

Psalm 81:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.

Analysis

But my people would not hearken to my voice (עַמִּי לֹא-שָׁמַע עַמִּי לֹא-לִי)—The emphatic **my people** intensifies the tragedy: not strangers but covenant children rejected their Father. Shama (hear, obey) appears throughout Deuteronomy as covenant loyalty's essential element. **And Israel would none of me** (lo avah li)—they 'desired not' or 'were not willing' toward their Redeemer.

This divine lament echoes throughout Scripture: Moses's warnings (Deuteronomy 32), the prophets' indictments (Isaiah 1:2-4, Jeremiah 7:23-26), and Christ's weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). The greatest tragedy isn't God's inability to save but human unwillingness to be saved. As Jesus said, 'You will not come to me that you might have life' (John 5:40).

Historical Context

Israel's wilderness generation epitomized stubborn rebellion: refusing to enter Canaan (Numbers 14), complaining against manna (Numbers 11), worshiping the golden calf (Exodus 32), and testing God at Meribah (Exodus 17). Despite seeing miracles, that generation died in the desert under judgment. Their children's history repeated the pattern, culminating in exile.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. In what areas of life are you 'not hearkening' to God's clear voice, choosing self-will over His revealed will?
2. How does the phrase 'my people would not' expose that the problem is never God's unwillingness but ours?
3. What patterns of family or church 'wilderness wandering' result from generational refusal to obey God's voice?

Interlinear Text

א בָּהּ לֹא אִשְׁרָא לְלִקְוָל עַמּוֹ שָׁמְעַנּוּ
H3808 would not hearken H8085 H5971 H6963 H3478 H3808 would
H14

: י

H0

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 32:18 (Parallel theme): Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

Proverbs 1:30 (Parallel theme): They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

Exodus 32:1 (Parallel theme): And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Deuteronomy 32:15 (Parallel theme): But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

Hebrews 10:29 (Parallel theme): Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Zechariah 7:11 (Parallel theme): But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

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