

Isaiah 30:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.

Analysis

For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose (ומצרים הִכְלִיל יְרִיק יְעֹזָרוּ) umitsrayim hevel variq ya'zoru)—Double emphasis on worthlessness: hevel (vanity, vapor, nothingness—same word in Ecclesiastes "vanity of vanities") and riq (emptiness, void). Their help is vapor—insubstantial, disappearing, worthless. The verb ya'zoru (they help) is ironic: they "help" but it's vain and empty.

Therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still (לְכָן) lakhen qarati lazot rahav hem shabet)—Difficult Hebrew, variously translated. Rahav typically means "Rahab," a poetic name for Egypt (also sea monster representing chaos—Psalm 87:4; 89:10). "Their strength is to sit still" (hem shabet) could mean Egypt's true strength is inaction (they talk big but do nothing) or Judah's best strategy is sitting still (trusting God rather than Egypt). The wordplay suggests both: Egypt's strength is mere boasting without action; Judah's strength would be quiet trust (verse 15: "in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength").

Historical Context

"Rahab" as Egypt's nickname appears in prophetic literature (Psalm 87:4; Isaiah 51:9). It evokes Egypt's mythological chaos monster, suggesting Egypt is all roar and no substance—fearsome reputation but impotent reality. History proved Isaiah right: Egypt's military aid against Assyria was indeed "vain and to no purpose."

Tirhakah's forces couldn't stop Sennacherib. Only divine intervention (Isaiah 37:36) delivered Judah. The irony is sharp: Judah exhausted itself securing Egyptian help that accomplished nothing, while the help they rejected (Yahweh's) was freely available and actually effective.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do impressive-looking helps (wealth, connections, abilities) often prove to be 'vain and to no purpose' when tested?
2. What does it mean that true 'strength is to sit still'—to trust God quietly rather than frantically securing human helps?
3. How does the 'Rahab' imagery (chaos monster, all noise and no substance) describe modern securities we trust?

Interlinear Text

לְכָנָן	יְעַזְּרֹר	וְמִצְּבָא	אֶם	בְּלֵד	בְּלִינָה	וְמִצְּבָא	אֶם
For the Egyptians	shall help			in vain	and to no purpose		
H4714	H3651			H1892	H7385		
therefore have I cried	is to sit still	concerning this	strength	concerning this	strength	therefore have I cried	is to sit still
H7121	H7674	H2063	H7293	H1992	H7293	H7121	H7674

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 7:4 (Parallel theme): And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

Isaiah 2:22 (Parallel theme): Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

Exodus 14:13 (References Egypt): And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

Hosea 5:13 (Parallel theme): When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.

Lamentations 3:26 (Parallel theme): It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

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