

Micah 7:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

Analysis

Micah concludes his prophecy with a magnificent hymn celebrating God's incomparable character. "Who is a God like unto thee" (mi-El kamokhah) plays on Micah's name (Mikayahu, "who is like Yahweh?") and echoes Moses's song at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:11). The implied answer: no one—no god, power, or authority compares to Yahweh. What makes Him unique? "That pardoneth iniquity" (nose avon)—the verb nasa means to lift up, carry away, or forgive. God removes sin's guilt and penalty from His people.

"And passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage" continues the theme. "Passeth by" (over al-pesha) means overlooking or forgiving, not in the sense of ignoring justice but of satisfying justice through substitutionary atonement. "The remnant" (she'erit) indicates not all Israel but the faithful few who trust God's promises. "His heritage" (nachalato) recalls covenant language—Israel is God's special possession, treasured inheritance (Deuteronomy 32:9; Psalm 33:12).

"He retaineth not his anger for ever" (lo-hecheziq la'ad apo) reveals God's disposition toward His covenant people. Though sin provokes righteous wrath, God doesn't nurse eternal grudges or hold perpetual anger against those He has redeemed. "Because he delighteth in mercy" (ki-chafets chesed hu) explains why: mercy, covenant love, and loyal kindness define God's essential character. Chesed

(translated variously as mercy, lovingkindness, steadfast love) describes God's covenant faithfulness—He keeps promises, shows loyal love, and delights in demonstrating grace to undeserving sinners. This concludes Micah's prophecy with hope rooted in God's merciful character, not human merit.

Historical Context

Micah 7:18-20 forms the book's concluding doxology, balancing earlier judgment oracles with hope for restoration. After pronouncing judgment on both kingdoms (1:5-7, 3:12), warning of exile (1:16), and describing social collapse (7:1-6), Micah ends with assurance that judgment isn't God's final word. His covenant faithfulness ensures restoration beyond exile—a promise fulfilled partially after Babylon's fall (538 BC) but ultimately fulfilled in Christ's redemptive work and new covenant.

These verses were later adapted for liturgical use in Jewish worship. The tradition of Tashlich ("casting") developed where Jews symbolically cast sins into water on Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), based on Micah 7:19: "thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." This ritual expresses faith in God's complete forgiveness—sins removed so thoroughly they're irrecoverable, drowned in the sea's depths, gone forever.

The theology here anticipates New Testament revelation. God pardons iniquity through Christ's substitutionary atonement—Jesus carries our sin (Isaiah 53:6, 12; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21). God passes by transgression because Jesus bore the penalty (Romans 3:25-26). God retains not His anger because wrath was poured out on Christ at Calvary (Romans 5:9). God delights in mercy, demonstrated supremely in sending His Son to die for sinners (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4-7). Micah's closing hymn finds full expression and fulfillment in the gospel.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's unique character—pardoning iniquity and delighting in mercy—distinguish Him from all false gods and idols?
2. What does it mean practically that God doesn't retain anger forever toward those covered by Christ's atonement?
3. How should God's delight in showing mercy shape your approach to confession, repentance, and assurance of forgiveness?

Interlinear Text

מִי H4310	אֵל H410	כִּמּוֹךָ H3644	נִשְׁאָ H5375	עוֹן H5771	וְעֵבֶר H5674
Who is a God		like unto thee that pardoneth		iniquity	and passeth by
עַל H5921	פְּשָׁע H6588	לְשֹׁאֵר יֵת H7611	נִחֲלָתוֹ H5159	לֹא H3808	הַחֲזִיק יְק H2388
the transgression		of the remnant	of his heritage	he retaineth	for ever
אֶפְרוֹ H639	כִּי H3588	חֲפֵץ H2654	חֶסֶד H2617	הוּא H1931	
not his anger		because he delighteth	in mercy		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 43:25 (Sin): I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Isaiah 44:22 (Sin): I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

Jeremiah 50:20 (Sin): In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

Jeremiah 32:41 (Parallel theme): Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

Jeremiah 3:12 (Grace): Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.

Exodus 15:11 (References God): Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Psalms 89:8 (References God): O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

Psalms 86:15 (Grace): But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

Psalms 65:3 (Sin): Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

Psalms 89:6 (Parallel theme): For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?