

# Jeremiah 34:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;

## Analysis

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**The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land**—this comprehensive list indicts every level of society. Sarim ("princes") were government officials; sarisim ("eunuchs") likely refers to court officials (the term can mean "officers" generally, not exclusively castrated individuals); kohanim ("priests") were religious leaders; and am ha-aretz ("people of the land") means landed citizens with legal standing. The fourfold categorization emphasizes total societal culpability—from palace to temple to general populace, all participated in covenant breaking.

This hierarchy's inclusion reveals covenant violation wasn't limited to the powerful oppressing the weak, though certainly the wealthy enslaved the poor. Rather, even those lower in social standing who had any servants participated in the re-enslavement. The phrase "which passed between the parts of the calf" (v. 18) applies to all these groups—aristocrats and commoners alike performed the covenant ceremony, then broke it. Corporate guilt pervades the society when covenant becomes culturally normative to violate.

Romans 3:23 echoes this totality: "all have sinned." Like Jeremiah 34, which indicts every societal level, Paul demonstrates universal human guilt before God. The comprehensive judgment coming on Judah (vv. 20-22) anticipates the comprehensive judgment at Christ's return, when "every knee shall bow" (Philippians 2:10). Only the comprehensive atonement of Christ's blood can answer

comprehensive human guilt—a truth these covenant ceremonies dimly foreshadowed.

## Historical Context

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Zedekiah's covenant to free slaves (34:8-10) was a desperate political-religious maneuver during Babylon's 588 BCE siege. The social pyramid included royal princes (Davidic dynasty members and appointed governors), Jerusalem's municipal officials, temple personnel, and property-owning citizens. When Egyptian forces briefly threatened Babylon's siege lines (v. 21, 37:5), creating temporary hope, this entire social structure unanimously re-enslaved freed servants, revealing how deeply exploitation was embedded in Judean culture.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does corporate cultural sin become so normalized that all societal levels participate without recognizing the evil?
2. In what areas might contemporary church culture be corporately guilty of covenant violations that transcend individual sin?
3. Why is it significant that religious leaders (priests) participated equally in covenant breaking alongside secular authorities?

## Interlinear Text

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|                    |                           |                    |                     |                    |                          |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| וְשָׂרֵי י         | יְהוּדָה ה                | וְשָׂרֵי י         | יְרוּשָׁלַם         | הַסֹּרְסִים        | וְהַכֹּהֲנִים            |
| <b>The princes</b> | <b>of Judah</b>           | <b>The princes</b> | <b>of Jerusalem</b> | <b>the eunuchs</b> | <b>and the priests</b>   |
| H8269              | H3063                     | H8269              | H3389               | H5631              | H3548                    |
| וְכָל ל            | עַם                       | הָאָרֶץ            | הָעֹבְרִים          | בֵּין              | בְּתֵרֵי י               |
| H3605              | <b>and all the people</b> | <b>of the land</b> | <b>which passed</b> | H996               | <b>between the parts</b> |
|                    | H5971                     | H776               | H5674               |                    | H1335                    |
| הָעֶגְלָה:         |                           |                    |                     |                    |                          |
| <b>of the calf</b> |                           |                    |                     |                    |                          |
| H5695              |                           |                    |                     |                    |                          |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 34:10** (Parallel theme): Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go.