

Isaiah 27:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, and set them on fire: for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.

Analysis

When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, and set them on fire: for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour. This verse continues describing the desolate city, now using agricultural imagery. **When the boughs thereof are withered** (beyavesh qetsireyha, בִּיבֶשׁ קִצִּירֶיהָ, literally "when its harvest/branches dry up") pictures dead, brittle branches. **They shall be broken off** (tishavarna, תִּשְׁבְּרֶנָּה) suggests easy snapping of lifeless wood.

The women come, and set them on fire (nashim ba'ot me'irot otah, נָשִׁים בָּאוֹת, וְקָאִירוּ אֹתָהּ)—women gathering dead branches for fuel, the most mundane domestic task, occurs in ruins of once-great powers. The reason for this irreversible judgment: **for it is a people of no understanding** (ki lo am-binot hu, כִּי לֹא עַם-בִּינֹת הוּא). Binah (בִּינָה) means discernment, insight, wisdom—specifically spiritual understanding. Romans 1:21-22 describes Gentiles who "became vain in their imaginations...professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Rejecting knowledge of God leads to judicial abandonment.

Therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that

formed them will shew them no favour reverses covenant language. God as Creator (osehu, עֲשֵׂהוּ, maker) and Former (yotsero, יוֹצֵרוֹ, potter/shaper) normally implies care, but willful rejection of understanding results in forfeited mercy (lo yerachamenu, לֹא יִרְחַמֵּנוּ) and favour (lo yechannenu, לֹא יַחַנֵּנוּ). This is Hosea's "Lo-ruhamah" ("no mercy," Hosea 1:6) and "Lo-ammi" ("not my people," Hosea 1:9) made permanent for those who finally reject God.

Historical Context

Nations surrounding Israel had access to knowledge of the true God through Israel's presence, Scripture, and prophets, yet persistently chose idolatry and opposed God's people. Their lack of understanding was willful, not innocent ignorance. Romans 1:18-32 explains how suppressing truth leads to darkened understanding and judicial hardening. For the church, this warning applies to apostates who had knowledge but rejected it (Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-27). Persisting in unbelief despite clear revelation results in irreversible judgment.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does this verse teach about the consequences of willfully rejecting spiritual understanding?
2. How does being created and formed by God increase accountability for those who reject Him?
3. What distinguishes 'a people of no understanding' (willful rejection) from genuine spiritual seekers who struggle with doubts?

Interlinear Text

בִּיבֹשׁ thereof are withered H3001	קִצִּיכָה When the boughs H7105	תִּשָּׁבֵר הָנָה they shall be broken off H7665	נָשִׁים the women H802	בָּא וְתֵ come H935	
וְתִשָּׂרֵף and set them on fire H215	אֹתָהּ H853	כִּי H3588	לֹא H3808	עַם for it is a people H5971	בִּינֹת of no understanding H998
וְהָיָה H1931	עַל H5921	כֵּן H3651	לֹא H3808	יִרְחֹמֶם נֹ them will not have mercy H7355	עֹשֵׂה הוּא therefore he that made H6213
וְיִצְרָה on them and he that formed H3335	לֹא H3808	יִחַנְנוּ them will shew them no favour H2603			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 1:3 (Parallel theme): The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Isaiah 43:7 (Creation): Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

Isaiah 44:24 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Isaiah 43:1 (Creation): But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

Jeremiah 8:7 (Parallel theme): Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

