

Jeremiah 18:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.

Analysis

Continuing the imprecation: "Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them." The prayer asks for the terror of invasion—enemy troops bursting into homes, causing screams of panic. The justification: "for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet." The hunting imagery depicts premeditated conspiracy to trap and destroy Jeremiah.

The lex talionis principle appears—let them experience terror proportionate to the violence they planned. This isn't excessive vengeance but appropriate justice. The prayer asks God to act as Righteous Judge, applying His own standards. Significantly, Jeremiah doesn't take personal revenge or hire assassins—he prays for divine intervention, demonstrating restraint and submission to God's timing and methods.

The principle that persecutors will experience what they intended for others recurs throughout Scripture (Esth 7:10, Ps 7:15-16, 9:15, Prov 26:27). God's justice is poetic—the punishment fits the crime. For believers, this warns that those who sow violence reap violence (Gal 6:7, Rev 13:10). Yet Christ broke this cycle by bearing what we deserved, offering forgiveness rather than retaliation (1 Pet 2:23-24).

Historical Context

The Babylonian invasion came suddenly in 588-586 BC, fulfilling this prayer. Soldiers breached Jerusalem's walls, ransacked homes, killed resisters, and dragged survivors into exile. The terror Jeremiah's enemies plotted for him came upon them instead. Archaeological evidence shows violent destruction throughout Judah from this period, validating the prophetic word. The cries from houses became the lamentations recorded in the book of Lamentations.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the principle that people reap what they sow operate in your life and society?
2. What's the difference between praying for God's justice and taking personal revenge?
3. How does Christ's breaking the retaliation cycle provide a model for responding to those who plot against you?

Interlinear Text

וְנִשְׁמָע	וְעָקָה	מִבְּתֵיחַם	כִּי	תָבִיא	עָלֶיהָ
be heard	Let a cry	from their houses	H3588	when thou shalt bring	H5921
H8085	H2201	H1004		H935	
וְגֵד	פְּתָא	כִּי	כָרוּ	שִׁחָה	לְלָכְדָּהּ
a troop	suddenly	H3588	upon them for they have digged	a pit	to take
H1416	H6597		H3738	H7745	H3920
וּפְחֵי	טָמְנִי	לְבִגְלִי			
snares	me and hid	for my feet			
H6341	H2934	H7272			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 6:26 (Parallel theme): O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.

Psalms 140:5 (Parallel theme): The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah.

Zephaniah 1:16 (Parallel theme): A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.