

Psalms 78:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.

Analysis

The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel—divine wrath (ḥēmat 'Ēlōhîm) targeted specifically the mišmannîm (fattest, most robust) and baḥûrîm (chosen/choice young men). The healthiest died first—those whose strength made them confident in self-sufficiency. Their vigor became vulnerability when misplaced in fleshly appetite rather than spiritual devotion.

This selective judgment parallels Ananias and Sapphira's sudden deaths (Acts 5:1-11)—not the weakest but the presumptuous died as warnings to others. Paul explains: 'For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died' (1 Corinthians 11:30)—divine discipline targets covenant people who treat grace as license. God judges the household first (1 Peter 4:17).

Historical Context

The 'chosen men' likely included tribal leaders and warriors—Israel's elite who should have modeled faith but instead led rebellion. Their deaths at Kibroth-hattaavah ('graves of craving') memorialized that privilege increases accountability.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How might your strength (health, wealth, talent) become the arena where you're most vulnerable to judgment?
2. Does God's discipline of 'chosen' Israel warn you that Christian privilege increases, not decreases, accountability?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֹהִים	אֵלֹהִים	בָּהֶם	עָלָה	וַיַּהַרְגוּ	בְּמִשְׁמֵנֵיהֶם
The wrath	of God	came	H0	upon them and slew	the fattest
H639	H430	H5927		H2026	H4924
וּבְחֹרֶי יִשְׂרָאֵל	יִשְׂרָאֵל	הִכְרִיעַ:			
the chosen	men of Israel	of them and smote down			
H970	H3478	H3766			

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