

Hosea 11:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

Analysis

God's emotional struggle: 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.' The Hebrew piles up rhetorical questions revealing divine anguish: 'How can I give you up... hand you over?' Admah and Zeboim were cities destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 10:19, Deuteronomy 29:23)—total annihilation. God wrestles: justice demands destruction, but love resists. 'My heart recoils within me' (nehepak alay libbi), 'my compassions kindle together' (yahhad nikhmeru nihumay). This isn't divine indecision but the tension between holiness and mercy. Verse 9 resolves: 'I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger... for I am God, and not man.' God's mercy transcends human revenge. This anticipates the cross where justice and mercy meet.

Historical Context

Despite Israel's persistent rebellion warranting complete destruction (like Sodom), God's covenant love prevented it. Though Assyria would conquer the northern kingdom (722 BC), scattering the ten tribes, a remnant would survive. God's faithfulness to Abraham's covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) constrained His wrath. This passage reveals God's heart: He takes no pleasure in judgment (Ezekiel 33:11) but

experiences anguish over necessary discipline. The ultimate resolution came through Christ: at the cross, God's wrath was fully executed (on His Son), and His mercy fully extended (to sinners). Romans 3:25-26 explains: the cross demonstrates God's justice and justifies believers simultaneously. God's 'repentings kindled together' found resolution in Jesus bearing the judgment we deserved.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's anguish over judging sinners affect my understanding of His character—His holiness and His love?
2. Do I take seriously both God's necessary judgment of sin and His passionate desire to show mercy?

Interlinear Text

א יְהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְנָבָב אֶתְנָבָב אֶתְנָבָב אֶתְנָבָב אֶתְנָבָב

H349 How shall I give thee up Ephraim how shall I deliver thee Israel H349

H5414

H669

H4042

H3478

נָהָפֵךְ כִּאֵבָאֵי מְ אָשִׁיחָנָב כִּאָדָם הַ אֶתְנָבָב

How shall I give thee up thee as Admah how shall I set thee as Zeboim is turned

H5414

H126

H7760

H6636

H2015

נְחֹזְקִים לְבָבִי נְכַמֵּר וְיִחְדַּד נְחֹזְקִים

H5921

mine heart

together

are kindled

within me my repentings

H3820

H3162

H3648

H5150

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 31:20 (Parallel theme): Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.

Matthew 23:37 (Parallel theme): O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Hosea 6:4 (Parallel theme): O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

Deuteronomy 32:36 (Repentance): For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.

Deuteronomy 29:23 (Parallel theme): And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:

2 Peter 2:6 (Parallel theme): And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

Genesis 14:8 (Parallel theme): And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;

Amos 4:11 (Parallel theme): I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Lamentations 1:20 (Parallel theme): Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.

2 Kings 13:23 (Parallel theme): And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.