

# Psalms 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** (יָעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא זָכַר עֲשׂוֹת חֶסֶד, ya'an asher lo zachar asot chased)—this verse grounds the preceding curses. The enemy **לא זָכַר** (lo zachar, "did not remember") to do **חֶסֶד** (chesed, covenant loyalty). **But persecuted the poor and needy man** (וַיִּרְדֹּף אִישׁ-עָנִי וְאַבְיֹן, vayirdof ish-ani ve'evyon)—the verb **רָדַף** (radaf, "pursue, persecute") depicts hunting. **עָנִי** (ani, "poor, afflicted") and **אַבְיֹן** (evyon, "needy, destitute") are God's specially protected classes. **That he might even slay the broken in heart** (וְיַנְכֵּהוּ לֵבָב לְמוֹתָת, venich'eh levav lemottet)—to kill (**מוֹת**, mut) the **נִכְאָה לֵבָב** (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 **עָנִי וְאַבְיֹן** 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

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

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

## Study Questions

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

ל א זָכַר עַשׂ וְ חָסֵד  
H3808 H2142 H6213 H2617  
Because that he remembered not to shew mercy

לֵב ב וְנִכְאָה ! אֲבִיוֹן עֲנִי אִישׁ וַיִּרְדּוּ  
 in heart the broken and needy the poor man but persecuted  
 H3824 H3512 H34 H6041 H376 H7291

למִוֹתֶת:

that he might even slay

## 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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