

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

בָּאָלָי	שְׁבָתָה	הַ	כִּי	שְׁדָמוֹת	וְ	חָשַׁבְתִּי	לְ	אָמַלְתִּי	וְ	שְׁדָמוֹת	כִּי
H3588	For the fields	of Heshbon		languish	and the vine	of Sibmah	the lords				
H7709		H2809		H535		H1612		H7643		H1167	
גּוֹיִם	כָּלָם	וְ	שְׁרוֹקָן	יְבָ	עַד	יְנֵי	רַ				
of the heathen	have broken down		the principal plants		H5704	even unto Jazer					
H1471		H1986		H8291		H3270					
מִדְבָּר	תְּ	עַ	מִדְבָּר	תְּ	עַ	שְׁלָ	חוֹתֶת	יְבָ			
thereof they are come	they wandered		through the wilderness		H4057	her branches					
H5060		H8582		H4057		H7976					
נִטְשָׁה	בָּרוּ	עַ	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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