

Psalm 129:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.

Analysis

Vivid imagery describes oppression: 'The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.' The metaphor compares affliction to agricultural violence - enemies treated Israel's back like soil to be plowed. Plowing involves cutting, tearing, and creating deep grooves. The image suggests both physical violence (scourging, beatings) and national devastation (invasion, destruction). The phrase 'upon my back' personalizes corporate suffering - the nation's pain is felt as individual bodily harm. 'They made long their furrows' emphasizes extent and duration - not quick, shallow cuts but deep, prolonged wounds. Long furrows suggest thorough, systematic oppression. This agricultural imagery would resonate powerfully in agrarian culture while conveying suffering's intensity. The verse doesn't minimize pain but describes it vividly before celebrating deliverance.

Historical Context

The imagery fits multiple contexts - Egyptian slavery, Assyrian brutality, Babylonian destruction. Isaiah 51:23 uses similar imagery for oppressors. The metaphor captures how enemies systematically wounded Israel, attempting to break the nation's spirit and strength. The long furrows suggest comprehensive, devastating oppression that should have destroyed the nation.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the plowing imagery communicate suffering more effectively than abstract description?
2. What does 'upon my back' suggest about the personal, bodily nature of national suffering?
3. How do 'long furrows' emphasize the extent, depth, and duration of affliction?
4. In what ways does this metaphor apply to Christ's suffering (the scourging, cross)?
5. How does vivid description of suffering prepare for celebrating deliverance?

Interlinear Text

עַל	גַּבֵּי	חֹרֶשׁ יִם	חֹרֶשׁ יִם	בְּאַרְיָכוֹ	לְמַעֲנָוֶתֶם:
H5921	upon my back	The plowers	The plowers	they made long	their furrows
	H1354	H2790	H2790	H748	H4618

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