

Psalm 79

Psalm 79:1 - "O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps."

- By the Babylonians, as prophesied (**Jeremiah 9:11**; **Jeremiah 26:18**; **Micah 3:12**).

Rashi - This is a song and an occasion for singing, for He poured out His fury on the wood and stones and did not utterly destroy His children.

Psalm 79:2-3 - "The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them."

The added profanation of dead bodies, the most serious uncleanness. Blood - which in Leviticus 15 was discussed as a defiling substance, is now pooled around the holy city.

But why are the inhabitants of Jerusalem called "saints" or pious ones when it was their own idolatry and rebellion that brought on God's judgment?

Rashi - Now were they not wicked? But since they received their punishment, they are accounted as pious men. Similarly, Scripture states (Deuteronomy 25:3): "your brother would be degraded before your eyes." As soon as he is lashed, he is your brother. It is explained in this manner in the Aggadah (Mid. Ps. 79: 4).

So it is with Christ - as soon as He was lashed and punished on the cross for our sins, we who believe are counted as "pious ones" - saints.

Psalm 79:6 - "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place."

- Repeated by **Jeremiah 10:25** - "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate."

Psalm 79:8 - "O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent (precede) us: for we are brought very low."

"tender mercies" = *racham* - compassion, but it also means "womb."

Relationship of mercy - womb - *mikvah* - grave

The *mikvah* - used for cleansing ritual defilement - represents the mother's womb, which is called in Hebrew *rechem*. This comes from the same root as the Hebrew word for mercy (*rahamah*). The *mikvah* personifies both the womb (i.e. the amniotic fluid) and the grave; the portals to life and the afterlife. Throughout the Tractate *Nidda* (which

discusses **Leviticus 15**), the word *kever* (literally grave) is used as a synonym for womb (*rehem*).

Miamonides: "The *kever* is opened' is a term for the opening of the womb, used in that way throughout the Talmud."

This is because the departure of life - of the newborn from the mother's body - causes her to be unclean for 40 or 80 days depending on the sex of the child, in a way similar to the uncleanness of a grave.

The numerical value (*gematriya*) of the Hebrew letter *mem*, written as "*mayim*" [= water] is 40, as is the amount of water necessary for purification in the *mikveh* (40 *sa'ah*)

We enter the mikveh as if we were in the womb - traditionally without clothing, jewelry or accouterments and in the fetal position. A fetus is halachically considered a life only after 40 days, and God created human pregnancy to last 40 weeks = the start of life.

- **Genesis 1:10** - "And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together (*miqveh*) of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good."

So the *mikveh* waters were actually the womb of creation from which He brought forth new life out of its former state of 'death,' (Also note Noah's flood and the crossing the Red Sea as baptism-like cleansings.)

Psalm 79:9 - "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake."

"purge" = *kaphar* - cover, atone (as in Yom Kippur) - This Psalm precedes Yom Kippur in the 3-year cycle readings.

A Cry for Justice

Psalm 79:10 - "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed."

See **Joel 2:17** - "Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?"

This cry points to a wider and future issue in **Revelation 6:9-10** - "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said

unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

"Where is God?" - This is the cry for universal justice, when all wrongs will be righted and divine balance restored in the earth. The cross achieved this, but it will be fully seen at the end time with the great white throne judgment.

Psalm 79:11 - "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;"

"power" = *zərowa`* - arm used for sowing; from a root that means "seed."

The one Seed is Christ - **Galatians 3:16** - This is how God achieves the deliverance of his people.

"appointed to die" = *ben tēmūwthah* - sons of death. Used only here and in **Psalm 102:20**.

Humanity is collectively "sons of death," appointed to die because of the "wages of sin," whose only hope is God's mercy and deliverance expressed through Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Psalm 79:12 - "And render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord."

See **1 Samuel 2:30** - "...Them that honor me, I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed"

Psalm 79:13 - "So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations."

The psalm ends with the word "praise" - *tehillah* - in contrast with the reproach of the heathen and the world

This will all be completely accomplished at the end times, when the question "Where is God?" will be answered once and for all:

- **Isaiah 25:8-9** - "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."