

Ezekiel 18:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Analysis

God declares: 'Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.' This establishes individual moral accountability before God. The phrase 'all souls are mine' (kol-hanephasot li, 'כל-הנפשות לי') asserts God's sovereign ownership of every human life, father and son equally. The principle 'the soul that sinneth, it shall die' directly refutes the fatalistic proverb the people were quoting: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge' (18:2). The exiles claimed they were suffering for ancestors' sins without bearing personal responsibility. God rejects this excuse—each person is accountable for their own choices. This doesn't deny that sin has generational consequences (Exodus 20:5) but affirms that each individual faces divine judgment based on personal righteousness or wickedness. The passage anticipates Christ, who 'tasted death for every man' (Hebrews 2:9) and offers individual salvation to all who believe.

Historical Context

The exiles in Babylon (circa 591 BC) were claiming victim status—they believed they were merely suffering for previous generations' sins without personal guilt. While it's true that their exile resulted partly from accumulated national sin, God insists each person also bears individual responsibility. The generation in exile had perpetuated their fathers' idolatries and covenant violations. Ezekiel 18 extensively develops case studies of righteous fathers with wicked sons, wicked fathers with righteous sons, showing that personal choice and character determine

one's standing before God. This revolutionary emphasis on individual responsibility challenged both fatalistic despair ('We're doomed because of our fathers') and presumptuous confidence ('We're safe because of Abraham').

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you balance recognizing generational sin patterns while taking personal responsibility for your own choices?
2. In what ways might you be blaming circumstances or heritage instead of owning your spiritual condition?

Interlinear Text

בָּאָבִים בְּנֵי כָּל־בָּנָה פְּשָׁעִים
H2005 H3605 Behold all souls H0 H2007 Behold all souls of the father H1

בְּנֵי כָּל־בָּנָה לִי כָּל־בָּנָה פְּשָׁעִים בְּנֵי כָּל־בָּנָה
Behold all souls of the son H0 H2007 Behold all souls that sinneth H1931

תִּמְלֹת:

it shall die

H4191

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 18:20 (Sin): The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the

righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Romans 6:23 (Sin): For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Numbers 16:22 (Sin): And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

Hebrews 12:9 (Parallel theme): Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Zechariah 12:1 (Parallel theme): The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

Galatians 3:22 (Sin): But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Numbers 27:16 (Parallel theme): Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,