

Isaiah 17:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel.

Analysis

'Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof.' Despite thorough judgment, a remnant survives—like few grapes or olives left after careful harvesting. The Hebrew concept of the 'remnant' is crucial to prophetic theology. Not total annihilation but severe reduction with small faithful remnant preserved. The specificity ('two or three...four or five') emphasizes how few survive. This demonstrates God's mercy even in judgment—preserving a remnant through whom His purposes continue. Reformed theology emphasizes the remnant doctrine: God always preserves a faithful few despite widespread apostasy.

Historical Context

Historically, this remnant included Judahites who remained in the land after northern kingdom's fall, plus any northern Israelites who escaped to Judah or survived deportation. Prophets like Hosea and Amos also emphasized remnant theology. The small numbers proved true—the northern kingdom largely disappeared from history, though genetic and cultural influences persisted. Later, Ezra-Nehemiah describes returnees from various tribes, indicating small preservation of northern tribal identities. The remnant theme continues through

Scripture to the Church—a preserved few through whom God's redemptive purposes advance.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does the remnant doctrine teach about God's faithfulness despite widespread apostasy?
2. How do the specific small numbers emphasize both judgment's severity and mercy's preservation?
3. In what ways does the Old Testament remnant prefigure the Church as God's preserved people?

Interlinear Text

שָׁנָה	בְּ	וְנִשְׁאָר	עֲזַלְתָּה	בְּ	וְ	בְּנֵי	בְּ	וְ	שָׁנָה
shall be left	H0	Yet gleaning grapes	in it as the shaking	of an olive tree		two			
	H7604		H5955	H5363		H2132			H8147
שְׁמֵשׁ	הַ	אַרְבַּע	הַ	שְׁלֹשׁ	הַ	אַמְתָּה	וְ	אַמְתָּה	וְ
or three	berries	in the top	of the uppermost bough		four	or five			
H7969	H1620	H7218	H534		H702	H2568			
וְשָׁרָאֵל:	אֱלֹהִים	וְיְהִי	הַ	נָאָם	וְ	פָּרָי	הַ	בְּסֻעַּף	וְיַהֲ
branches	in the outmost fruitful	thereof saith	the LORD	God					
H5585	H6509	H5002	H3068	H430					H3478

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 24:13 (Kingdom): When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.

Deuteronomy 4:27 (References Lord): And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

Romans 9:27 (References Israel): Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

Judges 8:2 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?

Obadiah 1:5 (Parallel theme): If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?

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