

Isaiah 31:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it.

Analysis

As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem (כְּצִפּוֹרִים עֹפּוֹת כֵּן יִגֵּן) (ketsipporim afot ken yagen YHWH tseva'ot al-Yerushalaim)—like **birds** (צִפּוֹרִים) (tsipporim, birds) **flying** (עוֹף) (uf, flying, hovering), Yahweh will **defend** (יִגֵּן) (ganan, defend, shield). **Defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it** (וְגָנוֹן וְהִצִּיל פָּסוֹחַ וְהִמְלִיט) (ganon vehitsil pasoach vehimlit)—doubling the verbs for emphasis: protecting-He will deliver, passing over-He will rescue.

The metaphor shifts from lion to birds—perhaps eagles hovering over nest (Deuteronomy 32:11) or mother hen sheltering chicks (Matthew 23:37). The verb **פָּסַח** (pasach, pass over) deliberately evokes Passover (פֶּסַח, Pesach) when God 'passed over' Israelite homes marked with blood, sparing firstborns while judging Egypt (Exodus 12:13). God will 'pass over' Jerusalem—sparing it from judgment that strikes enemies. This is grace in action: defending, delivering, preserving despite unworthiness.

Historical Context

The Passover allusion is deliberate. Just as God delivered Israel from Egypt through the Passover lamb, He will deliver Jerusalem from Assyria. The pattern continues: Christ, our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), delivers believers from judgment. God's hovering protection and Passover-like sparing characterize His covenant faithfulness throughout redemptive history.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the image of birds hovering protectively differ from the lion imagery, and what does each reveal about God?
2. What does the Passover language teach about God's protection—grace sparing the undeserving through substitutionary blood?
3. How does Christ as 'our Passover' connect this Old Testament promise to New Testament salvation?

Interlinear Text

עַל	צָבָא	וְת	יְהוָה	גָּן	וְ	כִּי	אֶפְ	וְת	כְּצִפֹּרִיִּם
	of hosts		so will the LORD	defend			flying		As birds
H5921	H6635		H3068	H1598			H5774		H6833
יְהוָה לִיט:	פָּסֵה	וְהֵצִיל	גָּן	וְ	יְרוּשָׁלַיִם				
he will preserve	it and passing over	also he will deliver	defend		Jerusalem				
H4422	H6452	H5337	H1598		H3389				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 91:4 (Parallel theme): He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Deuteronomy 32:11 (Parallel theme): As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:

Isaiah 38:6 (Parallel theme): And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

Psalms 37:40 (References Lord): And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

Psalms 46:5 (Parallel theme): God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

Exodus 19:4 (Parallel theme): Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

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