

Isaiah 30:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

Analysis

But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses—The Hebrew structure emphasizes willful defiance: "No!" (אָ/lo). Instead of returning to God, they choose literal fleeing (נָס/nus) on cavalry—the ancient equivalent of trusting military technology over divine protection. **Therefore shall ye flee**—Divine irony: they wanted to flee on horses for offensive power, but they will indeed flee—in panicked retreat. God often gives rebels exactly what they demand, to their ruin (Psalm 106:15).

We will ride upon the swift (רָץ/qal, swift/light)—Egyptian horses were prized for speed. **Therefore shall they that pursue you be swift**—another devastating reversal. Their military advantage becomes their pursuers' advantage. When we trust human strength instead of God, that very strength is turned against us.

Historical Context

Egypt was famous for its chariot forces and cavalry, while Israel's mountainous terrain made horses less practical. Acquiring Egyptian horses violated Deuteronomy 17:16's command that kings should not multiply horses. By seeking Egyptian cavalry, Judah was not only faithless but covenant-breaking. The Assyrian and later Babylonian armies indeed pursued Israel with swift cavalry.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What modern 'horses' (technologies, strategies, alliances) do Christians trust instead of God?
2. How has God's ironic judgment—giving you what you demanded—played out in your life?
3. What 'swift' advantages are you pursuing that might become advantages for your spiritual enemies?

Interlinear Text

וַתֹּאמֶר	לֹא	כִּי	עַל	סוֹסִים	וְנָנוּס	עַל	כִּי
But ye said	H3808	H3588	H5921	upon horses	No for we will flee	H5921	H3651
	H559			H5483	H5127		
וְנָנוּס	וְעַל	קַל	וְנִרְכָּב	עַל	כִּי	לֹא	יִקְלְוּ
No for we will flee	H5921	upon the swift	and We will ride	H5921	H3651	you be swift	H7043
	H5127	H7031	H7392				
וְרִדְפֵיכֶם:							
therefore shall they that pursue							
H7291							

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 31:1 (Parallel theme): Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

Isaiah 31:3 (Parallel theme): Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.

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