

Numbers 32:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed.

Analysis

And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed—God's judgment matched the spies' forty-day reconnaissance with forty years of wandering (Numbers 14:34), one year per day. The verb "wander" (nuah, נוּחַ) means to waver, totter, or move aimlessly—contrasting with the purposeful march toward Canaan God had intended.

"Until all the generation...was consumed" (tamam, תָּמַם, finished/completed/exhausted) fulfilled God's oath that the rebellious adults would die in the wilderness. This demonstrates that God's patience, though vast, has limits—persistent covenant-breaking brings inevitable judgment. Yet God's purpose continued; He preserved the next generation to inherit His promises. The forty years accomplished both judgment and preparation, purging unbelief while raising up a faithful generation under Joshua's leadership.

Historical Context

The wilderness wandering (approximately 1445-1405 BC) saw the death of all adults aged twenty and above who had been counted in the census at Sinai

(Numbers 1), except Caleb and Joshua. During this period, Israel camped primarily at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran/Zin. The deaths occurred gradually over four decades, with the final major die-off apparently in the 40th year. This judgment shaped Israel's national memory profoundly (Psalm 95:7-11; Hebrews 3:7-19).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's measured judgment (forty years matching forty days) reveal both justice and restraint?
2. What does this passage teach about generational consequences of covenant unfaithfulness?
3. How does the wilderness generation's fate warn against presuming on God's patience?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּנָּעֻם	בְּיֹשָׁבָאֵל	יְהוָה:	אֵף	וַיִּנָּעֻם
and he made them wander	against Israel	And the LORD'S	anger	was kindled
H5128	H3478	H3068	H639	H2734
כָּל	תָּם	עַד	שָׁנָה	אַרְבָּעִים
was consumed	was consumed	years	forty	in the wilderness
H3605	H552	H5704	H8141	H4057
יְהוָה:	בְּעֵינֵי	הָרָע	הָעֹשֶׂה	הָדָוָר
And the LORD'S	in the sight	evil	that had done	until all the generation
H3068	H5869	H7451	H6213	H1755

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 10:5 (Parallel theme): But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

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