

Psalm 78:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.

Analysis

Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble—the verdict of Numbers 14:33-34: 'Your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years... forty years, a year for each day.' The Hebrew *hebel* (vanity) means vapor, emptiness, futility—the same word Ecclesiastes repeats 38 times. Their years became *behālā* (trouble, sudden terror), living under death sentence, watching their generation die off one by one.

This describes Christless existence: 'having no hope and without God in the world' (Ephesians 2:12). Paul laments those who 'live as enemies of the cross... Their end is destruction... with minds set on earthly things' (Philippians 3:18-19). Yet Christ redeems even vanity: 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly' (John 10:10). Where Adam brought futility (Romans 8:20), Christ brings eternal purpose.

Historical Context

The wilderness generation (ages 20+ at Kadesh) died over the next 38 years, their corpses littering the desert as Hebrews 3:17 grimly notes: 'And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?' Only Joshua and Caleb survived to enter Canaan.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What activities consume your 'days in vanity'—time invested in what ultimately doesn't matter?
2. How does Christ's promise of 'abundant life' contrast with the emptiness of living for temporary satisfaction?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּאֲכַל	בָּהּ	כֹּל	וַיְמִיחַ	וּ	שְׁנָוֹת	וּ	בְּבָקָלָה:
did he consume	in vanity	Therefore their days	and their years	in trouble			
H3615	H1892	H3117		H8141			H928

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 14:35 (Parallel theme): I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

Numbers 14:29 (Parallel theme): Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,