

## Psalm 29

The long list in Genesis 36 of the descendants of Esau/Edom - Israel's enemy - is the counterpoint to this psalm's affirmation of God's sovereignty.

**Psalm 29:1-2** - "Give to the LORD, O you mighty, give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory due to his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

"Ascribe" to God the glory due his name.

"O you mighty" - benê-elîm - (sons of gods) The Targum refers this to the angels, "give praise before the Lord, ye companies of angels, sons of the Mighty;"

The phrase (sons of gods) is used only here and in Psalm 89:6.

Compare **Psalm 103:20**, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength;"

But Israel is also called the "son of God." (**Exodus 4:22-23**, **Deuteronomy 8:5**, **Jeremiah 31:9**, **Hosea 11:1**) or like those about to be bound and sacrificed as rams ('elim) like Isaac, and are thus "sons of the mighty ones," the patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Midrash on Psalm 29 uses Moses' song in Deuteronomy 32 as an exegetical key to Psalm 29.

**Deuteronomy 32:3** - "Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God."

i.e. "Whenever I call on the name of the Lord, you should ascribe greatness unto God." This is interpreted to be in an antiphonal, call-and-response pattern by the congregation in the liturgy of worship.

"This ascribing means praying prayers before him."

## The Amidah

Each mention of the Tetragrammaton, the Ineffable Name YHWH, correlates to one of the Eighteen Benedictions of the Amidah, recited daily by every Jew.

(There are actually 19, but one of the Messianic benedictions seems to have doubled since the time of the Midrash on Psalms.)

Moses upon being asked, "whence do we know how many prayers we are to offer?" answered, "Mark how many times the Ineffable Name occurs in this psalm (Psalm 29). Told "Eighteen times," Moses answered: "You must offer eighteen benedictions. Hence it is said "The glory due unto his name," and hence also the preceding verse conjoins

“glory and strength.”

Asked “Whence do we know where to begin?” Moses answered, “Mark the beginning of the psalm: ‘Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye sons of the mighty.’”

“O you mighty” - benê-elîm - (sons of gods) The Targum refers this to the angels, "give praise before the Lord, ye companies of angels, sons of the Mighty;"

[The phrase “sons of God” for the fallen angels in **Genesis 6:1-5** is slightly different, “bene-elohim”]

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But Israel is also called the “son of God” : (**Exodus 4:22-23**, **Deuteronomy 8:5**, **Jeremiah 31:9**, **Hosea 11:1**). And elsewhere, Israel is like those about to be sacrificed as rams (a similar word, ‘elim) like Isaac, and are thus “sons of the mighty ones - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

This relates to the first blessing of the Amidah:

“Blessed art thou,, O Lord our God and the God of our Fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, the great mighty and reverend God, the most high God, who bestows loving-kindness, and is the Master of all things; who remembers the pious deeds of the patriarchs, and in love will bring a redeemer to their children’s children for your Name’s sake. O King, Helper, Savior and Shield, Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Shield of Abraham.”

(See <http://buff.ly/2spYQ7Q> - ‘Psalm 29 through Time and Tradition,’ edited by Lowell K. Handy)

## **The Flood**

**Psalm 29:3** - “The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.”

Also:

**Psalm 29:10** - “The LORD sits on the flood; yes, the LORD sits King for ever.”

## **Heaven**

In one sense this is heaven.

**Deuteronomy 26:15** -“Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel”

Heaven = “*shamayim*” is a combination of two words, *shom* and *mayim*, which means, “There is water there.” (Chagigah 12a and Rashi, Genesis 1:8)

But the word translated “flood” here is exclusively, except in this place, applied to the Deluge (Genesis 6, 7) i.e. “This is the same God who, in Noah’s flood, sat as judge, and sent that destruction upon the earth.” And he also remembers his covenant, and restrains the floods from destroying the earth any more in that way.

So, fear only the Lord, because judgment and mercy both are in his hands.

## **Repentance**

In addition, [he sits} upon repentance, which is likened to water:

**1 Samuel 7:6** - “And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord.”

**Micah 7:18** - “He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

So this relates to another Amidah blessing: “Blessed art thou, king of the universe, who delighteth in repentance.”

## **Breaking the Pride of the Wicked Nations**

**Psalms 29:5** - “The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.”

“That is, the Lord breaks in pieces the wicked nations of the earth that stand high as cedars, ‘whose height is like the height of cedars (**Amos 2:9**)’ and he will gather the banished from the midst of the nations.” [Thus, another reference to Israel’s enemies, Amorites and Canaanites like those of Shechem that troubled Jacob, etc.]

The last two verses in the Targum on this psalm:

29:10 - “In the generation of the Flood, the Lord sat on his throne of judgment to take vengeance on them; and the Lord sat on the throne of mercy and saved Noah; and he reigns over his children forever and ever.”

29:11 - “The Lord gave the Torah to his people; the Lord will bless his people in peace.”

The Torah is the Word, the Logos, the Messiah as Torah fulfilled.