

Proverbs 29:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

Analysis

When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth (ברבות רשעים ורבה פשע)—as the wicked (resha'im) increase in number or influence, rebellion (pesha) multiplies. Sin is social and exponential—wickedness emboldens wickedness. When moral restraint is removed, transgression metastasizes.

But the righteous shall see their fall (וצדיקים במנפלתם וראו)—yet the righteous (tzadiqim) will witness their downfall (bemapaltam, their ruin/collapse). This isn't vengeful gloating but vindication of God's moral order. Psalm 37:34-38 similarly promises the righteous will see the wicked's end. History confirms that empires built on wickedness collapse; tyrannies fall. The righteous witness God's justice enacted in time.

Historical Context

Israel repeatedly cycled through periods of apostasy and judgment (Judges cycle). When wicked kings or foreign powers dominated, transgression increased—temple prostitution, child sacrifice, injustice. Yet prophets promised coming reversal. The exile demonstrated this principle massively—Babylonian wickedness ascendant, then destroyed by Persia. The righteous remnant witnessed God's faithfulness.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do you maintain hope when wicked ideologies or leaders seem to be multiplying and transgression increasing?
2. What does it mean to 'see their fall'—how should righteous people respond to the collapse of wicked systems?
3. In what ways does the exponential nature of sin (increasing wickedness multiplying transgression) call for active resistance rather than passive tolerance?

Interlinear Text

רַבָּה	רְשָׁעִים	רַבָּה	פְּשָׁע	צָדִיק	וְ
are multiplied	When the wicked	are multiplied	transgression	but the righteous	
H7235	H7563	H7235	H6588		H6662
רָאָוֶן	בְּמִפְלָתָם	רַבָּה			
their fall	shall see				
H4658	H7200				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 58:10 (Righteousness): The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

Psalms 37:36 (Parallel theme): Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

Psalms 91:8 (Evil): Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Psalms 92:11 (Evil): Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me.

Psalms 37:34 (Evil): Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

Proverbs 29:2 (Righteousness): When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

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