

Psalm 119:156

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

Analysis

Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD (רַבְּכִים בְּרַחְמֵיכָךְ, rabbim rachamekha YHWH)—Rachamim (plural of rechem, 'womb') denotes visceral, maternal compassion. The plural intensifies: 'manifold compassions.' **Quicken me according to thy judgments** (קְמִשְׁפְּטֵיכָךְ חַיְנִי), kemishpatekha chayeni)—mishpatim are judicial decisions, case-law precedents. The psalmist asks for life-giving not despite God's justice but according to it.

This resolves the mercy-justice tension at the cross: Romans 3:26 declares God 'just and the justifier.' The mishpatim (judgments) fell on Christ; the rachamim (mercies) flow to us.

Historical Context

The dual appeal to both mercy and judgments reflects Israel's covenant theology: God is both compassionate deliverer (Exodus 34:6) and righteous judge (Deuteronomy 32:4). The 'quicken' motif continues, but here linked specifically to God's judicial character—His righteous verdicts bring life to the faithful.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How can God's judgments be the basis for our quickening rather than our condemnation?
2. What does it reveal about God's character that His mercies are compared to womb-compassion (rachamim)?
3. How does the cross demonstrate that true mercy operates 'according to' divine justice rather than ignoring it?

Interlinear Text

are thy tender mercies	Great	O LORD	me according to thy judgments	quicken
H7356	H7227	H3068	H4941	H2421

Additional Cross-References

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

Isaiah 63:7 (References Lord): I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.

Psalms 86:13 (Parallel theme): For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.