

Numbers 21:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Analysis

God sent 'fiery serpents' (Hebrew 'seraphim', burning ones) among Israel, whose bites killed many. The adjective 'fiery' may describe the burning pain of venom or the serpents' appearance. This judgment matched the sin—they complained about lack of food and water, so God removed protection from deadly environment. Yet even this severe discipline aimed at producing repentance.

Historical Context

The Sinai wilderness contained various venomous snakes, normally held at bay by divine protection. God's removal of protection exposed Israel to natural dangers, teaching that His provision extends beyond obvious miracles like manna to encompass protection from countless unseen threats.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How much of God's protection and provision goes unnoticed until removed?

2. What does God allowing natural consequences of sin teach about His discipline methods?

Interlinear Text

וְיִשְׁלַח	יְהוָה	עַם	אֵת	הַנָּחָשׁ	יִם
sent	And the LORD	among the people	H853	serpents	fiery
H7971	H3068	H5971		H5175	H8314
וַיִּנָּשֶׁכּוּ	אֹתָם	עַם	וַיָּמָת	עַם	כִּב
and they bit	H853	among the people	died	among the people	and much
H5391		H5971	H4191	H5971	H7227
מִשְׁכָּאֵל:					
of Israel					
H3478					

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 10:9 (Parallel theme): Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Jeremiah 8:17 (References Lord): For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

Deuteronomy 8:15 (Parallel theme): Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

Isaiah 30:6 (Parallel theme): The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them.

Isaiah 14:29 (Parallel theme): Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.

