

Jeremiah 9:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?

Analysis

This verse poses a wisdom question: 'Who is the wise man, that may understand this?' The Hebrew *chakam* (חָכָם, wise) and *yavin* (יָבִין, understand, discern) challenge those claiming wisdom to explain the situation. 'And who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it?' Questions both sages and prophets—who can explain why the land is ruined? 'For what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?' The question's urgency reflects the theological crisis: how could YHWH's land, YHWH's people, YHWH's city face such devastation? Only divine revelation can answer—human wisdom fails to comprehend God's ways in judgment.

Historical Context

This verse may address the exilic community's theological confusion. How could God allow His temple's destruction? Where was His promised protection? Ancient Near Eastern peoples expected their gods to defend their temples; YHWH's 'failure' required explanation. The answer comes in verses 13-14: covenant violation explains divine judgment. This theological processing during exile produced much of the Hebrew Bible's final form.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why does understanding God's judgment require divine revelation rather than merely human wisdom?
2. How does the question's form—searching for someone wise enough to understand—expose the limits of unaided human reasoning about God's ways?

Interlinear Text

מִי H4310	הָאִישׁ man H376	הַחֲכָם Who is the wise H2450	וְיָבִין that may understand H995	אֶת H853	זֶה H2063	אֶת H834
דָּבַר hath spoken H1696	וְכִי this and who is H6310	פִּי he to whom the mouth H3068	יְהוָה of the LORD H413			
וְיִגְדֵּה that he may declare H5046	עַל H5921	מֶה H4100	אֲבָדָה perisheth H6	הָאֲרֶץ it for what the land H776	וְנִצְתָּה and is burned up H3341	
כַּמִּדְבָּר like a wilderness H4057	מִבֵּל H1097	עֹבֵר: that none passeth through H5674				

Additional Cross-References

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

Hosea 14:9 (References Lord): 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.

Psalms 107:34 (Parallel theme): A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

Deuteronomy 32:29 (Parallel theme): O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

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