

Psalm 133:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Analysis

This brief wisdom psalm extols covenant community through the exclamation 'Behold!' (hinneh—look, pay attention). The dual adjectives 'good and pleasant' (tov and na'im) encompass both moral rightness and experiential enjoyment. 'Brethren dwelling together in unity' refers to harmonious relationships among God's people, particularly relevant in David's context of tribal tensions. The subsequent verses compare unity to precious anointing oil and life-giving dew, suggesting it's a divine blessing, not merely human achievement. Christ prayed for this unity (John 17:21), and Paul commands it (Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 2:2).

Historical Context

As a 'Song of Ascents,' this psalm celebrated pilgrimages when Israelites from all tribes gathered in Jerusalem, setting aside regional tensions to worship together. David, who united Israel's tribes, understood unity's fragility and value. The psalm reflects covenant theology where God's people are defined by corporate identity, not just individual faith.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What conflicts or divisions in your church or family are you allowing to persist rather than pursuing unity?
2. How does this verse challenge individualistic Christianity that prioritizes personal faith over communal harmony?

Interlinear Text

אָהָרָן בְּתַת מִזְבֵּחַ וְבְּמִזְבֵּחַ וְבְּמִזְבֵּחַ אָהָרָן
H2009 H4100 Behold how good H4100 and how pleasant H5273 to dwell H3427 it is for brethren H251

אָהָרָן בְּתַת
H1571 in unity
H3162

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 1:10 (Parallel theme): Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Peter 3:8 (Parallel theme): Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

John 13:35 (Parallel theme): By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Hebrews 13:1 (Parallel theme): Let brotherly love continue.

John 17:21 (Parallel theme): That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Jeremiah 32:39 (Good): And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

Genesis 13:8 (Parallel theme): And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

Genesis 45:24 (Parallel theme): So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

Isaiah 11:6 (Parallel theme): The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

Isaiah 11:13 (Parallel theme): The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.