

# Psalm 82

## Corrupt Judges Arraigned

Two Basic Themes of Ps. 82:

1. God is supreme over all other supernatural powers;
2. The earthly courts have rendered unjust rulings for the weak, the orphans, the needy, etc.

Judges are to be God's representatives (Deut. 1:16-17; Lev. 19:15; I Kings 3:9)

Two basic interpretations of Ps.82 and they both turn on the meaning of the second occurrence of Elohim in verses 1, 6, and 8.

- Elohim
  - (plural of majesty/power, thus singular) = God.
  - (plural) = gods, angels, judges
    - John 10:34-36
    - Exodus 21:6; 22:8
    - Job 1:6
    - Deut 32:8
      - "... of his heavenly court..."
        - DSS – "... of the sons of God..."
        - LXX – "... number of the angels of God..."
        - MT – "...number of the sons of Israel..."
- Rabbi Rashi: Elohim = judges, per the Targum's rendering ("In the midst of the judges he judges")
  - "Accordingly God, the Supreme Jude, calls the administrators of justice in Israel to account for failing to discharge their office equitably."
- Rabbi Ibi Ezra" Elohim = angels ("in the midst of angels He judges")
  - "Most moderns [scholars] consider that we have in this Psalm a heavenly assize [court] before which the tutelary gods of the heathen peoples are summoned for permitting acts of violence against the innocent."
- Cf. Isaiah 3:13-15

- Cf. to Psalm 58: “Unjust Judges Condemned”

### **Vs. 1 – God the Supreme Judge of Judges**

“God (Elohim) stands over the congregation of God (El)”

“stands” means here “presides over, rules, is overseeing, etc” NOT the usual Hebrew verb for “opposite of sitting”

“In the midst of the Elohim, he judges”

### **Vss. 2-4 -- God’s Indictment of Bad Judges and Instructions**

3 – “poor” (dal) feeble, not \$\$\$

“uphold the rights” (tzedeq= “cause righteousness” = vindicate)

“oppressed” = a helpless person who is in the grip of an exploiter

“destitute” = both poor of assets and lacking friends who will support him

4 – “rescue” – the aid of the courts is vital since this person cannot escape by their own means

### **Vss. 5-7 – Condemnation of Bad Judges**

6 – “I said” – Heb emphatic word order “I Myself have said...”

“elohim (godlike beings) are you all” Rabbis say “men invested with Divine prerogatives.”

“sons of the most high (‘elyon) are you all”

7 – “like a man (adam) you all will die”

“you all will fall like one of the princes” Rabbis say “even princes have judgment passed upon them by God; so will you!”

### **Vs. 8 – Asaph’s Appeal to God**

“Rise up Elohim, judge the earth, for you shall possess all the nations.”