

Deuteronomy 15:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

Analysis

Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. The warning hishamer lekha (beware/take heed) addresses internal motivation, not merely external action. A davar-beliya'al (base/worthless thought) entertained in the levav (heart) constitutes sin even before manifesting in refusal to lend.

The ayin ra'ah (evil eye) is a Hebrew idiom for stinginess and ill will (cf. Proverbs 23:6; 28:22; Matthew 6:23). Calculating when to withhold charity based on the approaching Sabbatical year reveals heart-level greed and covenant-breaking. The phrase qara aleikha el-YHWH (he cry unto the LORD against you) echoes Exodus 22:23-24—God hears the oppressed and judges their oppressors. What begins as internal calculation becomes external sin when acted upon, incurring guilt (hayah bekha khet—'it will be sin unto you').

Historical Context

The Sabbatical year debt release (Deuteronomy 15:1-3) created perverse incentives—lenders might refuse loans near the seventh year, knowing repayment would be cancelled. The Pharisees later instituted the prozbul (legal fiction allowing debt collection despite Sabbatical year) to circumvent this economic disincentive, showing how legalism tries to evade costly obedience. Jesus condemned similar heart-level greed in the Pharisees (Mark 7:20-23; Luke 11:39-41), demonstrating that God judges internal attitudes, not merely external compliance.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What 'base thoughts' do you harbor that calculate the cost of obedience rather than trust God's provision?
2. How might the cries of those you've failed to help rise up as testimony against you before God?

Interlinear Text

מִרְאֵשׁ	לְבָבֶךָ	פָּנִים	הַיְהִי הָעֵד	דְּבָרָךְ	עַם	לְבָבֶךָ
Beware	H0	H6435	H1961	that there be not a thought	H1697	heart
	H8104				H5973	H3824
בְּלִי עַל	לִאמְרָה	קָרְבָּה	שָׁנָת	הַשְׁבָעָה	שָׁנָת	הַשְׁמִטָה
in thy wicked	saying	is at hand	the year	The seventh	the year	of release
H1100	H559	H7126	H8141	H7651	H8141	H8059
וְרַע הַ	עִינְבָּה	בָּחָר יְהָ	בְּאָחִי זֶ	בְּאָבִי זֶ	וְלֹא	תְּתֵת
be evil	and thine eye	brother	against thy poor	H3808	and thou givest	
H7489	H5869	H251	H34		H5414	
לְ	וְקַרְבָּה	אֶל יְהָ	אֶל יְהָ	וְהַ	וְהַ	בְּ
H0	him nought and he cry	H5921	H413	unto the LORD	H1961	H0
	H7121			H3068		
חַטָּאת:						
against thee and it be sin						
	H2399					

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 24:15 (Sin): At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee.

Matthew 20:15 (Evil): Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

Jeremiah 17:10 (References Lord): I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Exodus 22:23 (Parallel theme): If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry;

James 5:9 (Parallel theme): Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

Job 34:28 (Parallel theme): So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.

Proverbs 28:22 (Evil): He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

Proverbs 23:6 (Evil): Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:

Exodus 3:7 (References Lord): And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

Matthew 15:19 (Evil): For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: