

Jeremiah 51:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon,
shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the
inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say.

Analysis

The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. This imprecatory prayer calls for justice, invoking the lex talionis (law of retaliation) principle that violence returns upon the perpetrator. **The violence done to me and to my flesh** translates *ḥamasi u-še'eri* (חַמֵּסִי וּשְׁאֵרִי) — *ḥamas* denotes wrongful violence, injustice, oppression; *še'er* means flesh, kindred, body. This combines legal (violence/injustice) and physical (torn flesh) imagery.

Be upon Babylon invokes covenant curses, asking that Babylon experience the very suffering it inflicted (Deuteronomy 19:19-21). **My blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea** employs *dami* (דָמֵי), meaning bloodshed, bloodguilt—demanding accountability for innocent lives. The structure parallels Abel's blood crying from the ground (Genesis 4:10) and anticipates Revelation's martyrs crying 'How long, O Lord... dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?' (Revelation 6:10).

This imprecatory prayer is not personal vengeance but covenant justice. Zion appeals to God's righteousness, trusting Him to execute judgment. Such prayers appear throughout Psalms (35, 69, 109, 137:8-9) and teach that victims should commit their cause to God rather than seeking personal revenge (Romans 12:19). The appeal is vindicated in verses 36-37 when God promises to 'plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee.'

Historical Context

This verse reflects the traumatic memory of Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The reference to 'my blood' recalls the thousands killed during the siege and conquest—soldiers, civilians, children. Psalm 137:7-9 captures similar anguish, cursing Edom and Babylon for their violence. For exiles in Babylon, this imprecatory prayer expressed legitimate grief and called for divine justice while they remained powerless to act. The prayer affirmed that God sees injustice and will ultimately hold oppressors accountable. When Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC, the relatively bloodless transition might seem to contradict this prayer for vengeance. However, Babylon's destruction came gradually—first political conquest, then cultural assimilation, and eventually the city's complete abandonment and ruin, fulfilling verse 37. The prophetic principle endures: God avenges His people, though His timeline and methods may differ from human expectations.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do imprecatory prayers in Scripture teach us to process trauma and injustice while trusting God's justice rather than seeking personal revenge?
2. What does it mean that 'my blood' cries out for justice, and how does this connect to Christ's blood that 'speaks better things than that of Abel' (Hebrews 12:24)?
3. How should Christians today pray regarding injustice and violence—what is legitimate and what crosses into sinful vengeance?

Interlinear Text

תָּאָמַר	בְּבָבָלָן	עַל	וְשָׁאָרִי	בְּמַסֵּן	
The violence	done to me and to my flesh	H5921	be upon Babylon		say
H2555	H7607		H894		H559
כִּשְׁדָּךְ יָמִים	וְשָׁבֵבָי	אֶל	צִיּוֹן	וְשָׁבֵבָי	
shall the inhabitant	of Zion	H413	and my blood	H1818	shall the inhabitant
H3427	H6726		H3427	H3778	of Chaldea
יְהוָשָׁלָם:	יְהוָשָׁלָם:				
say	shall Jerusalem				
H559	H3389				

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 18:20 (Parallel theme): Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

Jeremiah 50:29 (References Babylon): Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.

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