

Habakkuk 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

Analysis

Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. God states the principle of proportional justice: **Because thou hast spoiled** (כִּי־אַתָּה שָׁלוֹתָ/ki-attah shallota)—you have plundered. The verb שָׁלַל (shalal) means to strip, rob, despoil completely. **All the remnant of the people shall spoil thee** (וְשָׁלְלוּךָ כָּל־יֵתֶר עַמִּים/yeshallukha kol-yeter amim)—survivors of the nations you conquered will plunder you in return.

The charges are specific: **men's blood** (מִדְּמַי אָדָם/middemei adam)—human bloodshed, the countless victims of imperial conquest. **Violence of the land** (חֲמַס עַרֶץ/chamas-eretz)—violent destruction of territories. **Of the city** (קִרְיָה/qiryah)—cities destroyed. **And of all that dwell therein** (וְכָל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ/vekhhol-yoshvei vah)—all inhabitants. This comprehensive indictment covers the totality of Babylon's violence: murder, territorial devastation, urban destruction, and genocide. God keeps account of all innocent blood spilled (Genesis 4:10), and He will require it (Genesis 9:5-6). The principle is foundational to biblical justice: those who shed blood will have their blood shed (Matthew 7:2, Revelation 13:10).

Historical Context

Babylon's conquests resulted in massive bloodshed. The siege of Jerusalem alone resulted in widespread death from starvation, disease, and warfare (Lamentations, 2 Kings 25). Tyre was besieged for 13 years. Egypt was invaded and plundered. Archaeological evidence shows widespread destruction across the ancient Near East during Babylon's campaigns. When Persia conquered Babylon, poetic justice occurred—former victims became the new rulers. Cyrus's decree allowing exiles to return (2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4) represented reversal: those displaced by Babylon were restored, and Babylon's treasures funded temple reconstruction. History vindicated God's prophetic word.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does God's accounting of innocent blood challenge nations and individuals who pursue success through violence or exploitation?
2. What does this passage teach about corporate responsibility—can nations be held accountable for bloodshed even generations later?
3. How should awareness of God's justice affect how believers think about war, violence, and social justice issues today?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	אֶתְּ הָ	יִשָּׁל וְ	גוֹיִם	רַב־יִם
H3588	H859	Because thou hast spoiled	nations	many
		H7997	H1471	H7227
	יִשָּׁל וְ	כָּל	יִתְּרֵ	עַמֵּי יִ
	Because thou hast spoiled	H3605	all the remnant	of the people
	H7997		H3499	H5971
				בְּדָמִי
				H1818
	אָדָם	וְחַמַּס	אֶרֶץ	קִרְיָהּ
	thee because of men's	and for the violence	of the land	of the city
	H120	H2555	H776	H7151
				וְכָל
				H3605
	וְשָׁבִי	בָּהּ:		
	and of all that dwell	H0		
	H3427			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 33:1 (Parallel theme): Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

Habakkuk 2:17 (Blood): For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

Jeremiah 27:7 (Parallel theme): And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.