

Psalm 107:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.

Analysis

This verse presents a powerful reversal of fortunes through divine intervention. The Hebrew verb "**poureth**" (shophek) suggests an abundant, overflowing action—God lavishly pours out "**contempt**" (buz) upon the mighty. This word carries connotations of scorn and derision, showing that those who once commanded respect now receive shame.

The targets are "**princes**" (nedibim), meaning nobles or those of high rank. The verb "**causeth them to wander**" (yat'em) depicts aimless wandering, stripping these leaders of their power and direction. The location is significant: "**the wilderness, where there is no way**" (tohu lo-derek)—literally a trackless waste, emphasizing complete disorientation and helplessness.

This verse illustrates the biblical principle that God humbles the proud and exalts the humble. The contrast between princes (symbols of power, direction, and security) and wandering in trackless wilderness demonstrates total reversal. God removes those who abuse their authority, reducing them to powerless wanderers.

Historical Context

Psalm 107 is a post-exilic thanksgiving psalm, likely composed after the Babylonian captivity when Israelites returned to their homeland. The psalm celebrates four types of deliverance, with this verse appearing in a section about God's intervention in human affairs.

The imagery would have resonated deeply with the returned exiles who had witnessed the overthrow of Babylonian princes and the humbling of great empires. They had seen powerful rulers like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar brought low, wandering in madness or conquered in battle. The 'wilderness with no way' may allude to the actual desert wanderings of defeated armies or the figurative wilderness of mental confusion that struck proud rulers like Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4). This historical context made God's ability to humble the mighty a lived reality for the psalm's original audience.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why does God specifically pour contempt on princes rather than just removing them?
2. What is the spiritual significance of causing the powerful to wander in wilderness?
3. How does this verse relate to other biblical teachings about pride and humility?
4. What comfort does this verse offer to those oppressed by unjust authorities?
5. In what ways might this principle apply to modern political and social structures?

Interlinear Text

שָׁפֵךְ	בְּאַרְצָה	עַל	נְדִיבָּם	וְיִתְּהַלֵּךְ	וְיִתְּהַלֵּךְ
He poureth	contempt	H5921	upon princes	and causeth them to wander	
H8210	H937		H5081		H8582

בְּתַהֲוָה	לֹא	דְּכָרָה
in the wilderness	H3808	where there is no way

Additional Cross-References

Job 12:24 (Parallel theme): He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.

Job 12:21 (Parallel theme): He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty.

Daniel 4:33 (Parallel theme): The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

Revelation 19:18 (Parallel theme): That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

Acts 12:23 (Parallel theme): And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

Psalms 78:66 (Parallel theme): And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach.

Psalms 107:4 (Parallel theme): They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

Exodus 8:24 (Parallel theme): And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.

Exodus 8:17 (Parallel theme): And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

Exodus 8:3 (Parallel theme): And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs:

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