

Deuteronomy 32:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

Analysis

O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!—Moses expresses divine longing for Israel's wisdom and repentance. The Hebrew exclamation *lu chakamu* (לו חֲכָמוּ, 'O that they were wise') uses *lu*, expressing unfulfilled wish or lament—God desires their wisdom but knows they'll resist. *Chakam* (חָכַם, 'to be wise') means not just intellectual knowledge but skillful living aligned with divine reality, fearing God and keeping His commandments (Deuteronomy 4:6; Proverbs 1:7).

The parallel phrase *yaskilu zot* (יִשְׁכִּילוּ זֹאת, 'they would understand this') uses *sakal*, meaning to have insight, prudence, success—the ability to perceive consequences. 'This' refers to the entire prophetic witness of the Song: God's faithfulness, Israel's rebellion, judgment's inevitability, and eventual restoration. **That they would consider their latter end** (*yavinu le'acharitam*, יָבִינוּ לְאַחֲרִיתָם) urges contemplation of final outcomes—where rebellion leads. *Acharit* means end, outcome, future destiny—both immediate judgment and ultimate eschatological reality.

This verse reveals God's pastoral heart—He doesn't delight in judgment (Ezekiel 33:11) but longs for repentance. Jesus echoes this over Jerusalem: 'How often I would have gathered your children...but you were not willing' (Matthew 23:37). Wisdom means recognizing sin's trajectory and turning before reaching destruction.

Historical Context

Throughout Israel's history, prophets repeatedly called for the wisdom Moses wished for. Isaiah urged, 'Come now, let us reason together' (Isaiah 1:18). Jeremiah pleaded, 'Stand at the crossroads and look...ask for the ancient paths' (Jeremiah 6:16). Jesus wept over Jerusalem's refusal to recognize 'the time of your visitation' (Luke 19:44). In each generation, God sent messengers urging people to 'consider their latter end' before judgment arrived. The 586 BC Babylonian exile and AD 70 Roman destruction demonstrated what happens when God's people ignore prophetic warnings. Hebrews 3:7-15 applies this to Christians: 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.' The call to wisdom and consideration remains urgent for every generation.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'consider your latter end' in light of both temporal consequences and eternal destiny?
2. How does God's expressed longing for Israel's wisdom challenge our understanding of divine judgment?

Interlinear Text

ל ו	חֲכָמֵי ו	וְשָׂפָּה יָלוּ	זֶה אֵת	יִבְּ יֵנוּ
O that	they were wise	that they understood	H2063	this that they would consider
H3863	H2449	H7919		H995

לְאַחֲרֵיתָם:

their latter end

H319

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 81:13 (Parallel theme): Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

Deuteronomy 5:29 (Parallel theme): O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Psalms 107:43 (Parallel theme): Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

Luke 12:20 (Parallel theme): But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

Hosea 14:9 (Parallel theme): Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Isaiah 47:7 (Parallel theme): And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.

Isaiah 10:3 (Parallel theme): And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?