



ISAIAH 30:1-17

WOE TO THE REBELLIOUS ~ A MESSAGE TO GOD’S STUBBORN CHILDREN

Have you ever thought about being rebellious? I don’t mean having a rebellious response to something, but actually choosing to intentionally rebel when it is only one of the behavioral actions available to you. If someone were to ask you at that very moment, “Why are you choosing to rebel,” how would you answer that question?

Some people think that rebellion is an attitude of the heart. Some think it’s a predisposition of man. Others chalk rebellion up to some deep-seeded emotional trauma that rises out of PTSD. What if rebellion is simply us saying that we don’t like being told what to do? How does God look at rebellion? Does he consider the source or reason for the rebellion, or is all rebellion created equal in his book? Maybe we can get a sense from our study of this first half of Chapter 30 of the book of Isaiah as to where rebellion fits into God’s relationship with man. We’ll see...

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 30:1 “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; ² 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! ³ Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation. ⁴ For though his officials are at Zoan and his envoys reach Hanes, ⁵ everyone comes to shame through a people that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.”</p> <p>⁶ An oracle on the beasts of the Negeb. 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. ⁷ Egypt’s help is worthless and empty; therefore I have called her “Rahab who sits still.”</p>	<p>a 30:6 Or possibly a title: “A burden (oracle) of the animals of the Negev.” The caravan, with its beasts of burden, was likely carrying the resources to pay for Egypt’s aid. God had once led them through that desert, bringing them into the promised land. Now they trek the other direction in the desert, looking for help but not from Father God. See Deut. 8:15; Jer. 2:6.</p> <p>b 30:6 Or “seraph.”</p> <p>c 30:7 Rahab is used as a poetic term both for a mythical sea monster and for Egypt. See Ps. 87:4; 89:10; Isa. 51:9.</p>	<p>Woe to the Rebellious</p> <p>Isaiah 30:1 This is what Yahweh says: “Woe to the rebellious children, who carry out their own plans but not mine, and who sign treaties without consulting my Spirit, piling one sin upon another. ² You travel down to Egypt to find help without being guided by the words of my mouth. Instead you put your trust in Pharaoh’s protection, seeking shelter in the shadow of Egypt. ³ Therefore, Pharaoh’s protection will become your shame, and the shelter of Egypt’s shadow will end in disaster! ⁴ Though your officials arrive at Zoan and your ambassadors reach as far away as Hanes, ⁵ all will be put to shame because of such unreliable people. They can offer you no help, only shame and disgrace!</p> <p>⁶ This is a prophecy of the desert animals: The burden of the caravan is to traverse a desert land a of distress and trouble, a land of the lion and lioness, the snake and the fiery flying one! b They carry their riches on the donkey’s back and their treasures on the camel’s hump to a nation that will give them nothing in return! ⁷ Egypt’s help is utterly worthless; that’s why I nicknamed her Rahab, the Do-Nothing Dragon. c</p>

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<p>⁸ 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. ⁹ For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; ¹⁰ 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, ¹¹ leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.”</p> <p>¹² Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, “Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, ¹³ 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; ¹⁴ 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.”</p> <p>¹⁵ For thus said 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, ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. (Is. 30:8–17 ESV)</p>	<p>d 30:10 Or “the beholders.”</p> <p>e 30:17 See Deut. 28:25.</p>	<p>A Message to God’s Stubborn Children</p> <p>⁸ God told me to write down in a book words meant for the coming generation as an eternal witness. ⁹ For they are stubborn rebels, children always telling lies, who refuse to listen to Yahweh’s instruction. ¹⁰ They say to the seers: “Stop seeing your visions.” They say to the prophets: d “Stop prophesying to us about what is right. Prophesy only pleasant things to us, even if they’re illusions! ¹¹ Leave this narrow way; turn aside from this harsh path. Don’t confront us anymore with the Holy One of Israel!”</p> <p>¹² Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel has to say: “Because you have despised this message, and trust in your own clever abilities to deceive,” “and rely upon oppression,¹³ your own sin will become like a high, bulging wall that is cracked and about to collapse. In an instant, it will all fall down. ¹⁴ It will break into pieces like shattered pottery, smashed so ruthlessly that not even a fragment big enough to pick up a hot coal or to scoop water from a cistern will be found!”</p> <p>¹⁵ Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, says: “Come back to me! By returning and resting in me you will be saved. In quietness and trust you will be made strong. But you refused. ¹⁶ And though you boast, ‘No! We will flee on horses,’ you will indeed flee for your lives! You say, ‘We will ride on swift horses,’ but your pursuers will be swift to chase you! ¹⁷ A thousand will flee at the threat of one, e and all will flee at the threat of five, until nothing will be left of you—like a lonely flagstaff on the top of a hill, or like a signpost on a barren mountain!”</p>

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY

JOHN A. MARTIN

WOE TO THE OBSTINATE CHILDREN (CHAP. 30)

This oracle (chap. 30) and the next one (chap. 31) center on the folly of attempting to make an alliance with Egypt to ward off the Assyrian threat. At this time Egypt was waning as a world power and could be of no real assistance to Israel and Judah in their fight against the strong Assyrian Empire. But a strong faction in Judah, rather than turning to God for protection, wanted to seek aid from Egypt.

- **The woe pronounced** (30:1-5)

- **30:1.** This woe (see comments on 3:9) was pronounced against those in Judah who wanted to form an alliance. The prophet spoke to those people as if they were children, and obstinate children at that. Like children, they did not have the proper perspective to know what was best for them. Floundering in their desire to save themselves and their nation, they were forming plans but not God's plans. Actually their plans were sinful because they were not what God wanted them to do.
- **30:2-5.** An alliance with Egypt, made without consulting the Lord, would put Judah to shame (vv. 3, 5 [twice]). The Jews even sent a delegation to two Egyptian cities—Zoan and Hanes—to talk about an alliance, but the talks were doomed to fail. The officials in Zoan were incapable of helping (see comments on 19:11). The location of Hanes is unknown, but it may have been in the Egyptian Delta near Zoan. The Lord had already said many times through Isaiah that He would use Assyria to wipe out the Northern Kingdom and to punish the Southern Kingdom. So to look to a crumbling empire for help was useless and could only result in disgrace (vv. 3, 5).

- **The oracle about the Negev** (30:6-17)

- **30:6-7.** As the envoys (cf. v. 4) traveled to Egypt they had to pass through the Negev, a desolate, dangerous area with wild animals (lions and snakes). The delegation from Judah took expensive gifts to Egypt on the backs of donkeys and camels. Judah's people were so desperate for help that they were willing to risk hardship and go to great expense. But Isaiah called Egypt—a nation unable to help—Rahab the Do-Nothing. In Ugaritic literature Rahab was the name of a female sea monster associated with Leviathan (see comments on 27:1; cf. Job 9:13; 26:12). Perhaps the hippopotamus, an animal that often sits in the water of the Nile doing nothing, represents that mythical water beast. Understandably Rahab came to be a poetic synonym for Egypt (and also for a demon behind Egypt) when God overpowered the Egyptian soldiers in the sea at the Exodus (cf. Isa. 51:9; Pss. 87:4; 89:10). So Egypt, Isaiah wrote, was good for nothing; she could not assist Judah in any way.
- **30:8-11.** The people did not want to listen to God's instructions through Isaiah. So God told him to write down his message so that they could not claim they had never heard it. In the future, the scroll on which the message was written would witness against them. They were like rebellious ... children (cf. v. 1), unwilling to listen to the Lord, to receive messages from His prophets. They did not want to be confronted with the truth from God, the Holy One of Israel (cf. v. 12 and see comments on 1:4).
- **30:12-17.** Immediately after they said they did not want to be confronted by the Holy One of Israel (v. 11) ironically Isaiah did confront them with more words from the Holy One of Israel (cf. v. 15). Rejecting Isaiah's message (vv. 9-11) and relying on oppression (i.e., fraud, or plans to avoid God's counsel) and deceit (which Egypt would practice on them), they would undergo judgment. That judgment would come suddenly—like a cracked wall that would collapse on them (v. 13). And it would be severe—like a pot so shattered that the pieces cannot be used for anything (v. 14). Though the Lord had called for repentance and trust so that the Judahites might have salvation and strength (v. 15) they did not want any of it. Instead they depended on military might (v. 16). But if they were to rely on horses (cf. 31:1), God said they would be forced to flee (30:16-17), being easily alarmed by the enemy. They would stand alone like a banner on a hill as a warning to others not to count on military strength.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. John Martin in his commentary above says, “The Lord had already said many times through Isaiah that He would use Assyria to wipe out the Northern Kingdom and to punish the Southern Kingdom.” What emotions does that statement stir up in you?
2. Israel was defeated and Judah was hoping to avoid a similar outcome by reaching out to Egypt for help, even though God told them his plan was to protect them if they trusted him. Why do you think they might have found it hard to trust him with their future? Have you ever looked at your circumstances and found it hard to trust God to deliver you?
3. Take a look at the following emotions. Why might it be easy to rebel if your decisions were being made in the context of: The fear of failure? Anxiety stemming from a chronic medical condition? Betrayal at the hands of a close friend? Disappointment that come from not experiencing the life you thought you would have because you worked so hard at being a “good Christian.”
4. If you saw a rebellious attitude or decision coming from a close friend, how would you approach trying to encourage them away from rebellion? How much effort would you put into this endeavor?
5. Is the comment, “I don’t care!” always a sign of rebellion? Explain your reasoning.
6. Is rebelling against God different than rebelling against other people? Why?