

Jeremiah 23:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house.

Analysis

And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house (וְהַנְבִיא וְהַכֹּהֵן וְהָעָם וְהָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר מַשָּׂא יְהוָה וְפָקַדְתִּי עַל-הָאִישׁ הַהוּא וְעַל-בֵּיתוֹ וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר מַשָּׂא יְהוָה וְפָקַדְתִּי עַל-הָאִישׁ הַהוּא וְעַל-בֵּיתוֹ). The threefold category—prophet, priest, people—encompasses religious leaders and laypeople alike. The verb פָּקַד (paqad, 'punish/visit/attend to') carries judicial force. Using the forbidden phrase מַשָּׂא יְהוָה (massa YHWH, 'burden of the LORD') brings punishment extending to one's household (בַּיִת, bayit).

This severe prohibition addresses linguistic degradation of sacred terminology. When words lose meaning through misuse, reality itself becomes obscured. God bans the term massa because it has been corrupted beyond recovery. The punishment's extension to 'his house' reflects covenant corporate solidarity—households share responsibility for profaning God's name. Jesus similarly warned against every idle word requiring account (Matthew 12:36). Language shapes reality; corrupt language corrupts communities. The prohibition protects divine communication's integrity.

Historical Context

The ban on using massa attempted linguistic reform—preventing further profaning of prophetic vocabulary. Archaeological evidence shows ancient Near Eastern

cultures treated divine oracles with elaborate rituals and reverence. Judah's casual treatment of massa revealed spiritual bankruptcy. The punishment 'on his house' reflects ancient Near Eastern household-based social structure where families functioned as legal and religious units.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What religious vocabulary have you emptied of meaning through casual or manipulative use?
2. How does your household/family share accountability for how you speak about sacred things?
3. What would it mean to ban certain corrupted religious language to protect truth's integrity?

Interlinear Text

וְהַנָּבִיא יֵאָמֵר	וְהַכֹּהֵן	וְהָעָם	אֲשֶׁר	יֵאָמֵר
And as for the prophet	and the priest	and the people	H834	that shall say
H5030	H3548	H5971		H559
מִשָּׁא	יְהוָה	וּפְקֹדֶתִי	עַל	הַזֶּה וְעַל
The burden	of the LORD	I will even punish	H5921	that man
H4853	H3068	H6485	H376	H1931 H5921
בֵּיתוֹ:				
and his house				
H1004				

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 13:3 (Prophecy): And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

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