

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 46

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The *Pondering* studies were published in the Brit Chadashah Newsletter. Brit Chadashah (*New Covenant*) is a Messianic Fellowship in Sydney. Led by Paul Cohen a Jewish believer in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). We meet together fortnightly for Bible studies from a Messianic Jewish Perspective. We are a unique fellowship made up of Jewish and Gentile people who are believers in Yeshua as the promised Messiah of Israel.

If you don't know Yeshua as your Messiah, we encourage you to search out the Scriptures for yourself. God promised in the book of Jeremiah, "*You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13). And we hope you will make contact with us so that we can share more about the Messiah, His life and ministry.

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Pondering Psalm 46

Introduction

There are three separate stanzas in this one psalm, which can be seen by the word Selah, which serves as an end marker. Selah carries the meaning *to pause*, reflect or ponder. And that is what we will do today as we ponder the three stanzas of Psalm 46.

Verse 7 and 11 are a refrain. Imagine if you will the Temple choir singing the whole of the psalm and the refrain being sung as an echo by the faithful: *“God who is our refuge and our strength, The LORD of armies, He is with us; He is the God of Jacob our stronghold.”*

Author

As with the other “Korah Psalms,” this psalm was handed to the descendants of Korah who had not participated in the rebellion (Numbers 26:11). Besides porters and gate-keepers they became important worship leaders in the tabernacle and later in the temple (2 Chronicles 20:19). Various psalms were given to this family to compose music for them, though some may have been written by them (Psalms 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88).

Historical Background

There is no agreement as to when or by whom it is written; the oldest tradition recorded in the Targum attributes it to the sons of Korah, after their father was swallowed up (hidden) from them while they were delivered. Others link this psalm to King David, when he was victorious over the Ammonites and Moabites. Others see it as a prophetic psalm at the time of the ingathering of the exiles at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Genre

Psalms 46 to 48 are all linked with some commonality, the Kingship of the Lord and His reign from Zion. As such these are classified as Royal Psalms, while others see them as Psalms of Zion. There are some 30+ songs of Zion in the Psalms.

- In Psalm 46 the LORD is in the midst of His city, He is our refuge and our strength, so that the people have confidence.
- In Psalm 47 the LORD reigns as the King of all the earth; He is Israel’s protector.
- In Psalm 48 the LORD reigns in Zion and He makes her secure; the city reflects God’s presence.

Zion’s future

Not only is Psalm 46 one of the Royal and Zion Psalms but it also includes prophetic elements, as it describes aspects of the Millennial Jerusalem. Other psalms that contain future promises regarding Jerusalem include:

- Psalm 48:1-10 declares that Jerusalem will be the city of the Great King.
- Psalm 87:1-7 the LORD loves the gates of Jerusalem and she will be the City of God.
- Psalm 122:1-9 this is where the thrones of David’s house will be.
- Psalm 147:1-20 the LORD Himself will build Jerusalem.

Jewish liturgy

There is a verse from this Psalm that is recited each week in the Havdalah service (the separation ceremony that marks the end of the Sabbath): “*The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold, Selah.*” Psalms 46: 7 or 11 will therefore be familiar to many.

Outline

There are three stanzas in this psalm, each with its own theme:

Verses 1-3 God is our refuge.

Verses 4-7 Song of Zion.

Verses 8-11 Faith in the God of Jacob who will be exalted.

Verses 1-3 God is our refuge though...

1 For the choir director, a Psalm for the sons of Korah, set to Alamoth, a song.

God is our refuge and strength,

A very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear,

though the earth should change And

though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;

3 Though its waters roar and foam,

Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.

Selah.

Comments

“*Alamoth*” in Biblical Hebrew means “*virgins*,” so some have thought that this psalm was meant to be sung by the “*virgins*” who served in the Tabernacle (1 Samuel 2:22) and later in the Temple. Women led worship (Miriam in Exodus 15:20-21), and both male and female singers are mentioned in the second Temple (Ezra 2:65 and Nehemiah 7:67). There were also musicians amongst them who were playing tambourines (Psalm 68:25).

Others have thought that “*Alamoth*,” both here and in 1 Chronicles 15:20, could also indicate a musical notation or a high-pitched instrument. The Septuagint (Greek translation) has “*concerning secret things*,” and implies that there is a secret or a hidden mystery revealed by God in this Psalm. The Millennial kingdom was and is no Biblical secret, yet for many religious Jews and Gentiles the Millennial reign of Messiah over all the earth is a mystery.

God is our ever-present refuge, always waiting for us to come (verse 1) and He is the trustworthy help even when changes are happening. Mountains when used symbolically are kingdoms (Jeremiah 51:25, Isaiah 2:2), and so it seems the Psalmist is describing when the nations are in a state of violent conflict. *If* this is the setting then the background might well be found in 2 Kings 18-19 and Isaiah 36-37, when God delivered King Hezekiah and Jerusalem from Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. It also looks prophetically towards the nations being in an uproar against the LORD and His Anointed.

Verses 4-7 Song of Zion

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the City of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.

5 God is in the midst of her,
she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.

6 The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;
He raised His voice, the earth melted.

7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Selah.

Comments

Although Zion is not mentioned explicitly, the City of God is God's Holy Dwelling. It is known by many names - Jerusalem, Jebus, Ariel and Zion. As there has never been a major river in Jerusalem, the psalmist is speaking prophetically here, because in the future there will be one. Twice it is clearly prophesied (Ezekiel 47:1-12 & Zechariah 14:8) that a river will flow out from the Millennial Temple through Jerusalem, where it will split in two. One stream will flow towards the Mediterranean Sea and the other to the Dead Sea, which will be given new life and fishermen will fish there. Fruit trees will be standing on the water's edge and the leaves of trees will be for medicinal purposes.

This is the blessing that comes when God will dwell in her midst, and His capital city cannot be moved. Even though nations are in an uproar (Psalm 2:1-4; 83:2-8) and are moved, the Lord is in Jerusalem and He is her protection. The *nations made an uproar* yet all the time God was laughing and *kingdoms fell* as they fought against the LORD. This may well be a reference to the end time battle called Armageddon.

Refrain: Name of God

The LORD of hosts

The God of Jacob is our stronghold

The refrain in verses 7 and 11 - the LORD of both the earthly (1 Samuel 17:45) and the heavenly armies (1 Kings 22:19) is with us, as such His people can feel secure as the Almighty and all-powerful God with His armies surround Jerusalem. Here the Name of The LORD - YHWH is used to point out that He is the Covenant maker and keeper who is on our side. He is the God of Jacob, He preserved Jacob in and through all his ordeals and He confirmed the Covenant with Jacob and his children, as such we need not fear as He is our defence, He is our fortress to whom we flee in danger. Today this is spiritual, but in the Messianic (Millennial) Kingdom this will be physical.

Verses 8-11 faith in the God of Jacob who will be exalted

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.

9 He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.

10 "Cease striving and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

11 The LORD of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our stronghold.
Selah.

Comments

The invitation to the nations who are at war is made by the LORD the Man of War (Exodus 15:1-3; Psalm 110:5-6), who will create two permanent desolations 1) Edom in Southern Jordan (Isaiah 34:8-15; Ezekiel 35:6-9) and 2) Babylon, Southern Iraq (Isaiah 13:20-22; Jeremiah 51:41-43), and one temporarily in Egypt (Joel 3:19). It is He who will ensure the nations will not make war any more (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3), for His kingdom will know no end (Isaiah 9:7).

As the LORD reigns in Zion (verse 5), He will extend His reign over the nations, even those who raged (verses 8-9). Their plans and wars had no effect on God, or His city, and so the peoples are encouraged to cease striving (verse 10) and acknowledge the LORD. Note that God speaks directly to all people “Cease...” This is translated as “be still,” to hush and be quiet, but from the context it is *stop fighting*. The nations are called to desist from their armed struggle and stop clenching their fist at Heaven. Sadly, many today are fighting the LORD by turning against His people, His Land and His City.

Conclusion

The words of Isaiah 40:9-10 come to mind

9 “Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news,
Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news;
Lift *it* up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”

10 Behold, the Lord God will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him.
Behold, His reward is with Him. And His recompense before Him.”

We ought to get up and tell the good tidings בְּשׂוּרָה (*besorah*), the modern Hebrew word for *gospel*. What is the Good News - Here is Yeshua, your God, who is coming to dwell in her midst. Messiah will rule with a rod of iron and the nations will cease to strive with the Lord. May we who know the mysteries of His council, and know the plans proclaim the coming King, declare His kingdom.

Selah
Blessings in Messiah
Paul & Sue