

Psalm 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 (qeṣep) 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 עַל־כֵּן יְהוָה רַב־עָלָיו רָאשָׁה נִתְּנוּבָה רְאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁקָה הַנֶּאֱמָנָה כִּי־אָשָׁר־נִשְׁקָה הַנֶּאֱמָנָה
H3651 heard Therefore the LORD this and was wroth so a fire was kindled
H8085 H3068 H5674 H784 H5400

בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: עַל הָאָרֶץ בְּיַעֲלֵה אֶת־יִגְעָם בְּיַעֲלֵה אֶת־יִגְעָם
against Jacob H1571 and anger also came up against Israel
H3290 H639 H5927 H3478

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