

Psalms 147:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.

Analysis

He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. This verse radically subverts cultural assumptions about divine favor. The Hebrew *lo b'gevurat hasus yechpatz* (לא בגבורה הושע יחפוץ) uses *yechpatz* (delight, take pleasure) in the negative—God does NOT find pleasure in military might symbolized by war horses (sus, סוס). Similarly, "**the legs of a man**" (*shoqe ha'ish*, שׁוֹקֵן הָאִישׁ) represent human strength, speed, and prowess in battle.

In ancient Near Eastern warfare, cavalry and foot soldiers were primary military assets. Horses symbolized wealth, power, and tactical advantage (see 1 Kings 10:26-29 on Solomon's horses; Isaiah 31:1 condemns trust in Egyptian horses). Fast runners could carry messages or outmaneuver enemies. Yet Yahweh's pleasure lies elsewhere—not in human or animal strength, but in covenant faithfulness (v. 11 continues: "The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him").

This principle appears throughout Scripture. God forbade Israel's kings from multiplying horses (Deuteronomy 17:16), precisely because military power tempts nations to trust arms rather than Yahweh. Zechariah prophesied the Messiah would come "lowly, and riding upon an ass" (Zechariah 9:9), not a war horse—fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21:5). Paul declares God's power is "made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9), and worldly strength often opposes divine purpose (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

Historical Context

Military might was the currency of ancient geopolitics. Empires rose and fell based on cavalry, chariots, and infantry. Israel, often militarily weaker than neighbors, faced constant temptation to trust alliances, weapons, or mercenaries rather than Yahweh. Psalms repeatedly contrast human military strength with divine deliverance (Psalm 20:7, 33:16-17, 44:6). Post-exilic Judah, a small province under Persian rule, had no military strength—only faith in God's covenant faithfulness.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What modern equivalents of 'horses' and 'strong legs' tempt you to trust in human ability rather than God's power?
2. How does God's lack of delight in natural strength challenge cultural narratives about success, power, and self-sufficiency?
3. In what areas of weakness might God actually be positioning you for dependence on His strength rather than your own?

Interlinear Text

ל	א	בָּגְבוּן	ת	הַס	וֹס	יְחִיף	לֹא	בְּשָׁוָק	וְש
H3808		not	in	the	strength	of	the	horse	He
		H1369		H5483		H2654		H3808	delighteth

רָצֶה:

he taketh not pleasure

H7521

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 20:7 (Parallel theme): Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

1 Samuel 16:7 (Parallel theme): But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Isaiah 31:1 (Parallel theme): Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

Proverbs 21:31 (Parallel theme): The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.

Ecclesiastes 9:11 (Parallel theme): I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Hosea 1:7 (Parallel theme): But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

2 Samuel 1:23 (Parallel theme): Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.