

Deuteronomy 28:57

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.

Analysis

And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet—Hebrew šilyātāh (שִׁלְיָתָה) specifically means the afterbirth or placenta, suggesting she will eat it immediately after delivery. **And toward her children which she shall bear** clarifies: not just the afterbirth but the newborns themselves. **For she shall eat them for want of all things secretly** (בְּסֶתֶר, bəsēter)—in hiding, ashamed but desperate.

This is perhaps the most disturbing verse in Scripture. The woman who should nurture life becomes death. The Hebrew emphasizes the immediacy—'coming out from between her feet' suggests she eats the child at birth. This happened during the Roman siege according to Josephus. The word 'secretly' shows residual shame: even in total depravity, conscience isn't fully dead, only suppressed in desperate sin.

Historical Context

Josephus records multiple cases of women eating their infants during the AD 70 siege. Lamentations 4:10 similarly records 'compassionate women' cooking their

children during the Babylonian siege. These historical confirmations remove any possibility that Moses was using hyperbole.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage reveal the depth to which sin can drag humanity?
2. What does the preservation of shame ('secretly') suggest about the indestructibility of conscience?
3. How does Christ's giving of His body 'for want of all things' reverse this curse of consuming children?

Interlinear Text

כִּי־יְהִי־בְּשִׁלְיַת־הָ

And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet

H7988

בִּיאָת־תְּ

H3318

מִבֵּין־

H996

כִּי־יְהִי־

H7272

תְּאַכֵּל־מִ

for she shall eat

and toward her children

H1121

H834

which she shall bear

H3588

כִּי

H398

אֲשֶׁר־בְּחַסֵּר

them for want

H2640

כִּי־לְ

H3605

בְּמִצּוֹר

of all things secretly

H5643

בְּתִיר

H3205

בְּמִצּוֹר

in the siege

H4692

וּבְמִצּוֹר

and straitness

H834

מִ

אֲיַצֵּךְ

shall distress

H6693

לְכָ

H0

אַיְצֵךְ

wherewith thine enemy

H341

בְּשַׁעֲרֵיכֶם:

thee in thy gates

H8179

