

Psalm 109:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

Analysis

And they have rewarded me evil for good (וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לִי בְּעֵבֶר פָּנֶה טובָה, vayasimu alai ra'ah tachat tovah)—the preposition פָּנֶה (tachat, "in place of") emphasizes substitution: evil instead of good, not alongside it. **And hatred for my love** (וְשֹׁנְאָה, vesin'ah tachat ahavati)—the same substitution structure intensifies the betrayal.

This verse articulates the central grievance justifying the imprecations that follow. David isn't merely offended; he has suffered covenant betrayal. Proverbs 17:13 pronounces God's curse on those who "reward evil for good." Psalm 35:12 and 38:20 echo this complaint. The principle reaches its apex in Judas, who betrayed Jesus with a kiss after three years of intimacy (Luke 22:47-48). Peter applied Psalm 109:8 to Judas (Acts 1:20), confirming this psalm's messianic and typological significance.

Historical Context

David's biography is marked by unreciprocated kindness: sparing Saul, honoring Jonathan's memory through Mephibosheth, treating Absalom with fatherly tenderness despite treason. Ancient Near Eastern reciprocity codes made this reversal especially heinous—hospitality and kindness created binding obligations.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing unrequited love as covenant betrayal (not mere ingratitude) help you process deep relational wounds?
2. What does David's appeal to God's justice (rather than cynical withdrawal) teach about maintaining love despite betrayal?
3. How does Judas's betrayal of Christ illuminate the gravity of rewarding evil for good in spiritual contexts?

Interlinear Text

תְּחִתְּנֵנִי שְׁנָא הָטָב הַתְּחִתְּנֵנִי רַעַת רַעַת עַל יְמֵנוּ
And they have rewarded me evil for good and hatred

H7760 H5921 H7451 H8478 H2896 H8135 H8478

אֶתְבָּתִים

for my love

H160

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 17:13 (Evil): Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

Psalms 38:20 (Evil): They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is.

Genesis 44:4 (Evil): And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

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