

Proverbs 28:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

Analysis

He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance—The Hebrew *neshek* (usury, interest) literally means 'bite,' reflecting predatory lending. Combined with *tarbit* (unjust gain, excessive interest), this condemns exploiting the vulnerable. Yet divine irony prevails: **he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.**

Leviticus 25:35-37 explicitly forbade charging interest to fellow Israelites, especially the poor. Wealth accumulated through exploitation ultimately transfers to the righteous who show *chanan* (mercy, favor) to the needy. God redistributes ill-gotten wealth—a principle seen in Proverbs 13:22: 'The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.'

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern economies often involved lending at interest, but Israel's covenant law mandated different ethics—reflecting God's character as defender of the poor. Nehemiah 5 records post-exilic reforms against usury. James 5:1-6 warns wealthy oppressors of coming judgment.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does your financial stewardship reflect mercy toward those in need versus personal accumulation?
2. Are there ways you benefit from systemic injustice that exploits vulnerable populations?
3. How can you use your resources to 'pity the poor' as God's agent of redistribution?

Interlinear Text

הַמֶּרְבֵּה	הַוְנוֹ	בֶּן שֹׁשֶׁל	וּבְתִרְבֵּה יֵת	לְחֹנֵן
increaseth	his substance	He that by usury	and unjust gain	it for him that will pity
H7235	H1952	H5392	H8636	H2603
יְלֵלִים	יִקְבְּצֵנָה:			
the poor	he shall gather			
H1800	H6908			

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 13:22 (Righteousness): A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 (Parallel theme): For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Leviticus 25:36 (Parallel theme): Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

Exodus 22:25 (Parallel theme): If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.

Ezekiel 18:17 (Parallel theme): That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.

Proverbs 14:31 (Parallel theme): He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

Ezekiel 18:13 (Parallel theme): Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.

Ezekiel 18:8 (Parallel theme): He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,