

Jeremiah 5:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

Analysis

God exposes social injustice: 'For among my people are found wicked men' (קַנִּיםשֶׁׁ'û bּּ'אָמִמִּרְשָׁׁׁאִים). The term 'my people' intensifies the tragedy—those called to be holy harbor wickedness. The metaphor 'they lay wait, as he that setteth snares' compares evildoers to hunters trapping prey: 'they set a trap, they catch men' (yāšîbû mašhît 'ānāšîm yilkôdû). This vivid imagery depicts deliberate, calculated exploitation—the wealthy and powerful systematically oppressing the vulnerable. The Hebrew māšhît (trap, snare) emphasizes premeditation. These aren't accidental injustices but planned schemes to enrich themselves at others' expense. This social sin violates covenant requirements to protect the vulnerable (Exodus 22:21-27, Deuteronomy 24:14-15) and provokes divine judgment as severely as idolatry.

Historical Context

Jeremiah's ministry coincided with severe social stratification in Judah. The wealthy accumulated land by fraud and debt slavery (Isaiah 5:8, Micah 2:1-2), courts favored the rich (Amos 5:12), and the poor faced systematic exploitation. Archaeological evidence from this period shows concentration of wealth in Jerusalem while rural areas impoverished. This violated Torah's economic protections—sabbath years, jubilee, gleaning rights, interest prohibitions—designed to prevent permanent underclass formation. Prophets consistently condemned social injustice alongside idolatry (Isaiah 1:17, 23; Amos 2:6-7; Micah 6:8). Jesus later addressed similar issues, denouncing religious leaders who

'devoured widows' houses' (Mark 12:40). The principle remains: true faith produces justice; religion without righteousness is hypocrisy.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What 'snares' or exploitative systems in modern society do Christians have responsibility to address and oppose?
2. How does your faith community balance evangelism with pursuing social justice for the vulnerable?

Interlinear Text

נִמְצָא אֵלָיו	בְּעֵמָה	רָשָׁע יִם	צְשָׂוָר
H3588 are found	H4672 For among my people	H5971 wicked	H7789 men they lay wait
		H7563	
כִּי			
אָנָּשִׁים מִשְׁתַּחַת יְתֵהֶלֶת	אָנָּשִׁים מִשְׁתַּחַת יְתֵהֶלֶת	כִּי	לְכָדוֹן
as he that setteth	snares	they set	they catch
H7918	H3353	H5324	H3920

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 1:11 (Parallel theme): If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:

Psalms 64:5 (Evil): They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?

Jeremiah 18:22 (Parallel theme): 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.

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