

# Psalm 109:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.

## Analysis

**Because that he remembered not to shew mercy** (יען אשר לא זכר עשות חסד) ya'an asher lo zachar asot chased)—this verse grounds the preceding curses. The enemy (lo zachar, "did not remember") to do חסד (chesed, covenant loyalty). **But persecuted the poor and needy man** (ויזף אישען ואבון) vayirdof ish-ani ve'evyon)—the verb צוף (radaf, "pursue, persecute") depicts hunting. עני (ani, "poor, afflicted") and אבון (evyon, "needy, destitute") are God's specially protected classes. **That he might even slay the broken in heart** (ונכאה לבב למוות) venich'eh levav lemottet)—to kill (mut, mut) the לבב (nich'eh levav, "broken in heart").

This verse provides the moral justification for imprecation. The enemy didn't commit minor offenses—he hunted the vulnerable whom God loves. Psalm 34:18 promises "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart"; to slay such people is to attack God's beloved. James 1:27 defines pure religion as caring for widows and orphans; the opposite—exploiting them—merits severe judgment. David himself was עני ואבון during his fugitive years; this prayer may be partially autobiographical.

## Historical Context

Israelite law protected the poor, widow, orphan, and stranger with severe sanctions (Ex 22:22-24). Failure to show mercy violated the greatest

commandment's second half (Lev 19:18). David's enemy committed not political opposition but covenant crimes warranting covenant curses.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's special protection of the broken-hearted inform His response to those who exploit them?
2. What does "remembering to show mercy" suggest about mercy as a discipline requiring intentionality?
3. How does James 1:27 challenge superficial religion divorced from advocacy for the vulnerable?

## Interlinear Text

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ל א אֲשֶׁר רָא יְשֻׁעָה  
H3282 H834 H3808 Because that he remembered  
זָכַר H2142 not to shew  
שׁוּעַת H6213 mercy  
חֶסֶד H2617

לְבָבָךְ יִנְכַּא הַבּוֹדֵד אֲשֶׁר  
but persecuted man the poor and needy the broken in heart  
H7291 H376 H6041 H34 H3512 H3824

לְמֹתָתְךָ  
that he might even slay  
H4191

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 34:18** (Parallel theme): The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

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