

Psalm 103:1-10

(The psalm is repeated next week, so we'll split it up)

"A Psalm of David," written possibly in his old age, since it speaks of youth being restored (verse 5).

Targum: "A Psalm of David spoken in prophecy"

In regard to the Torah readings in **Numbers 17**, the continued murmuring of the people is the opposite of "forget not all his benefits" on verse 2. Not only had they forgotten His benefits, they had even forgotten the plague and judgment on Korah of the previous chapter.

Even at that point, the people should have still been able to say, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." (verse 10) since they all deserved death for rebellion. His mercy is always available for those who repent.

Psalm 103:1 - "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

"all that is within me" - the various organs of the body, which were regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of thought, will and emotion.

"soul" - *nephesh* - any living, breathing creature; the breath of life, the self, mind, the whole inner being.

- **Genesis 2:7** - "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (*nephesh*)."

The soul can be said to weep (**Psalm 119:28**), or to cry for vengeance (**Job 24:12**).

"bless" = *barak* - a primitive root; to kneel; by implication to bless God (as an act of adoration) The primary notion of the word lies in "breaking" or "breaking down."

It is used for either blessing God or invoking, asking for blessing. In either case, we must first acknowledge our brokenness and our submission to Him.

Blessing usually infers something coming from a greater authority to a lesser. Of course it's impossible for humans to confer any kind of "blessing" on God. In this sense it really means submission, thanks and praise, with which He is pleased and receives as a sweet-savor offering.

"All" includes the heart, the mind, the inward parts, the kidneys, bowels, etc. - each representing a portion of the attributes of human personality, but without strict boundaries between them. They generally overlap in meaning in the scriptures. All our

human faculties - the intellect, emotions and will, our thoughts as well as our speech - were created to be used to praise and bless God, and to commune with Him.

But many times these attributes are in conflict with one another, in pain, are dysfunctional, confused or in despair. David speaks to everything going on within himself, with a command to return, unite with one purpose and to "bless His holy Name."

This command is repeated in the next verse and at the end of the psalm:

Psalm 103:2 - "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:"

Forgetting His benefits is what causes us to worry, to murmur and to be in anxiety.

Forgiving and Healing

Psalm 103:3 - "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth (*rapha*) all thy diseases;"

All! No matter how grievous or enormous the sin, Jesus' blood covers them all.

See **Isaiah 33:24** - "And the inhabitant [of Zion] shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

- **Isaiah 53:5** - "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (*rapha*)."

Jesus and later the apostles healed many with physical diseases, and any recovering of health from disease can be attributed to God. But the reference here is to spiritual maladies.

- **1 Peter 2:24** - "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (*iaomai*)."

iaomai = to cure, heal, to make whole. Used 22 times for physical healing. But sometimes - usually referencing **Isaiah 6:10** - it means spiritual healing in the sense of making whole:

- **Matthew 13:15** (quoting **Isaiah 6:10**) - "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal (*iaomai*) them."

The "healing" in this verse in Matthew is talking about conversion/salvation. The physical symptoms of the heart, deafness and blindness, are used as metaphors for

spiritual maladies affecting the soul, caused by sin. Spiritual blindness and deafness is what is cured in these passages.

"healed" = *rapha'* - The Hebrew word usually refers to physical healing, but sometimes means to repair or make whole:

- **Psalm 41:4** - "I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal (*rapha*) my soul; for I have sinned against thee."
- **Psalm 147:3** - "He healeth (*rapha*) the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

Healing (*rapha*) can mean the equivalent of "pardon."

- **2 Chronicles 30:18-20** - "For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon (*kaphar*) every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed (*rapha*) the people."

Psalm 103:4 - "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness (*cheeced*) and tender mercies (*racham*);"

Targum: "who redeemest thy life from hell"

"redeem" = *ga'al* - act as a kinsman-redeemer to ransom, buy back, avenge, purchase, deliver

"destruction" = *shachath* - from a root meaning a pit (especially as a trap); destruction, the grave or sepulchre, corruption, hell.

"crowneth" = *'atar* - to encircle (here for protection), compass, crown

"tender mercies" = *racham* - from a primitive root; to fondle; by implication, to love; the womb (as cherishing and protecting the fetus), bowels, compassion, mercy

- **Luke 1:68** - (Zechariah at the birth of John the Baptist) "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people"

Psalm 103:5 - "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

...With Manna, the bread that came down from heaven, Jesus himself.

- **John 6:35** - "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me

shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Aben Ezra: "who satisfieth thy soul with good things"

- **Isaiah 40:31** - "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Psalm 103:6 - "The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

Not just the Israelite in Egypt, but the poor, the widow, and the fatherless, who are often oppressed by the rich and mighty.

- **Psalm 10:17-18** - "You have heard, O LORD, the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their hearts. You will incline Your ear, to vindicate the fatherless and oppressed, that the men of the earth may strike terror no more"

Ultimate justice will prevail at the end of time when the scales will be balanced. This is said here to give hope, and to instruct us in our own dealings with the vulnerable, the afflicted and the poor, and to encourage justice for them in our society.

Psalm 103:7 - "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel."

How? Through the miraculous redemption of Israel from Egyptian slavery, by signs and wonders, the giving of the Law and through the types of Christ and His sacrifice on the cross, reflected in the Tabernacle and its furniture, sacrifices, offerings and the set feasts, etc.

- **John 14:6** - "...I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Psalm 103:8 - "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

Quoting **Exodus 34:6** - "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"

Repeated in **Psalm 86:15; Psalm 145:8; Joel 2:13; Nehemiah 9:17**.

His mercy is reflected in the face of Jesus Christ.

- **Numbers 6:25-26** - "The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you"

- **John 1:17** - "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

God gives us ample space and time to repent. Even to Pharaoh and "vessels of wrath," He is long-suffering.

Chastisement lasts only for a time

Psalm 103:9 - "He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever ('owlam')."

"chide" = *riyb* - grapple, contend, strive, prosecute a legal case

- **Isaiah 57:16** - "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made."

- **Micah 7:18** - "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."

Psalm 103:10 - "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

- **Psalm 130:3** - "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

- **Ezra 9:13** - "And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this;"

(The whole chapter - Ezra's Prayer of Confession - is a great expansion on this verse)