

Psalms 149:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;

Analysis

This verse concludes Psalm 149 with an eschatological call: 'Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand.' The phrase 'high praises of God' (romemuyot Elohim) emphasizes exalted praise, elevated worship. 'In their mouth' suggests that praise becomes the distinguishing characteristic of God's people. The phrase 'and a twoedged sword in their hand' (ve-cherev pifiyot be-yadam) shifts dramatically. The twoedged sword represents judgment and power. This verse combines two apparently contradictory images: the mouth full of praise and the hand holding a sword. In post-exilic apocalyptic theology, this was understood as describing the future vindication of the righteous and judgment on enemies. The 'sword' is not literal but metaphorical for God's judgment authority granted to the faithful. Some interpreters understand this as spiritual warfare (Word of God as sword, Ephesians 6:17) rather than physical violence. The verse declares that the same people who praise God will execute His judgment. This reflects apocalyptic expectation: God's faithful, who now appear weak and afflicted, will be vindicated and become instruments of divine justice.

Historical Context

This verse generated significant interpretive debate. In Second Temple Judaism, particularly during the Maccabean Revolt (165 BC), when Jews fought Greek oppression, this verse was sometimes cited as justifying armed resistance. The Maccabees saw themselves as the meek (anavim) being beautified with salvation (verse 4), and armed warfare as fulfilling this verse's promise. However, many

Jewish interpreters understood the 'sword' as metaphorical: the word of God or divine judgment. In Christian interpretation, Augustine and medieval theologians generally saw the sword as spiritual rather than literal. Protestant reformers emphasized that believers must leave vengeance to God and not claim to execute judgment personally. The verse's eschatological orientation suggests that the sword-wielding belongs to the future kingdom, not the present church age. In later Jewish thought, particularly rabbinic Judaism, this verse's militaristic language was increasingly spiritualized or relegated to future messianic times. The verse remains one of the most debated in the Psalter regarding Christian approaches to justice and violence.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What is the relationship between praising God ('high praises in their mouth') and wielding God's judgment ('sword in their hand')?
2. How should the metaphor of the 'twoedged sword' be understood - literally, spiritually, or eschatologically?
3. Why does the psalm combine praise with judgment power, apparently contradictory images?
4. In what ways does this verse reflect apocalyptic expectations about vindication of the righteous?
5. How should contemporary believers understand claims about executing God's judgment, and what are the dangers and biblical safeguards?

Interlinear Text

רוֹמֵם וְ	אֵל ל	בְּגִרוֹנָם	וְחֶרֶב	פִּיפִי וְ
Let the high	praises of God	be in their mouth	sword	and a twoedged
H7319	H410	H1627	H2719	H6374
בְּיָדָם:				
in their hand				
H3027				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 4:12 (Word): For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Psalms 66:17 (Parallel theme): I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

Revelation 1:16 (Word): And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Revelation 19:6 (References God): And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Nehemiah 9:5 (Resurrection): Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

Psalms 96:4 (Resurrection): For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.

Psalms 115:7 (Parallel theme): They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.

Luke 2:14 (References God): Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men.

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