

Psalm 77

Usually in the Psalms, we can hear the voice of Christ either in his sufferings on the cross or ministry, wrestling like Jacob to .

Taken in context with Leviticus 10, we hear the inner cry of Aaron, attempting to resolve the grief over his dead sons with God's command not to mourn.

(Compare: "And Aaron held his peace." - **Leviticus 10:3**; "I am so troubled that I cannot speak." - **Psalm 77:4**)

Commentators note the striking changes in mood running through this psalm.

Psalm 77:1 - "I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me."

"with my voice = audibly, out loud.

Psalm 77:2 - "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted."

"my sore ran in the night, and ceased not" - The text of this verse is evidently faulty. As it stands it is unintelligible.

"sore" = *yad* - hand. "my hand flowed, or poured forth." - The KJV's "sore" comes from the Rabbis, who thought of the hand beating the breast, and rendered, "my blows were poured out."

The Septuagint has "with my hands against (or before) Him, and I was not deceived" - possibly from a different manuscript reading. Perhaps meaning his hand was stretched out in earnest supplication.

Rashi - my wound oozes: In this exile, which is like night, it oozes pus and gall.

Targum: "in the night my eye dropped with tears"

Rabbi David Kimchi (Spain, 1160–1235) - my "stroke", or "wound"

"my soul refused to be comforted" - The only true consolation in life can come only from "The consolation of Israel" - the Messiah (**Luke 2:25**).

Psalm 77:3 - "I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah."

Better - "If I remember God I must sigh; I meditate, and my spirit faints."

Psalm 77:4 - "Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak."

Targum: "thou holdest the brows of my eyes"

- Some suggest "Thou hast closed the guards of my eyes" — i.e., my eyelids.

But most say this means he was sleepless.

- "I am so stupefied that I am struck dumb."

Psalm 77:5-6 - "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times (*olam*). I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search."

"considered" = *châshab* - consider, reckon, meditate on

Targum: "I have mentioned the good days which were of old, the good years which were of ages past."

The idea is, "So why has this harsh tribulation come from the hand of God who has been so good in times past?"

Psalm 77:10 - "And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High."

Rashi - "the change of the right hand of the Most High": How the right hand of the Most High changed. It was mighty with strength and now He has withdrawn His right hand.

"I will remember" - not in the original, but in the next verse, although many believe it should be the sense here too.

"infirmity" = *chalah* - wound, piercing

Significantly this word is used concerning the Messiah:

Isaiah 53:10 - "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief (*chalah*)"

Possibly "that the right hand of the most High might be changed" or alternately, in order to "remember the years of the right hand of the most High" as a means to remove his doubts, despondency, and unbelief, and to relieve and strengthen his faith.

Ultimately this 'right hand' speaks of humility:

- **1 Peter 5:6** - "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, so that in due time He may exalt you."

Psalm 77:11 - "I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember your wonders of old."

Psalm 77:13 - "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?"

"in the sanctuary" = "in holiness"

Rashi - "Your way is in sanctity": Your manner is to sanctify Your name in the world, to execute justice upon the wicked.

Recall from the story of Nadab and Abihu:

- **Leviticus 10:3** - "Then Moses said unto Aaron, 'This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.' And Aaron held his peace."

Psalm 77:16 - "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled."

Targum: "they saw thy majesty in the midst of the sea, O God; they saw thy power upon the sea"

i.e. the Red Sea

- **Exodus 15:8** - "At the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up; like a wall the currents stood firm; the depths congealed in the heart of the sea."

Or possibly also the peoples of the earth:

- **Revelation 17:15** - "Then the angel said to me, "The waters where you saw the prostitute seated are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues."

Psalm 77:17-18 - "The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook."

Josephus says, perhaps drawing on this verse, that at the time when the Egyptians were drowned in the Red sea, rains descended from heaven, and there were terrible thunders, lightnings, and thunderbolts; this was when the Lord looked through the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians (**Exodus 14:24**).

Kimchi interprets the "arrows" here as hailstones.

Psalm 77:19 - "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

Targum: In the sea of Suph (the Red Sea)

Jewish tradition holds that there were twelve paths, according to the number of the tribes, and refers this to **Psalm 136:13**

See **Habakkuk 3:15** - "You trampled the sea with Your horses, churning the great waters."

"thy footsteps are not known" -

No one perceived Thy presence, much less discerned Thy footsteps. As in external nature and in the human heart, God worked secretly. The sea flowed back where Israel passed, and no visible trace of God's victorious march was left:—a parable of His method of working.

See Job, seeking to find God so he can reason with Him:

- **Job 23:8** - "If I go east, He is not there, and if I go west, I cannot find Him. 9When He is at work in the north, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the south, I cannot see Him"

"not known" - God's thoughts are not our thoughts, especially the mystery of His grace

Isaiah 55:8-9 - "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Romans 11:33 - "O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and untraceable His ways! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?"

Psalm 77:20 - "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

Through the Red Sea, according to some rabbis, or through the wilderness.

Isaiah 63:11-12 - "Then His people remembered the days of old, the days of Moses. Where is He who brought them through the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is the One who set His Holy Spirit among them, who sent His glorious arm to lead them by the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to gain for Himself everlasting renown"

An abrupt ending. It also again mentions Aaron - related to **Leviticus 10**.

The Psalmist's fears suddenly and strangely vanished, so that he needed to go no further.

The Arabic version adds its own ending, "Allelujah!"

