

Psalm 74

The Torah reading in Leviticus 4 about the sin offering shows how Israel could "draw near" to God. Now, after idolatry and sin have separated them from Him, they cry out, "why hast thou cast us off for ever?"

They had forgotten the true meaning of the sacrifices, which is repentance.

Maschil of Asaph - A *maschil* is a didactic or teaching poem. Asaph is probably not the Asaph who lived in David's time. Asaph became a tribal name passed down, attaching to all the descendants of the original Asaph. This may be rendered "for Asaph," i.e. for his posterity.

This psalm was obviously written after the destruction of Jerusalem, although some Jewish sages suggest this is a prophetic vision of that time.

Psalm 74:1 - 'O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?"

Instead of the smoke from the sin offering and the acceptance offerings rising from the brazen altar, there is only smoke from a desolated Temple, evidence of God's wrath.

This psalm lacks a statement of repentance. Only a call for God to remember his covenant.

But God has not cast off his people forever.

Romans 10:21 - 11:5 - "But to Israel he saith, 'All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.' I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ... Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Psalm 74:2 - "Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt."

i.e. He redeemed them out of bondage in Egypt -

Exodus 15:16-17 - "Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established."

As Christ purchased the church -

Acts 20:28 - "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

1 Peter 1:18-19 - "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"

Psalm 74:3 - "Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary."

"Lift up thy feet" - hurry and come see the destruction...

Psalm 74:4 - "Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns for signs."

Aaron's rod was kept as a "sign" against future rebellion.

See **Numbers 17:10** - "Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels"

Now that they had rebelled, the enemy's banners were "signs" of God's withdrawing his protection.

Psalm 74:5-6 - "A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers."

As in the NET - They invade like lumberjacks swinging their axes in a thick forest. Or, 'it seems as if men were lifting up axes against a thicket of trees.'

The cedars of Lebanon were hewn down and given by Hiram King of Tyre to Solomon for use in building the Temple. Now they were being hewn down again, in its destruction.

Kimchi, a rabbi of the 12th century, notes: "When the temple was built, he who lifted up his axe upon a thick tree, to cut it down for the building, was known, as if he lifted it up above in heaven before the throne of glory; all so rejoiced and gloried in the building."

Psalm 74:8 - "They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land."

"synagogues" = *mow`ed* - sacred season, set feast, appointed time, season or place; the tent of meeting. Possibly the several courts in the Temple for women, Israel and priests.

The enemies had effectively destroyed any way to celebrate the pilgrimage feasts in Israel. Not only that, but sacrifices had completely ceased - there could be no sin or trespass offerings, burnt, meal or peace offerings.

Psalm 74:9-10 - "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?"

Smoke from the sacrifices were a continual sign to Israel that God was accepting them in their sweet savor offerings. No more.

Enemy and adversary are singular. This envisions Satan or perhaps the Beast:

Revelation 13:6 - "And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven."

Psalm 74:11-12 - "Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom. For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth."

Salvation in the midst of our "earthen vessel."

midst = *qereb* - the inward parts (as discussed in the sacrifices of Leviticus)

- **Zephaniah 3:17** - "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

God's Sovereignty

Psalm 74:13 -17 - "Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers. The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter."

The Dragon = Leviathan = Egypt/Pharaoh = Satan

Isaiah 27:1 - "In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea."

Ezekiel 29:3-5 - "Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. ...I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven."

Revelation 12:3-9 - "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a

great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. ... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Also, the peace offering is in view here: Leviathan is "to be meat to the people." Like the Canaanite giants were to be bread for Israel.

Psalm 74:19 - "O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever."

Targum of Jonathan - This turtledove as soon as the male recognizes its mate, it does not mate with another. So have Israel not exchanged You for another god, although You have distanced Yourself from them and they were like a widow.

Psalm 74:20 - "Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

"dark places - *machshak* - the secret places of the earth, i.e. Hades.

Without the covenant, we have no hope.

Psalm 74:23 - "Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually."

"increaseth" = *`alah* - ascends, like smoke from an offering. An offering.

The contrast is that since the Temple has been destroyed, no more offerings are ascending to God daily, only the continual noise and clamor of destruction.