

Isaiah 32:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth
thither the feet of the ox and the ass.

Analysis

Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters (אַשְׁרֵיכֶם עַל-כָּל-מַיִם, ashreykem zor'ey al-kol-mayim)—אַשְׁרֵי (ashrey, blessed, happy) are those who זָרַע (zara, sow) beside כָּל-מַיִם (kol-mayim, all waters). **That send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass** (מְשַׁלְּחֵי רֶגֶל הַשּׁוֹר וְהַחֲמוֹר, meshaleychey regel hashor vеха chamor)—who send forth (שָׁלַח, shalach) the רֶגֶל (regel, foot) of ox and donkey.

The chapter concludes with agricultural blessing—those who sow beside irrigated land and use oxen/donkeys for plowing experience blessing. This contrasts with failed harvests (v. 10) and thorns/briers (v. 13). Well-watered fields represent abundant provision. The ox and ass imagery suggests diligent labor—using all resources for cultivation. Ecclesiastes 11:1 counsels: 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days'—generous, faith-filled sowing yields future harvest. Luke 8:5-15's parable of sower shows varied responses to gospel seed. Second Corinthians 9:6: 'He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.'

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern agriculture depended on water access—irrigation from rivers, rainfall, wells. 'Beside all waters' indicates multiple water sources, ensuring reliable irrigation regardless of drought. Using both ox (powerful for heavy plowing) and donkey (versatile for lighter work) shows wise resource deployment.

The blessing isn't prosperity gospel but covenant faithfulness: obedience yields provision (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does 'sowing beside all waters' picture investing in Kingdom work with generous, faith-filled effort?
2. What 'oxen and donkeys'—resources and abilities—has God given you to deploy for fruitful sowing?
3. How does patient, diligent sowing contrast with seeking quick results or minimal investment?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁרֶיךָ ׀	זֹרְעֵי ׀	עַל	כָּל	מִיָּם	מְשַׁלְּחֵי ׀
Blessed	are ye that sow	H5921	H3605	beside all waters	that send forth
H835	H2232			H4325	H7971
רַגְלֵי	הַשֶּׁ׀	וְהַחֲמֹר:			
thither the feet	of the ox	and the ass			
H7272	H7794	H2543			

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 11:1 (Parallel theme): Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

