

Psalm 53

The murmuring of Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 16) is representative of the corrupt state of humanity after the fall, which this psalm describes.

Psalm 53:1 - "To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil, A Psalm of David."

Rashi - on machalath: Possibly the name of a musical instrument. Another explanation: concerning the malady (מחלתו) of Israel when the Temple will be destroyed. He already recited another psalm resembling this one (**Psalm 14:1**): "The fool said in his heart, 'there is no God, etc.'" One relates to the destruction of the First Temple and this one, to the Second Temple.

Psalm 53:1 - "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good."

Rashi - "The fool said in his heart": This is Titus; when he cut into the curtain and his sword was dripping with blood, he said that he had killed [God] Himself.

The Targum adds, "of whom is revenge"; or there is no God to punish and avenge the wicked"

Paraphrased by the Targum on Psalm 14:1, 'There is no government of God in the earth.'

Fool = *nâbâl* - denotes moral perversity, not mere ignorance or weakness of reason.

"corrupt are they" -

Genesis 6:11-12 - "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth."

abominable = *ta`ab* - detestable, abhorrent

"iniquity" = *`evel* - injustice, wickedness

Romans 1:18-32 is a commentary on this psalm.

"There is none that doeth good":

Romans 3:10-12 - "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Psalm 53:2-3 - "God looked down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they

are altogether become filthy; there is none that does good, no, not one."

"Every one of them is gone back" - They are all dross (Rashi)

filthy = *'alach* - to sour like milk, to be morally tainted

Psalm 53:4 - "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God."

This in contrast to God providing bread/manna to Israel in the wilderness (**Exodus 16**)

Could be translated: "Have not the workers of iniquity been made to know?" by seeing the bones of the besiegers of Jerusalem, described in verse 5.

Psalm 53:5 - "There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them."

"against thee" - medieval Jewish commentators saw "thee" as the Messiah.

Rashi - "there was never such fear": This fear was not like the first fear that came over Belshazzar, for in this redemption the Holy One, blessed be He, scattered the bones of those who camp around you, Jerusalem, as the matter that is stated (**Zechariah 14:12**): "His flesh will waste away, etc."

This suggests the annihilation of Sennacherib's great army later in Israel's history. Probably the text was intentionally altered in this recension in order to introduce a reference to the most famous example in later times of the discomfiture of worldly arrogance venturing to measure its strength with Jehovah. - *The Cambridge Bible*

Targum: "for God scatters the strength of the armies of the wicked."

2 Kings 19:35 - "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."

The LXX. and Vulg. have "the bones of them that please men."

Galatians 1:10 - "...if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Only Christ, the promised Deliverer and Messiah, can bring a solution to humanity's bondage to sin:

Psalm 53:6 - "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

