

Isaiah 33:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.

Analysis

Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble (תָּהַרְוּ תְּשַׁשְׁנָה תְּלִדוּ קָשׁ, taharu chashash teledu qash)—you conceive (הָרָה, harah) שְׁשָׁנָה (chashash, chaff, dry grass) and give birth to (יָלַד, yalad) קָשׁ (qash, stubble). **Your breath, as fire, shall devour you** (רֹעֵחַ מִתְּאַכְּלָה אֵשׁ, ruchakem esh tokhalkhem)—your רֹעֵחַ (ruach, breath, spirit) like אֵשׁ (esh, fire) will devour you.

God addresses Assyria's futile schemes—all their planning, effort, and warfare produce worthless results: chaff and stubble. The pregnancy metaphor depicts prolonged effort yielding useless fruit. Their own רֹעֵחַ (ruach)—breath, spirit, arrogance—becomes fire consuming them. Poetic justice: their own rage destroys them. James 1:15 uses similar birth imagery: 'when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.' Psalm 7:14-16 depicts the wicked conceiving mischief and bringing forth falsehood, falling into their own pit.

Historical Context

Assyria conceived grand imperial plans—conquering nations, building empire, amassing wealth. But it all became chaff. Their arrogance (רֹעֵחַ, ruach) kindled divine fire-judgment. Sennacherib's boasts (Isaiah 37:24-25) became his downfall. His own sons murdered him (Isaiah 37:38)—his 'breath' (descendants) became fire devouring him. Babylon later destroyed Assyria (612 BC)—all their conquests proved stubble. Empires rise and fall; only God's Kingdom endures.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What plans or ambitions might you be 'conceiving' that will only produce chaff and stubble?
2. How does pride or arrogance (רוּחַ, ruach) become the fire that destroys the proud person?
3. When have you seen the wicked's schemes backfire, consuming them like fire?

Interlinear Text

תִּתְהַרֵּן	שְׁבַשׁ	תַּלְדֵּן	שְׁבַשׁ	רָגַבְתָּם	אֵשׁ
Ye shall conceive	chaff	ye shall bring forth	stubble	your breath	as fire
H2029	H2842	H3205	H7179	H7307	H784

תַּאֲכַלְתָּם
shall devour
H398

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 59:4 (Parallel theme): None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

Psalms 7:14 (Parallel theme): Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.

James 1:15 (Parallel theme): Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

