

Psalms 139:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.

Analysis

For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. This verse explains why David prays for judgment: the wicked don't just harm people but blaspheme God. Speak against thee wickedly (לִמְזִמָּה, limzimmah) carries the idea of plotting, scheming with malicious intent—not casual irreverence but calculated rebellion. **Thine enemies** (אֲרֵכָה, arecha) are God's adversaries, not merely David's.

Take thy name in vain (נִשְׁאַל לִשְׁוֹן, nas'u lashav) violates the third commandment (Exodus 20:7)—using God's name for empty, deceptive purposes or treating it with contempt. The wicked invoke God's name to legitimize their evil schemes. For David, God's honor is at stake; this isn't about personal offense but defending divine glory. Those intimate with God (vv. 1-18) cannot be neutral when His name is profaned.

Historical Context

Throughout Israel's history, false prophets and wicked leaders used God's name to authorize injustice (Jeremiah 23:16-17, Ezekiel 13:6-7). In David's time, rival claimants to the throne may have invoked YHWH's name falsely. Jesus faced similar blasphemy from religious leaders who claimed God's authority while rejecting God's Son.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. In what subtle ways might you be 'taking God's name in vain' by claiming His authority for your own agenda?
2. How does deep intimacy with God (vv. 1-18) create intolerance for seeing His name profaned by others?
3. What is your responsibility when you witness God's name or character being misrepresented?

Interlinear Text

אֵשׁ ר	י מְרוֹבֵּ	לְמִזְמָה	נָשׂ וְא	לֵשׁ וְא
H834	For they speak	against thee wickedly	take	thy name in vain
	H559	H4209	H5375	H7723

עֲדֵיבִי:
and thine enemies
H6145

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 20:7 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Jude 1:15 (Parallel theme): To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Psalms 74:18 (Parallel theme): Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.

Revelation 13:6 (Parallel theme): And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

Isaiah 37:23 (Parallel theme): Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

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