

Psalms 113:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

Analysis

This verse celebrates God's compassionate intervention in human suffering. The Hebrew **מושיבי עקרת הבית** (moshivi akeret habayit, 'He causes to dwell the barren woman of the house') shows God actively settling her in a home—transforming exile into belonging. The term **עקרה** (akeret, 'barren') carried deep shame in ancient Israel, where a woman's worth was often measured by childbearing ability. Barrenness meant no legacy, no security in old age, and social stigma. The phrase **אם-הבנים שמחה** (em-habanim semechah, 'joyful mother of children') represents complete reversal—from shame to honor, from isolation to family, from sorrow to joy.

The concluding **הֲלֹלְיוֹתָה** (hallelu-Yah, 'Praise the LORD') is not mere formula but explosive gratitude. This verse echoes Hannah's story (1 Samuel 2:5), Sarah's laughter-turned-joy (Genesis 21), and prefigures Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). The transformation from barrenness to motherhood represents God's power to overturn impossible situations, making this verse beloved by those experiencing any form of spiritual or physical barrenness. The psalmist sees this personal miracle as revealing God's character—He lifts the lowly and reverses human hopelessness.

Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern culture, particularly Israel, barrenness was considered divine judgment or curse. Childless women faced social stigma, legal vulnerability

(no sons to inherit or protect them), and deep psychological anguish. The Law protected widows and orphans but offered little for the barren. Yet Scripture repeatedly highlights God's compassion for barren women: Sarah (Genesis 21), Rebekah (Genesis 25:21), Rachel (Genesis 30:22), Manoah's wife/Samson's mother (Judges 13), Hannah (1 Samuel 1), and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4). Psalm 113, part of the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118) recited at Passover and other festivals, emphasizes God's care for the lowly—the poor, needy, and barren. This verse became a source of hope for countless women through centuries of Jewish and Christian worship.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's intervention for the barren woman demonstrate His concern for the socially marginalized?
2. In what ways might modern believers experience 'spiritual barrenness' that God can transform?
3. What does this verse teach about God's timing and power to reverse impossible situations?
4. How should the church minister to those experiencing infertility or other forms of 'barrenness'?
5. What parallels exist between physical barrenness and spiritual fruitlessness, and how does God address both?

Interlinear Text

מִשְׁבֵּט

to keep

H3427

עָקָר רָתָה

He maketh the barren woman

H6135

בָּבֶן יִתְּ

house

H1004

אֶם

mother

H517

הַבָּנִים

of children

H1121

שָׁמֵחַ

and to be a joyful

H8056

בָּלָלָה

Praise

H1984

יְהִי

ye the LORD

H3050

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 68:6 (Parallel theme): God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

1 Samuel 2:5 (Parallel theme): They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

Isaiah 54:1 (References Lord): Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

Genesis 25:21 (References Lord): And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Galatians 4:27 (Parallel theme): For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.