

Isaiah 49:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

Analysis

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. This cosmic summons to praise reflects the Hebrew concept that all creation participates in worshiping its Creator. The threefold address—heavens, earth, mountains—encompasses the entire created order in a liturgical call to celebrate God's redemptive work. The verb rannenu (רָנַן, "sing") conveys joyous shouting, not mere melodic singing.

The dual grounds for praise are God's comfort (nicham, נִיחָם) and mercy (racham, רָחָם). The first term suggests consolation and relief from distress; the second derives from the word for "womb," indicating deep, motherly compassion. This reveals God's tender heart toward His afflicted people—a comfort rooted not in their merit but in His covenant faithfulness.

From a Reformed perspective, this anticipates the complete restoration accomplished through Christ's redemptive work. Paul echoes this cosmic rejoicing in Romans 8:19-22, where creation itself awaits liberation. The comforting of God's people finds ultimate expression in the new creation where God dwells with humanity and "wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 21:3-4). This verse demonstrates that redemption has cosmic implications—Christ came to reconcile "all things unto himself" (Colossians 1:20).

Historical Context

The call for creation to sing parallels ancient Near Eastern hymnic traditions where nature elements are personified. However, unlike pagan mythology where natural features were deified, Isaiah maintains strict monotheism—creation worships the one true God. This poetic device appears frequently in Hebrew poetry (Psalms 96:11-12, 98:7-8).

For exiled Israelites, this prophecy of divine comfort would have contrasted sharply with their circumstances of captivity and loss. The Babylonian conquest destroyed Jerusalem, the temple, and the Davidic monarchy—core elements of Israelite identity. Isaiah's promise that the LORD would comfort and show mercy despite their affliction pointed toward hope beyond immediate circumstances, trusting in God's unchanging covenant faithfulness regardless of present suffering.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the cosmic scope of redemption expand your understanding of salvation's significance?
2. What specific afflictions in your life need God's motherly compassion today?
3. How might you participate in creation's worship of God's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

בָּרְךָ יְמִינְךָ שָׁמֶן מִמְּלֹא כְּבָדְךָ
Sing O heavens and be joyful

H7442 H8064

בָּרְךָ אָרֶץ יְמִינְךָ שָׁמֶן מִמְּלֹא כְּבָדְךָ
O earth and break forth

H776

בָּרְךָ יְמִינְךָ שָׁמֶן מִמְּלֹא כְּבָדְךָ
O mountains

H2022

לְזִקְנֵתִךְ נָתַתָּךְ עַמְּךָ יְהֹוָה רְבָעָה
into singing hath comforted for the LORD his people upon his afflicted

H7440 H3588

H5162

H3068

H5971

H6041

רְבָעָה:

and will have mercy

H7355

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 44:23 (Sin): Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

Isaiah 51:3 (References Lord): For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Isaiah 52:9 (Sin): Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

Isaiah 12:1 (References Lord): And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.