

Psalms 147:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

Analysis

This verse turns from the goodness of worship itself to God's specific works: 'Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.' The command 'Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving' (shiroh la-Adonai be-toda) connects singing with gratitude, suggesting that praise should be grounded in recognition of specific benefits. The phrase 'upon the harp' invokes instrumental accompaniment, indicating musical sophistication and emotional expression. 'Our God' personalizes the cosmic God to the community's relationship. The verse establishes that praise should emerge from thanksgiving - grateful recognition of God's gifts and actions. This distinguishes true worship from mere flattery or abstract theology. True praise responds to experienced goodness. The harp specifically, an instrument associated with David (1 Samuel 16:23), connects worship to Israel's royal tradition while making it accessible to the community through professional musicians and perhaps congregational participation.

Historical Context

Stringed instruments feature prominently in Israel's temple worship. Psalm 33:2 mentions 'ten-stringed instrument' (asor), and Chronicles extensively documents temple musicians with lyres and harps (1 Chronicles 15:20-21). The Second Temple period saw development of more elaborate musical practice, though debates exist about continuity with First Temple practice. The harp (Hebrew 'chinator') was associated with pastoral and prophetic contexts as well as temple worship. The phrase 'with thanksgiving' (be-toda) points to the Hebrew word todah, which in some contexts refers to a specific sacrifice of thanksgiving

(Leviticus 7:12-15). Connecting singing with thanksgiving may reflect the integration of music into the sacrificial system, though post-exilic contexts increasingly emphasized music and prayer as substitutes for or supplements to sacrifice. The phrase 'sing praise unto our God' (zamru elohenu) employs the verb zamar, which specifically connotes musical praise with instruments, distinguishing it from other forms of prayer.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why should praise always be accompanied by thanksgiving, and how does this ground worship in reality?
2. What role do instruments play in worship, and how do they differ from or complement vocal praise?
3. How does the phrase 'our God' establish both personal relationship and communal identity?
4. In what ways does the harp as symbol connect contemporary worship to Israel's tradition?
5. How should the connection between singing, thanksgiving, and instrumental music inform modern worship practices?

Interlinear Text

לְעֻצְבוֹתָם: וּמָחַב שׁ לִב לְשֹׁב וּרְפָא

He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds

H7495

H7665

H3820

H2280

H6094

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 34:18 (Parallel theme): The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Job 5:18 (Parallel theme): For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.

Luke 4:18 (Parallel theme): The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Isaiah 61:1 (Parallel theme): The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

Jeremiah 33:6 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.

Psalms 51:17 (Parallel theme): The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Isaiah 57:15 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Malachi 4:2 (Parallel theme): But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Ezekiel 34:16 (Parallel theme): I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.