

Psalm 69:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.

Analysis

Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. This begins the imprecatory section (verses 22-28) where David calls for divine judgment on enemies. "Their table" (מִזְבֵּחַ/shulchanam) represents prosperity, security, and fellowship—the blessings of peace. David prays these very blessings become a "snare" (פָּתָח/pach), a trap or noose capturing birds, and a "trap" (שְׁלֵמָה/moqesh), similar term for hunter's device.

"That which should have been for their welfare" (וְלֹא־שְׁלֵמָה/velishlomim) uses shalom—peace, wholeness, prosperity. David prays that enemies' very prosperity becomes their downfall, their comfort their curse. This isn't mere vindictiveness but prophetic insight: often the wicked are destroyed by their own success, becoming proud, complacent, and blind to coming judgment (Proverbs 1:32, Luke 12:16-21).

Paul quotes this verse in Romans 11:9-10 regarding Israel's partial hardening—their religious privileges and law, meant for blessing, became occasion for stumbling over Christ. This demonstrates how imprecatory psalms aren't merely personal vendettas but prophetic prayers aligned with God's justice.

Historical Context

Imprecatory psalms (35, 59, 69, 109, 137) trouble modern readers but were standard ancient Near Eastern lament genre, appearing in Mesopotamian,

Egyptian, and Hittite texts. However, biblical imprecations differ crucially: they appeal to covenant justice, not personal vengeance; they invoke God's judgment, not personal retaliation; and they're often prophetic, not merely vindictive.

"Table" as metaphor for prosperity and security appears throughout Scripture (Psalm 23:5, 78:19). To pray for an enemy's table to become a snare means praying their very security and satisfaction become the means of judgment—a common biblical theme where the wicked are destroyed by their own devices (Psalm 7:15-16, 9:15, Proverbs 26:27).

Jesus's teaching to "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44) doesn't contradict imprecatory psalms but completes them. Personal forgiveness doesn't negate God's justice. We forgive personally while recognizing God will judge righteously.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do you reconcile imprecatory prayers for justice with Jesus's command to love enemies?
2. In what ways might prosperity and comfort become spiritual traps, even for believers?
3. What is the difference between praying for God's justice on evil and seeking personal vengeance?

Interlinear Text

לְפָנֶיךָ מִשְׁלַחַן מִיְּהִי

H1961 **Let their table**

H7979

לְפָנֶיךָ מִשְׁלַחַן

H7979 **before**

H6440

לְפָנֶיךָ מִשְׁלַחַן

H6341 **become a snare**

וְלֹשֶׁלּוּם יִם

לְמַזְבֵּשׁ:

them and that which should have been for their welfare let it become a trap

H7965

H4170

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 5:3 (Parallel theme): For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

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