

Psalms 78:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel;

Analysis

Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel—divine wrath (qəṣep) isn't petulant reaction but holy response to covenant betrayal. The 'fire' ('ēš) at Taberah (Numbers 11:1-3) consumed the camp's outskirts as judgment, while 'anger' ('ap, literally 'nose burning') indicates God's righteous indignation at their libel against His character.

Paul warns: 'We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer' (1 Corinthians 10:9-10). God's wrath isn't arbitrary—it's the inevitable collision between holiness and rebellion. Yet Christ bore this fire: 'the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53:6).

Historical Context

Taberah's fire occurred shortly before the quail plague (Numbers 11). The double judgment—fire and plague—demonstrated that God's patience has limits. Moses's intercession stopped the fire, prefiguring Christ's superior mediation (Hebrews 7:25).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How should the reality of God's wrath inform your view of the cross where Christ absorbed that fire?
2. What grumbling in your life invites the 'fire' of divine discipline?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁמַע לְךָ וְ	יְהוָה	וַיִּתְעַב ר	אֵשׁ	וְנִשְׁקָה
<small>H3651</small>	heard <small>H8085</small>	Therefore the LORD <small>H3068</small>	this and was wroth <small>H5674</small>	so a fire <small>H784</small>
				was kindled <small>H5400</small>
בְּיַעֲקֹב	וְגַם	אֵף	עָלָה	בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:
against Jacob <small>H3290</small>	<small>H1571</small>	and anger <small>H639</small>	also came up <small>H5927</small>	against Israel <small>H3478</small>

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