

Psalm 42

This cry of David, “Why hast thou forgotten me?” (vs. 9) - is an echo of the cry of Israel in bondage in our Torah reading, and also a foreshadowing of Jesus’ cry on the cross.

Psalm 42:1 - To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

“maschil” = song or poem of contemplation and instruction

Wait - didn’t Korah rebel against Moses, and the earth swallowed him up? How did his sons get mixed up with a beautiful psalm like this?

Rashi - “of the sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaf.” At first, they were in their father’s counsel, but at the time of the controversy they parted, and when all those around them were swallowed up, and the earth opened its mouth (**Numbers 16**), their place was left within the mouth of the earth, as the matter that is stated (**Num. 26:11**): “But the sons of Korah did not die.” There they uttered a song, and there they composed these psalms. [Then] they ascended from there, and the Holy Spirit rested on them, whereupon they prophesied concerning the exiles, the destruction of the Temple, and the Davidic dynasty.

The three sons of Levi were Gershon, Merari, and Kohath. The sons of Korah were later an important branch of the singers of the Kohathite division of Levites. After seven successive generations, the prophet Samuel arose from the line of Korah.

2 Chronicles 20:19 - “And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.”

Psalm 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87, and 88 are all written by or associated with the Sons of Korah.

Psalm 42:1-2 - “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”

John 7:37-39 - “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

“appear before God” = The regular formula for the stated visits to the Temple at the three great Festivals (**Exodus 23:17; Psalm 84:7**).

Psalm 42:5 - “Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted in me? hope you in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.”

“cast down” = depressed, bowed down, prostrated, to sink down under the weight of sorrow

“disquieted” = to growl, to be agitated, troubled, or anxious in mind: to moan internally.

“Hope thou in God” - Again we see a word of hope at the center of the Psalm.

“Help of his countenance” - “for the salvations of his face” to experience again his blessing as in the priestly blessing

Numbers 6:24-26 - “The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.”

Psalm 42:6 - “O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.”

The Rabbis - David was on the run and unable to be in Israel. He is remembering the wonderful works God did for the people of Israel of old, in drying up the river Jordan, and giving them the law on Mount Sinai, a Mizar (little) hill. Some believe the Transfiguration of Jesus occurred somewhere on snow-capped Mount Hermon, which marks Israel’s northern boundary.

Psalm 42:7 - “Deep calls to deep at the noise of your waterspouts: all your waves and your billows are gone over me.”

Better translated, “Flood calleth unto flood at the noise of thy cascading cataracts.”

“all your waves and your billows are gone over me.” - Because this is a Haftarah to Exodus 1 & 2, we can hear an echo of the male newborns in Egypt drowned in the Nile, and the cry of their parents.

David is totally overwhelmed. The image is a recollection of Noah’s flood, when the upper deep, or abyss of waters, (in the clouds,) called to the lower deep, or abyss of waters in the sea and rivers, to unite and drown the world in the Deluge.

Psalm 42:8 - “Yet the LORD will command his loving kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer to the God of my life.”

Another word of hope! Then back to despair.

Psalm 42:9 - “I will say to God my rock, Why have you forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”

It’s a continuing conversation between David’s spirit and his soul, striving against his despondency.

The "enemy" here referred to may have been Absalom, who had driven David from his throne and kingdom.

Psalm 42:10 - "As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily to me, Where is your God?"

"As with a sword in my bones" sword = *retsach* - Not a sword but with a "shattering or crushing" of my bones. Luther: "as death in my bones."

Psalm 42:11 - "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Almost a repeat of verse 5. Except now it refers to his *own* countenance:

Health = "yeshuah" - "salvation," which will make my face to shine, and my countenance cheerful, which supposes the gladness of the heart and the bettering of his condition

Joshua's name was Yehoshua, meaning "YAHWEH is salvation." The name Jesus comes from a Greek translation of the Aramaic short form of Yehoshua, (Yeshu'a)

Joshua was first called Hoshea. The change from Hoshea to Yehoshua appears in Numbers 13:16, by prefixing the name of Yahweh.

When the name Abram became Abraham (Genesis 17:5) and Sarai became Sarah (Genesis 17:15), the letter Yod was split up into two He's (2 x 5 = 10). The letter Yod complains about this to God (according to Midrash Genesis Rabbah XLVII,1). But with the name Yehoshua, Yod gets satisfaction: "Hitherto thou wast in a woman's name and the last of its letters; now I will set thee free in a man's name and at the beginning of its letters."

Jesus is an Aramaic form of Yehoshua. The Greek form, "Iesous," is described by Philo as meaning "the Lord's salvation."

Later rabbis referred to Jesus as Yeshu. They said he lost the use of the final "a" or "ayin" because he could not save himself.

(The Jews for Jesus website has an interesting discussion of this:
<https://buff.ly/2yBQGMH>)

Exodus 14:13 - "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation ("yeshuah") of the LORD..."

"And my God" — As He formerly was, so He is still, and ever will be; and will assuredly show himself to be my God, although, for a season, he may hide his face, or withdraw his help from me. - *Benson Commentary*

