

# 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

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**Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?** (עַל־מָה עָשָׂה יְהוָה בְּכֵה לְאַרְצָךְ וְעַל־מָה חֹרֵי אֶף הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה)—The rhetorical questions *al meh* ("on account of what?") and *meh chori 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 *chori 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

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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

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**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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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

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וְאָמְרוּ shall say H559	כָּל H3605	הַגּוֹיִם Even all nations H1471	עַל H5921	מָה H4100	עָשָׂה done H6213	יְהוָה Wherefore hath the LORD H3068
כִּי H3602	לָאֵרֶץ thus unto this land H776	הַזֹּאת H2063	מָה H4100	חֹרֵי what meaneth the heat H2750	קָדַח anger H639	
וּלְ of this great H1419	הַזֶּה H2088					

