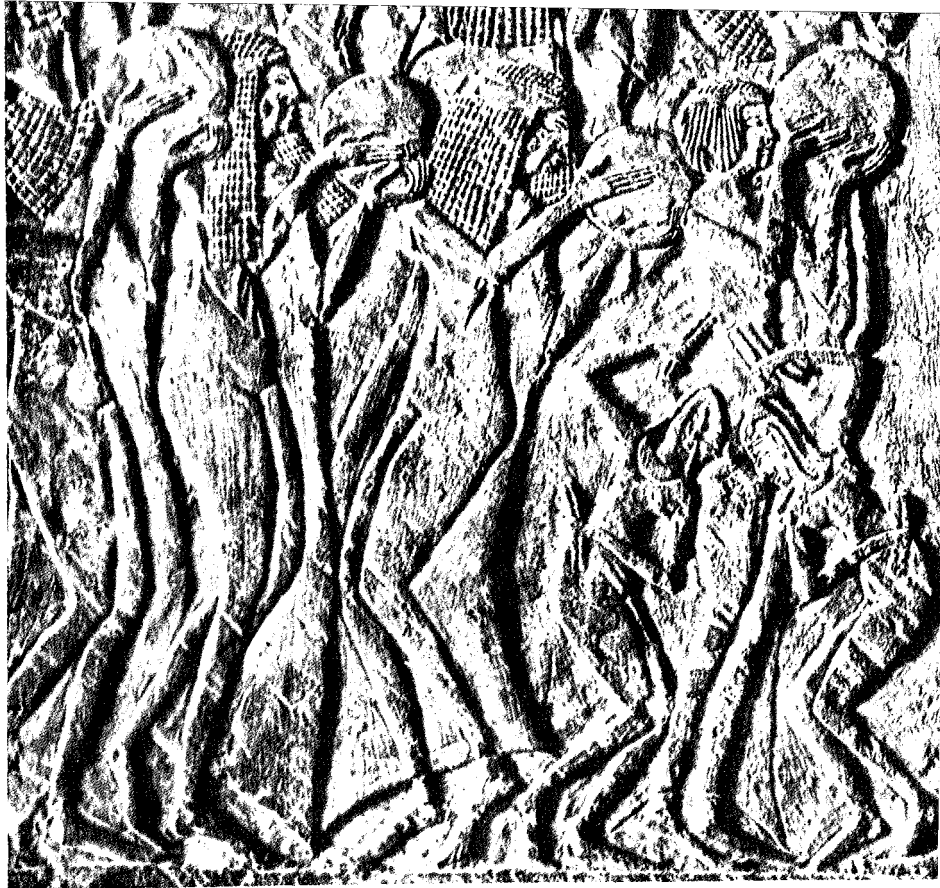


3. SWORD

TEXT: 31:1-9

- 1 Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely 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 Jehovah!
- 2 Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity.
- 3 Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit: and when Jehovah shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is helped shall fall, and they all shall be consumed together.
- 4 For thus saith Jehovah unto me, As the lion and the young lion growling over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him, will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so will Jehovah of hosts come down to fight upon mount Zion, and upon the hill thereof.
- 5 As birds hovering, so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will pass over and preserve it.
- 6 Turn ye unto him from whom ye have deeply revolted, O children of Israel.
- 7 For in that day they shall cast away every man his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin.
- 8 And the Assyrian shall fall by the sword, not of man; and the sword, not of men, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become subject to task-work.
- 9 And his rock shall pass away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign, saith Jehovah, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.



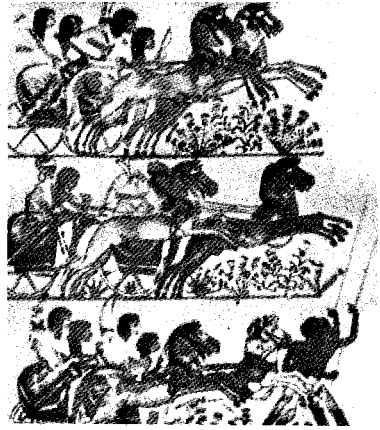
"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea"
(Exodus 15: 20-21).

The timbrel or tabret, here seen being played by Egyptian dancing-girls, was a kind of tambourine, a wooden framework covered with hide. It was used to provide a rhythmic accompaniment for the choral dance which was led off by the prophetess Miriam as an expression of joy and thanksgiving for the miraculous escape of Israel from destruction at the hands of the Egyptian army. Later on, King Saul is greeted joyfully in this manner after the slaughter of the Philistines: ". . . the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets . . ." (I Samuel 18:6).

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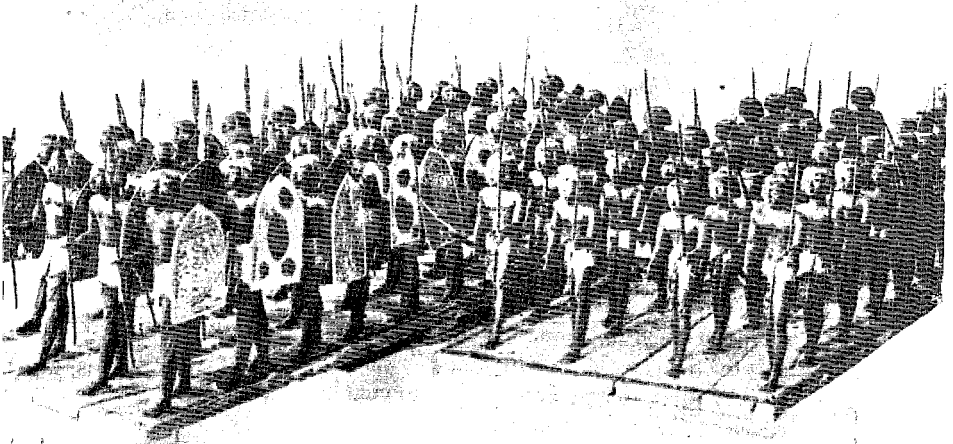
"And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them" (Exodus 14:7).

Egyptian war-chariots careering through meadows thick with flowers. Since ever the Hyksos introduced the horse into Egypt about 1700 B.C., the light two-wheeled chariot played an increasingly important role in Egyptian strategy. The chariot corps became a powerful striking force, operating in sections of twenty-five machines. Each car had a driver and a fighting-man, who was armed with bow, spear and shield. The quiver was fixed to the outside bodywork (as illustrated). Chariot units of the type seen in this Egyptian picture pursued the people of Israel, according to the biblical record.



"But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army" (Exodus 14:9).

Forty soldiers on the march in four columns of ten (left). Each of them holds a six-foot lance in his right hand and a leather-covered shield in his left. Marching beside them, likewise in four columns of ten, is a company of Nubian archers (right). Each archer carries an unstrung bow in his left hand and a bundle of arrows in his right. This wooden model reproduces accurately what the Bible calls "Pharaoh's army".



FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
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QUERIES

- a. What "words" would God not call back?
- b. When would Jehovah come down to fight upon mount Zion?
- c. How would the young men of the Assyrians become subject to taskwork?

PARAPHRASE

Cursed are those who run to Egypt for help, relying on Egypt's great numbers of horses, chariots and cavalrymen. Woe to them because they do not turn to the Holy One of Israel, Jehovah, for their help. Jehovah's word is wise and His word is faithful—He is going to keep His word and bring evil upon the evil-doers and upon those from whom they seek help. Let me remind you, these Egyptians are mere men, not God; and their horses mere flesh, not spirit. When Jehovah stretches forth His omnipotent hand against them, both you and your helpers will fall and be consumed. But God has told me this: Just like a lion growling over his prey is not frightened or cowed even when many shepherds shout at him, so the Lord will come down upon Zion and fight against her enemies, the Assyrians, and He will not be frightened or cowed by them. As birds hover over their young to protect them, so Jehovah of hosts will hover over Jerusalem to protect her. He will shield, deliver, pass over and preserve her. Turn back, therefore, O Chosen Nation, to Him from whom you have so completely strayed. The day is soon coming when some of you will indeed recognize that you have rebelled and you will cast away your idols—images made by your own hands which reveal the sin of your hearts. In that day the Assyrians will be destroyed—not by human swords but the sword of God will pursue them and scatter them. The Assyrians, who have laid tribute on so many others will one day have their young men taken in tribute and made slaves. The real strength of the Assyrian nation will be so terrified and its leaders so cowed by fear they will desert

their battle-flag in panic. This is a pronouncement of Jehovah whose fire is in Jerusalem ready to devour His enemies.

COMMENTS

V. 1-3 **FEEBLENESS OF EGYPT:** The flatness and scarcity of trees in the land of Egypt made it ideal for vast armies of horses and chariots. Classical writers attest to the abundance of horses in Egypt as well as the bas reliefs on ancient Egyptian ruins. Chariots were as awesome against foot soldiers then as tanks and armored vehicles are today. Egypt, with thousands of horses and chariots, would appear to Judah as invincible. Isaiah continues his warning in the strongest and plainest language possible against turning away from Jehovah and seeking help in pagan Egypt.

Judah thinks she is wise in trying to get help from Egypt. But Jehovah is also wise. He is wise enough to know what evil is—going to Egypt; He is wise enough to know who the evil-doers are—Judah; He is wise enough to bring woe upon the evil-doers to try to turn them from their evil; He is wise enough that He never needs to retract His words! God always abides by what He has spoken. He always speaks with full knowledge and perfect foreknowledge (cf. Num. 23:19, etc.).

The prophet may have put some irony or sarcasm into his tone when he spoke these words, "Now the Egyptians are men; and not God. . . ." The great war machine of the Egyptians and all their riches made them appear invincible to tiny Judah. However, Judah is reminded, the Egyptians are merely men—not God. They are not invincible. One is reminded of the people of the Roman empire of the first and second centuries. In that day "the whole earth wondered after the beast" (the Roman emperor), and they made images of the beast and worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?" But the apostle John, author of the Revelation to the churches of Asia Minor, told the church that the "beast" was not invincible—in fact

John said he had the beast's number; it was 666, the number of a man. The beast is not invincible, he is human! (cf. Revelation 13:1-18). Isaiah said, Egypt is not God, but man!

The Hebrew word *ruahk* translated *spirit* is also translated *wind* and symbolizes the mighty penetrating power of the Invisible God. The horses and horsemen of the Egyptians are flesh, subject to all the feebleness of flesh, and not spirit! Spirit is a synonym for power. God is *all* power. When He stretches out His hand they will see power like their forefathers witnessed at the parting of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Egyptian army. There may be a veiled reference here to that great wonder of the past. This time, both Egypt (he that helpeth) and the rebellious Israelites (he that is helped) shall fall, and they shall all be consumed together.

V. 4-9 FEROCITY OF GOD: The power of God is as awesome as that of a lion devouring a sheep. Call all the shepherds of the land and have them shout at the lion—he will show no fright. Let the Assyrians surround Jerusalem (as they did in Isaiah 36-39) and let them shout at the Lion of the Tribe of Judah—He will show no fright nor will he be cowed by them. In fact, He will pounce upon the taunting Assyrians and devour them (185,000 of them in one night).

The power of God to destroy His enemies will, at the same time, protect and deliver those who put their trust in Him (instead of putting it in Egypt). God will hover over them like a bird hovers over its young. Jesus said He would have gathered Jerusalem under His wings as a hen gathers her chicks, but Jerusalem would not! (cf. Mt. 23:37-39). God is going to protect Jerusalem every way possible. He will protect, deliver, pass over and preserve it. There is no way the Assyrians are going to overrun Jerusalem, if Judah will repent of its haughty and rebellious determination to seek Egypt's help. It seems from the historical record (II Kings 18-20; II Chron. 32; Isa. 36-39) that Hezekiah probably decided initially to seek Egypt's help but then he, and others of Judah, repented and Jerusalem was saved.

But Judah, God's Israel (chosen), must turn back to Him

from whom they had so completely departed (Heb. *saroh*). The Hebrew word translated *deeply* is *aemiyq* and sometimes means *to conspire*. The combination of words *aemiyq saroh* emphasizes the deliberate, almost premeditated, nature of Judah's rebellion against God. The prophet continues by informing the people that the evidence of true repentance will be total renunciation of their idols. These idols were not borrowed or forced upon them by someone else—they were made with their own hands! They are images of the rebellion that is really in their heart. This would be costly, since the images were of gold and silver. Repentance and discipleship unto the Lord which does not cost is not true!

When they repent, the Lord will cause the Assyrian to fall. He is going to fall, not from some military action of man, but from some mysterious, non-human power, (cf. Isa. 37:36). Yet in the latter half of verse 8, the Assyrian is said to flee from the sword. This is probably the sword of Babylon, a hundred years later (612 B.C.), when Assyria was destroyed at the battle of Carchemish and Assyria's young men were probably captured and sold as slaves as was customary in those days. Even the defeat of Assyria by Babylon was permitted by God (cf. Jer. 27:1-11). Isaiah predicts that the mighty Assyrian, whose very name struck terror into the hearts of all men of that day, would some day be terror stricken himself. The "rock" of verse 9 probably refers to the cruel, blood-thirsty, destructive army upon which the Assyrian empire was built. It fled in terror from the Babylonian attack upon Nineveh (cf. Nahum). The beginning of its downfall was when it attacked Zion, the penitent people of God. The remnant of God was protected and delivered from what seemed an invincible enemy. God has been delivering His church from its enemy for centuries (cf. Revelation). And some glorious day the struggle will be over, for God is going to banish His arch enemy, the devil, to eternal death in the lake of fire and brimstone.

QUIZ

1. Why would Judah be tempted to rely on Egypt's horses and horsemen?
2. How does Isaiah emphasize God's wisdom?
3. How does Isaiah 31:3 compare to Revelation 13?
4. How is God going to be like an unfrightened lion?
5. What does God's "hovering" over Jerusalem remind one of in Jesus' words?
6. How emphatic is Isaiah about the Israelite's revolt?
7. When did Assyria "pass away by reason of terror"?

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS THIRTY THROUGH THIRTY-ONE

DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>burden</i> of the beasts of the South | 7. a <i>Topheth</i> |
| 2. <i>Rahab</i> that sitteth still | 8. the <i>lighting down</i> of his arm |
| 3. <i>returning</i> and <i>rest</i> | 9. horses <i>flesh</i> , and not spirit |
| 4. <i>quietness</i> | 10. as birds <i>hovering</i> |
| 5. ye be left as a <i>beacon</i> | 11. subject to <i>taskwork</i> |
| 6. a <i>bridle</i> that causeth to err | 12. his <i>rock</i> shall pass away |

MEMORIZATION

"Now go, write it before them on a _____, and inscribe it in a _____, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever. For it is a _____ people, _____ children, children that will not _____ the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See

_____ ; and to the prophets, Prophecy _____ unto us _____ things, speak unto us _____ things, prophecy deceits, get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the _____ of Israel to cease from before us." (30:8-11)

"Woe to them that go down to _____ for help, and rely on _____, and trust in chariots because they are _____, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they _____ not unto the _____ of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!" (31:1)

EXPLANATION

1. Explain why Egypt could be of no help to Judah. (30:1-7)
2. Explain how the people of Judah would one day defile their graven images. (30:22)
3. Explain how the Assyrian would fall by the sword not of man. (31:8-9)

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. Why was Judah foolish in making political plans without consulting God's advice and how may this warning be applied to nations today? (30:1-7)
2. Why did the people of Judah wish to hear no more of the Holy One of Israel and what application may be made of this same attitude today? (30:8-17)
3. Why was Judah placing so much reliance on Egypt's horses and what application may be made of such an attitude today? (31:1-3)