

Jeremiah 10:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name.

Analysis

This verse celebrates Jacob's God: 'The portion of Jacob is not like them.' Jacob's 'portion' (cheleq, חֶלֶק) is his inheritance, his God—completely unlike worthless idols. 'For he is the former of all things.' yotser (יֹצֵר, potter, former) describes God as cosmic craftsman who formed everything. Unlike human craftsmen making idols, the divine Potter formed the universe. 'And Israel is the rod of his inheritance.' The relationship is reciprocal: God is Israel's portion; Israel is God's inheritance (nachalah). 'The LORD of hosts is his name.' The divine title YHWH Tseva'oth (Lord of armies/hosts) emphasizes military sovereignty over all powers, earthly and heavenly.

Historical Context

The concept of God as 'portion' appears in Psalm 16:5, 73:26, 119:57, 142:5, and Lamentations 3:24. During exile, when Israel lost land, temple, and political identity, their 'portion' remained—God Himself was their inheritance when all else was stripped away. This theology of divine sufficiency sustained exilic faith.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean for God to be our 'portion' when external supports are removed?
2. How does the mutual inheritance—God is Israel's portion, Israel is God's inheritance—describe covenant relationship?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת רִאשֵׁן יְמִינֵךְ בְּעֵד לְקָרְבָּן כִּי לֹא
H3808 H428 The portion of Jacob H2506 H3290 H3588 is not like them for he is the former
H3335

וְהַבָּנָה תְּמִימָה וְהַבָּנָה תְּמִימָה
H3605 H1931 of all things and Israel H3478 H7626 H5159 H3068
is the rod of his inheritance The LORD

שְׁמָנוֹן אֶבְרָא וְתִּשְׁמַע
of hosts is his name
H6635 H8034

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 32:9 (References Lord): For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

Jeremiah 32:18 (References Lord): Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name,

Jeremiah 31:35 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:

Psalms 119:57 (References Lord): Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

Psalms 74:2 (Parallel theme): Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

Jeremiah 10:12 (Parallel theme): He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

Jeremiah 51:19 (References Lord): The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts is his name.

Lamentations 3:24 (References Lord): The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

Isaiah 45:7 (References Lord): I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

Psalms 135:4 (References Lord): For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.