

Numbers 24:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.

Analysis

The oracle 'God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn' grounds Israel's present blessing in past redemption. The Hebrew *re'em* (wild ox/unicorn) symbolized untamed power. Israel's strength derives not from military might but from God who brought them from Egypt with mighty acts. This past deliverance guarantees future victories: 'he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.' God's past faithfulness ensures future triumph—a principle Christians claim through Christ's finished work.

Historical Context

The Exodus was Israel's defining redemptive event, constantly referenced as evidence of God's electing love and mighty power (Deuteronomy 5:6). Balaam's oracle from an outside perspective confirmed what Israel knew internally: their God was unmatched. The imagery of consuming enemies and breaking bones prophesied military victories under Joshua, the judges, and David. God's redemption purposes inevitably triumph.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does remembering God's past deliverance strengthen faith for future battles?
2. What role does the Exodus play in understanding our redemption in Christ?
3. How should believers leverage Christ's finished work when facing present challenges?

Interlinear Text

אֱלֹהִים	הוֹצִיא אוֹתוֹ	מִמִּצְרַיִם	כְּתֹשֶׁפֶת	רֵאֵם
God	brought him forth	out of Egypt	he hath as it were the strength	of an unicorn
H410	H3318	H4714	H8443	H7214
וְיֹאכַל	לֶאֱכֹל	אֶת־	אֶת־	וְיִשָּׁבֵר
he shall eat up	the nations	his enemies	their bones	and shall break
H0	H398	H1471	H6862	H6106
וְיִשָּׁבֵר	אֶת־	וְיִשָּׁבֵר	אֶת־	וְיִשָּׁבֵר
them through with his arrows	and pierce			
H2671	H4272			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 45:5 (Parallel theme): Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

Psalms 2:9 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Jeremiah 50:17 (Parallel theme): Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones.

Numbers 23:22 (References God): God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

Numbers 23:24 (Parallel theme): Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

Numbers 14:9 (Parallel theme): Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

Isaiah 38:13 (Parallel theme): I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

Jeremiah 50:9 (Parallel theme): For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

Psalms 21:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.

Deuteronomy 32:23 (Parallel theme): I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them.