

Psalms 64:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.

Analysis

But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. This verse marks the psalm's dramatic pivot from David's fear of enemies (v.1-6) to confident declaration of God's judgment against them. The emphatic "But God" (vayoreym Elohim, וַיֹּרֵם אֱלֹהִים) introduces divine reversal—the enemies have prepared their arrows (v.3-4), but God will shoot His arrow at them. The hunters become the hunted; the attackers become the targets.

"Shall shoot at them with an arrow" (chetz, חֵץ) uses singular "arrow"—one divine arrow suffices where enemies prepared many. This emphasizes God's efficiency and power. Where enemies plot elaborate schemes requiring multiple coordinated attacks, God's single intervention undoes all their plans. The verb form is prophetic perfect or waw-consecutive imperfect, expressing certainty about future divine action. David speaks of God's intervention as accomplished fact, so confident is he in divine justice.

"Suddenly" (pit'om, פֶּתֹם) means unexpectedly, in an instant, without warning. The enemies plot secretly, supposing themselves hidden and safe; God's judgment comes swiftly and surprisingly. They imagine themselves in control, crafting careful schemes—then sudden divine intervention shatters their plans. This recalls Proverbs 6:15: "Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy." God's timing is rarely our timing, but when His judgment falls, it comes decisively and unexpectedly.

"They be wounded" (hiyu makhoveyhem, הָיוּ מַכּוֹתֵיהֶם) literally means "their wounds shall be" or "they shall be their wounds." The Hebrew grammar is somewhat ambiguous, but the sense is clear: those who sought to wound others will themselves be wounded. The judgment fits the crime—measure for measure, arrow for arrow. This principle of poetic justice runs throughout Scripture: Haman hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:10); Babylon's violence returns on her own head (Obadiah 15); those taking the sword perish by the sword (Matthew 26:52). Divine justice is precisely calibrated—the wicked are caught in the works of their own hands (Psalm 9:16).

Historical Context

The imagery of arrows as divine judgment appears throughout Scripture. God's arrows represent plague, famine, defeat in battle, and various forms of judgment (Deuteronomy 32:23, Job 6:4, Psalm 7:13, Psalm 38:2). When God's anger kindles, His arrows fly forth as instruments of righteous wrath against sin and injustice. This anthropomorphic imagery helped ancient Israel understand God's active role in historical events—He wasn't distant or passive but directly intervening in human affairs to establish justice.

Throughout David's life, he witnessed sudden divine judgments that confirmed this psalm's promise. Saul, who relentlessly pursued David for years, died suddenly in battle at Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31). Nabal, who insulted David and refused him provisions, was struck by God and died ten days later (1 Samuel 25:38). Absalom, leading rebellion against his father, was caught in a tree and killed despite David's command to spare him (2 Samuel 18:9-15). In each case, David didn't personally avenge himself but witnessed God's sudden intervention.

The principle of sudden divine judgment became part of Israel's wisdom tradition. Proverbs repeatedly warns that the wicked will be suddenly destroyed (Proverbs 1:26-27, 3:25, 6:15, 24:22, 29:1). The prophets announced sudden judgments on nations oppressing Israel—Assyria's 185,000 soldiers destroyed in one night (Isaiah 37:36), Babylon falling in a single day (Isaiah 47:9), Edom's sudden desolation (Jeremiah 49:8). These historical fulfillments validated the psalmist's confidence: God does shoot His arrow; the wicked are suddenly wounded.

For the New Testament church, this psalm speaks to eschatological judgment. Jesus warned that His return would come like a thief in the night, suddenly and unexpectedly (Matthew 24:43-44). Paul taught that sudden destruction will come upon those saying 'peace and safety' (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Peter describes the day of the Lord coming suddenly, when the heavens will pass away with great noise and elements melt with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:10). While believers await Christ's return with hope, the wicked face sudden inescapable judgment.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the image of God shooting His own arrow at the wicked answer the concern that evil sometimes seems to prosper unopposed?
2. What does the 'suddenness' of divine judgment teach about patience in waiting for God's justice versus taking revenge into your own hands?
3. How does the principle of poetic justice (enemies wounded by their own schemes) reveal something about God's character and His moral order?
4. In what ways does confident prophetic declaration of God's future judgment (speaking it as already done) strengthen faith in the present?
5. How should believers respond when they see God's sudden judgment fall on those who persecuted them—with vindictive satisfaction or with soberness?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּרֶם	אֵל הָיִם	יָצַח	כִּי יָבֹא פְתָא וְ	
shall shoot	But God	at them with an arrow	suddenly	H1961
H3384	H430	H2671	H6597	
מִכֹּתָם:				
shall they be wounded				
H4347				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 30:13 (Parallel theme): Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

Psalms 73:19 (Parallel theme): How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

Psalms 18:14 (Parallel theme): Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

Job 6:4 (References God): For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.

Proverbs 29:1 (Parallel theme): He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Proverbs 6:15 (Parallel theme): Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

Deuteronomy 32:23 (Parallel theme): I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them.

Deuteronomy 32:42 (Parallel theme): I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

