

# Isaiah 31:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.

## Analysis

**Now the Egyptians are men, and not God** (וּמִצְרַיִם אָדָם וְלֹא־אֵל, uMitsrayim adam velo-El)—Egyptians are אָדָם (adam, man, mortal) not אֵל (El, God). **And their horses flesh, and not spirit** (וְסוּסֵיהֶם בָּשָׂר וְלֹא־רוּחַ, vesusehem basar velo-ruach)—horses are בָּשָׂר (basar, flesh) not רוּחַ (ruach, spirit). **When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together** (וַיִּהְיֶה יְטַהֲיָדּוֹ וְכָשַׁל עֹזֶר וְנָפַל אֲזוּר וַיַּחֲדָו כֻּלָּם יִכְלִיּוּ, vaYHWH yateh-yado vekhshal ozer venafal azur veyachdav kulam yikhlayon).

Isaiah strips away illusions with ontological categories: creature versus Creator, flesh versus spirit. Egypt is merely human; horses are merely flesh—powerful but finite, impressive but mortal. When Yahweh נָטָה (natah, stretches out) His יָד (yad, hand), both helper (עֹזֶר, ozer) and helped (אֲזוּר, azur) will כָּשַׁל (kashal, stumble, fall). The verb כָּלָה (kalah, fail, be consumed, perish) pronounces comprehensive destruction. Psalm 146:3-5 echoes: 'Put not your trust in princes... his breath goeth forth... Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help.'

## Historical Context

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Egypt's fall to Babylon (605-568 BC) fulfilled this prophecy. Nebuchadnezzar devastated Egypt (Jeremiah 46, Ezekiel 29-32), proving that this ancient superpower was merely flesh. Every empire—Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman—rose and fell. Only Yahweh endures. The contrast between flesh and spirit anticipates Paul's theology (Romans 8:5-9, Galatians 5:16-25).

## Related Passages

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

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. What 'horses and chariots' (impressive but merely flesh) are you tempted to trust instead of the Spirit?
2. How does recognizing the creature-Creator distinction reorient priorities and trust?
3. When has something you trusted in (career, relationship, wealth, health) proven to be 'flesh, not spirit'?

## Interlinear Text

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וּמִצְרַיִם	אָדָם	וְלֹא	אֵל	וְסוּסֵיהֶם	בָּשָׂר	וְלֹא
Now the Egyptians	are men	H3808	and not God	and their horses	flesh	H3808
H4714	H120		H410	H5483	H1320	
וְרוּחַ	יְהוָה	יָטֵה	יָדוֹ	וְכַשֵּׁל		
and not spirit	When the LORD	shall stretch out	his hand	shall fall		
H7307	H3068	H5186	H3027	H3782		
עֲזָר	וְנָפַל	עֲזָר	וְיִחַדּוּ	כָּל		
and he that is holpen	shall fall down	and he that is holpen	together			
H5826	H5307	H5826	H3162	H3605		
יְכָלִינָם:						
and they all shall fail						
H3615						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 9:17** (References Lord): Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one is an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

**Jeremiah 15:6** (References Lord): Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting.

**Ezekiel 28:9** (References God): Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee.

**Isaiah 30:5** (Parallel theme): 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.

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

**Isaiah 36:6** (References Egypt): 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 36:9** (References Egypt): 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?

**Psalms 33:17** (Parallel theme): An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

**Psalms 9:20** (References Lord): Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

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