

# Psalms 136:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever.

## Analysis

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"O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever." This verse employs a Hebrew title Elohei ha'elohim (God of gods), asserting YHWH's supreme deity over all so-called gods. Elohim can refer to the true God or false gods/idols; Elohei ha'elohim declares Him God above all divine claimants. This confronts ancient polytheism—while nations worshiped many deities, Israel's God reigns supreme. Deuteronomy 10:17 similarly calls Him "God of gods, and Lord of lords." The refrain ki le'olam chasdo (for forever His mercy/lovingkindness) emphasizes that YHWH's covenant faithfulness never fails. Unlike capricious pagan deities, YHWH demonstrates steadfast, enduring mercy. The psalm's structure (26 verses, each ending with this refrain) creates liturgical emphasis through repetition—God's mercy is the constant theme regardless of which saving act is recounted.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern cultures practiced polytheism, with pantheons of gods governing different realms—sky gods, fertility goddesses, war deities, local patron gods. Treaties invoked multiple gods as witnesses. Israel stood radically apart in affirming YHWH alone as true God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The first commandment forbade other gods (Exodus 20:3); prophets mocked idols as powerless (Isaiah 44:9-20, Jeremiah 10:1-16). Psalm 136 likely served as temple liturgy, possibly for Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, or other festivals recounting God's saving acts. The repetitive structure aided corporate worship and memorization.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does affirming God as "God of gods" challenge modern forms of idolatry (money, power, pleasure, success)?
2. What difference does it make that the supreme God is characterized by enduring mercy rather than capricious wrath?
3. How can repetitive liturgical worship (like this Psalm's refrain) deepen rather than deaden spiritual engagement?

## Interlinear Text

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ה וְיִתְּן	יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	כִּי יִשְׁעוֹ	לְעוֹלָם	חַסְדּוֹ:
O give thanks	of gods	of gods	H3588	endureth for ever	for his mercy
H3034	H430	H430		H5769	H2617

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 10:17** (References God): For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

**Psalms 97:9** (References God): For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

**2 Chronicles 2:5** (References God): And the house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods.

**Daniel 2:47** (References God): The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.

**Exodus 18:11** (References God): Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.

**Joshua 22:22** (References God): The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day,)

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