

Joel 2:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

Analysis

Then will the LORD be jealous for his land (Hebrew vayeqanne YHWH le'artso, לְאַרְצּוֹ—)the verb qana (קָנָא) means to be jealous, zealous, or passionate. This is divine jealousy, not petty human envy, but holy zeal for God's own possession. The land belongs to Yahweh (Leviticus 25:23: "the land is mine"); Israel were tenants, not owners. God's jealousy for His land demonstrates His covenant commitment—He will not allow His inheritance to remain devastated or His name to be reproached among the nations. This jealousy is the same attribute that forbids idolatry (Exodus 20:5, 34:14, Deuteronomy 4:24)—God passionately guards His glory and His people.

And pity his people (Hebrew vayachmal al-ammo, עַל־עַמּוֹ—)the verb chamal (חִמָּל) means to have compassion, to spare, to show mercy. The conjunction "and" links God's jealousy for the land with pity for the people, showing they're inseparable—God's zeal for His covenant involves both place and people. The phrase "his people" (ammo) emphasizes covenant relationship—despite their sin, they remain God's people. This foreshadows the gospel: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate... whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30). God's electing love doesn't depend on human merit but His sovereign grace.

The verse marks a dramatic turning point. Chapters 1:1-2:17 describe judgment and call to repentance; verse 18 inaugurates God's response. The verbs shift from future to past (in Hebrew): "Then the LORD was jealous... and had pity." This

prophetic perfect tense treats future events as already accomplished, emphasizing certainty. When God's people genuinely repent (2:12-17), divine response is assured. This teaches that God delights to show mercy—He doesn't grudgingly relent but passionately turns to bless those who return to Him. As Lamentations 3:31-33 affirms: "For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."

Historical Context

The shift from judgment to restoration in Joel 2:18 reflects Israel's covenant history—cycles of apostasy, judgment, repentance, and deliverance (Judges 2:11-19). The phrase "his land" designates the Promised Land as Yahweh's possession, given to Israel conditionally. Deuteronomy 28-30 established the covenant structure: obedience brings blessing and prosperity in the land; disobedience brings curses culminating in exile. Yet even exile isn't final—Deuteronomy 30:1-10 promises that when Israel returns to the LORD, He will restore them. Joel's prophecy follows this pattern.

God's jealousy for His land connects to His dwelling there. The tabernacle and later the temple represented God's presence among His people. When judgment fell (locusts, drought, famine), it threatened worship—grain and drink offerings ceased (1:9, 13). God's jealousy moves Him to restore not merely agricultural productivity but the worship system itself. This anticipates the New Covenant where God's dwelling shifts from a physical temple to His people themselves (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, Ephesians 2:21-22). The church is now God's temple, indwelt by His Spirit.

The conjunction "then" indicates that God's response follows human repentance. This doesn't mean humans manipulate God or earn mercy through performance. Rather, God has ordained that genuine repentance (which He Himself enables) precedes restoration. Jonah 3 demonstrates this pattern: Nineveh's repentance led God to relent from threatened judgment. James 4:8-10 applies the principle to believers: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." God's sovereignty and human

responsibility aren't contradictory but complementary—God works through means, and repentance is the appointed means for receiving mercy.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's jealousy for His land and people demonstrate His covenant faithfulness rather than capricious emotion?
2. What does it mean that God shows pity despite His people's deserved judgment—how does this reveal His character?
3. How should understanding that you are God's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19) shape your stewardship of body, mind, and time?

Interlinear Text

אִיָּגֶג אֵת	וְיַהְיֵה הָרָאֵת	לְאָרֶץ וְלְעָלָמָה	עַל וַיְחַמֵּן לְעָלָמָה	עַל וַיְחַמֵּן לְעָלָמָה
be jealous	Then will the LORD	for his land	and pity	his people
H7065	H3068	H776	H2550	H5921

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 8:2 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.

Psalms 103:13 (References Lord): Like as a father pitith his children, so the LORD pitith them that fear him.

Zechariah 1:14 (References Lord): So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

Isaiah 63:9 (Parallel theme): In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

Isaiah 63:15 (Parallel theme): Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?

James 5:11 (References Lord): Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Lamentations 3:22 (References Lord): It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

Isaiah 60:10 (Parallel theme): And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.

Jeremiah 31:20 (References Lord): 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.

Luke 15:20 (Parallel theme): And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.