

Hosea 12:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

Analysis

God's call to covenant renewal: 'Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment and wait on thy God continually.' The Hebrew imperatives are direct: 'we-attah be-Eloheka tashuv' (and you, to your God return), 'hesed u-mishpat shemor' (mercy and justice keep), 'qavveh el-Eloheka tamid' (wait on your God continually). The three-fold summons:

1. return/repent (shub—turn back from idolatry to YHWH)
2. practice covenant loyalty and justice (hesed u-mishpat—internal devotion and external righteousness)
3. wait on God continually (qavah—hope/trust, persistently).

This encapsulates covenant faithfulness: right relationship with God (return/wait) produces right treatment of others (mercy/justice). Micah 6:8 parallels: 'do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with thy God.' True religion combines vertical and horizontal dimensions.

Historical Context

Context includes Israel's history of deception and violence (v. 7-8: merchant using false balances, loving to oppress), contrasted with Jacob's wrestling with God and prevailing through persistence (v. 3-4, referencing Genesis 32:24-30). The call to 'return' assumes Israel had departed; 'wait continually' implies sustained trust, not sporadic devotion. Israel's pattern was cyclical apostasy (Judges period repeated in kingdom era). God calls them back to consistent covenant life: mercy (hesed)

toward covenant community, justice (mishpat) in all dealings, persistent dependence on God. This anticipates Jesus's summary of the law: love God, love neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). Genuine faith produces both worship and ethics, vertical and horizontal righteousness.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Have I 'returned to God' with genuine repentance, or do I maintain distance through unconfessed sin?
2. How do I balance active obedience (keeping mercy and justice) with patient trust (waiting on God continually)?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶתְּנָאָתָה יְבָרֵךְ יְהָוָה שְׁמָךְ רְאֵתָה וּמִשְׁפָּטָה
H859 on thy God Therefore turn mercy and judgment keep and wait
H430 H7725 H2617 H4941 H8104 H6960

אֶלְּלָבְּרָאָתָה יְבָרֵךְ יְהָוָה
H413 on thy God continually
H430 H8548

Additional Cross-References

Micah 6:8 (Grace): He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Hosea 14:1 (References God): O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Micah 7:7 (References God): Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

Zechariah 7:9 (Grace): Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

Isaiah 40:31 (Parallel theme): But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 58:6 (Parallel theme): Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

Isaiah 8:17 (Parallel theme): And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Isaiah 1:16 (Parallel theme): Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Isaiah 30:18 (Grace): And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

Isaiah 31:6 (Parallel theme): Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.