

Psalms 79:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.

Analysis

O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. This verse shifts from imprecatory prayer against enemies to penitential prayer for Israel. "Remember not" (al-tizkor-lanu, אַל-תִּזְכֹּר-לָנוּ) asks God to refrain from covenant lawsuit based on accumulated guilt. "Former iniquities" (avonot rishonim, עֲוֹנוֹת רִאשׁוֹנִים) acknowledges generational sin—the current generation suffers for both their own sins and accumulated guilt from ancestors' covenant violations.

The contrast "let thy tender mercies" (rachamekha, רַחֲמֶיךָ) introduces God's covenant compassion—maternal-like tenderness toward His people. "Speedily prevent us" uses qadem (קִדַּם), meaning to confront, meet, anticipate—asking God's mercy to arrive quickly before complete destruction. The urgency suggests Israel teeters on extinction's edge, requiring immediate divine intervention. "Prevent" in KJV's 1611 usage means "come before" or "go before," not hinder.

"We are brought very low" (dalonu me'od, דָּלוּנוּ מְעֹד) describes utter depletion—physical, economic, emotional, spiritual. The verb dalal (דָּלַל) means to be thin, weak, impoverished. Israel has nothing left with which to recommend themselves; only God's mercy can save. This prepares for verse 9's appeal to God's reputation: save us not for our sake but for Your name's sake.

Historical Context

This verse reflects post-exilic or mid-exilic theology recognizing that current suffering results from accumulated covenant violations spanning generations. Daniel 9, Ezra 9, and Nehemiah 9 contain similar prayers confessing generational guilt. The appeal to divine mercy rather than justice acknowledges Israel has no legal standing before God—they've forfeited covenant privileges through persistent rebellion. Only God's undeserved compassion can restore them.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How should Christians today understand the relationship between generational sin patterns and current consequences?
2. What does it mean to appeal to God's 'tender mercies' rather than His justice when we deserve judgment?
3. How does honest acknowledgment of being 'brought very low' position believers to receive God's restoring grace?

Interlinear Text

אֶל	תִּזְכֹּר	לְנוֹ	עוֹנֹת	רָאשׁ נָ יָם	מִהֵר	יִקְדָּם וְנוֹ
H408	O remember	H0	iniquities	not against us former	speedily	prevent
	H2142		H5771	H7223	H4118	H6923
מְאֹד: יֵל וְנוֹ כִּי רַחֲמֶיךָ						
let thy tender mercies						
H7356						
low						
very						
H1809						
H3966						

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 64:9 (Parallel theme): Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.

Psalms 142:6 (Parallel theme): Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

Psalms 116:6 (Parallel theme): The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

Psalms 21:3 (Parallel theme): For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

Revelation 18:5 (Parallel theme): For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

Hosea 9:9 (Parallel theme): They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

Psalms 130:3 (Parallel theme): If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Psalms 25:7 (Parallel theme): Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Psalms 106:43 (Parallel theme): Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

Exodus 32:34 (Parallel theme): Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

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