

## *The Passage Itself*

Here are Isaiah's words (or, rather, God's words through Isaiah) – preached to Judah, then recorded by the prophet as commanded by God, and now fixed in Scripture:

‘Ah, stubborn children’, declares the LORD, ‘who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation. For though his officials are at Zoan and his envoys reach Hanes, everyone comes to shame through a people that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.

Through a land of trouble and anguish, from where come the lioness and the lion, the adder and the flying fiery serpent, they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people that cannot profit them. Egypt's help is worthless and empty; therefore I have called her “Rahab who sits still”.

And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; who say to the seers: “Do not see”, and to the prophets: “Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel”’. Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: ‘Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; and its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern’.

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For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength'. But you were unwilling, and you said: 'No! We will flee upon horses'; therefore you shall flee away; and: 'We will ride upon swift steeds'; therefore your pursuers shall be swift. A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill.

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD! And yet he is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evildoers and against the helpers of those who work iniquity. The Egyptians are men, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together (Isa. 30:1 – 31:3).<sup>1</sup>

Now for a brief exposition and application of this passage.

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<sup>1</sup> I have not found the quotation marks easy to place in this extract. Not everyone will agree with my decision.