

# Isaiah 31:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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!

## Analysis

**Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help** (הוֹי הַיּוֹרְדִים מִצְרַיִם לְעֶזְרָה, hoy hayordim Mitsrayim le'ezrah)—the seventh woe pronounces judgment on those יָרַד (yarad, going down) to מִצְרַיִם (Mitsrayim, Egypt) for עֶזְרָה (ezrah, help). **And stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many** (וְעַל־סוּסִים יִשְׁעֵנוּ וַיִּבְטְחוּ, ve'al-susim yisha'enu vayivtechu al-rekhev ki-rav)—they שָׁעָן (sha'an, lean upon, rely) on horses and בָּטַח (batach, trust) in רֶכֶב (rekhev, chariots). **But they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!** (וְלֹא שָׁעוּ וְלֹא דָרְשׁוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, velo sha'u al-Qedosh Yisrael ve'et-YHWH lo darshu)—they don't שָׁעָה (sha'ah, look to, regard) God or דָּרַשׁ (darash, seek).

Egypt's horses and chariots represented ancient superpower military technology—the tanks and fighter jets of the ancient world. Judah, threatened by Assyria, sought Egyptian alliance rather than relying on Yahweh. The sin isn't seeking protection but the misplaced trust: horses instead of God, human alliances instead of divine covenant. Deuteronomy 17:16 explicitly forbade kings multiplying horses or returning to Egypt. Psalm 20:7 contrasts: 'Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.'

## Historical Context

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In the late 8th century BC, Assyria dominated the Near East. Egypt, though weakened, still projected military strength. When Assyria threatened Judah, King Hezekiah's advisors advocated an Egyptian alliance (Isaiah 30:1-7). Egypt's cavalry was renowned, tempting small nations to seek protection. But Egypt repeatedly proved an unreliable ally—'a bruised reed' that pierces the hand (Isaiah 36:6).

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. What modern equivalents of 'horses and chariots' tempt you to trust in human strength rather than God?
2. How does seeking legitimate help become sinful when it displaces trust in God?
3. What does it practically mean to 'seek the LORD' instead of defaulting to worldly solutions?

## Interlinear Text

ה וי	היִרְדּוּ יָם	מִצְרַיִם	לְעֶזְרָהּ ה	עַל	סוֹסֵי יָם	וְשָׁעוּ נֹו
Woe	to them that go down	to Egypt	for help	H5921	on horses	and stay
H1945	H3381	H4714	H5833		H5483	H8172
וַיִּבְטְחוּ ו	עַל	כִּי כַב	כִּי	כִּי ב	וְעַל	פָּרָשִׁים
and trust	H5921	in chariots	H3588	because they are many	H5921	and in horsemen
H982		H7393		H7227		H6571
כִּי	עֲצָמָו	מְאֹד	וְלֹא	שָׁעוּ	עַל	
H3588	strong	because they are very	H3808	but they look	H5921	
	H6105	H3966		H8159		
קִדּוֹשׁ	לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	וְאֵת	יְהוָה	לֹא	יִדְרְשׁוּ:	
not unto the Holy One	of Israel	H853	the LORD	H3808	neither seek	
H6918	H3478		H3068		H1875	

## Additional Cross-References

**Psalms 20:7** (Faith): Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

**Jeremiah 17:5** (Faith): Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

**Deuteronomy 17:16** (References Lord): But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

**Jeremiah 2:13** (Parallel theme): For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

**Daniel 9:13** (References Lord): As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

**Isaiah 36:9** (Faith): How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

**Isaiah 30:16** (Parallel theme): 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.

**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.

**Isaiah 9:13** (References Lord): For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts.

**Ezekiel 17:15** (References Egypt): But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?