

Jeremiah 9:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

This verse describes the tongue as deadly weapon: 'Their tongue is as an arrow shot out.' The Hebrew chets shachut (חַצְבָּעַן שַׁחַט) literally means 'a slaughtering arrow' or 'a sharpened arrow'—designed for killing. 'It speaketh deceit' continues the theme of verbal treachery. 'One speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.' The contrast between mouth (peh, פֶּה) and heart (qereb, קֶרֶב, inner being) reveals hypocrisy—friendly words concealing murderous intent. 'Layeth his wait' (orbo, אָרְבָּה) pictures an ambush, lying in wait to destroy. Social interaction becomes warfare with words as weapons.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare relied heavily on archery; the arrow was the quintessential killing weapon. Jeremiah's audience understood arrows as deadly, precise instruments of death. The image of speaking peace while planning harm describes Judah's political culture—treaties made to be broken, alliances formed for exploitation, friendships feigned for advantage. This anticipates Psalm 55:21 about smooth words with war in the heart.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the arrow metaphor capture the calculated, intentional nature of verbal deception?
2. What does the gap between peaceful words and hostile hearts reveal about human capacity for duplicity?

Interlinear Text

בָּגְדָּאֵד	וְיִדְבְּךָ רֶגֶל	מִרְמָתָה	לְשׁוֹן מִתְּשִׁוָּתָה	שׁוֹחֵן	נִתְּשִׁוָּתָה	זָרָבָה
is as an arrow	shot out	Their tongue	deceit	it speaketh	with his mouth	
H2671	H7819	H3956	H4820	H1696	H6310	

אֶרְבָּוֹן	וְיִשְׁלַׁחַ	שָׁלָם	אֶת	רְעֵה הָוֹא	רְעֵה הָוֹא	וְיִדְבְּךָ	וְיִבְּקַרְבָּן	וְיִשְׁלַׁחַ	וְיִשְׁלַׁחַ	וְיִשְׁלַׁחַ	וְיִשְׁלַׁחַ
peaceably	H854	to his neighbour	it speaketh	but in heart	he layeth	his wait					
H7965		H7453	H1696	H7130	H7760	H696					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 28:3 (Peace): Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.

Psalms 120:3 (Parallel theme): What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?

Jeremiah 9:3 (Parallel theme): 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.

Psalms 55:21 (Parallel theme): The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

Psalms 12:2 (Parallel theme): They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

Psalms 57:4 (Parallel theme): My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

2 Samuel 3:27 (Parallel theme): And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org