

Isaiah 19:1-16
An oracle against Egypt

See, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt; the idols of Egypt will *tremble* at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will *melt* within them. 2 I will *stir up* Egyptian against Egyptians, and they will *fight*, one against the other, *neighbor against neighbor*, city against city, kingdom against kingdom; 3 the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be *emptied out*, and I will *confound* their plans; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead and the ghosts and the familiar spirits; 4 I will deliver the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master; *a fierce king will rule* over them, says the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts. 5 The waters of the Nile will be *dried up*, and the river will be *parched* and dry; 6 its canals will become foul, and the branches of Egypt's Nile will *diminish and dry up*, reeds and rushes will *rot away*. 7 There will be *bare places* by the Nile, on the brink of the Nile; and all that is sown by the Nile will *dry up*, be *driven away*, and be no more. 8 Those who *fish will mourn*; all who cast hooks in the Nile will *lament*, and those who spread nets on the water will *languish*. 9 The workers in flax will be in *despair*, and the carders and those at the loom will *grow pale*. 10 Its weavers will be *dismayed*, and all who work for wages will be *grieved*. 11 The princes of Zoan are utterly *foolish*; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give *stupid counsel*. How can you say to Pharaoh, "I am one of the sages, a descendant of ancient kings"? 12 Where now are your sages? Let them tell you and make known what the LORD of hosts has planned against Egypt. 13 The princes of Zoan have become fools, and the princes of Memphis are deluded; those who are the cornerstones of its tribes have led Egypt astray. 14 The LORD has poured into them a *spirit of confusion*; and they have made Egypt stagger in all its doings *as a drunkard staggers* around in vomit. 15 *Neither head nor tail, palm branch or reed, will be able to do anything* for Egypt. **16 On that day the Egyptians will be like women,¹ and tremble with fear before the hand that the LORD of hosts *raises against them*.**

¹ Compare "woman in her pangs" in Jeremiah 49:22 and 50:43; or this may refer to the common practice of mutilating males.

Isaiah 19:16a, 17-25
[An oracle concerning Egypt]

16 On that day . . . 17 {And} the land of Judah will become **a place of festival (pilgrimage)²** for the Egyptians; everyone to whom it is mentioned will **be in awe³** because of the plan that the LORD of hosts is planning **concerning⁴** them. 18 On that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that *speak the language of Canaan* and swear *allegiance to the LORD* of hosts. One of these will be called the **City of the Sun.⁵** 19 On that day there will be *an altar to the LORD* in the center of the land of Egypt, and *a pillar to the LORD* at its border. 20 It will be a sign and a witness to the *LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt*; when they cry to the LORD because of oppressors, *he will send them a savior*, and will defend and deliver them. 21 The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the *Egyptians will know the LORD* on that day, and will *worship with sacrifice and burnt offering*, and they will make *vows to the LORD* and perform them. 22 (The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing.)⁶ They will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their supplications and *heal them*. 23 On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. 24 On that day **Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25 whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage."**⁷

² "a terror" in RSV, KJV, etc. But the Hebrew here is חָגָה = *haga* = *hag* "festival" and the Arabic حَجَّ *haj* "pilgrimage."

³ RSV "fear"; compare colloquial English (a) "terrible" and "terrific" and (b) "awesome and awful."

⁴ RSV "against"; but Hebrew עַל *al* has many meanings.

⁵ "Sun" = חֶרֶס *heres*, and "destruction" = חָרָס *haras*.

⁶ The first half of this verse is a paranthetical flashback to the Exodus event.

⁷ Note the Targum's reading, "blessed be my people whom I have brought forth out of Egypt. Because they sinned before me I carried them into exile in Assyria, but now they have repented, they shall be called, 'My people, my inheritance, even Israel.'" The Septuagint render the verse: "Blessed is my people which is in Egypt, and which is in Assyria and Israel which is my inheritance."