

Lamentations 3:64

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands.

Analysis

Appeal for divine retribution: **"Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands."** The Hebrew *tashiv lahem gemul YHWH kema'aseh yedeihem* (תָּשִׁיב לָהֶם גְּמוּל יְהוָה כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה יָדֵיהֶם) requests God execute justice. *Tashiv* (תָּשִׁיב, "render, return") means to pay back or recompense. *Gemul* (גְּמוּל) means recompense, dealing, or due reward—what is deserved.

"According to the work of their hands" (*kema'aseh yedeihem*, כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה יָדֵיהֶם) requests proportionate justice. Not excessive revenge but appropriate consequences matching their deeds. This echoes *lex talionis* ("eye for eye")—punishment fitting the crime (Exodus 21:23-25). The principle appears throughout Scripture: "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2). "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Theologically, this represents an imprecatory prayer—calling on God to judge evildoers. Such prayers appear throughout Psalms (Psalm 35, 69, 109, 137, 139). They aren't vindictive but appeals for divine justice. Romans 12:19 commands: "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Imprecatory prayers give wrath its proper place—in God's hands, not ours. They express confidence that God will indeed judge evil and vindicate the righteous.

Historical Context

Imprecatory psalms and prayers were common in ancient Israel. David prayed similar prayers against enemies (Psalm 55:15, 58:6-8, 69:22-28). Jeremiah repeatedly called for judgment on his persecutors (Jeremiah 11:20, 15:15, 17:18, 18:21-23, 20:12). These weren't vindictive rants but covenantal appeals—asking God to enforce the curses He promised against those who harm His servants.

God answered such prayers. Those who opposed Jeremiah perished in Jerusalem's fall. The false prophets who contradicted Jeremiah were killed or exiled (Jeremiah 20:6, 28:15-17, 29:21-23). Officials who persecuted Jeremiah faced judgment (Jeremiah 38:2-3). The Babylonians who exceeded God's disciplinary intent eventually fell to Persia (Daniel 5, fulfilling Jeremiah 50-51). Justice came, though timing was God's prerogative.

The principle continues in the New Testament. Revelation 6:9-11 shows martyrs under the altar crying: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Revelation 18-19 describes God's judgment on Babylon (Rome), answering that prayer. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 promises: "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." Divine justice is certain, even if delayed.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do imprecatory prayers like this one differ from personal revenge, and why are they legitimate expressions of faith?

2. What does 'according to the work of their hands' teach about proportionate rather than excessive judgment?
3. In what ways does leaving vengeance to God (Romans 12:19) actually demonstrate greater faith than taking personal revenge?
4. How should believers pray regarding evil and evildoers today—ignoring injustice, or appealing to God for righteous judgment?

Interlinear Text

רַבְּרָבָה	לָהֶם	וְלָהֶם	יְהוָה	כְּמַעֲשֵׂהוּ
Render	H0	unto them a recompence	O LORD	according to the work
H7725		H1576	H3068	H4639
:יְדִיָּהֵם				
of their hands				
H3027				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 28:4 (Parallel theme): Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

Jeremiah 11:20 (References Lord): But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

2 Timothy 4:14 (References Lord): Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: