

# Psalms 77:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.

## Analysis

**The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid** (רָאוּךְ מַיִם, אֱלֹהִים רָאוּךְ מַיִם יַחֲלִילוּ). The repetition "the waters saw thee... saw thee" emphasizes intensity. Ra'ah (רָאָה) is visual perception—the waters literally beheld God's presence. Chil (חִיל) means to writhe, tremble, or be in anguish—personifying the waters as sentient creatures terrified by divine presence. This recalls the Red Sea crossing and perhaps also creation itself (Genesis 1:2, Job 38:8-11).

**The depths also were troubled** (אֶרֶץ-יִרְגָּזוּ תְהוֹמוֹת). Tehom (תְּהוֹם) is the primordial deep, the chaotic waters of pre-creation (Genesis 1:2). Ragaz (רָגַז) means to quake, shake, or be disturbed. God's presence causes even primal chaos to convulse in terror. This cosmic imagery portrays the exodus as new creation—God conquering chaos to bring His people into ordered existence.

## Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cosmology viewed the sea as symbol of chaos and divine opposition (Babylonian Tiamat, Canaanite Yam). Israel's theology was radically different: Yahweh created the waters (Genesis 1:6-10), controls them (Job 38:8-11), and walks through them (Exodus 14:21-22). The Red Sea crossing demonstrated Yahweh's absolute sovereignty over cosmic forces. The New Testament applies this to Christ rebuking the sea (Mark 4:39) and walking on water (Matthew 14:25-27).

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What does it mean that even inanimate waters 'saw' and 'feared' God's presence?
2. How does this cosmic imagery elevate the exodus from political liberation to new creation?
3. How does Christ's mastery over the sea reveal His divine identity as Israel's God?

## Interlinear Text

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רָא וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא
saw	The waters	thee O God	saw	The waters	thee they were afraid
H7200	H4325	H430	H7200	H4325	H2342
וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא	וַיֵּרָא
also were troubled	the depths				
H637	H7264	H8415			

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 14:21** (Parallel theme): And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

**Habakkuk 3:15** (Parallel theme): Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.