

Jeremiah 37:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

Analysis

Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt—this Egyptian intervention represents Pharaoh Hophra (Apries, 589-570 BC), whose forces moved north to challenge Babylon's siege. The Hebrew yatsa (יצא, came forth) suggests military deployment with apparent strength. Egypt had been Judah's forbidden ally; Isaiah and Jeremiah repeatedly warned against trusting Egypt rather than Yahweh (Isaiah 30:1-7; 31:1-3; Jeremiah 2:18, 36-37).

And when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem—the withdrawal seemed to vindicate those who trusted in Egyptian alliance. False prophets undoubtedly proclaimed deliverance; political leaders congratulated themselves on wise diplomacy. The Hebrew shama (שמע, heard) indicates intelligence reports prompting tactical withdrawal. Babylon temporarily lifted the siege to deal with Egypt, creating the illusion that Jerusalem was saved.

This apparent deliverance became a test of faith: would Judah interpret the reprieve as vindication of their politics or recognize it as temporary? Jeremiah would soon declare God's true word: Egypt would retreat, Babylon would return, and Jerusalem would fall. Human alliances provide only temporary, illusory security; covenant faithfulness to Yahweh is the only true refuge.

Historical Context

Archaeological and historical sources confirm Egypt's intervention during Nebuchadnezzar's siege. Pharaoh Hophra attempted to maintain Egyptian influence in Canaan by supporting Judah against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar's forces temporarily withdrew to neutralize the Egyptian threat before resuming Jerusalem's siege. This brief reprieve gave false hope to Zedekiah's government. Lachish Letter #3 (discovered in excavations) may reference Egyptian forces, providing extrabiblical confirmation. Egypt's intervention ultimately failed—they retreated without engaging Babylon decisively, abandoning Judah to its fate. This fulfilled the prophets' warnings that Egypt was a 'broken reed' that would pierce the hand of those who leaned on it (2 Kings 18:21; Ezekiel 29:6-7).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Why did Judah repeatedly turn to Egypt for security despite prophetic warnings against foreign alliances?
2. How do temporary reprieves from consequences sometimes reinforce unbelief rather than prompt repentance?
3. What modern 'Egypts' do people trust instead of relying fully on God's covenant promises?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּשְׁמַע וְמִמִּצְרָיִם פְּרָעָה הַיְהוּנָה וְאֵצֶן

army Then Pharaoh's was come forth out of Egypt heard

H2428

H6547

H3318

H4714

H8085

שְׁמַע מִצְרָיִם עַל יְרוּשָׁלָם אֲתָת שְׁמַע

and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem tidings

H3778

H6696

H5921

H3389

H853

H8088

וְיְרוּשָׁלָם מִצְרָיִם עַל יְהוּנָה וְאֵצֶן

of them they departed Jerusalem

H5927

H5921

H3389

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 17:15 (References Egypt): But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

Jeremiah 37:11 (References Jerusalem): And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,

Jeremiah 34:21 (Parallel theme): And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you.

2 Kings 24:7 (References Egypt): And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

Jeremiah 37:7 (References Egypt): Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

