

Numbers 14:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

Analysis

Moses' intercession imagines the nations' false conclusion that God 'slew them in the wilderness' out of inability to fulfill His promise. This hypothetical speech highlights how God's judgments can be misinterpreted when observers lack understanding of covenant relationship and the necessity of divine holiness.

Historical Context

The surrounding nations knew of Israel's Exodus and wilderness journey (as Rahab later testified, Joshua 2:9-10). Their interpretation of events would shape their understanding of Yahweh's power and character, making Israel's experience a testimony—either to God's faithfulness or (falsely) to His weakness.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do unbelievers interpret the trials and disciplines you experience as a Christian?
2. What opportunities do you have to correct false perceptions of God's character?

Interlinear Text

אֲלֹהִים בְּנֵי הָעָם הַשְׁמִיט מִבְּלָתָה יְהוָה יְכֹלֶת אִכְּלָה
was not able Because the LORD to bring this people
H1115 H3201 H3068 H853 H5971 H2088 H413

לְפָנֵי אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע בְּאַרְצָה
which he sware unto them therefore he hath slain
H834 H7650 H0 H7819

בְּמִדְבָּר
them in the wilderness
H4057

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 9:28 (References Lord): Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.

Joshua 7:9 (Parallel theme): For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

Joshua 7:7 (References Lord): And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!

