

Psalms 78:59

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred
Israel:

Analysis

When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel. The temporal clause **When God heard** emphasizes divine awareness—idolatry doesn't go unnoticed. **Wroth** (vaya'avov, וַיָּאָוֹב) literally means 'He passed over in wrath,' describing overwhelming anger. **Greatly abhorred** (vayyim'as me'od, וַיִּמְאָס מְאֹד) means intense rejection or disgust—God utterly repudiated covenant-breaking Israel.

This anthropopathic language (attributing human emotions to God) reveals moral reality—sin genuinely offends divine holiness. God's wrath isn't arbitrary rage but holy response to evil. The intensifier **greatly** (me'od, מְאֹד) emphasizes the severity of divine rejection. Israel experienced what it means to be cast away from God's presence.

Yet this verse prepares for grace—God's abhorrence leads to discipline (vv. 60-64), which ultimately serves redemptive purposes. Divine wrath in the Old Testament often functions as severe mercy, designed to bring repentance. Only at the cross does God's wrath fall fully and finally—on His Son as substitute (Romans 3:25-26).

Historical Context

Specific judgments likely referenced include the Philistine capture of the ark at Shiloh (1 Samuel 4), defeat at Aphek, and ongoing oppression during the judges period. God's 'abhorrence' manifested in military defeat, foreign oppression, and

eventually exile—covenant curses promised for disobedience (Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How should believers balance understanding God's wrath against sin with His love for sinners?
2. What does it mean that Jesus absorbed God's full abhorrence of sin at the cross on behalf of believers?
3. How can churches recover healthy fear of God's holiness without falling into legalistic terror?

Interlinear Text

שָׁמַעַ	אֲלֵהִים	וַיִּתְעַבֵּר	וַיִּמְאָס	חָאֵד	בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:
heard	When God	this he was wroth	abhorred	and greatly	Israel
H8085	H430	H5674	H3988	H3966	H3478

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 106:40 (Parallel theme): Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.