

Psalms 10:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

Analysis

To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress. The psalm concludes with God's ultimate purpose: justice for the vulnerable and an end to oppression. After describing the problem (wickedness and oppression), crying out for divine intervention, and affirming God's hearing, David now states God's intention and the eschatological hope of all who suffer injustice.

"To judge the fatherless and the oppressed" (lishpot yatom vedakh, לְשַׁפֹּט יָתוֹם וְדָחַךְ) employs shaphat (to judge, vindicate, execute justice). Yatom (fatherless, orphan) and dakh (oppressed, crushed, broken) represent those with no human defender. God's judgment here is not condemnation of the victims but vindication—He judges *for* them, defending their cause and establishing justice on their behalf. This is the positive sense of judgment: making things right, restoring what was taken, defending the defenseless.

"That the man of the earth may no more oppress" (bal-yosif od la'arotz enosh min-ha'arets, בְּלִיּוֹסִיף עוֹד לְעַרֹץ אֱנוֹשׁ מִן־הָאָרֶץ) describes the intended result of divine judgment. Bal is emphatic negation; yosif means "continue" or "add." Arotz means to terrify, make afraid, oppress violently. Enosh (man, mortal) emphasizes human frailty and weakness—mere mortals who terrorize others. Min-ha'arets (from the earth) identifies them as earthly, temporal, limited—not divine or eternal. The phrase pictures mere mortals of earth terrorizing image-bearers of God, and God's judgment putting an end to this arrogant violence.

The verse is profoundly eschatological. It envisions a time when oppression ceases—when God's justice is so thoroughly established that the wicked can no longer terrorize the vulnerable. This anticipates the kingdom of God, when righteousness fills the earth, when Christ reigns in perfect justice, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). Until that day, believers pray "Thy kingdom come" and work for justice while waiting for ultimate justice.

The conclusion answers the opening question. Why does God stand afar off? Not because He is indifferent but because He is preparing comprehensive, eternal justice. His apparent delay is sovereign patience, ensuring that when He acts, oppression will end forever. This transforms suffering from meaningless to meaningful—it is temporary, God sees it, He will judge, and oppression will ultimately cease.

Historical Context

The vision of God establishing justice and ending oppression pervades prophetic literature. Isaiah envisioned the Messiah's reign: "with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth" (Isaiah 11:4). He promised: "The LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously" (Isaiah 24:23). Micah prophesied a time when "nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3).

Jesus announced that in His kingdom, the first shall be last and the last first (Matthew 19:30). The Magnificat celebrates that God "hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree" (Luke 1:52). Revelation depicts the final judgment when God "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Revelation 21:4).

This eschatological hope sustained Israel through exile, early Christians through persecution, and suffering believers throughout history. The wicked may prosper

temporarily, but their day is coming. God will establish comprehensive justice, vindicate the oppressed, and ensure that "the man of the earth"—mere mortal humans who exalted themselves—will oppress no more. This certainty enables believers to endure injustice without despairing or taking vengeance, knowing that God will ultimately make all things right.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God 'judge' on behalf of the fatherless and oppressed, and what does this judgment accomplish?
2. What is significant about describing the oppressor as 'man of the earth'—a mere mortal?
3. How does eschatological hope (that oppression will ultimately cease) help believers endure present injustice?
4. What is the relationship between working for justice now and waiting for God's final justice then?

Interlinear Text

לְשַׁפֹּט ט	יֵת וֹם	וְיָד וְ	בְּל	יֹסֵי יִף	ע וִיד	לְעֹרֵץ
To judge	the fatherless	and the oppressed	H1077	may no more	H5750	oppress
H8199	H3490	H1790		H3254		H6206
אֶנֶן וְשׁ	מִן	הָאֶרֶץ:				
H376	H4480	of the earth				
		H776				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 82:3 (Parallel theme): Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Psalms 9:9 (Parallel theme): The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

Isaiah 11:4 (Judgment): But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

Psalms 17:14 (Parallel theme): From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

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