

Psalms 83:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their
princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:

Analysis

Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna. The prayer specifies judgment on enemy leadership. Shitemo nedivenmo k-Orev v-khi-Z'ev (שִׁיתֵמוּ נְדִיבֵמוּ כְּעֹרֵב וְכִזְעָב, "make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb") invokes Gideon's victory where these Midianite princes were killed by Ephraimites (Judges 7:25). Oreb ("raven") and Zeeb ("wolf") died at locations named after them—the rock of Oreb and winepress of Zeeb—their names permanently memorializing their defeat.

V-khol nesikhenmo khi-Zevach v-khi-Tsalmunna (וְכָל-נְסִיכֵמוּ כִּזְבַּח וְכִי-צַלְמֻנָּה, "all their princes as Zebah and as Zalmunna") references Midianite kings personally executed by Gideon (Judges 8:21) after they confessed to killing his brothers. The prayer asks for enemy leadership's comprehensive destruction—not just armies defeated but commanders eliminated, ensuring the threat doesn't resurface.

Targeting leadership has strategic logic: defeating generals demoralizes armies, killing kings ends dynasties, eliminating nobles prevents regrouping. But the deeper theological point concerns accountability. Leaders who instigate evil bear greater guilt than those who follow (James 3:1). The conspiracy's architects deserve special judgment. Similarly, Jesus pronounced severer condemnation on religious leaders who misled people (Matthew 23:13-36) than on common sinners they despised.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare recognized leadership's importance. Killing enemy commanders could end conflicts quickly—David's defeat of Goliath routed Philistine armies (1 Samuel 17:51-52). Jezebel's elimination ended Baal worship's institutional support (2 Kings 9:30-37). Haman's execution delivered Persian Jews (Esther 7:10). The principle extends beyond military conflict: removing corrupt leadership enables reformation (2 Kings 23:4-25, Nehemiah 13:4-9). The four Midianite leaders named represent comprehensive defeat of enemy command structure at all levels—princes and kings, military and political leadership.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Why does Scripture often focus on judging leaders more severely than followers, and what does this teach about leadership accountability?
2. How should believers pray regarding corrupt or hostile political, cultural, or religious leadership?
3. What biblical examples demonstrate that removing evil leadership can transform entire communities or nations?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	וּ כְצִלְמֹנָ ע	וְזֶבַח	וְזֶבַח	כְּעֹרֶב	נְ דִיבִימוֹ	שִׁית מוֹ
	and as Zalmunna	as Zebah	and like Zeeb	like Oreb	their nobles	Make
H3605	H6759	H2078	H2062	H6159	H5081	H7896

נְסִיכֵימוֹ:
yea all their princes
H5257

Additional Cross-References

Judges 7:25 (Parallel theme): And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

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