

Psalm 40

Set against the background of Genesis 49, as Joseph is about to come up out of Egypt (the pit, the grave) to the Promised Land to bury Jacob. Also, the blessings of Jacob to his sons bring to memory Joseph's betrayal by his brothers when they threw him into a pit.

Rashi makes just that connection: "out of the roaring pit" i.e. from the imprisonment of Egypt and from the roaring of their tumult.

Most importantly, in **Hebrews 10:5-9**, Paul quotes **Psalm 40:6-8** as the words of Christ, offering Himself as a better sacrifice.

Consciously or unconsciously, David speaks here as the type of Christ.

Psalm 40:1-2 - "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

"waited patiently" - Heb. "in waiting, I waited;" the doubling of the word notes that he waited diligently and earnestly, patiently and perseveringly, until God should help him.

A "noisy" pit. A pit of tumult, clamor or uproar of a crowd of men, or of war. Also used to mean "destruction." Possibly an allusion to subterranean caverns in which the waterfalls make so horrible a noise as to be intolerable. Some scholars see a depiction of Christ on the cross, mocked and insulted, then descending to hell to endure the same from fiends and demons in a pit filled with horrors, and with men crying out as they fall into it.

"out of the miry clay" - a frothing, unstable morass of slime, like quicksand. Such quagmires are said to be common in the Holy Land. The Septuagint renders it: "a lake of misery."

"and set my feet on a rock" - A rock is an image of security (**Psalm 18:2; Psalm 27:5**).

Isaiah 28:16 - "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed."

1 Corinthians 10:4 - "and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ."

Christ as the chief corner stone: **Psalm 118:22** - The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. (**Luke 20:17, 1 Peter 2:7**. etc.)

Psalm 40:3 - "And he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God: many

shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”

“A new song” - to be joined by all his people above and below, **Revelation 5:9**.

Rashi identifies the song with the spontaneous “song of the sea” by Moses after crossing of the Red Sea in **Exodus 15:1-21**.

Psalm 40:4 - “Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.”

Rashi - “such as turn aside to lies” - Those who turn from the straight way to follow the falsehood of idols.

A Body Has Thou Prepared

Psalm 40:6-8 - “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Hebrews 10:4-9 - “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”

Why the difference in Paul’s quotation?

“mine ears hast thou opened” - The Septuagint (LXX) has, "but a body hast thou prepared me" or “a body you restored to me” - Paul assumes a body by the mention of ears, a part of the body being put for the whole. As the ear is the instrument for receiving the divine command, so the body is the instrument for fulfilling it.

Compare **Isaiah 50:5-6** - “The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.”

The Hebrew verb “to pierce” (כָּרַח = H3738) in **Psalm 40:6** is the same trilateral root (a root containing a sequence of three consonants) for the Hebrew verb “to prepare” (כָּרַח = H3739). For example, this second verb (כָּרַח = H3739) appears translated in **2 Kings 6:23** as "prepared." In other words, both verbs have the exact same trilateral root, but have different meanings. The LXX translators had thus understood the verb in this verse not as H3738 ("pierced"), but as H3739 ("prepared").

Additionally the LXX translators understood the word "ears" as metonymy for obedience. Thus the proper rendering in Hebrew would be that the Lord prepared the ears of David for obedience to the Lord.

The LXX translators went farther: they understood that the Lord had not just unstopped or unplugged the ears of David, but prepared (הִכְרִיחַ = H3739) the ears of David in order for him to hear the voice of the Lord, and thus to obey. If and when the ears obey, then the whole person follows, and in this regard King David as a person (his whole body) was a type of living sacrifice to the Lord.

David's adversary Saul exhibited just the opposite: **1 Samuel 15:22** - Samuel said, "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."

Origen, in his Commentary on the Epistle of Romans, recognized the literal text rendering of "ears," but mentions the context of Psalm 40:6 in terms not of "ears," but of "body," and relates it to Paul's admonition to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice."

(See a full discussion here: <https://buff.ly/2wtRfHP>)

The Hebrew says - "Lo! I come, bringing the book written for me," (i.e., I have duly performed all the rites ordained in the book.)

"Then said I, Lo, I come" - The incarnation of Christ, taking the body, or human nature, prepared for him, and uniting it to himself.

"in the volume of the book it is written of me" -

Rashi - at the time of the giving of the Torah, behold I came to You to be bound in Your covenant (**Exod. 24:7**): "We will do and hear," and this matter is written as testimony concerning me in the scroll of the book, i.e., in the Law of Moses.

John 5:39 - "You pore over the Scriptures because you presume that by them you possess eternal life. Yet these are the very words that testify about Me"

Initially, in **Genesis 3:15** - "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it (he) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

"to do thy will, O God." -

Luke 22:42 - "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

"yea, thy law is within my heart." -

Jeremiah 31:33 - "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

Psalm 40:9 - "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest."

Ephesians 2:17 - "He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near."

Psalm 40:12 - "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me."

i.e. the crushing weight of the sins of the world.

Isaiah 53:6 - "the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Psalm 40:13 - "Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me."

... which was done when he was raised from the dead

Psalm 40:15 - "Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha."

Targum: "Aha, Aha! We have rejoiced at his destruction, with joy at his affliction."

Luke 13:35 - "Look, your house is left to you desolate."

Luke 21:20 - "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that her desolation is near."

Psalm 40:17 - "But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God."

"Poor and needy" - when deserted by his Father, forsaken by his disciples, and surrounded by his enemies; and had the sins of his people, the curse of the law, and the wrath of God upon him.

- *John Gill Exposition*

Rashi - Every expression of poor and needy in Psalms refers only to Israel.

2 Corinthians 8:9 - "...though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."

"yet the Lord thinketh upon me" - Targum: "thinketh good for me"

(although despised and rejected of men)

Philippians 2:9 - "...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."

