

Psalms 83:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth.

Analysis

Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth. The victory description continues with graphic detail. Nishmadu v-En-dor (נִשְׁמַדּוּ בְּעֵינֵי־דָּאָר), "perished at En-dor") uses shamad (שָׁמַד), meaning utterly destroyed, annihilated. En-dor, near Mount Tabor, became graveyard for Midianite forces. The phrase hayu domen la-adamah (הָיָה דָּמָן לְאָדָמָה, "they became dung for the earth") is deliberately crude—defeated warriors' corpses left unburied, decomposing, fertilizing soil.

This imagery deliberately dishonors the enemies while emphasizing complete defeat. Ancient Near Eastern culture valued proper burial deeply; leaving corpses unburied was ultimate degradation (1 Kings 14:11, Jeremiah 8:2). The dead become domen (דָּמָן, "dung/manure")—worthless refuse, their military pride reduced to fertilizer. This brutal language reflects warfare's horror while communicating that those who oppose God end in utter humiliation.

The agricultural metaphor contains ironic justice: enemies who plotted to "take to ourselves the houses of God in possession" (v. 12)—seize Israel's land—instead become manure enriching that very land. Their ambition to possess results in their decomposition fertilizing what they sought to steal. God's judgments often contain poetic justice—the punishment fitting the crime (Esther 7:10, Daniel 6:24).

Historical Context

En-dor was a village about four miles south of Mount Tabor in the Jezreel Valley. Though not explicitly mentioned in Judges 7-8's account of Gideon's victory, the location fits the battle's geography. Ancient battlefields where bodies lay unburied became proverbial symbols of divine judgment (Psalm 79:2-3, Jeremiah 25:33). The image would resonate with agricultural audiences who understood manure's role in cultivation. Modern sensibilities find such language offensive, but ancient warfare was brutal, and biblical writers don't sanitize its realities. The graphic imagery serves theological purpose: demonstrating that opposition to God's purposes ends in comprehensive defeat and dishonor.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How should modern readers understand and apply the Bible's graphic judgment language without softening its reality or becoming callous to human suffering?
2. What examples of "poetic justice" (punishment fitting crime) do you see in Scripture, and what do these teach about God's character?
3. How does this verse's brutal honesty about warfare's consequences challenge romantic or sanitized views of conflict?

Interlinear Text

Which perished	H8045	at Endor	H5874	they became as dung	H1828	for the earth	H127
				לֹא־דָמָה:	כַּא־מַ	כַּא־אָרֶבֶן	נִשְׁמַד וְ

Additional Cross-References

Zephaniah 1:17 (Parallel theme): And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

Joshua 17:11 (Parallel theme): And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher Beth-shean and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, even three countries.

1 Samuel 28:7 (Parallel theme): Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor.

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