

Psalms 147:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?

Analysis

He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? The Hebrew mashlik qarcho kefittim (מִשְׁלִיךְ קָרְחוֹ כִּפְתִּימִים) uses mashlik (casts, hurls) and kefittim (morsels, fragments), depicting God throwing hailstones or ice fragments like someone scattering bread crumbs. The image conveys both ease (God effortlessly disperses ice) and power (what seems small to Him is overwhelming to creation). Qarcho (קָרְחוֹ, His ice) emphasizes divine ownership and agency over frozen precipitation.

The rhetorical question **"who can stand before his cold?"** (lifnei karato mi ya'amod, לִפְנֵי קָרָתוֹ מִי יַעֲמֹד) expects the answer "no one." The verb ya'amod (stand, endure, withstand) appears in contexts of enduring judgment or hostile forces. Divine cold, like divine heat, becomes an instrument demonstrating creaturely dependence. What seems ordinary weather reveals God's power—humans cannot resist or survive severe cold without shelter, clothing, and fire (all ultimately provided by God).

This imagery anticipates eschatological judgment where God's power overwhelms opposition. Nahum 1:6 asks, "Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?" The same God who scatters ice will judge the wicked. Yet for covenant people, God's power inspires confidence, not terror—the One who controls nature's extremes controls all circumstances threatening His people.

Historical Context

Severe winter weather posed real danger in ancient Palestine—travelers could die of exposure, crops could be destroyed, and livestock lost. Hail specifically was recognized as divine weapon—the seventh plague on Egypt (Exodus 9:18-26), the defeat of Israel's enemies (Joshua 10:11), and eschatological judgment (Revelation 16:21). The psalmist's rhetorical question acknowledges humanity's vulnerability before nature's extremes, all governed by God's sovereign word.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing God's power in nature's destructive forces (cold, hail, storms) balance with trusting His protective care?
2. What circumstances in your life feel overwhelming, like cold you 'cannot stand before,' yet remain under God's sovereign control?
3. How should the same divine power that judges the wicked comfort believers facing opposition or hardship?

Interlinear Text

מִשַּׁל יוֹ	קָרָח וְ	כַּפֹּת יָם	לִפְנֵי י	קָרָח וְ	מִי	יִעֲמֹד:
He casteth forth	his ice	like morsels	before	his cold	H4310	who can stand
H7993	H7140	H6595	H6440	H7135		H5975

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 10:11 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.

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