

The *khamsin* is a hot, dry, sandy wind that blows into Israel from the Arabian Desert during the spring months. Its name means “fifty,” since in some Middle Eastern nations it can blow for fifty days. Imagine an 80 mph sand-filled, August wind in Phoenix, Arizona. That’s what it’s like in some of these countries. It’s no place for grass, nor flowers. In Israel, the *khamsin* can turn green grass brown in less than two days.

In Isaiah 40:6–8, the LORD tells us that we people, by ourselves, are like grass and flowers. One way this is true is that any life or beauty we possess is a gift of God, despite our prideful tendency to treat our lives and beauty as things we own or have earned. To this the LORD issues a scalding warning: “The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it.” The LORD can take away our lives and our beauty more quickly than a *khamsin*, since like grass and flowers we, by ourselves, are also unwittingly fragile.

How can we who are so fragile but still so proud ever hope to survive the *khamsin* of the LORD? To this the LORD issues a refreshing promise: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” Notably, Isaiah records this after his nation had just survived a whirlwind from the east. The mighty and barbaric Assyrian army had blown in and, after destroying Israel’s strongest cities, was about to assail Jerusalem. Before commencing the attack, the Assyrian ambassador tried to solicit Israel’s surrender. He blasphemously mocked trust in God’s word. “Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you [Israel] rest this trust of yours? Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war?” (36:4–5). In response, God *spoke*, “[H]e shall not come into this city, declares the LORD. For I will defend this city to save it” (37:34–35). God’s people believed these “mere words” of the LORD, and the angel of the LORD *khamsin*-ed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.

Everything else eventually falls, but God’s word stands—despite all the increasingly fierce opposition to it, despite even the embarrassing failures of those commissioned to preach and teach it. It’s the word that promises, among other wonderful things, that the Lord Jesus will come in glory for His people. He’ll come to save from all whirlwinds and especially from the ultimate *khamsin* all who have been born into eternal life through faith in His immortal word. *VDMA*.

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