

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!" (אַל/lo). Instead of returning to God, they choose literal fleeing (וַיַּעֲזֹב/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 (רַכֵּב/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

בְּ עַל כִּי לֹא וְתִּאמְרֵ	H3651 H5921 H3588 H3808 But ye said	עַל סְמִים עַל תְּנַסֵּס	H3651 H5483 H5921 H5127 upon horses No for we will flee
H559	H5921	H3588	H3808

וְלֹא תִּלְכְּלָה בְּנֵךְ בְּנֵי עַל יְמֵינֶךָ וְלֹא תִּלְכְּלָה בְּנֵי עַל יְמֵינֶךָ וְלֹא תִּלְכְּלָה בְּנֵי עַל יְמֵינֶךָ

רְדָפִיכָם:

therefore shall they that pursue

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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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