

Psalms 80:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

Analysis

It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. This verse describes comprehensive devastation of the vineyard. "It is burned with fire" (serupah va'esh, שֶׁרֻפָּה בָאֵשׁ) and "it is cut down" (kesukhah, כְּסֻכְחָה) use passive participles indicating completed destruction. Fire represents divine judgment throughout Scripture (Deuteronomy 32:22; Isaiah 10:17; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14), while cutting down suggests deliberate, thorough removal—not accidental burning but intentional destruction. The vineyard once carefully cultivated is now utterly ruined.

"They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance" (mig'arat panekha yovedu, מִגְּאֵרַת פָּנֶיךָ יִוָּדֻ) attributes destruction directly to God's angry response. Ge'arah (גְּעָרָה) means rebuke, reproof—God's verbal expression of displeasure that effects judgment (Psalm 18:15, 76:6, 104:7; Isaiah 50:2, 66:15). Panim (פָּנִים, face/countenance) represents God's personal presence and disposition toward His people. Where God's face shining brings blessing (Numbers 6:25-26; Psalm 4:6), God's face in anger brings destruction. Avad (אָבַד, perish) indicates complete loss, destruction, death.

The verse's theology is sobering: the same God who planted the vineyard now burns it; the same hand that strengthened the son now rebukes unto death. This isn't external enemy action but divine judgment. Yet the lament continues, indicating that even God-executed judgment doesn't terminate the covenant relationship. The people can still appeal for restoration precisely because God

remains personally engaged—angry but not indifferent, judging but not abandoning entirely.

Historical Context

Fire imagery describes historical devastations: Assyrian conquest burned northern cities (2 Kings 15:29, 17:6, 24); Babylonian destruction burned Jerusalem and the temple (2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chronicles 36:19). Jeremiah witnessed Jerusalem's burning, interpreting it as Yahweh's judgment (Jeremiah 21:14, 32:29, 37:10, 38:23). The comprehensive destruction—burned and cut down—left nothing viable. Archaeological excavations reveal burn layers from these conquests. Yet the exile wasn't Israel's end; God preserved remnant and eventually restored them, validating the psalm's hope that divine rebuke, though severe, wasn't final abandonment.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How should believers understand catastrophic losses and failures as potentially being 'rebuke of thy countenance' rather than random misfortune?
2. What is the relationship between deserved judgment and desperate prayer for mercy when God's anger is clearly justified?
3. How can Christians maintain hope during seasons when everything seems 'burned with fire' and 'cut down' by divine discipline?

Interlinear Text

שָׂרַף ה	בָּא ש	כָּסוּחַ ה	מִגֵּעַר ת	פָּנֶי יְיָ	יִאָּבְדוּ:
It is burned	with fire	it is cut down	at the rebuke	of thy countenance	they perish
H8313	H784	H3683	H1606	H6440	H6

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 39:11 (Parallel theme): When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.

John 15:6 (Parallel theme): If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

2 Thessalonians 1:9 (Parallel theme): Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

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