

Psalms 78:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

Analysis

Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. The brutal "nevertheless" (way, וַי) demolishes the pious confession of verse 35. Pātâ (פָּתָא, "flatter") means to deceive or seduce, exposing their worship as manipulation—attempting to appease an angry deity through empty words. Kāzab (כָּזַב, "lied") describes deliberate falsehood, not mere insincerity.

This verse dissects religious hypocrisy at its core: using God's own vocabulary (Rock, Redeemer) while hearts remain uncommitted. Their mouths spoke orthodox confessions, but tongues lied because hearts were far from God—precisely what Isaiah would later prophesy (Isaiah 29:13) and Jesus would quote against Pharisees (Matthew 15:8).

The indictment is terrifying: you can lie to God with true words if your heart contradicts them. External religious performance—prayers, songs, confessions—becomes perjury when divorced from internal reality. This anticipates James's warning that faith without works is dead (James 2:17).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern treaty language required oath-taking and verbal commitment. Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh involved public confessions and vows. Asaph exposes these solemn commitments as fraudulent

when the heart remained rebellious—a violation of the third commandment about not taking God's name in vain.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What worship practices in your life might constitute "flattering God with your mouth" while your heart is distant?
2. How can you identify gaps between your professed beliefs and actual trust in God?
3. What does it mean to "lie to God"—and how might you be doing it without realizing?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּפְתּוּ וְהוּ	בִּפְיָם	וּ בְלָשׁוֹן
Nevertheless they did flatter	him with their mouth	unto him with their tongues
H6601	H6310	H3956
וַיִּשְׁבּוּ	לֵוִי	
and they lied		
H3576	H0	

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 33:31 (Parallel theme): And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

Isaiah 29:13 (Parallel theme): Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

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