

Zechariah 7:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Analysis

And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor (וְאַל־תַּעֲשִׂיחוּ, ve'almanah veyatom ger ve'ani al-ta'ashoqu)—God's social ethic targets society's most vulnerable. The verb ashaq (אֶשַׁח) means to extort, defraud, or oppress through injustice. The four categories—almanah (widow), yatom (orphan), ger (sojourner/alien), ani (poor)—appear repeatedly throughout Torah and prophets as God's special concern (Exodus 22:21-24; Deuteronomy 10:18; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 7:6). These lack societal power and protection.

And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart—God penetrates beyond external acts to internal disposition. The verb chashav (חָשַׁב) means to think, plan, devise. External obedience satisfies human law, but God requires heart-purity (1 Samuel 16:7). Jesus intensified this principle: anger equals murder, lust equals adultery (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28). James warns that favoritism toward the rich while despising the poor violates the royal law of love (James 2:1-9).

This verse connects authentic worship with social justice. God rejects religious ritual divorced from ethical practice. The prophets unanimously condemned this divorce: Isaiah's indictment of festivals without justice (Isaiah 1:10-17), Amos's rejection of assemblies while oppressing the poor (Amos 5:21-24), Micah's

summary that God requires justice, mercy, and humble walking over sacrifice (Micah 6:6-8).

Historical Context

This oracle came in the fourth year of Darius (518 BC, v. 1), two years after temple rebuilding resumed. Bethel's delegation asked whether they should continue commemorative fasts established during exile (v. 3). God's response cuts to motive: were they mourning for God or themselves? Then He reminds them why the first temple fell—not lack of religious observance but social injustice and hardened hearts. The pre-exilic prophets had warned that ritual without righteousness invited judgment, resulting in 70 years of exile.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge modern Christians who maintain religious observance while ignoring social injustice toward the vulnerable?
2. In what ways might you 'imagine evil' against others in your heart while maintaining external courtesy or religious correctness?
3. Who are today's equivalents of 'the widow, orphan, stranger, and poor' in your community—and how is God calling you to defend rather than oppress them?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלְמָנָה הַ	וְיֵת וָאִם	גַּר	וְעֲנִי י	אֶל	וְתַעֲשֶׂה קוֹל
not the widow	nor the fatherless	the stranger	nor the poor	H408	And oppress
H490	H3490	H1616	H6041		H6231
וְרָעָה	אֶיִשׁ	אָחִיו	אֶל	וְתִשָּׁב וְ	בְּלִבְבְּכֶם:
evil	against	his brother	H408	and let none of you imagine	in your heart
H7451	H376	H251		H2803	H3824

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 5:28 (Evil): They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

Isaiah 1:23 (Parallel theme): Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Psalms 72:4 (Parallel theme): He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

Psalms 21:11 (Evil): For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

Psalms 140:2 (Parallel theme): Which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war.

Proverbs 6:18 (Evil): An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

Proverbs 3:29 (Evil): Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

1 John 3:15 (Parallel theme): Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Jeremiah 18:18 (Parallel theme): Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the

wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

Exodus 23:9 (Parallel theme): Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

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