

Habakkuk 3:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.

Analysis

Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages (נִקְבַּת בְּמִצְרַיִם/naqavta vematav rosh perazo)—God struck enemy leaders with their own weapons ('staves,' מִצְרַיִם/matav). This depicts poetic justice: the wicked destroyed by their own instruments of violence. Proverbs repeatedly teaches this principle (Proverbs 26:27, 28:10)—those who dig pits for others fall in themselves.

They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly (יִסְעַרְוּ לְהַפִּיצֵּנִי עַלְיָתְמֵם כְּמוֹלְאָכֵל עֲנֵי בְמִסְתָּר)—enemies attacked like a whirlwind, rejoicing to devour the vulnerable. Their cruelty was predatory: secretly devouring the poor, delighting in oppression. This describes both historical enemies (Egyptians, Canaanites, Babylonians) and spiritual reality: Satan prowls like a lion seeking to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Historical Context

Throughout Israel's history, enemies attacked to plunder and destroy. Egypt enslaved them, Canaan opposed their conquest, Assyria scattered the northern kingdom, Babylon would exile Judah. Each enemy rejoiced in Israel's suffering. Yet God repeatedly turned enemies' weapons against themselves: Egyptian chariots drowned in the sea they tried to cross, Canaanite iron chariots couldn't withstand Yahweh, Assyria fell to Babylon, Babylon fell to Persia. The pattern demonstrates

divine justice: those who oppress God's people ultimately face judgment, often by their own methods turned against them.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's pattern of turning enemies' weapons against them demonstrate His justice and sovereignty?
2. What does the enemies' delight in 'devouring the poor' reveal about the nature of wickedness and oppression?
3. How should Christians respond to spiritual enemies who seek to devour believers (1 Peter 5:8-9)?

Interlinear Text

נָקַת בְּתַּחַת	בְּמִטְבֵּן	רַאשׁ	פְּרִזֵּן
Thou didst strike through	with his staves	the head	of his villages
H5344	H4294	H7218	H6518
וְאֵלֶּךָ לְאֵלֶּךָ	כִּמְזָרֶךָ	מִצְרָמָה	לְאֵלֶּךָ לְאֵלֶּךָ
they came out as a whirlwind	to scatter	me their rejoicing	was as to devour
H5590	H6327	H5951	H3644
נָטַת בְּמִסְתָּרָה			H398
the poor	secretly		
H6041	H4565		

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 9:14 (Parallel theme): And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

Psalms 10:8 (Parallel theme): He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.

Daniel 11:40 (Parallel theme): And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

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