

Psalm 149:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

Analysis

Let them praise his name in the dance (יְלִלּוּ שָׁמוֹן תְּמִחוֹל) — Machol (dance) signifies bodily participation in worship, not entertainment but physical expression of spiritual joy. David danced before the ark (2 Samuel 6:14), and Miriam led dancing after the Red Sea deliverance (Exodus 15:20). Praising God's **name** (שְׁם) means honoring His revealed character and covenant reputation, not merely uttering syllables.

Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp (בָּתָף וְכָפָר יְמִרְוֵלָו) — The toph (tambourine/timbrel) and kinnor (lyre/harp) represent percussion and strings, combining rhythm and melody. Zamar (to sing praises) often accompanies instrumental music, creating multi-sensory worship. This full-body, multi-instrumental praise anticipates Psalm 150's orchestral crescendo and reflects the biblical pattern of offering God our whole being—mind, voice, and body.

Historical Context

Temple worship in ancient Israel was highly embodied and communal, contrasting sharply with modern Western worship's cerebral tendencies. Musical instruments were specifically commissioned for temple service (1 Chronicles 23:5), and Levitical musicians were trained professionals. The timbrel was often associated with women's worship leadership (Exodus 15:20, Judges 11:34), while the harp was David's instrument. This verse reflects the full participation of God's people—male and female, musicians and dancers—in corporate celebration.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 – Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 – God is love

Study Questions

1. How does your cultural context limit or enhance embodied worship, and what biblical adjustments might be needed?
2. What might prevent believers from offering wholehearted physical expression in worship, and are these barriers biblical?
3. How do music and movement in worship engage aspects of your humanity that words alone cannot?

Interlinear Text

בְּתִ יְהוָה בְּמִחְלָל וְשָׁמָן וְיִפְלָל וְכִבְשָׁה וְכִבְשָׁה וְכִבְשָׁה

Let them praise his name in the dance unto him with the timbrel and harp

H1984 H8034 H4234 H8596 H3658

לְזִמְרָה
let them sing praises H0
H2167

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 81:2 (Parallel theme): Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.

Jeremiah 31:13 (Parallel theme): Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

Exodus 15:20 (Parallel theme): And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

Psalms 30:11 (Parallel theme): Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

2 Samuel 6:16 (Parallel theme): And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

2 Samuel 6:14 (Parallel theme): And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.

Judges 11:34 (Parallel theme): And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

Psalms 33:2 (Resurrection): Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

1 Chronicles 25:6 (Parallel theme): All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.

1 Chronicles 16:42 (Parallel theme): And with them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God. And the sons of Jeduthun were porters.