

Psalms 120:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.

Analysis

The specific distress emerges: the psalmist suffers from 'lying lips' and 'deceitful tongue.' The Hebrew 'lashon remiyah' (deceitful tongue) refers to speech intended to mislead, manipulate, or destroy. Slander and false testimony were serious offenses in Israel's covenant community (Exodus 20:16; 23:1), as they violated both truth and neighbor-love. The double reference to speech organs ('lips' and 'tongue') emphasizes the comprehensive nature of verbal assault the psalmist endures. This prayer for deliverance recognizes that words wound deeply - gossip, lies, and manipulation inflict real harm. The appeal to God acknowledges that only divine intervention can vindicate the falsely accused. Human defense against slander often proves inadequate; God must act as defender of the righteous.

Historical Context

Lying and deceit were endemic problems in ancient Near Eastern society, where honor and reputation carried immense weight. False accusation could result in loss of property, position, or even life. The Mosaic law prescribed severe penalties for false witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:16-21), recognizing slander's destructive power. The psalmist's appeal to God rather than human courts demonstrates faith that divine justice surpasses human judgment.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why does Scripture repeatedly condemn lying and deceit as particularly offensive sins?
2. How do 'lying lips' and 'deceitful tongue' harm both individuals and communities?
3. What recourse do believers have when falsely accused or slandered?
4. How does Jesus' experience of false testimony during His trial illuminate this psalm?
5. In what ways might we inadvertently participate in spreading falsehood or gossip?

Interlinear Text

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| יְהוָה | הַצִּלְה | נַפְשִׁי | מִשְׁפֹּת | שֶׁקֶר | מִלֶּשׁוֹן | רַמָּה: |
| O LORD | Deliver | my soul | lips | from lying | tongue | and from a deceitful |
| H3068 | H5337 | H5315 | H8193 | H8267 | H3956 | H7423 |

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 12:22 (References Lord): Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.