

# Zechariah 11:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.

## Analysis

**Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.** This verse describes the appalling exploitation of God's flock by their supposed caretakers. "**Whose possessors slay them**" (asher qonehem yahargum, אֲשֶׁר קָנֵהם יָהָרָגֵם) depicts owners who kill their own sheep for profit—viewing them as commodities, not living souls entrusted to their care.

**"And hold themselves not guilty"** (ve-lo ye'shamu, וְלֹא יַעֲשֻׂמוּ) reveals their moral blindness: they feel no guilt for destroying those in their charge. They exploit God's people while claiming righteousness. **"They that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich"** combines religious hypocrisy with greed—thanking God while profiting from God's people's suffering. This describes religious leaders who use their positions for financial gain while displaying outward piety.

**"Their own shepherds pity them not"** (ve-ro'eihem lo yachmol aleihem, וְרָעִים לֹא יָחְמוֹל עֲלֵיכֶם) is the devastating climax: those called to shepherd have no compassion. The word chaml means to spare, show mercy, have compassion. Israel's leaders are completely devoid of pastoral concern. This describes the Pharisees and religious elite of Jesus's day who "devour widows' houses" (Matthew 23:14) and "bind heavy burdens on men's shoulders" (Matthew 23:4).

## Historical Context

---

This verse paints a damning picture of Israel's leadership from the intertestamental period through Jesus's time. The Hasmonean priest-kings combined religious office with political power, often exploiting the people. The Sadducees collaborated with Rome for profit. The Pharisees imposed crushing legalistic burdens while exempting themselves. Jesus condemned them: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer" (Matthew 23:14).

The phrase "Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich" captures their religious veneer masking greed. They attributed their wealth to God's blessing while extracting it from the poor through temple taxes, sacrificial system manipulation, and legal trickery. Annas and Caiaphas's families controlled the temple market, gouging pilgrims on sacrificial animals. Jesus cleansed the temple precisely because they had made God's house "a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13).

## Related Passages

---

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

---

1. How does this verse warn religious leaders against viewing their congregations as means to personal gain rather than souls entrusted to their care?
2. In what ways do modern churches risk repeating this error—exploiting God's people while claiming to serve them?
3. How does Jesus as the Good Shepherd who "lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11) contrast with these shepherds who slay and sell the flock?

## Interlinear Text

---

|                         |                  |         |             |               |            |                                     |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------|-------------|---------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| וְאֶשְׁתָּמֵד           | לְנִגְיָה        | אֲשֶׁר  | אֲשֶׁר      | אֲשֶׁר        | אֲשֶׁר     | מִזְמָרְתָּם                        |
| H834                    | Whose possessors | H7069   | slay        | H3808         | hold       | them and hold themselves not guilty |
|                         |                  |         | H2026       |               |            | H816                                |
| וְאֶעֱשֶׂה              | רְאֵם            | רְאֵם   | בָּרְכָה    | יְהִי הָרָךְ  | וְמִכְרִיב | וְאֶעֱשֶׂה                          |
| and they that sell      | them say         | Blessed | be the LORD | for I am rich |            |                                     |
| H4376                   | H559             | H1288   | H3068       |               |            | H6238                               |
| עַלְיָקָן               | יְחִימָה         | וְלֹא   | לֹא         | עִירָה        | וְרַעַב    | מִזְמָרְתָּם                        |
| and their own shepherds | H3808            | pity    | H5921       |               |            |                                     |
| H7462                   |                  | H2550   |             |               |            |                                     |

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Jeremiah 50:7** (References Lord): 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.

**Hosea 12:8** (Parallel theme): And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.