

Psalms 86:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious,
longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

Analysis

But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious (וְאַתָּה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהִים, ve-attah Adonai El-rachum ve-channun)—Rachum means compassionate, merciful; channun means gracious, showing favor. **Longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth** (אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת, erekh appayim ve-rav-chesed ve-emet)—Erekh appayim literally means "long of nostrils," i.e., slow to anger; rav-chesed means abundant in covenant love; emet means truth, faithfulness.

This verse quotes Exodus 34:6, God's self-revelation to Moses after the golden calf. David contrasts his godless enemies (v. 14) with God's compassionate character. The fivefold description emphasizes divine patience and reliability. Despite enemy violence, God remains merciful. This isn't weakness but strength—he could destroy rebels instantly but offers grace instead.

Historical Context

Exodus 34:6-7 is cited repeatedly in the OT (Numbers 14:18, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 103:8, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2), becoming Israel's core confession of God's character. Whenever they faced judgment or distress, they appealed to this revelation.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does meditating on God's character (compassion, grace, patience) transform your response to enemies?
2. Which of these five attributes (compassion, grace, patience, mercy, faithfulness) do you most need to trust right now?
3. How does God's "longsuffering" with his enemies inform how you should treat yours?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת הַ	אֶדְוִי	אֵל	רַח וּמִ	וְחַנּוּן
H859	But thou O Lord	art a God	full of compassion	and gracious
	H136	H410	H7349	H2587
אֶרְחַם	אֶפְלֹא	וְרַב	חֶסֶד	וְאֵמֶת:
longsuffering	H639	and plenteous	in mercy	and truth
H750		H7227	H2617	H571

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 130:7 (Grace): Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

Ephesians 1:7 (Grace): In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Psalms 103:8 (Grace): The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

Psalms 86:5 (Grace): For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Joel 2:13 (Grace): And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Nehemiah 9:17 (Grace): And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

Psalms 145:8 (Grace): The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

Micah 7:18 (Grace): Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

Psalms 85:10 (Grace): Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Psalms 111:4 (Grace): He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.