

Isaiah 30

In the thirtieth chapter near and distant elements are so combined as to make it especially important that the historical background be kept clearly in mind.

It is impossible to say whether this chapter is a continuation of the same discourse or one given by Isaiah at a later time. It deals with events which follow within a few years. It is possible that it was written later on, but it is equally possible that it represents Isaiah's answer to the objections raised in the minds of the nobles while he was speaking at the banquet. It is as if they said to themselves: "He declares that our alliance with Assyria will bring us into great danger from that powerful aggressor. In that case we will simply turn to Egypt for help, and play off one of the great powers against the other." This was what they tried to do during the next few years. Isaiah begins chapter 30 with God's answer to the attempt of the Israelites to find help against Assyria from Egyptian sources instead of from Himself.

The chapter falls into four clearly defined sections. The first of these, verses 1-7, rebukes the people for failing to seek their help from God, and declares that their efforts to get help from Egypt will be of no avail whatever.

The beginning of verse 6 can be easily misunderstood, "The burden of the beasts of the south." The reader naturally remembers the many times in chapters 13-23 when a similar phrase is used to introduce God's declarations of doom against one of the heathen nations. Analogy suggests that here also we have a burden or declaration of doom by the Lord, and that it is against a nation referred to as "the beasts of the south." However, this makes no sense in the context, and it soon becomes clear that here "burden" is used in its simplest meaning and refers to the loads placed on the backs of the camels and donkeys which the Judeans would send southward to carry great presents to Egypt in the hope of securing Egyptian help against the Assyrians. The verse vividly describes the great amount of treasure to be sent to win the favor of Pharaoh, and declares that all this will be to no profit. Egypt will prove unwilling or unable to give material assistance against Assyria!