

# Psalms 16:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:  
thou maintainest my lot.

## Analysis

**The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.** This verse employs inheritance and land allotment imagery to express complete satisfaction in God Himself as one's ultimate portion and possession. The concepts resonate with Israel's tribal land distributions but transcend physical inheritance to spiritual reality.

"The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance" (יהה עַתְתִּיךְ לִכְסֵי) uses language from Israel's land allotment. When Canaan was divided, each tribe received nachalah (inheritance), a territorial portion. However, the Levites received no land inheritance; Numbers 18:20 declares: "The LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel." What others might perceive as deprivation—no land, no territorial wealth—was actually supreme privilege: God Himself was their portion.

David wasn't a Levite, but he adopts Levitical language—declaring that ultimate satisfaction isn't found in possessions, land, or wealth, but in God Himself. Chelqi (my portion) indicates what is assigned, allotted, designated as one's share. The psalmist's assigned portion isn't merely blessings from God but God Himself.

"And of my cup" (וְכֹסֵי) extends the imagery. The cup represents one's destiny, lot, or assigned experience in life. Psalm 11:6 speaks of "the portion of their cup" referring to judgment. Psalm 23:5 describes God preparing a table and

the cup running over, symbolizing abundant blessing. Here, the LORD Himself is the cup—the psalmist's destiny, experience, and satisfaction.

"Thou maintainest my lot" (אתה תומך גורלי) uses tomikh (support, uphold, maintain) and goral (lot, portion, that which is assigned by lot). When land was distributed, lots were cast to determine each tribe's allotment (Joshua 14-21). God didn't merely give David his portion once but continually maintains, upholds, and secures it. This isn't temporary blessing but permanent security.

This verse expresses the ultimate truth: God Himself is the believer's portion, cup, and maintained inheritance. External circumstances may vary, physical possessions may be lost, but the believer's true wealth—relationship with the living God—remains secure.

## Historical Context

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The land inheritance system was fundamental to Israelite identity. Each tribe's nachalah (inheritance) connected them to the Abrahamic covenant's promise of land (Genesis 12:7, 15:18-21). Loss of land meant curse and exile; possession meant covenant blessing. Joshua's careful distribution (Joshua 13-21) fulfilled God's ancient promises.

The Levites' unique status—no territorial inheritance but God as their portion (Numbers 18:20, Deuteronomy 10:9, 18:1-2)—set them apart. They received cities within other tribes' territories and lived on tithes and offerings, constantly dependent on God's provision through His people. What might seem like disadvantage was actually intimacy—while others possessed land, Levites possessed God.

David's background adds poignancy to this declaration. As youngest son, he likely received minimal inheritance. As fugitive fleeing Saul, he lost access to any family possessions. As king, he could have claimed unlimited wealth, yet he declares God alone is his portion. Circumstances varied drastically—shepherd boy, fugitive, king—but his treasure remained constant: God Himself.

Psalm 73:25-26 echoes this sentiment: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Lamentations 3:24, written during exile's devastation, affirms: "The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."

In Christian theology, this verse anticipates the New Testament truth that believers' inheritance is God Himself through Christ. Ephesians 1:3 declares God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:11,14,18 repeatedly refers to believers' "inheritance" in Christ—not merely future heavenly rewards but present possession of God through the indwelling Spirit. Peter writes that believers have "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4)—an inheritance that begins with knowing God through Christ.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. What does it mean practically that 'the LORD is your portion' rather than merely one of your possessions?
2. How does the Levites' unique inheritance (God Himself rather than land) illustrate the privilege of having God as one's portion?
3. In what ways might you be tempted to find your portion in things other than God, and how does this verse reorient priorities?
4. How does Jesus's teaching about treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21) relate to declaring God as your portion?
5. What does it mean that God 'maintains your lot,' and how does this provide security amid changing circumstances?

## Interlinear Text

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הָיָה	מִנְתָּחָה	מִלְקָדֶשׁ	וְכֹסֶת	אֶת
The LORD	is the portion	of mine inheritance	and of my cup	
H3068	H4490	H2506	H3563	H859

  

תֹּזֵם	יְהִי	גּוֹלִילִי
thou maintainest	my lot	
H8551	H1486	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 73:26** (Parallel theme): My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

**Psalms 142:5** (References Lord): I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

**Lamentations 3:24** (References Lord): The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

**Psalms 23:5** (Parallel theme): Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

**Psalms 119:57** (References Lord): Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

**Deuteronomy 32:9** (References Lord): For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

**Psalms 89:4** (Parallel theme): Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

**Isaiah 53:12** (Parallel theme): Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

**Psalms 116:13** (References Lord): I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

**Psalms 9:4** (Parallel theme): For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.

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