

Isaiah 52:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.

Analysis

For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward. This verse contrasts the return from exile with the exodus from Egypt. The exodus required haste (chipazon, חִפְזוֹן, Exodus 12:11) and flight from Pharaoh's pursuing army. The return from Babylon follows different pattern—no hurried escape but orderly procession with divine protection. "Ye shall not go out with haste" emphasizes calm, dignified departure, not desperate fleeing.

The double divine protection—"the LORD will go before you" (vanguard) and "the God of Israel will be your rereward" (rear guard)—depicts complete military encirclement for defense. Me'asiphkem (מֵאַסִּיפְכֶּם, "your rereward") comes from 'asaph (אַסַּף), meaning to gather or bring up the rear. God both scouts ahead removing obstacles and protects from behind against pursuers, ensuring total security for the journey.

From a Reformed perspective, this models Christian pilgrimage. Believers journey from bondage (sin) to inheritance (glory), protected by divine providence. Christ goes before as forerunner (Hebrews 6:20) and follows as shepherd gathering strays (John 10:4, 27-28). The promise of orderly, protected journey grounds assurance—salvation isn't desperate flight but confident procession under divine guard. Psalm 139:5 echoes this: "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid

thine hand upon me." God's comprehensive protection enables courage, not fearful haste.

Historical Context

The contrast with Egypt's exodus highlights differences in redemptive events. Exodus 12:11, 33 describe hurried departure with Egyptians urging them out. Exodus 14 records panicked flight from Pharaoh's army. The return from Babylon follows different pattern—Cyrus's decree (Ezra 1) gave official permission and provision. No enemy pursued; instead, Persians contributed to the journey (Ezra 1:4, 6).

Ezra 8:31 confirms this: "the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way." The journey took months but proceeded securely. This demonstrates redemptive history's progression—God's later deliverances transcend earlier ones, culminating in Christ's work that not only delivers from bondage but ensures arrival at destination. Church history shows similar protection—though facing opposition, the gospel spreads with divine enablement, not desperate flight.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God going before and behind you affect your approach to life's challenges?
2. Where are you rushing in 'haste' rather than trusting God's orderly leading?

3. How can the church better demonstrate confident, unhurried trust in God's protection?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	לֹא	בְּחֶפְזוֹן	תֵּצֵא	וּבְמָנוֹס הַ	לֹא	הֵלֵךְ	כִּי
H3588	H3808	with haste	For ye shall not go out	by flight	H3808	will go	H3588
		H2649	H3318	H4499		H1980	
וְשָׂאָל:	אֵלֶּה יְ	וּמַאֲסָפְכָּם	יְהוָה הַ	לִפְנֵיכֶם	הֵלֵךְ		
of Israel	you and the God	will be your rereward	for the LORD	before	will go		
H3478	H430	H622	H3068	H6440	H1980		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 58:8 (Light): Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

Deuteronomy 20:4 (References God): For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

Isaiah 45:2 (Parallel theme): I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

Micah 2:13 (References Lord): The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

Exodus 12:11 (References Lord): And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.

1 Chronicles 14:15 (References God): And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle: for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines.

Exodus 12:33 (Parallel theme): And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.

Exodus 12:39 (Parallel theme): And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.

Judges 4:14 (References Lord): And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.

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