

Psalms 136:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Analysis

To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.

This verse begins the psalm's creation section, celebrating God as wise Creator. **"By wisdom"** (בְּתִבּוּנָה/bitvunah) emphasizes intelligent design—creation wasn't random chaos but ordered purpose. Tevunah denotes understanding, insight, discernment. The heavens display sophisticated order: planetary orbits, stellar patterns, cosmic laws. This wisdom anticipates Proverbs 8:22-31, where personified Wisdom assists in creation.

"Made the heavens" (לַעֲשֶׂה הַשָּׁמַיִם/le'oseh hashamayim) uses עָשָׂה (asah), to make, fashion, or accomplish. Unlike bara (create from nothing, Genesis 1:1), asah emphasizes craftsmanship—the heavens are God's workmanship, skillfully fashioned. The heavens (שָׁמַיִם/shamayim) include both atmospheric sky and stellar expanse, declaring God's glory (Psalm 19:1).

The refrain **"for his mercy endureth for ever"** (כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ/ki le'olam chasdo) connects creation with covenant loyalty. Chesed denotes steadfast love, loyal-love, covenant faithfulness. That God's chesed endures forever (לְעוֹלָם/le'olam) means creation itself flows from and reflects God's loyal love. He made the heavens not from necessity but from overflow of faithful love.

Historical Context

Psalm 136 is the Great Hallel, sung at Passover's conclusion and during daily temple worship. Its antiphonal structure—each verse followed by the refrain 'for his mercy endureth for ever'—suggests congregational or choir responses, one group reciting the verse, another the refrain. This created powerful corporate worship, voices joining in affirmation of God's enduring chesed. The psalm recounts salvation history from creation through exodus to conquest, demonstrating that the same loyal love that made the heavens delivered Israel from Egypt.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing creation as product of divine wisdom (not accident) affect your view of purpose and meaning in life?
2. What is the connection between God's creative power and His covenant loyalty (chesed)—how does creation display His faithful love?
3. In what ways can you cultivate awareness of God's enduring mercy in the created world around you?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------|-------------------|
| הָלַעַשׂ | הַשָּׁמַיִם | בְּתִבּוֹנָה | כִּי | לְעוֹלָם |
| made | the heavens | To him that by wisdom | H3588 | endureth for ever |
| H6213 | H8064 | H8394 | | H5769 |
| חֲסִדּוֹ: | | | | |
| for his mercy | | | | |
| H2617 | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 1:1 (Creation): In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Psalms 104:24 (Creation): O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

Psalms 33:6 (Creation): By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

Jeremiah 51:15 (Creation): He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.

Jeremiah 10:12 (Creation): He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.