

Proverbs 30:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

Analysis

There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men. The second corrupt generation weaponizes their mouths—shinayim (שִׁנַּיִם, teeth) as charavot (חֶרֶבוֹת, swords) and malt'khot (מַלְתָּכוֹת, jaw teeth) as ma'akhalot (מַאֲכָלוֹת, knives). This vivid metaphor describes predatory exploitation: violent speech and ruthless oppression that destroys the vulnerable.

"To devour" (le'ekol, לֶאֱכֹל) means to consume, eat up, annihilate. The targets are aniyim (אֲנִיִּים, the poor, afflicted) and evyonim (עֲבֹיִּים, the needy, destitute). Throughout Scripture, God fiercely defends these groups (Exodus 22:21-24, Psalm 82:3-4, Isaiah 10:1-3). This generation—oppressive creditors, corrupt judges, violent landlords, exploitative employers—uses legal and economic power as weapons to crush those who cannot fight back. Amos condemned those who "swallow up the needy" (8:4). James rebuked the rich who "have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter" (5:5).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern economies operated without modern financial regulations or social safety nets. Debt slavery was common; creditors could seize persons as collateral (2 Kings 4:1). Judges could be bribed (Isaiah 1:23); courts favored the

wealthy. Powerful landowners consolidated holdings by dispossessing small farmers during famines. Against this backdrop, Israel's law provided unique protections: prohibitions on usury (Exodus 22:25), jubilee year debt forgiveness (Leviticus 25), gleaning rights for the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10), and multiple warnings that exploiting the vulnerable invites divine judgment. Yet Israel repeatedly violated these commands. Prophets from Amos to Malachi condemned economic oppression as covenant breaking that would bring exile.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do modern economic and legal systems sometimes function as 'teeth like swords' that devour the poor—and how should Christians respond?
2. In what subtle ways might you use power, privilege, or speech as weapons rather than instruments of justice and mercy?
3. How does Jesus's Beatitude 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' (Matthew 5:3) and His warning to the rich (Luke 6:24-25) challenge worldly attitudes toward wealth and poverty?

Interlinear Text

ד וֶרֶן	חֶבֶר וְ	שִׁנָּיו	וּמַאֲכָל וְ	חִתְלֵלֵי יוֹ
There is a generation	are as swords	whose teeth	as knives	and their jaw teeth
H1755	H2719	H8127	H3979	H4973
לֶאֱכֹל	עֲנִיִּים	מֵאֶרֶץ	וְאֶבְיוֹנִים	מִבְּתֵינֵם:
to devour	the poor	from off the earth	and the needy	from among men
H398	H6041	H776	H34	H120

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 3:7 (Parallel theme): Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

Psalms 57:4 (Word): My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

Psalms 14:4 (Parallel theme): Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

Job 29:17 (Parallel theme): And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.

Psalms 12:5 (Parallel theme): For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

Ecclesiastes 4:1 (Parallel theme): So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.

Amos 8:4 (Parallel theme): Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

Revelation 9:8 (Parallel theme): And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

Psalms 58:6 (Parallel theme): Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.