

# Psalm 120:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?

## Analysis

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The psalmist poses a rhetorical question about divine judgment against deceivers: 'What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?' This question anticipates God's judicial response to persistent liars. The interrogative form implies that appropriate punishment exceeds human imagination - God's justice will fit the crime perfectly. The direct address to 'thou false tongue' personifies deceit, treating it as a willful agent deserving judgment. This rhetorical device emphasizes personal responsibility for words spoken. The question format also invites reflection on the seriousness of verbal sin, which often receives less attention than physical violence despite its destructive power.

## Historical Context

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In ancient Israel's oral culture, where written contracts were rare, a person's word carried legal and social weight. Lying threatened the entire social fabric, making covenantal community life impossible. The question posed here would resonate with a community dependent on trustworthy speech for justice, commerce, and relationships.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. Why does the psalmist frame judgment as a question rather than a direct statement?
2. What does personifying the 'false tongue' reveal about accountability for speech?
3. How seriously do modern Christians take sins of speech compared to other sins?
4. What New Testament passages echo this concern about deceitful speech?
5. How might this verse inform Christian conduct in an age of social media and instant communication?

## Interlinear Text

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מַה	וְ	תִּתְּعַבֵּד	וְ	מַה	לֹא	בְּ	וְ	עַל	יְ	בְּ	לֹא
H4100		What shall be given	H0	H4100				unto thee or what shall be done	H3254		H0
	H5414										

  

לְ	שָׁ	וְ	תִּתְּ	מַה	רְ
tongue	unto thee thou	false			

  

H3956	H7423
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