

Psalm 26

David asks God to test him

“Psalm 26 reflects the opposite of self-righteousness. It can only be prayed by those who stand up to the lies of evildoers - gangsters, mafia or political power structures - who risk their violence, who have paid a steep price for doing so, and have no one to turn to but God.”

—see Ancient Hebrew Poetry Blog, <http://buff.ly/2qPgZKp>

Psalm 26:1 - “Judge me (vindicate me), O LORD; for I have walked in my integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.”

This probably refers to an episode from **1 Samuel 24:9** - “David said to Saul, ‘Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, “Behold, David seeks to harm you?”’”

David was falsely accused of seeking King Saul's harm, and for this he was hunted as a rebel by Saul and his army. David calls for God to vindicate him. Though in numerous other psalms David confesses his sins, in this matter he insists he is innocent. The psalm is relevant to anyone falsely accused, faced with the contradiction of God's silence in the hour of pain, or the seeming triumph of evildoers.

[This also explains why this psalm is read now - Jacob after fleeing from Laban is about to face Esau in **Genesis 31**.]

Abraham and Job - Other wrenching trials

The Rabbis said the phrase from **Psalm 26:2, 11** - “ I will walk in mine integrity” was Abraham's reply to the accusations of Satan as he walked with Isaac to offer his son on Mt. Moriah.

Satan confronted Abraham and quoted a passage from Job to him: ‘If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved?... Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest” (Job 4:2-5) (i.e., Abraham is being asked to commit a wrong against which his whole teaching has hitherto been directed). Abraham replied: “I will walk in my integrity’ (Psalm 26:2). - Babylonian Talmud, (Sanhedrin 89b)

Like Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (**Luke 4:1-12**), Abraham did not engage or negotiate with Satan, but quoted scripture.

In fact this kind of exchange is seen by the Rabbis as an internal dialogue, but with a satanic origin for the ideas. Satan's arguments may be technically true, but they are rejected because of their source.

Reish Lakish, commenting on Job in the Babylonian Talmud (tractate Baba Bathra 16a)

says: “Satan, the evil prompter (the “evil inclination,” or *yetzer ra*), and the Angel of Death are all one. He is called Satan, as it is written, ‘And Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.’ He is called the evil prompter: [we know this because] it is written in another place, ‘Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,’ and it is written here [in connection with Satan] ‘Only upon himself put not forth thine hand.’ The same is also the Angel of Death, since it says, ‘Only spare his life,’ which shows that Job’s life belonged to him.”

“therefore I shall not slide” is more like a prayer than an assertion - “let me not slide.” — Gill’s Exposition

Test me

Psalm 26:2 - “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.”

“try me,” as the refiner smelts gold to get rid of any remaining dross. So God ‘proved’ Abraham (**Genesis 22:1**); and Israel (**Deuteronomy 8:2**; **Deuteronomy 8:16**).

2 Timothy 2:15 (NET) - “Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who does not need to be ashamed, teaching the message of truth accurately.”

proven = dokimos - “tested and proven to be true,” as an assayer tests gold to prove its genuineness and integrity.

1 Peter 1:7 - “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”

David’s cry for vindication recall Jacob’s complaint against Laban in **Genesis 31:36-42**.

The Inward Parts

“my reins and my heart” The reins (*kilyah* = kidneys) were thought to be the seat of the inward affections and emotions, the heart the seat of one’s thought and will, though sometimes they are interchangeable. Generally encompasses the whole of our interior self, the core of who a person is. - Cambridge Bible

Why do this? “I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” (**Jeremiah 17:10**)

The Rabbis described Abraham: “His two ‘kidneys’ (the sources of intellect and reflection) were overflowing with wisdom and taught Torah.”

[See also **Psalm 16:7** - “I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.”]

Thy Lovingkindness Before my Eyes

Psalm 26:3 - "For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth."

Psalm 26:5 - "I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked."

Psalm 26:6 - "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:"

Verse 6 probably refers to a ritual washing that was done by worshippers prior to entering the Temple grounds. And it was part of the ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles for people to march round the altar with palms.

With God's lovingkindness (grace) before his eyes, David could walk in God's truth. He would be clothed in God's own righteousness. And he would not compromise with evil.

Psalm 26:7 - "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works."

Only after knowing his true identity, and having it tested, could David "publish" God's wondrous works. Teaching should only issue from the integrity of a wholly surrendered position. Otherwise, it's hypocrisy.

Psalm 26:11 - "But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me."

Even knowing all this, David shows no presumption. He still asks for God's redemption and mercy.