

Deuteronomy 28:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

Analysis

He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail. Economic reversal completes social reversal from verse 43. Deuteronomy 28:12 promised Israel would "lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow"—now that blessing inverts completely. The Hebrew rosh (head) and zanab (tail) picture leadership versus following, honor versus shame. Debt creates bondage; the borrower becomes servant to lender (Proverbs 22:7).

This curse describes exile economics—Jews became debt slaves in foreign lands while their conquerors possessed the wealth. It anticipates Jesus's teaching about two masters—you'll love one and hate the other (Matthew 6:24). Covenant unfaithfulness creates spiritual debt that enslaves.

Historical Context

Post-exilic Jews struggled under Persian taxation (Nehemiah 5:1-5, 9:36-37). Later, Roman tribute crushed first-century Judea. The diaspora often faced discriminatory laws limiting Jewish economic participation, creating perpetual financial disadvantage—living as "tail" among nations.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does economic reversal (from lender to borrower) illustrate the comprehensive nature of covenant curses?
2. What does being "tail" rather than "head" teach about losing spiritual authority and influence through disobedience?

Interlinear Text

ה וא	תִּלְוֶנּוּ	וְאֵת ה	ל א	תִּלְוֶנּוּ	ה וא	יְהוָה ה
H1931	He shall lend	H859	H3808	He shall lend	H1931	H1961
	H3867			H3867		
לְרֹאשׁ		וְאֵת ה	תִּהְיֶה ה	לְזָנָב:		
to him he shall be the head		H859	H1961	and thou shalt be the tail		
H7218				H2180		

Additional Cross-References

Lamentations 1:5 (Parallel theme): Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.