

Psalm 138

A Psalm of David, paired with the Torah reading **Deuteronomy 26** on the First Fruit Offering.

Psalm 138:1 - "I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee."

"gods" = *elohim* - one of the terms referring to God Himself, but in the plural - like the royal "we" - or it can mean simply gods, the mighty, judges; The LXX has "angels" who are sometimes called gods (**Psalm 8:5**); the Targum has "judges" who are sometimes called "gods" (**Psalm 82:1**); the Syriac version has "kings"

Psalm 138:2 - "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

With the Temple not yet built, David would have meant toward the Tabernacle and the mercy seat of the Ark in the Holy of Holies where the Shechinah dwelt. Or possibly toward Heaven, or even a prophetic word directed toward Christ, whose body is the true temple.

Rashi - for You magnified Your word over all Your names: Your name is mighty, jealous, and vengeful, but You magnified Your word, so that You skip over Your standards, over all Your names, and You forgive us.

"thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" - In everything by which God has placed His Name over, or made himself known in creation, all is being done according to his decrees and purposes.

"Word" - The reference here is probably to the promises of God, and especially to the promise which God had made to David that the Messiah would descend from him (**1 Chronicles 17:11-12**). God has magnified his word/his promise, and his faithfulness to it, above all his other revealed attributes.

Psalm 138:3 - "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

"strengthenedst me with strength in my soul" - encouraged me greatly

Psalm 138:4 - "All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth."

See **Isaiah 49:23** - "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

Psalm 138:5 - "Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD."

Or the kings of the earth shall sing on the journey toward the Lord - as pilgrims do, singing the Psalms of Ascent going up to Jerusalem.

Psalm 138:6 - "Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off."

The Targum adds, "to destroy them"

"lowly" - *shaphal* - from a root that means depressed; low, base, humble, ignoble, vile,, cast down - God notes only humility - like the unleavened matzah at Passover or the lowly barley omer marking the First Fruit Offering, or the humility expressed in Mary's Magnificat - **Luke 1:46-55**.

Psalm 138:7 - "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me."

"trouble" = *tsarah* - trouble, distress, adversity, anguish, oppressor, a rival enemy (but in the feminine)

"Revive me" = *chayah* - bring back to life, revive (resurrect), preserve, save

David here possibly prefigures Christ, walking in the midst of this world, opposed by the Great Whore of Babylon (feminine rival to the Bride), persecuted and then crucified yet knowing somehow His Father would revive Him at the resurrection - the First Fruits from the grave.

Psalm 138:8 - "The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."

"perfect" - *gamar* - to bring to completion, cause to cease or come to an end

(Not the word *shalem* - "perfect" meaning complete and whole)

Perhaps it means causing the anguish to cease, which would comport with Jesus' cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me!" on the cross.

But ultimately, as shown in the resurrection of Christ,

- **Psalm 94:14** - "...the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance."

