

Joshua 7:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

Analysis

Joshua's prayer reaches its climax: concern for God's name and reputation. 'The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it'—Israel's defeat will embolden enemies and spread throughout Canaan. The verb 'hear' (shama', שָׁמַע) carries weight—hearing leads to action. When Canaanites hear of Israel's vulnerability, they'll unite against them. Joshua's fear 'shall environ us round'—surround and destroy—envisioning strategic catastrophe. His ultimate concern: 'what wilt thou do unto thy great name?' This is theologically sound reasoning: God's reputation is tied to Israel's success because He publicly identified Himself with them. If Israel is destroyed, the nations will blaspheme God's name, suggesting He couldn't fulfill His promises. This echoes Moses's intercession after the golden calf (Exodus 32:11-13) and when Israel refused to enter Canaan (Numbers 14:13-16). Yet there's irony: Joshua rightly worries about God's reputation but hasn't considered that tolerating sin in the camp also dishonors God's name. God's holiness is as much part of His reputation as His power.

Historical Context

The concern for God's 'great name' reflects ancient Near Eastern theology where deities' reputations rose or fell based on their nations' military success. When Assyria conquered nations, they claimed their god Ashur's superiority; when Babylon defeated Assyria, Marduk's supremacy was proclaimed. Israel's theology differed—Yahweh was actually supreme—but the cultural framework meant

nations judged gods by observable outcomes. Joshua's prayer recognizes this reality: Israel's failure would cause Canaanites to mock Yahweh, not just Israel. This wasn't merely human pride but legitimate concern for God's glory among nations. The phrase 'cut off our name from the earth' uses extinction language—complete annihilation of Israel's identity and memory. Joshua envisions worst-case scenario: covenant people destroyed, promises unfulfilled, God's name blasphemed. His theological instincts are right—God's glory is paramount. But his diagnosis is wrong—God hasn't abandoned Israel; Israel has violated covenant through Achan's sin.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does concern for God's glory differ from concern for personal or corporate reputation?
2. What does it mean that God's holiness (punishing sin) and God's power (giving victory) both protect His reputation?
3. How can we intercede for God's name to be honored while examining our own hearts for covenant violations?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁמַע וְ	הַכְּנַעֲנִי י	וְכָל	וְיֹשְׁבֵי י	הָאָרֶץ
shall hear	For the Canaanites	H3605	and all the inhabitants	from the earth
H8085	H3669		H3427	H776
וְנִסְּ בּוֹ	עַל יָדוֹ	וְהִכֵּה יָתוֹ	אֶת	לְשִׁמְךָ
of it and shall environ us round	H5921	and cut off	H853	name
H5437		H3772		H4480
				H8034
הָאָרֶץ	וּמָה	תַּעֲשֶׂה ה	לְשִׁמְךָ	הַגָּדוֹל:
from the earth	H4100	and what wilt thou do	name	unto thy great
H776		H6213	H8034	H1419

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 32:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Psalms 83:4 (Parallel theme): They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

John 12:28 (Parallel theme): Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Deuteronomy 9:28 (Parallel theme): Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.

Joel 2:17 (Parallel theme): Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

Ezekiel 20:9 (Parallel theme): But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

Numbers 14:13 (Parallel theme): And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

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