

## Psalm 144

This was probably written by David after he had come to the throne, and had gained two victories over the Philistines, but with some enemies still left to fight.

R. Saadiah Gaon interprets this psalm as relating to the times of the Messiah.

**Psalm 144:1-2** - "Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me."

David credits God for his skill that brought victories against many foes for Israel. Most notable was his ability to overcome Goliath while just a youth and a shepherd, not a soldier. In fact, the Septuagint titles it "A Psalm of David Against Goliath."

David's hands were used to the shepherd's crook and the sling and in playing the harp and lyre. God gave him skills with the sword, the bow, the shield and the spear.

From this, we realize that God not only supplies us with spiritual weapons and armor to fight spiritual enemies, but also gives us the skill, guidance and boldness to do so.

"goodness" = *checed* - mercy, lovingkindness This could be translated "Who is merciful to me, who loves me..."

"my people" = *am* - people, nations Some translate this as "the nations" or "the heathen" ( the Philistines, Ammonites, Edomites, Moabites, and Syrians) but it could also be translated "my people" in the sense of Israel, who were made willing to receive him as king.

**Psalm 144:3-4** - "LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away."

Or as in the Septuagint version, "that thou shouldest be known unto him?"

"man" and "son of man" here are merely stand-ins for the human race as a whole.

Similar phrases are used elsewhere:

- **Job 7:17** - "What is man that You should exalt him, that You should set Your heart upon him"

- **Psalm 8:4** - "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

- **Isaiah 2:22** - "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to

be accounted of?"

- **Hebrews 2:6** - "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

This is saying that logically, God should take no more notice of humans than any other of His creatures. And yet, we learn from the quote in Hebrews that He HAS taken notice and "magnified" man by having Christ take on human form, become one of us, and ...

- **Hebrews 2:7-8** - "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet"

So too, David wonders here why he was singled out for such mercy and honor from God.

**Psalm 144:5-8** - "Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them. Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood."

Targum: "O Lord, bow the heavens, and manifest thyself"

"touch the mountains, and they shall smoke"; as Mount Sinai did when the Lord descended on it, see **Exodus 19:18** and **Psalm 104:32**.

"deliver me out of great waters" - the human race is often described in scripture as roiling waters or a turbulent sea.

- **Jude 1:13** - "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

- **Psalm 18:4** - "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid."

Targum: "deliver me from the multitudes or armies, that are like to many waters"

- **Revelation 17:1** - "Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters"

"Strange children" are foreigners, but could also be the "estranged" within Israel who oppose God through heresy and rebellion.

"What concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (**2 Corinthians 6:15**)

God did come to David's aid, though He did not manifest Himself in a fiery display like this during David's time. But He will at the end of time when all enemies will be defeated. Hints of it are at the dedication of Solomon's Temple, at the crucifixion, and at Pentecost.

### Transition to Praise

**Psalm 144:9** - "I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee."

Possibly meaning in return or in response to God hearing his petition. More likely because of his assurance he has been heard, or simply because meditating on God's past redeeming work inspired David to sing and praise.

Isaac ben Moses Arama, a 15th century Spanish rabbi, suggests that this refers to the days of the Messiah.

The "new song" is pictured as the means of praise by the redeemed ones in the heavenlies before the Lamb:

- **Revelation 14:2-3** - "And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."

The content of the "new song" magnifies Christ's sacrificial blood shed on the cross:

- **Revelation 5:9-10** - "And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

This is somehow linked to the Song of Moses praising God for deliverance at the Exodus from bondage in Egypt.

- **Revelation 15:3** - "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

One song of Moses is recorded in **Exodus 15:1-18**. Another passage referred to as the Song of Moses is **Deuteronomy 32:1-43**.

**Psalm 144:10** - "It is he that gives salvation to kings: who delivers David his servant from the hurtful sword."

Rashi says this refers to a specific incident: This speaks about the Rock of the

Divisions, when David was close to being seized by Saul (**I Sam. 23:27**): "A messenger came to Saul, saying, 'Make haste and go, etc.'" He saved Saul from shedding innocent blood, and David from being killed.

The Targum refers the "hurtful sword" to 'the evil sword of Goliath.' Others say Saul, or the "strange children" of verse 7.

Now David repeats the refrain of verse 7:

**Psalm 144:11** - "Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood:"

The next verses depict the blessings of **Deuteronomy 29-30**, which is probably why this psalm is linked to that Torah reading.

**Psalm 144:12** - "That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:"

The idea of being fruitful or reproducing is included.

Targum: "that our sons may be as plants of the dactyles (or palm trees, **Psalm 92:12**), nourished up in the doctrine of the law from their youth"

Daughters like "corner stones polished - the idea is of hewn angles and strength, like the description of unassailable chastity as a "wall" in **Song of Solomon 8:9**.

Rashi - "Our daughters are like corners": Full of desire as the corners of the altar (**Zechariah 9:15**) are full of blood, but they are intimate only with their husbands.

**Psalm 144:13** - "That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:"

"in our streets" = outside, i.e. in the pastures and fields

Spiritually this refers to the increase and gathering of God's people - the different flocks of Christ.

Plenty as opposed to scarcity and famine.

**Psalm 144:14** - "That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets."

"our oxen ... strong to labour" - Both words are of uncertain meaning.

Ministers of the word are compared to oxen for their patience in suffering, and their laboriousness in working, **1 Corinthians 9:9**, **1 Timothy 5:17**.

The Talmud interpreted "*alufeinu* - oxen" as leaders and teachers. "Our leaders are burdened" — they are laden with weighty responsibilities in matters of Torah and mitzvot (Berakhot 17b). The Talmud explains that this is a prayer that our rabbis not be plagued by errant or heretical students.

The Talmud explains that the phrase "in our streets" means that that we will not be disgraced by "a student who burns his dish in public." The expression "to burn one's dish" means to follow a ruinous and heretical path. Doing so "in public" means that the wayward student has openly promulgated such a path, seeking to lead others astray. i.e. The dish originally was healthy and nutritious, but the student ruined it.

The Hebrew "*birhovoteinu*" can mean "in our streets" but also can mean "in our expansion on the tale," in elaborating and interpreting the teachings.

- See [http://www.ravkooktorah.org/PSALM\\_144.htm](http://www.ravkooktorah.org/PSALM_144.htm)

**Psalm 144:15** - "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."

"Happy" = '*esher* - blessed, happy

- **Deuteronomy 33:29** - "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

- **Romans 8:28** - "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."