

Psalms 79:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.

Analysis

Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed. This verse returns to the theological crisis introduced in verse 4: the nations' mockery of Israel becomes mockery of Yahweh. The question "Where is their God?" (ayyeh Eloheihem, אַיְיֵה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם) was the ultimate taunt against a defeated nation, implying divine impotence or non-existence. This echoes Joel 2:17 and anticipates ongoing theological challenges when God's people suffer.

The psalmist transforms the taunt into motivation for divine action: vindicate Your reputation by demonstrating that You are neither absent nor powerless. "Let him be known" (yivada, יִיבָדָה) requests God make Himself known through action, not merely proclamation. The phrase "in our sight" (le'eineinu, לְעֵינֵינוּ) asks that Israel witness God's vindication within their lifetime—not deferred to distant eschatology but visible, tangible justice.

"By the revenging of the blood of thy servants" (niqmat dam-avadekha, נִקְמַת דַּם־אַבְדֶּכָה) returns to verse 2's image of slaughtered faithful. Naqam (נָקַם) means to avenge, take vengeance—executing justice for innocent bloodshed. The theology is covenantal: these aren't random victims but "thy servants," people under God's protection. Their unavenged blood cries from the ground (Genesis 4:10), demanding divine response. The request isn't vindictive but theological: demonstrate covenant faithfulness by defending Your covenant people.

Historical Context

The taunt "Where is their God?" appears in various forms throughout Scripture during national crises (Psalm 42:3, 10; 115:2; Micah 7:10). Ancient Near Eastern theology directly connected military outcomes to divine power. When nations conquered Israel, they interpreted it as their gods defeating Yahweh. This challenged Israel's monotheistic witness—if Yahweh is truly sovereign over all nations, why does He permit His people's defeat? The question drove Israel to sophisticated theodicy: God permits judgment for discipline but will ultimately vindicate His name.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How should Christians respond when skeptics use believers' suffering as evidence against God's existence or power?
2. What is the relationship between God's reputation among nations and His people's visible flourishing or suffering?
3. How does appealing to God's concern for His own name's sake provide confidence in prayer for justice?

Interlinear Text

יֹאמְרוּ לִמָּה H4100	אֵלֶּה יְהוָה H346	בְּגִיִּם H1471	אֵלֶּה יְהוָה H430
say H559	Wherefore should the heathen	Where is their God	
יְדָע H3045	בְּגִיִּם H1471	לְעֵינֵינוּ H5869	בְּקֶמֶת H5360
let him be known	Wherefore should the heathen	in our sight	by the revenging
דָּם H1818	עַבְדֶּיךָ H5650	הַשָּׁפוּרִים H8210	
of the blood	of thy servants	which is shed	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 42:10 (References God): As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

Revelation 18:20 (References God): Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

Psalms 42:3 (References God): My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

Psalms 94:1 (References God): O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

Psalms 115:2 (References God): Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?

Exodus 6:7 (References God): And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Exodus 7:5 (Parallel theme): And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

