

Numbers 24:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.

Analysis

And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock—The Kenites (קְנִיטִים) Qeini, metalworkers/smiths), allied with Israel through Moses' father-in-law Jethro (Judges 1:16; 4:11), received a mixed oracle. Their **dwellingplace** (חוֹשֵׁב moshav, habitation) was **strong** (עִתָּן eitan, enduring/permanent), and their **nest in a rock** (עַלְמָתָן qan basela) suggested secure, elevated positioning like cliff-dwelling birds.

Despite apparent security, verse 22 predicts eventual captivity, teaching that no physical fortress substitutes for covenant relationship with God. Jesus warned against building on sand versus rock (Matthew 7:24-27)—the issue isn't location but foundation. The Kenites' metalworking skills provided economic security, but couldn't prevent later Assyrian captivity.

Historical Context

The Kenites were nomadic metalworking clans descended from Cain (possibly) or simply named for their trade. Moses' father-in-law Jethro/Reuel was Kenite (Judges 1:16), establishing positive relationship with Israel. Some Kenites accompanied Israel into Canaan (Judges 1:16), while others remained semi-nomadic on Israel's margins.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the Kenites' 'strong dwellingplace' that ultimately failed teach about false security in material prosperity?
2. What 'nests in rocks' (seemingly secure positions) might you trust more than relationship with God?
3. How does Kenite alliance with Israel (through Jethro) contrast with their predicted captivity, teaching that proximity to God's people doesn't guarantee protection without personal covenant relationship?

Interlinear Text

And he looked	וַיַּרְא	את	פְּנֵי	וְ	ישָׁאַל	וְ	מִשְׁלָל	וְ	יֹאמֵר	אֵת
	H853		H7017		H5375		H4912		H559	H386
H7200										
is thy dwellingplace	מֹשֶׁבֶת	בָּ	ישָׁם	וְ	בָּ	לְעֵ	לְבָ	בְּ	תְּ	אֵת
H4186			H7760		H5553		H7064			

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 15:19 (Parallel theme): The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,