

Zechariah 8:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.

Analysis

For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour. God contrasts past hardship with promised future blessing. The phrase "**before these days**" (lifnei ha-yamim ha-hem, לִפְנֵי הַיּוֹם הַהֵם) refers to the period before temple rebuilding resumed—likely the sixteen years between laying the foundation (536 BC) and recommencing work (520 BC), when economic conditions were dire.

"There was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast" (lo sachar ha-adam... ve-sachar ha-behemah enennah, לא שכר האדם... ושכר הבהמה איןנה) describes economic collapse—no wages for workers, no profit from livestock. Agriculture and commerce failed; poverty prevailed. This fulfills covenant curses: "Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap" (Micah 6:15). Haggai described identical conditions: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough... and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6).

"Neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction" indicates social instability and danger—people couldn't travel safely due to tzar (affliction/distress). The climactic statement: **"for I set all men every one against his neighbour"** (va-ashalach et-kol-ha-adam ish be-re'ehu, וְאַשְׁלַח אֶת-כָל-הָעָם אִישׁ בְּרֵעָהוּ—God Himself caused social breakdown, neighbor

against neighbor. This divine judgment created chaotic conditions where community trust dissolved, paralleling covenant curses (Leviticus 26:17; Jeremiah 9:4-5).

Historical Context

The historical context appears in Haggai 1:5-11. When returnees prioritized building their own houses over God's temple, God withheld blessing: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6). This wasn't random misfortune but covenantal discipline: "I called for a drought upon the land... and upon all the labour of the hands" (Haggai 1:11).

The phrase "I set all men every one against his neighbour" may reference internal conflicts among the returned community, friction with Samaritans and surrounding peoples (Ezra 4), and general social disorder accompanying economic hardship. When material blessing dries up, human relationships often deteriorate—poverty breeds conflict, scarcity generates suspicion, hardship fractures community. This social chaos represented divine judgment for misplaced priorities.

Yet Haggai 2:15-19 promises reversal: "Consider now from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD... from this day will I bless you." The moment they recommitted to temple building (prioritizing God's house), covenant blessing would resume. Zechariah's message in 8:10 confirms this pattern—past hardship resulted from covenant neglect, but repentance and obedience open floodgates of blessing. The principle endures: seeking first God's kingdom results in provision (Matthew 6:33), while reversing priorities invites discipline.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do economic hardship and social conflict sometimes function as divine discipline for spiritual unfaithfulness or misplaced priorities?
2. What does it mean practically to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33) in the face of material needs and financial pressure?
3. When experiencing prolonged difficulty despite faithful service, how do we discern between divine discipline, spiritual attack, or simply living in a fallen world?

Interlinear Text

נָהָרִים כִּי לִפְנֵי יְמֵינוּ בַּתְּמִימָן וְשָׁכָר אֲלֵיכֶם לֹא הָיָה

H3588 For before H1992 no hire H3808 there was
H6440 H3117 H7939 H120 H1961

אֵין לְבָבָה בְּבָבָם הַוְשָׁכָר אֵלִיזָצָר אֵין לְבָבָה

no hire for beast H369 to him that went out or came in H369
H7939 H929 H3318 H935

כָּל אֲתָת וְאַשְׁלֵחַ מִן בֵּצָר

neither was there any peace H4480 because of the affliction for I set H853 H3605
H7965 H6862 H7971

בְּרַעֲנָה אֲשֶׁר פָּאֵד מִן

all men every one against his neighbour H7453
H120 H376

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 19:2 (Parallel theme): And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.

Amos 3:6 (Parallel theme): Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

Amos 9:4 (Parallel theme): And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

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