

Isaiah 24:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.

Analysis

From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs (מִכֶּנֶף הָאָרֶץ) mik'nafe ha'aretz, literally 'from the wing/edge of the earth')—The prophet hears praise echoing from earth's extremities. **Even glory to the righteous** (אֲשֶׁר לְצַדִּיק) tsebi latsadiq) can mean 'glory to the Righteous One' (God) or 'glory belongs to the righteous.' Either way, it celebrates divine vindication.

Then comes jarring reversal: **But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!** (רָזִילִי רָזִילִי) razi-li razi-li)—The repetition intensifies anguish. רָזִילִי (razi) means 'my leanness,' 'my wasting away,' suggesting physical/spiritual emaciation from witnessing continued treachery. **The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously**—The Hebrew repeats בָּגָד (bagad, to act treacherously) four times in escalating forms, creating a drumbeat of betrayal. This isn't occasional faithlessness but pervasive, deepening treachery that devastates the prophet.

Historical Context

This verse captures prophetic tension: glimpsing future salvation yet remaining immersed in present sin. Isaiah hears distant songs of the redeemed but confronts

immediate reality—persistent human treachery. 'Treacherous dealers' (בָּגְדִּים, bogdim) refers to covenant-breakers, those who betray trust, particularly Israel's unfaithfulness to God. The prophet's anguish reflects spiritual burden—seeing both God's promised glory and humanity's continued rebellion. Jeremiah experienced similar agony (Jeremiah 9:2). This prophetic grief foreshadows Jesus weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44), seeing both coming judgment and offered salvation.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How should believers balance celebrating God's ultimate victory with grieving over present evil and suffering?
2. What does Isaiah's visceral reaction ('my leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!') teach about appropriate spiritual responses to persistent sin?
3. In what ways does the repeated emphasis on treachery reveal the seriousness of covenant-breaking and unfaithfulness to God?

Interlinear Text

אָכְלָה שָׁמְעָנוּ זִמְרָתָה בְּאַרְץ מִכְּנָה
From the uttermost part of the earth songs have we heard even glory

לִאְמָר לְאַצְּקָה יְהִי צְדִיקָה אָלָה
to the righteous But I said My leanness My leanness woe

בְּגָדָה בְּגָדָה בְּגָדָה
have dealt treacherously have dealt treacherously have dealt very

בְּגָדָה בְּגָדָה
have dealt treacherously have dealt treacherously

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 21:2 (Parallel theme): A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.

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.

Jeremiah 5:11 (Parallel theme): For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 3:20 (Parallel theme): Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.