

# Deuteronomy 29:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?

## Analysis

**Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?** עַל-מָה עֲשָׂה יְהוָה כֹּה לְאַגָּז (—The rhetorical questions al meh ("on account of what?") and meh chor ha-af ha-gadol ha-zeh ("what is the heat of this great anger?") frame international astonishment. Pagan nations expect gods to protect their territories; Yahweh's devastation of his own covenant land appears paradoxical.

The phrase chor ha-af ("burning of anger") uses charah (to burn, be kindled) with af (nostril, anger)—literally "burning of nostrils," depicting fierce wrath. The modifier gadol ("great") emphasizes disproportionate severity from outsiders' perspective. Why would Israel's God destroy Israel?

This international interrogation assumes nations recognize covenant theology—they know this land belongs to Yahweh and understand his relationship with Israel differs from typical god-nation dynamics. The question anticipates correct theological diagnosis: covenant violation, not divine weakness or capriciousness, explains the judgment. The nations become inadvertent theologians, forced to acknowledge Yahweh's covenant justice.

## Historical Context

After Jerusalem's fall (586 BCE), surrounding nations mocked Judah's ruin (Psalm 79:1-4, Lamentations 2:15-16). Yet some, like Nebuchadnezzar, eventually acknowledged Yahweh's sovereignty (Daniel 4:34-37). The exilic period forced theological reckoning—why did the temple fall? Jeremiah and Ezekiel provided the answer: covenant unfaithfulness, not Marduk's superiority over Yahweh. This question-answer format appears in ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties warning that judgment will be obvious and explicable to observers.

## Related Passages

## Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

## Genesis 1:1 – Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

1. How does God's judgment of his own people testify to watching unbelievers about his character?
2. When contemporary Christians fail publicly, how should we answer the watching world's 'Why?'

## Interlinear Text

בְּאָרֶץ כְּהֵן לֹא רֹא שְׁאַת מֵה בָּזֶה תְּרִיבָה בְּאָרֶץ  
H3602 thus unto this land H2063 H4100 what meaneth the heat anger  
H776 H2750 H639

בְּגָד וְלָבָה: H2088

