

Isaiah 30:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

Analysis

They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them (הָבֵשׁ עַל־עַם לֹא־)—The ambassadors' shame when they discovered Egypt's worthlessness. Hovish (from bosh) means to be ashamed, disappointed, confounded. Lo-yo'ilu means "cannot profit/benefit." Egypt was a people who couldn't help—militarily impotent despite impressive appearances.

Nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach (לֹא־לְעֵזֶר וְלֹא־)—
לֹהוּעֵיל כִּי לְבָשֶׁת וְגַמְלִתְרָפָה/lo-le'ezer velo leho'il ki levoshet vegam-lecherpaah)—Emphatic repetition: not help (ezer), not profit (ho'il). Instead: shame (boshet) and reproach (cherpah, disgrace). Five negative outcomes contrasted with zero positive ones. The alliance brought only humiliation. Cherpah implies taunting, the disgrace of being mocked by enemies for trusting a failed ally.

Historical Context

When Assyria invaded in 701 BCE, Egypt's promised military aid proved worthless. Sennacherib's Rabshakeh mocked Judah's Egyptian alliance: "Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him" (2 Kings 18:20-21). Judah suffered the shame of public mockery for their failed political gambit. This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy exactly: Egypt brought shame and reproach, not help and profit.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do worldly alliances and securities often promise much but deliver only shame when tested?
2. What does it feel like to be 'ashamed' of trusting something that failed, and how does this drive us back to God?
3. How can the reproach of failed human plans turn us toward the unfailing help of divine providence?

Interlinear Text

ל א ל מו להוּא יֵל לֹא עַם עַל הָבָב אִישׁ כֶּל
H3605 They were all ashamed H3001 H5921 of a people H3808 H3276 H0 H3808

וְגַם לְבִשְׁת כִּי להוּא יֵל וְלֹא לְעַזְר them nor be an help H5828 H3808 H3588 H1571 H1322

לְחֶרְףָה:
and also a reproach
H2781

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 2:36 (Parallel theme): Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.

Isaiah 30:7 (Parallel theme): For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.

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