

Jeremiah 9:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.

Analysis

This verse describes moral decay: 'And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies.' The Hebrew imagery pictures the tongue as a weapon—bent and aimed like a bow shooting arrows of falsehood. 'But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth' uses *gavar* (גָּבַר, to be mighty, prevail)—they show no courage for truth. 'For they proceed from evil to evil' indicates progression in wickedness rather than repentance. The climactic indictment: 'and they know me not, saith the LORD.' Using *yada* (יָדָע), the covenant knowledge term, God declares the relationship broken. They no longer 'know' Him in intimate, loyal relationship. Knowledge of God is the foundation of covenant faithfulness; its absence explains their moral collapse.

Historical Context

Archery metaphors appear throughout prophetic literature (Psalm 64:3-4, Jeremiah 9:8). The tongue as weapon is developed extensively in wisdom literature (Proverbs 12:18, 18:21, James 3:1-12). Jeremiah's era witnessed sophisticated deception in diplomacy, commerce, and religion. The 'not knowing God' indictment echoes Hosea 4:1-6 where lack of divine knowledge produces moral chaos.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the bow metaphor capture the intentional, aimed nature of verbal deception?
2. What is the relationship between knowing God and ethical behavior that makes moral collapse inevitable when knowledge fails?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּדְּכוּ וְ	אֶת	לְשׁוֹנָם	כְּקִשְׁתָּם	שֶׁ קָרָה	וְלֹא	לְאֱמוּנָה
And they bend	H853	their tongues	like their bow	for lies	H3808	for the truth
H1869		H3956	H7198	H8267		H530
וְגִבֹּר וְ		בְּאֶרֶץ	כִּי	רָעָה הִיא	אֶל	רָעָה הִיא
but they are not valiant		upon the earth	H3588	from evil	H413	from evil
H1396		H776		H7451		H7451
וַיֵּצְאוּ	וְאֵת יְ	לֹא	יָדְעוּ	נֹאֵם		יְהוָה:
for they proceed	H853	H3808	and they know	not me saith		the LORD
H3318			H3045	H5002		H3068

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 9:8 (Parallel theme): Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.

Jeremiah 4:22 (Evil): For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

Romans 3:13 (Parallel theme): Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

Judges 2:10 (References Lord): And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

Jeremiah 31:34 (References Lord): And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

1 Samuel 2:12 (References Lord): Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

Revelation 12:11 (Parallel theme): And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Jeremiah 22:16 (References Lord): He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:5 (Truth): And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.

Jeremiah 7:26 (Parallel theme): Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.