

Psalms 78:64

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.

Analysis

Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation. The death of **priests** (kohanav, כֹּהֲנָיו)—Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's corrupt sons—represented spiritual leadership's collapse. Priests were supposed to mediate God's presence; their violent death symbolized broken mediation. Israel lost both military defenders (v. 63) and spiritual guides simultaneously—total societal breakdown.

The phrase **widows made no lamentation** (almnotav lo tivkeynah, אֶלְמֹנָתָיו לֹא תִבְכְּיָנָהּ) describes shock so profound that normal grief rituals ceased. Ancient Near Eastern mourning included loud wailing and formal laments; their absence indicates either complete numbness or circumstances (continued battle, captivity) preventing proper grieving. Grief itself was stolen.

This verse prepares for God's awakening (v. 65)—the nadir before restoration. Only when human strength utterly fails does God rise to act. The priests' death exposed the need for a perfect High Priest; Christ alone fulfills priestly mediation that human weakness corrupted (Hebrews 7:23-28).

Historical Context

Eli's sons died carrying the ark into battle (1 Samuel 4:11), a fitting judgment for their sacrilege (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25). Their widows—facing devastating

trauma—couldn't perform normal mourning rites. This crisis catalyzed Israel's demand for monarchy, ending the judges period and beginning a new political era.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does corrupt spiritual leadership contribute to national judgment, and what responsibility do congregations bear for tolerating it?
2. What does the absence of normal grief rituals teach about trauma's comprehensive destruction of social functioning?
3. In what ways does Christ's perfect priesthood remedy the failures of Israel's human priests?

Interlinear Text

כֹּהֲנֵיוֹ	בַּיָּד רֶבֶב	נָפַל לוֹ	וְאֶלְמָנֹתָיו	לֹא	תִבְכְּיָנָהּ:
Their priests	by the sword	fell	and their widows	H3808	made no lamentation
H3548	H2719	H5307	H490		H1058

Additional Cross-References

Job 27:15 (Parallel theme): Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep.

1 Samuel 4:17 (Parallel theme): And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

Ezekiel 24:23 (Parallel theme): And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another.

1 Samuel 4:11 (Parallel theme): And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

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