

Deuteronomy 32:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.

Analysis

The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs—Moses depicts total, indiscriminate judgment spanning all ages and conditions. The Hebrew *mi-chutz techakel-cherev* (מִחוּץ תֶּשַׁכֵּל-חֶרֶב, 'from outside the sword bereaves') describes external military invasion, while *u-me-chadarim eimah* (וּמִמְחֲדָרִים אֵימָה, 'and from inner chambers terror') represents internal collapse—fear, paranoia, civil strife, and psychological breakdown within besieged cities.

The comprehensive scope—*bachur gam-betulah* (בָּחֹר גַּם-בְּתוּלָה, 'young man also virgin'), *yoneq im-ish seivah* (יוֹנֵק עִם-אִישׁ שֵׂיבָה, 'suckling with man of gray hair')—emphasizes that covenant curses spare no demographic. Warriors and brides, infants and elderly, all perish when God removes His protective hedge. This reversed God's creation mandate to 'be fruitful and multiply'—instead of life and increase, apostasy brings comprehensive death. The dual assault (external sword, internal terror) fulfills in Jerusalem's sieges by Babylon (586 BC, 2 Kings 25; Jeremiah 52) and Rome (AD 70). Lamentations 1:20 echoes precisely: 'abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.'

Historical Context

Moses prophesied this judgment circa 1406 BC, centuries before its fulfillment. The 'sword without' refers to foreign invasion—Assyria, Babylon, and ultimately

Rome. The 'terror within' describes siege conditions where starvation, disease, and despair ravaged populations. During Babylon's siege of Jerusalem (588-586 BC), cannibalism occurred (Lamentations 2:20; 4:10), fulfilling Moses' curse. Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) knowing Rome would bring this very judgment in AD 70, when Titus destroyed the city, killing an estimated 1.1 million Jews. The comprehensive destruction—young and old, male and female—characterizes divine judgment's thoroughness when covenant protection is removed.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the indiscriminate nature of judgment (young and old) emphasize the seriousness of corporate covenant unfaithfulness?
2. What does the dual threat (external sword, internal terror) reveal about how sin destroys from both outside and within?

Interlinear Text

מְחוּץ	תִּשְׁכֹּל	חֶרֶב	וּמִתְּוֶךְ יָם	אִיָּהּ	גַּם
without	shall destroy	The sword	within	and terror	H1571
H2351	H7921	H2719	H2315	H367	
בְּחוּר	גַּם	בְּתוּלָה	יֹנֵק	עִם	אֶיֶשׁ
both the young man	H1571	and the virgin	the suckling	H5973	also with the man
H970		H1330	H3243		H376
שֵׂיבָה:					
of gray hairs					
H7872					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 7:15 (Word): The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

Lamentations 1:20 (Word): Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org