

Jeremiah 23:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD;

Analysis

But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD. The conditional 'since' (וְאִם, v'im, 'but if') introduces judgment based on continued disobedience. Despite explicit prohibition (verse 34), they persist in saying מַשָּׂא יְהוָה (massa YHWH, 'the burden of the LORD'). The phrase **and I have sent unto you, saying** (וַאֲשַׁלַּח אֲלֵיכֶם לְמֹרָא, va'eshlach aleikhem lemor) emphasizes active divine communication—God sent messengers forbidding this language.

The verse structure emphasizes willful rebellion:

1. God sends prohibition
2. people ignore it
3. judgment follows.

This isn't innocent error but defiant disobedience to explicit command. The repetition of 'the burden of the LORD' (three times in one verse!) dramatizes their obstinate clinging to forbidden terminology. It's like children taunting a parent by repeating prohibited words. Such defiance transforms linguistic corruption into direct rebellion against divine authority. When God says 'Don't speak this way' and people insist on doing so, language becomes battleground for sovereignty.

Historical Context

This verse implies a historical sequence: Jeremiah delivered God's prohibition, yet people—especially prophets and priests—continued using the banned phrase. Their persistence despite warning reveals entrenched rebellion. The religious establishment's investment in existing theological language made reform impossible without catastrophic judgment. Sometimes linguistic habits become so ingrained that only exile and starting over can break them.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What prohibited patterns of speech or thought do you cling to despite divine correction?
2. How does persistence in 'small' disobediences (forbidden words) reveal deeper rebellion?
3. What linguistic or theological habits in your faith community resist reform despite biblical challenge?

Interlinear Text

תֹּאמַר וְכִּי תֹאמַר יְהוָה: מִשָּׁא וְאִם
Because ye say H3651 **Because ye say** H3541 **Because ye say** H559
But H518 **The burden** H4853 **of the LORD** H3068

מִשָּׁא הַזֶּה הַדָּבָר אֲתָּא תֹאמַר וְעַן יְהוָה:
The burden H4853 **this word** H1697 **Because ye say** H559 **of the LORD** H3068
H2088 H853 H3282

תֹּאמַר וְלֹא תֹאמַר וְאֶלֵיכֶם וְאֶשְׁלַח וְיְהוָה:
Because ye say H559 **Because ye say** H3808 **Because ye say** H559
and I have sent H7971 **of the LORD** H3068
H413

יְהוָה: מִשָּׁא א
of the LORD H3068 **The burden** H4853