

Psalms 80:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.

Analysis

The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. This verse continues describing Israel's past glory through hyperbolic vineyard imagery. "The hills were covered with the shadow of it" (kasu harim tsillah, כָּסוּ הָרִים צִלָּהּ) uses kasah (כָּסָה, to cover) depicting the vine's extensive canopy. Though vines don't typically shade mountains, the exaggeration emphasizes Israel's widespread influence and prosperity. The imagery suggests blessing extending even to high places traditionally associated with Canaanite worship—Israel's God-given prosperity surpassed surrounding nations' achievements.

"The boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars" (va'anafeha arzey-El, וַאֲנַפְיָהּ אֲרֵזֵי־אֱלֹהִים) employs mixed metaphor, shifting from vine to cedars of Lebanon—famed for height, strength, and majesty (1 Kings 5:6; Psalm 29:5; Isaiah 2:13). Arzey-El (אֲרֵזֵי־אֱלֹהִים) literally means "cedars of God"—a Hebrew superlative indicating the mightiest cedars. The comparison suggests Israel's branches (tribes, leadership, influence) achieved greatness comparable to Lebanon's legendary trees. Solomon's alliance with Hiram of Tyre to import cedar for temple construction (1 Kings 5:1-12) would resonate with original hearers.

The mixed metaphor (vine producing cedar-like boughs) emphasizes that Israel's greatness transcended natural limitations—only supernatural blessing could produce such extraordinary growth. This sets up the devastating contrast in verse 12: why has God allowed such divinely-cultivated magnificence to be destroyed?

Historical Context

Cedar of Lebanon was ancient Near East's premier building material—durable, aromatic, resistant to rot and insects. Solomon's temple, palace, and the House of the Forest of Lebanon all used cedar extensively (1 Kings 6-7). Cedars symbolized strength, permanence, and royal/divine majesty. The metaphorical comparison between Israel's influence and these mighty trees would communicate God's elevation of Israel above natural expectations. During exile or foreign oppression, recalling this past glory both mourned loss and maintained hope for restoration to divinely-intended greatness.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the mixed metaphor (vine with cedar-like branches) communicate God's supernatural blessing beyond natural capabilities?
2. What dangers arise when God's people remember past glory during present diminishment—nostalgia vs. hope?
3. How can Christians maintain confidence that God can restore supernatural fruitfulness after seasons of devastating loss?

Interlinear Text

כָּסוּ were covered H3680	הַר יָם The hills H2022	צֶלֶה with the shadow H6738	וּלְעֵנֶף יָהּ of it and the boughs H6057	אֲרֵזִי cedars H730
אֵלָּהֵם thereof were like the goodly H410				

