

Psalms 78:57

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

Analysis

But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. The phrase **turned back** (vayyisogu achor, וַיַּעֲשֵׂה אַחֲר) describes retreat from covenant commitment, not merely stumbling but deliberate desertion. **Dealt unfaithfully** (vayivgadu, וַיַּעֲבֹד) uses the language of marital treachery—Israel played the harlot with other gods (Hosea 1-3).

Like their fathers indicts generational sin patterns. Despite witnessing God's mighty acts, each generation repeated its fathers' faithlessness, proving that spiritual life doesn't transmit genetically—every generation needs new birth (John 3:3-7). The continuity of rebellion demonstrates the depravity of the human heart apart from grace.

The simile **like a deceitful bow** (nehepcu kekeshet remiyyah, נְהַפֵּכְוּ כְּקַשְׁתַּת רְמִיָּה) is devastating. A warped bow looks functional but shoots arrows crooked, making it worse than useless—dangerous. Israel appeared to be God's weapon against paganism but instead proved unreliable, missing the target. Only Jesus is the true arrow shot straight to accomplish God's purposes (Isaiah 49:2).

Historical Context

Asaph likely wrote during increasing apostasy in the Northern Kingdom under Jeroboam's golden calf worship (1 Kings 12:25-33) or later syncretistic practices.

The 'fathers' reference recalls the wilderness generation's unbelief (Numbers 14) and subsequent judges-era cycles of idolatry.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What generational sin patterns might you be unconsciously repeating from your spiritual 'fathers'?
2. How can believers ensure they're reliable 'weapons' for God's purposes rather than 'deceitful bows'?
3. In what ways does understanding our natural unfaithfulness drive us to depend on Christ's faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּעֲשֵׂה	וְיָבֹלָה	כִּאֵבּוֹת מִ	וְנִפְכַּד
But turned back	and dealt unfaithfully	like their fathers	they were turned aside
H5472	H898	H1	H2015
bow	like a deceitful		
H7198	H7423		

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 7:16 (Parallel theme): They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Psalms 78:8 (Parallel theme): And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

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