

Proverbs 23:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

Analysis

This verse grounds the previous warning in God's character as defender of the fatherless. 'Their redeemer is mighty' (גָּאַל מִצְקָה/go'alam chazaq, their kinsman-redeemer is strong) identifies God as the ultimate נָאָל (go'el), the family advocate who protects and avenges. In Israel, the kinsman-redeemer had three primary duties: buy back family land sold due to poverty (Leviticus 25:25), marry a widowed relative to preserve the family line (Ruth 3-4), and avenge murdered family members (Numbers 35:19). God assumes this role for the fatherless who lack human advocates. 'He shall plead their cause with thee' (הוַיַּרְאֵב אֶת־רִיבָם אֶתְךָ/hu-yariv et-rivam ittakh, He Himself will contend their case against you) warns that God personally prosecutes those who exploit orphans. This echoes Psalm 68:5: 'A father of the fatherless... is God in his holy habitation.' Jesus is the ultimate Redeemer who purchased us from slavery to sin (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Historical Context

The kinsman-redeemer concept permeates Old Testament theology. Boaz redeemed Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 4:1-10). Job declared: 'I know that my redeemer liveth' (Job 19:25). God repeatedly identified Himself as Israel's Redeemer—delivering them from Egypt (Exodus 6:6), Babylon (Isaiah 43:14), and ultimately through Christ (Isaiah 59:20; Luke 1:68). When human redeemers failed, God intervened. He judged Egypt for oppressing Israel (Exodus 3:7-10). He promised vengeance on Edom for attacking Judah (Obadiah 1:10-15). Early church theology developed redemption doctrine extensively—Christ's blood paid sin's penalty

(Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12), purchasing believers from the slave market of sin. This shapes Christian ethics: redeemed people defend the oppressed, imitating their Redeemer.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God as your Redeemer transform your sense of identity and security?
2. What does it mean practically that God 'pleads the cause' of the oppressed—and how should this affect your actions?
3. In what ways can you serve as an instrument of God's redemptive care for the vulnerable?

Interlinear Text

רִיב	מִ	אֶת	יְבָרֶךְ	יְאַלְמָ	נָא	תִּלְךְ	רִיב	יְבָרֶךְ	אֶת	רִיב	מִ
H3588	For their redeemer	H1931	is mighty	H2389	H7378	H853	he shall plead	H7379	their cause		
H1350											

אֶתְּךָ:

H854

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 22:23 (Parallel theme): For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

Job 19:25 (Redemption): For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

