

Isaiah 30:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.

Analysis

For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes (בְּחַיּוֹ) ki-hayu vetso'an sarav umal'akhav chanes yagi'u)—Specific geographic details authenticate the prophecy. Zoan (Greek: Tanis) was a major city in Egypt's Nile Delta, the ancient Hyksos capital and later a residence of pharaohs. Hanes (possibly Heracleopolis Magna or Tahpanhes) was another Egyptian city. Isaiah names actual locations where Judah's diplomatic mission traveled—sarim (princes/officials) and mal'akhim (ambassadors/messengers) conducting treaty negotiations. The verb yagi'u (came/arrived) emphasizes they actually reached these cities, completing the shameful journey to seek Egypt's help.

Historical Context

This verse provides historical evidence of Hezekiah's diplomatic mission to Egypt, complementing 2 Kings 18:21's reference to trusting Egypt. Archaeological discoveries at Tanis (Zoan) have uncovered remains of the 25th Dynasty period when Judean ambassadors would have visited. The mention of specific cities shows Isaiah wasn't speaking abstractly but addressing concrete political negotiations. These ambassadors carried tribute (verse 6) to purchase Egyptian military alliance. The journey itself was dangerous—traversing the Negev wilderness with its lions, vipers, and serpents (verse 6). All this effort and expense for an alliance that would prove worthless.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What 'expensive' efforts (time, money, energy) do you invest in seeking worldly security rather than trusting God?
2. How does knowing God sees the specific details of our faithless choices ("his princes were at Zoan") affect your accountability?
3. What does it mean to exhaust yourself pursuing help from sources that cannot ultimately save?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּבֹא בְּצָעֵן שָׁבֵן וּמֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה וְאֶלְעָגָלָה
H3588 H1961 were at Zoan H6814 For his princes H8269 and his ambassadors H4397 to Hanes H2609 came H5060

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 19:11 (Parallel theme): Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?

Isaiah 57:9 (Parallel theme): And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell.

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