

Deuteronomy 32:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.

Analysis

If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment (אִם־) — (שְׁנוֹתִי בְּנֵקְרָבִי וְתַחַזְקֵנִי בְּמִשְׁפָט יְהִי) — the conditional "if" (im) introduces divine judgment as certain future action. Shannoti (whet/sharpen) describes preparing a blade; beraq charbi (my lightning/glittering sword) evokes the flash of polished metal—a terrifying image of readied divine vengeance. Mishpat (judgment) shows this isn't arbitrary rage but judicial execution. God's hand takes hold of judgment like a warrior grips his weapon.

I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me — (אָשִׁיב נָקָם לֵאָכִי וְלִמְשְׁתָּאִי אֲשָׁלֵם) — ashev naqam (render/return vengeance) and ashallem (reward/repay) are judicial terms indicating proportional retribution. God's tzarai (enemies/adversaries) and mesan'ai (haters) are those who oppose His people and purposes. This prepares for the final day when God vindicates His elect and judges those who persecuted them (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

Historical Context

Divine warrior imagery permeates ancient Near Eastern literature, but Israel's God fights for justice, not territorial conquest or honor. This verse describes God's future judgment on Israel's oppressors after disciplining Israel for covenant violation. The imagery recurs in prophetic literature (Isaiah 27:1; 34:5-6; Jeremiah

46:10; Ezekiel 21:9-11) and Revelation's apocalyptic battle scenes (Revelation 19:11-21), where Christ wields the sword of divine judgment.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the certainty of God's future judgment affect your response to present injustice?
2. What does it mean that God's vengeance is always coupled with His justice and judgment, never arbitrary?

Interlinear Text

אֵם שְׁפֹתִי בְּמִשְׁפָּט וְתַאֲחֵז מַרְבֵּב יְדִי
H518 If I whet my glittering sword take hold on judgment and mine hand
H8150 H1300 H2719 H270 H4941 H3027

אָשֵׁם יְבִרְכֵּנִי לְמַשְׁנָא וְאָשְׁלָמָה
I will render vengeance to mine enemies them that hate and will reward
H7725 H5359 H6862 H8130 H7999

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 66:16 (Word): For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

Isaiah 27:1 (Word): In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

Psalms 7:12 (Word): If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

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