

Deuteronomy 32:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

Analysis

To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence (לְיִתְּרָם וִשְׁלֵם)—God claims exclusive rights to naqam (vengeance) and shillem (recompense/retribution). This isn't arbitrary wrath but covenant justice: God alone possesses perfect knowledge, righteous standards, and authority to execute judgment. Paul quotes this in Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30, prohibiting personal vengeance and entrusting justice to God.

Their foot shall slide in due time—the Hebrew timmoṭ raglam evokes unstable footing on a slippery path. The wicked appear secure but stand on treacherous ground; judgment is certain though delayed. Le-'et (in due time) emphasizes God's perfect timing—neither premature nor tardy. **The day of their calamity is at hand** (yom 'edam qarob)—the yom (day) of disaster hastens despite apparent delay. God's patience isn't weakness but opportunity for repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Historical Context

This verse became foundational for biblical theology of divine judgment. Ancient Near Eastern gods were often portrayed as capricious in vengeance; Israel's God executes justice according to covenant righteousness. The principle that vengeance belongs to God alone distinguishes biblical ethics from tribal honor codes requiring personal revenge. Early church fathers cited this against Christian participation in state-sanctioned violence.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Where are you tempted to take vengeance into your own hands instead of trusting God's perfect justice?
2. How does God's patience ("in due time") challenge your desire for immediate judgment on wrongdoers?

Interlinear Text

לְ	לִכְמָה	וְשָׁלֵם	לְעֵת	פָּמָת
הֹ	To me belongeth vengeance	and recompence	in due time	shall slide
	H5359	H8005	H6256	H4131
לְ	קָרְבָּן	וְ	אַיִלָּה	לְ
their foot	H3588	is at hand	for the day	of their calamity
H7272	H7138	H3117	H343	H2363
לְ	עַתְּדָה	לִמְמָה		
and the things that shall come				
	H6264			

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:19 (Parallel theme): Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Hebrews 10:30 (Parallel theme): For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

Nahum 1:2 (Parallel theme): God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

2 Peter 2:3 (Parallel theme): And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Psalms 94:1 (Parallel theme): O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

Jeremiah 23:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

Nahum 1:6 (Parallel theme): Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

Deuteronomy 32:43 (Parallel theme): Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

1 Peter 2:8 (Parallel theme): And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Jeremiah 13:16 (Parallel theme): Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.