

Psalms 75:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

Analysis

But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. This central theological affirmation corrects human presumption about power and success. After warning against arrogant self-exaltation (verses 4-6), the psalmist declares that God alone determines who rises and falls.

"God is the judge" (Elohim shophet, אלהים שופט) uses shaphat, meaning to judge, govern, vindicate, or execute justice. God's role as judge encompasses more than courtroom verdicts; He governs human affairs, determining outcomes according to His righteous will. This contrasts with human attempts to control destiny through power, manipulation, or self-promotion.

"He putteth down one, and setteth up another" (zeh yashpil vezeh yarim, זה ישביל זה ירים) uses demonstrative pronouns ("this one... that one") to emphasize God's sovereign choice. Shaphel means to bring low, humble, abase; rum means to raise up, exalt, lift high. The verbs are active—God is the agent of both humiliation and exaltation. Human striving cannot guarantee success; divine sovereignty determines outcomes.

This verse echoes Hannah's song: "The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up" (1 Samuel 2:6-7). The theology of divine sovereignty over human fortunes runs throughout Scripture.

Historical Context

The ancient world was intensely hierarchical. Kings, emperors, and nobles wielded power that seemed absolute. Yet Israel's faith insisted that behind human power stood divine sovereignty. Nebuchadnezzar learned this when God humbled him: "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:32).

The prophets frequently announced divine judgment on proud rulers. Isaiah 14 mocks the king of Babylon's fall from heaven. Ezekiel 28 prophesies against the prince of Tyre. The pattern is consistent: human pride invites divine humiliation; humble dependence on God leads to exaltation.

For Israel living under foreign domination—whether Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, or Roman—this doctrine provided hope. The current world order was not permanent. God who raised up empires could also bring them down. History was not random but governed by the divine Judge.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing God as the ultimate judge affect your response to injustice or unfair treatment?
2. What examples from history or Scripture illustrate God putting down one and setting up another?
3. How should this verse shape a believer's attitude toward ambition and success?
4. What comfort does this doctrine provide when godless people seem to hold all the power?

Interlinear Text

וְרִים: וְיַהֲיֵה יְמֵן כִּי
H3588 But God H430 is the judge H8199 שָׁפֵט הַיְהּוּ שָׁפֵט יְלִיל הַיְהּוּ
H2088 he putteth down H8213 H2088 one and setteth up H7311

Additional Cross-References

Luke 1:52 (Parallel theme): He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

Psalms 147:6 (Parallel theme): The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

Psalms 50:6 (Judgment): And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

John 15:16 (Parallel theme): Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

2 Samuel 6:21 (Parallel theme): And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.

1 Samuel 16:1 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

Psalms 58:11 (Judgment): So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

1 Samuel 15:23 (Parallel theme): For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

1 Samuel 15:28 (Parallel theme): And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.

Galatians 1:15 (References God): But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

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