

Psalm 83:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

Analysis

So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

The prayer intensifies: pursue enemies with overwhelming force. Ken tirdephem b-sa'arekha (כִּי תִּרְדְּפָם בְּסָעָרֶךְ, "so pursue them with your tempest") uses radaf (רָדַף), meaning to chase, pursue relentlessly—the same verb describing Pharaoh pursuing Israel to the Red Sea (Exodus 14:8). But here God pursues the enemies with sa'ar (סָעָר), meaning storm, tempest, whirlwind—violent weather as divine weapon.

Uvi-sufatekha t'vahel (וְבָסַפְתָּה תִּבְהַלֵּם, "and with your storm terrify them") pairs sufah (סָעָר, "storm/whirlwind") with bahal (בָּהָל, "terrify, trouble, dismay"). The verb conveys overwhelming fear and confusion—panic that destroys rational thought and organized resistance. Enemies won't merely face defeat but experience terror that breaks their will to fight. This describes psychological as well as physical destruction.

The imagery recalls God's theophanic appearances in storm and tempest: Sinai (Exodus 19:16-18), Elijah's cave (1 Kings 19:11), Job's encounter (Job 38:1), Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:4). Storm represents God's terrible majesty, His power before which creation trembles. When God comes in judgment, He arrives in tempest and whirlwind, His presence too overwhelming for human endurance. The prayer asks God to manifest Himself in terrifying power that enemies cannot resist.

Historical Context

Ancient Mediterranean peoples knew devastating storms—sudden tempests at sea drowning sailors (Jonah 1:4), thunderstorms with lightning setting fires (Psalm 29), hailstorms destroying crops (Exodus 9:18-26). Weather was understood as divine action—Baal worshipers claimed he controlled storms, but Israel knew Yahweh alone commanded nature (1 Kings 18:41-46). God used weather as judgment weapon: hailstones against Canaanites (Joshua 10:11), east wind bringing locusts on Egypt (Exodus 10:13), wind dividing Red Sea (Exodus 14:21). The prayer asks God to deploy these natural forces against current enemies as He did against past ones.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God's control over nature (including destructive weather) shape your view of natural disasters and divine sovereignty?
2. What does it mean that God's presence is often depicted in terrifying natural phenomena (storm, fire, earthquake)?
3. How can believers balance praying for God's judgment on evil with Jesus's command to love enemies?

Interlinear Text

תְּבַקְּלָם:	וְבִסְוַּתְּמָתְּבֵן	בְּסָעֵם	תְּרַדֵּפְתָּם	תְּבַקְּלָם:
H3651 So persecute	them with thy tempest	with thy storm	and make them afraid	H926

Additional Cross-References

Job 9:17 (Parallel theme): For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause.

Psalms 58:9 (Parallel theme): Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.

Psalms 50:3 (Parallel theme): Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

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