

Micah 6:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.

Analysis

Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. God continues describing covenant curses—futile labor. "**Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap**" echoes Deuteronomy 28:30-33: "Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her...thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof." Invading armies would harvest what Israel planted. Hosea 8:7 warned: "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." Agricultural language illustrates divine judgment: investments produce no returns, efforts bear no fruit.

"Thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil" (תַּזְרַךְ וְלֹא-מְסֻבֵּן שָׁמֶן, zayit tidrokh ve-lo-tasukh shemen)—olive pressing was labor-intensive; oil was used for anointing, cooking, lamps. **"Sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine"** (וְתִירוֹשׁ וְלֹא תִשְׂתַּחַת־יָיִן, ve-tirosh ve-lo tishveh-yayin)—wine production required planting, pruning, harvesting, pressing, fermenting. To labor without enjoying the fruit is covenant curse. Why? Because prosperity requires God's blessing. When He withdraws favor, human effort proves futile. Haggai rebuked post-exilic Jews: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough" (Haggai 1:6). The remedy: obedience.

This principle extends beyond agriculture. Paul wrote: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also

bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). Yet the converse applies: sowing in disobedience reaps judgment. Galatians 6:7-8 warns: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Fruitfulness requires divine blessing obtained through obedience.

Historical Context

Israel's history illustrates this pattern. During the judges period, when Israel sinned, God allowed enemies to plunder harvests (Judges 6:3-6). Assyrian and Babylonian invasions devastated agricultural infrastructure—vineyards destroyed, orchards burned, populations deported. Amos 5:11 prophesied: "Ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them." Zephaniah 1:13 warned: "Their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof." These weren't random calamities but covenant curses executing Deuteronomy 28. When the Church abandons faithfulness, God withdraws blessing—ministries become barren, efforts fruitless, resources wasted.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. In what areas of your life are you "sowing but not reaping"—investing effort without seeing fruit—possibly due to disobedience or misaligned priorities?
2. How does recognizing that fruitfulness requires God's blessing guard against both presumption (assuming success) and despair (when efforts falter)?

3. What changes in obedience or priorities might God be calling you to make so that your labor bears lasting fruit for His kingdom?

Interlinear Text

תַּזְבֵּעַ	עַתָּה	אַל	תַּקְצֵז	זֹר	תַּדְרֹג	אַתָּה
H859	Thou shalt sow	H3808	but thou shalt not reap	H7114	H859	thou shalt tread
	H2232					H1869
וְלֹא	תַּמְסֵךְ	שְׁמֵן	וְלֹא	וְתִירֵשׁ	וְלֹא	
the olives	but thou shalt not anoint	thee with oil	and sweet wine		H3808	
H2132	H5480	H8081	H8492			
תַּשְׁתַּחַת	וְלֹא					
but shalt not drink	wine					
H8354	H3196					

Additional Cross-References

Zephaniah 1:13 (Parallel theme): Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

Amos 5:11 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.

Jeremiah 12:13 (Parallel theme): They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit: and they shall be ashamed of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

Leviticus 26:20 (Parallel theme): And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.

Haggai 1:6 (Parallel theme): Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there

is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

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