

Psalms 53:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.

Analysis

God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. This verse presents God's comprehensive survey of humanity, searching for wisdom and spiritual seeking. The language is anthropomorphic—describing God in human terms—to communicate divine scrutiny of human hearts and actions.

"God looked down from heaven" (Elohim mishamayim hishqif, פָּנָאֵל מִשְׁמָיִם הַשְׁקִיף), uses shaqaf (שָׁקָף), meaning to look down, look out, gaze. This isn't casual glancing but penetrating examination. Genesis 18:16 uses this word when the LORD looked toward Sodom before judging it. Psalm 14:2 (parallel passage) uses identical language. God's position "from heaven" emphasizes transcendence—He sees comprehensively what humans cannot see from earthly perspective. Nothing is hidden from His view.

"Upon the children of men" (al-bene adam, עַל-בְּנֵי אָדָם) uses bene adam, literally "sons of Adam." This phrase emphasizes human descent from Adam—fallen humanity sharing in the corruption that entered through the first transgression. Romans 5:12: "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The survey is comprehensive—all humanity, not just Israel or particular groups.

"To see if there were any that did understand" (lir'ot ha-yesh maskil, לִרְאֹות הָיָשׁ מַשְׁכִּיל) uses sakal (שָׁכָל), meaning to be prudent, wise, act wisely. Maskil (מַשְׁכִּיל) is a

participial form: "one who understands," "one acting wisely." This isn't abstract intellectual knowledge but practical wisdom—understanding that leads to right action. Proverbs 9:10: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." True understanding starts with recognizing God's reality and authority.

"That did seek God" (doresh et-Elohim, דָרְשׁ אֶת־אֱלֹהִים) uses *darash* (דָרְשׁ), meaning to seek, inquire, pursue. This is active pursuit of God—not passive acknowledgment but intentional movement toward divine relationship. Jeremiah 29:13: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." God searches for seekers—those whose hearts turn toward Him rather than away from Him. The tragedy: God's search yields negative results (next verse).

Historical Context

The image of God looking down from heaven to survey humanity appears throughout Scripture. Genesis 6:5: "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This divine survey preceded the flood. Genesis 11:5: "And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded"—the survey before Babel's judgment. Genesis 18:20-21: God says He will "go down now, and see" whether Sodom's sin matches the outcry against it.

These anthropomorphic descriptions don't suggest God lacks knowledge requiring investigation. God's omniscience is absolute: "the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts" (1 Chronicles 28:9). Rather, this language emphasizes God's active engagement with human affairs and His justice in making judgments based on thorough examination rather than hearsay.

The search for "any that did understand, that did seek God" echoes passages about righteous remnants. Abraham bargained with God over Sodom: if ten righteous were found, the city would be spared (Genesis 18:32). Ezekiel 22:30: "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." Isaiah 59:16: "he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor."

Jesus later sent disciples to seek those who would respond to the gospel. Luke 19:10: "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." God seeks seekers—those whose hearts turn toward Him. John 4:23: "the Father seeketh such to worship him" in spirit and truth. This mutual seeking—God seeking humanity, humanity seeking God—describes redemptive relationship.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that God 'looks down from heaven' to examine humanity, and how should this divine scrutiny affect how we live?
2. How is 'understanding' defined biblically—why is it connected to seeking God rather than merely accumulating knowledge?
3. What is the difference between acknowledging God's existence and actively seeking God, and which characterizes your spiritual life?
4. Why does God search for 'any that did understand, that did seek God,' and what does His search reveal about His desire for relationship?
5. How does Jesus 'seeking and saving the lost' fulfill God's search for those who seek Him?

Interlinear Text

אֱלֹהִים:	God	from heaven	looked down	upon the children	of men
H430		H8064	H8259	H5921	H1121
לְרֹאֹת	to see	בַּיּוֹם	מִשְׁמָךְ יְלֹא	דְּבַרְנָשׁ	אֱלֹהִים:
H7200		H3426	H7919	H1875	H430

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 55:6 (Parallel theme): Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

2 Chronicles 15:2 (Parallel theme): And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

Psalms 111:10 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

2 Chronicles 19:3 (References God): Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

Psalms 27:8 (Parallel theme): When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

Jeremiah 23:24 (Parallel theme): Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

Psalms 102:19 (Parallel theme): For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;

Jeremiah 16:17 (Parallel theme): For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.

Psalms 11:4 (Parallel theme): The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

Psalms 10:4 (References God): The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.