

Psalm 102:1-12

The superscript: "A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD."

"afflicted" = *aniy* - poor, lowly, needy, afflicted, humbled, depressed, in mind or circumstances

King David realized that the windows and gates of heaven are open for the Ani, and he accordingly took off his crown and sat on the earth as a poor person and exclaimed (Psalm 86:1): "Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy." The great lesson is to view oneself as an Ani before God in prayer and supplication - knowing that each and every thing is a gift from Him, from the smallest speck of salt to David HaMelech's palace in Yerushalayim. If one does so, his prayer can pass through all ostensible barriers, and arrive at the heavenly throne!

In the same way, Christ "took off His crown," became one of us, "sat on the earth as a poor person, "and now is our intercessor:

- **I Timothy 2:5** - "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;"

- **Romans 8:34** - "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

- **Hebrews 7:25** - "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Rashi says the "*aniy*" or poor refers to Israel; for "he is overwhelmed" - the Jewish translation translates as "he enwraps himself." Jews take this is a reference to the prayer shawl described in **Numbers 15:38-41**, which is perhaps the link back to our Torah reading, **Numbers 15**.

"complaint" = *siyach* - a contemplation; by implication, an utterance: — babbling, conversation, communication, complaint, meditation, prayer, talk, quarrel.

David could have written this during a time of affliction. But probably, historically it's a cry of the exiles in Babylon. As one commentary titles it: "Prayer of a Patient Sufferer for Himself and for the Jerusalem That Lies in Ruins."

Psalm 102:1-2 - "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily."

This was not a silent, or a mental prayer; it was a loud cry.

Reading this at Passover season, the verse points to Christ's cry on the cross in His distress.

"Prayer comes aright to God, when it comes through Christ, and out of his hands, perfumed with the incense of his mediation." - *Gill's Exposition*

See the description of the acceptance offerings in **Numbers 15:3-16**.

"Hide not Thy face from me" - The Targum says "Hide not Thy Shechinah from me," which is what was prophesied would happen in the Song of Moses: "This people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land..." and then "I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do" (**Deuteronomy 31:18**). This was also the case on the Cross when Jesus cried "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Psalm 102:3 - "For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth."

Either an expression of the brevity of life -

- **Job 7:7** - "Remember that my life is but a breath."

- **James 4:14** - "For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

...or a description of the extremity of the distress he is in -

His bones, the emblem of human strength and life, are dried out, exhausted, quickly consumed like dry wood in a fire.

Psalm 102:4 - "My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread."

His heart - meaning his inner self - was struck down and withered so there was no hope left.

Not only did he forget to eat his physical food, but he was unable to consume spiritual nourishment, and so was without any comfort.

The Targum adds: "I forgot the law of my doctrine"

Psalm 102:5 - "By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin."

In the ancient world, being fat meant you were prosperous and blessed. Skin and bones depict a man devoid of blessings or benefits.

Psalm 102:6 - "I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert."

Both are unclean birds.

"pelican" - meant to emphasize the psalmist's loneliness.

"owl" - said to inhabit ruined places, and its screeching mimics the psalmist's cries.

The wilderness and desert signify exile.

Psalm 102:7 - "I stay awake; I am like a solitary bird on a roof."

Either "I can't sleep" or "I stay awake and keep watch."

Some rabbis saw this verse as concealing a hidden reference to God removing His Presence from the Holy of Holies at the destruction of Jerusalem:

"I escaped [from my children who caused me anguish] and became like a lone bird on a rooftop" - i.e. the rooftop of the Temple.

Psalm 102:8 - "Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me."

Better as the NET says - "All day long my enemies taunt me; those who mock me use my name in their curses."

He is taunted because God has apparently forsaken him.

"use my name in their curses" - They say, "May God do unto you what He did unto this man!"

Psalm 102:9 - "For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,"

Like a mourner covered in sackcloth and ashes. Life has no more savor or enjoyment for him. He is fed with the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction (**Isaiah 30:20**)

Compare **Psalm 80:5** - "Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure."

Psalm 102:10 - "Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down."

Like the generation in the wilderness, Israel fell from honor and God's blessing to a cursed position of exile because of their sin and rebellion.

Psalm 102:11 - "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass."

A shadow has no substance, is full of darkness and obscurity, and is "stretched out" just before it vanishes at sundown.

Psalm 102:12 - "But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations."

This is the turning point in this psalm. Hope re-enters the picture.

The Targum: "but thou, O Lord, thy habitation continues for ever in heaven"

"Remembrance" - As read at the season of Passover, this recalls Jesus' Last Supper:

- **Luke 22:19** - "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."

- The second half of **Psalm 102** is reserved for next week's readings.