

Psalms 78:56

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:

Analysis

Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies. The devastating **Yet** introduces Israel's faithlessness despite overwhelming grace. **They tempted** (vanassu, וַיִּנְסּוּ) means to test or try God's patience, demanding proof of His presence (Exodus 17:7, Numbers 14:22). **Provoked** (vayamru, וַיִּמְרוּ) carries connotations of rebellion and bitterness—deliberate defiance, not mere weakness.

The title **most high God** (Elohim Elyon, אֱלֹהִים עֶלְיוֹן) heightens the tragedy. They rebelled against the supreme deity who just demonstrated His power over all gods through the exodus. Unbelief is cosmic treason against sovereign majesty. **Kept not his testimonies** (lo shameru edotav, לֹא שָׁמְרוּ עֲדֹתָיו) indicates violation of covenant stipulations—God's edot (עֲדוֹת) are His binding testimonies about Himself and His requirements.

This verse establishes a pattern repeated throughout redemptive history: God saves → people rebel → God judges → remnant preserved → cycle repeats. Only Christ breaks this cycle, obeying perfectly where Israel failed (Romans 5:19).

Historical Context

The period of the Judges (1390-1050 BC) exemplifies this pattern: 'they forsook the LORD...and the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel' (Judges 2:12-14).

Despite possessing the Promised Land and God's law, Israel repeatedly apostatized into Canaanite religion, provoking divine discipline.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do believers 'test' God today through demanding signs or questioning His goodness?
2. What heart attitude transforms obedience from legal duty into loving response to grace?
3. In what ways does recognizing God as 'Most High' affect how we view our sin's seriousness?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּסּוּ וַ	וַיִּמְרוּ	אֶת	אֱלֹהֵי יָם	עָלֵי וֶן	יְעוּדֹתָ יְיָ
Yet they tempted	and provoked	H853	God	the most high	not his testimonies
H5254	H4784		H430	H5945	H5713

לֹא	שָׁמְרוּ:
H3808	and kept
	H8104