

1 Samuel 3:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

Analysis

The message God delivers is severe: 'I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.' Ear-tingling indicates shocking news, here specifying judgment. The phrase anticipates Jeremiah 19:3 and 2 Kings 21:12, where similar language introduces announcements of catastrophic judgment. Samuel's first prophetic message concerns the destruction of his mentor's house. God does not ease the young prophet into pleasant assignments but immediately confronts him with the weight of prophetic responsibility.

Historical Context

The idiom of ears tingling (tsalal) appears only three times in Scripture, each announcing devastating judgment. The physical response of shock becomes a metaphor for how the news affects hearers. Such judgment oracles characterize much prophetic ministry.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Why would God commission a young prophet with such a difficult first message?
2. How do you respond when God's word to you concerns judgment rather than comfort?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	יְהוָה	אֶל	שְׁמוּאֵל	לֵאמֹר	יְהוָה	עַתָּה
said	And the LORD	H413	to Samuel	H2009	H595	Behold I will do
H559	H3068		H8050			H6213
דָּבָר	בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל	אֲשֶׁר	כָּל	שֹׁמֵעַ	תִּצְלִי	יָנָה
a thing	in Israel	H834	H3605	of every one that heareth	it shall tingle	
H1697	H3478			H8085	H6750	
שֶׁתִּי	אָזְנוֹ:					
at which both	the ears					
H8147	H241					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 19:3 (References Lord): And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.

2 Kings 21:12 (References Lord): Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.

Acts 13:41 (Parallel theme): Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

Habakkuk 1:5 (Parallel theme): Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

Luke 21:26 (Parallel theme): Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

Isaiah 29:14 (Parallel theme): Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

Isaiah 28:19 (Parallel theme): From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.