

Isaiah 16:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah:
the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal
plants thereof, they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered
through the wilderness: her branches are stretched out, they
are gone over the sea.

Analysis

Agricultural devastation extends to Heshbon and Sibmah's famous vineyards. Fields languish, choice vines are destroyed, vines that reached Jazer and wandered through wilderness are broken down. "Lords of the heathen" (foreign rulers) breaking vines indicates systematic destruction of economic infrastructure. Ancient warfare targeted agriculture to create famine and prevent recovery. Spiritually, this depicts how sin destroys fruitfulness—life apart from the True Vine (John 15) produces temporary prosperity that judgment withers.

Historical Context

Moab's plateau provided excellent viticulture. Heshbon and Sibmah wines were renowned and exported throughout the region. Archaeological surveys confirm extensive ancient terrace systems for grape cultivation. Assyrian and Babylonian military policy included destroying fruit trees and vines (2 Kings 3:19, 25). Systematic agricultural destruction contributed to Moab's depopulation and disappearance as a distinct nation.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does agricultural destruction illustrate judgment removing economic foundations of pride?
2. What does withering vines teach about fruitlessness apart from the True Vine?
3. How do temporal economic judgments prefigure final judgment's comprehensive destruction?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	שְׂדֵמוֹת	חֶשְׁבֹן וְ	אֲמָל ל	וְכֶן	שִׁבְמָה ה	בְּעֵלֵי
H3588	For the fields	of Heshbon	languish	and the vine	of Sibmah	the lords
	H7709	H2809	H535	H1612	H7643	H1167
גוֹיִם	הִלְמוּ וְ	שְׂרוּקֵי יָהּ	עַד	יַעֲזֵר		
of the heathen	have broken down	the principal plants	H5704	even unto Jazer		
H1471	H1986	H8291		H3270		
נִגַּע עוֹ	תָּעוּ	מִדְבָּר	שֶׁל חוֹתֵי יָהּ			
thereof they are come	they wandered	through the wilderness	her branches			
H5060	H8582	H4057	H7976			
נִטְּשׁוּ וְ	עָבְרוּ	יָם:				
are stretched out	they are gone over	the sea				
H5203	H5674	H3220				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 15:4 (Parallel theme): And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh: their voice shall be heard even unto Jahaz: therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; his life shall be grievous unto him.

Numbers 32:38 (Parallel theme): And Nebo, and Baal-meon, (their names being changed,) and Shibmah: and gave other names unto the cities which they builded.

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