

Psalm 37:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

Analysis

The wicked 'plotteth' (Hebrew 'zamam,' devises, purposes) reveals premeditated hostility toward the just. Gnashing teeth (also in Psalm 35:16, 37:12) expresses rage and violent intent—teeth bared in fury. This image appears when religious authorities opposed Jesus (Acts 7:54) and describes hell's occupants (Matthew 8:12). The contrast between plotting schemes and gnashing teeth shows both calculated malice and passionate hatred. Yet the verse presents this factually, not alarmingly—the subsequent verse reveals God's response.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern imagery used animals gnashing teeth to depict ferocious attack. David applies this to human enemies whose hatred resembles predatory animals stalking prey.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when you discern others plotting against you?
2. What does enemies' intense hatred reveal about the spiritual battle underlying physical opposition?

Interlinear Text

עַל־יְהִי־בְּשָׁעַר־לְאַצְלֵנִים־וְחַנְכֵנִים־זָמָן

gnasheth and against the just the wicked plotteth

H2161

H7563

H6662

H5921

שְׁפִיעָה:

upon him with his teeth

H8127

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 35:16 (Parallel theme): With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

Micah 2:1 (Evil): Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

Daniel 8:12 (Parallel theme): And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.

Psalms 31:13 (Parallel theme): For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.