

Isaiah 30:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

Analysis

That walk to go down into Egypt (הַהֹלְכִים לְרֶדֶת מִצְרַיִם/haholkim laredet mitsrayim)—"Go down" (yarad) is geographically accurate (Egypt is lower elevation) but theologically significant—descent always implies spiritual decline in Scripture (Abraham went down to Egypt during famine, Genesis 12:10; Israel went down to Egypt and became enslaved). Going to Egypt reverses the Exodus, returning to bondage.

And have not asked at my mouth (וְלֹא שָׁאַלּוּ/ufi lo sha'alu)—They didn't inquire of Yahweh's mouth, didn't seek His word through prophets. "Asking at the mouth" was the proper protocol for kings facing decisions (1 Kings 22:5; 2 Kings 3:11). Their failure to consult God revealed functional atheism—living as though God's opinion doesn't matter. **To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh** (לְעֹז בְּמַעֲוֹ פַרְעֹה/la'oz bema'oz par'oh)—Wordplay: seeking to be strong (la'oz) in Pharaoh's stronghold (ma'oz). Pharaoh was Egypt's title, meaning "great house." **And to trust in the shadow of Egypt** (וּלְחַסוֹת בְּצֶל מִצְרַיִם/velachsot betsel mitsrayim)—Chasah means to seek refuge, take shelter. "Shadow" (tsel) implies protection, as shade from desert sun. But Egypt's shadow provides no real refuge—it's illusory protection.

Historical Context

Egypt's 25th Dynasty (Cushite pharaohs from Nubia) ruled 715-664 BCE, overlapping Hezekiah's reign. Pharaoh Shabaka and later Tirhakah presented themselves as strong allies against Assyria. Judah's ambassadors traveled the dangerous Negev desert (verse 6) carrying tribute to secure Egyptian military support. But Egypt's power was declining—they couldn't even defend themselves (Assyria would conquer Egypt by 671 BCE under Esarhaddon). Trusting Egypt was trusting a collapsing power. Isaiah's prophecies proved accurate: Egypt's help was worthless (verse 7).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'ask at God's mouth' before making major decisions, and how can you practice this?
2. How do we seek to 'strengthen ourselves' in worldly securities (finances, careers, relationships) rather than in God?
3. What 'shadows' (illusory protections) do people trust today that provide no real refuge?

Interlinear Text

הֵלְכִים	לָךְ דָּת	מִצְרַיִם:	וּפִי	לֹא	שָׁאַ לֹ
That walk	to go down	into Egypt	at my mouth	H3808	and have not asked
H1980	H3381	H4714	H6310		H7592
לְעוֹז	בְּמַעַז	וְזֶה	פֶּרַע הַ	וְלִחְסוּ	בְּצֵל
to strengthen	themselves in the strength	of Pharaoh	and to trust	in the shadow	
H5810	H4581	H6547	H2620	H6738	
מִצְרַיִם:					
into Egypt					
H4714					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 36:6 (Faith): Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

Jeremiah 43:7 (References Egypt): So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: thus came they even to Tahpanhes.

Numbers 27:21 (Parallel theme): And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.