

Deuteronomy 28:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away.

Analysis

And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away. The Hebrew *nebhelah* (נְבִלָה, dead body/carcass) emphasizes death without proper burial—the ultimate disgrace in ancient Near Eastern culture. Unburied corpses meant the person died under divine curse, without honor or remembrance.

To be **meat unto all fowls** reverses Leviticus 11 purity laws—rather than avoiding unclean carrion-eating birds, covenant-breakers would become food for them. The phrase **no man shall fray them away** (לֹא מַחְרִיד, *lo macharid*) means no one would even drive away the scavengers, indicating total desolation and absence of surviving family. Jeremiah 7:33 and 16:4 depict this exact judgment on Jerusalem before the Babylonian exile.

This covenant curse directly inverts Genesis 1:26-28 where humanity had dominion over birds and beasts—now the animals would have dominion over human corpses.

Historical Context

Deuteronomy 28:26 was written around 1406 BC during Israel's wilderness wandering as Moses delivered his farewell addresses. The curse eerily predicted the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (586 BC) when Jeremiah witnessed corpses

lying unburied in the streets (Lamentations 4:9-10). Ancient Near Eastern treaties (Assyrian vassal treaties) contained identical curses for covenant violation.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why was proper burial so significant in biblical culture, and what does denial of burial signify about covenant judgment?
2. How does this curse reverse the creation mandate of dominion over animals in Genesis 1?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיְתָה הַ	נִבְלָתָךְ	לְמֶאֱכָל	לְכָל	עוֹף	הַשָּׁמַיִם
H1961	And thy carcase	shall be meat	H3605	unto all fowls	of the air
	H5038	H3978		H5775	H8064
וּלְבֵהֵמַת	הָאָרֶץ	וְאִין	מִחְרִיד:		
and unto the beasts	of the earth	H369	and no man shall fray them away		
H929	H776		H2729		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 16:4 (Parallel theme): They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

Jeremiah 34:20 (Parallel theme): I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.

Jeremiah 7:33 (Parallel theme): And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.

Jeremiah 19:7 (Parallel theme): And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

Jeremiah 8:1 (Parallel theme): At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:

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