

Psalms 79:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.

Analysis

For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place. This verse provides justification for the previous imprecatory prayer. "Devoured" (akhal, אכל) uses consuming/eating imagery, suggesting voracious destruction—not merely defeating but consuming completely, like wild beasts devouring prey. "Jacob" employs Israel's covenant name, emphasizing that attacking Israel attacks the people of God's promise to the patriarchs.

"Laid waste his dwelling place" (et-navehu heshamu, אֶת-נָבֵהוּ הַשְׁמָעוּ) uses shamem (הַשְׁמָעֵ), meaning to devastate, make desolate, horrify. The "dwelling place" (naveh) can refer to pasture or habitation—either the land of Israel or Jerusalem/the temple specifically. If temple, the phrase describes the ultimate sacrilege: destroying God's earthly dwelling. If land generally, it emphasizes the comprehensive devastation of Israel's covenant inheritance.

The verse functions as evidence in a legal argument: these nations deserve judgment because they have committed the crime of covenant violation by proxy—they attacked God's covenant people and land. The logic anticipates Genesis 12:3's promise that God will curse those who curse Abraham's descendants. The psalmist holds God to His own covenant commitment to defend Israel against hostile nations.

Historical Context

The Babylonian conquest fulfilled the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28-29 and Leviticus 26. The term "laid waste" accurately describes archaeological evidence of destruction layers in 6th-century BC Judah. Cities were burned, populations deported, and land left desolate. The phrase "devoured Jacob" reflects the totality of devastation—political, economic, religious, and demographic collapse. Jeremiah 25:9 describes Nebuchadnezzar as God's servant executing judgment, yet Jeremiah 25:12 promises God will subsequently judge Babylon for excessive cruelty.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does covenant theology (God's promises to defend His people) inform Christian prayer regarding persecution today?
2. What is the relationship between divine sovereignty (God permitted Israel's defeat) and human accountability (nations are responsible for cruelty)?
3. How should believers respond when God allows His people to experience devastating defeat for purposes of discipline?

Interlinear Text

וְאָכְלָה	אַתָּה	יְמִלָּחַם	בְּ	אַתָּה	יְמִלָּחַם	בְּ
H3588	For they have devoured	H853	Jacob	H853	his dwelling place	H5116
	H398		H3290			

הַשְׁמִיתָ
and laid waste
H8074

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 1:15 (Parallel theme): And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

Jeremiah 50:7 (Parallel theme): All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.

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