

Deuteronomy 32:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

Analysis

I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh (אֶשְׁכֵּר חֲצֵי מַדָּם וְחַרְבִּי תֹאכַל בָּשָׂר)—the Hebrew ashkir (make drunk) personifies arrows as becoming intoxicated with blood. Chitzai (my arrows) and charbi (my sword) execute divine judgment; the sword to'khal (devours/eats) basar (flesh) like a ravenous beast. This shocking imagery depicts total, decisive judgment—no half measures, no survivors among the impenitent.

And that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy (מִדָּם חָלָל וְשִׁבְיָה מְרֹאֵשׁ פְּרָעוֹת אוֹיֵב)—chalal (slain) and shivyah (captives) indicate comprehensive defeat. Me-rosh par'ot oyev (from the head/beginning of the enemy's leaders) suggests judgment begins with enemy commanders, the "longhaired" warriors or princes. God's vengeance is thorough and begins at the top of Israel's oppressors' power structure.

Historical Context

This graphic battle imagery was standard in ancient Near Eastern victory hymns and royal inscriptions. However, Israel's tradition uniquely attributes military victory to divine intervention rather than royal prowess. The language anticipates prophetic oracles against nations (Isaiah 13; 34; Jeremiah 46-51; Ezekiel 25-32) and Revelation's imagery of Christ's return (Revelation 19:13, 15). Early church interpretation saw this as eschatological—God's final judgment on evil.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do you reconcile God's violent judgment imagery with His love and mercy?
2. What does God's thorough judgment on unrepentant evil reveal about His holiness and justice?

Interlinear Text

אֶשְׂכַּר יִר	חֲצִי	מִדָּם	וְחֶרֶבִי	
drunk	I will make mine arrows	and that with the blood	and my sword	
H7937	H2671	H1818	H2719	
תֹּאכַל ל	בָּשָׂר	מִדָּם	חָלָל	וְשִׁבְיָהּ
shall devour	flesh	and that with the blood	of the slain	and of the captives
H398	H1320	H1818	H2491	H7633
מֵרֵאשִׁית	פְּרָעוֹת	אֹיֵב:		
from the beginning	of revenges	upon the enemy		
H7218	H6546	H341		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 32:23 (Parallel theme): I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them.

Jeremiah 46:10 (Word): For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

