

## Psalm 84

How is this psalm connected to our Torah readings?

This is an expansion on the Temple sanctuary, mentioned in Leviticus 19:30 - "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD." and the warning not "to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name." (Leviticus 20:3)

This could be a psalm of longing written by David when he was forced to flee Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion.

(However, Rashi considered this a psalm of the exile).

Superscript: To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

*Gittith* means "wine press." It's used in three Psalm titles - **Psalm 8, 81 and 84**; a song title used for the Feast of Booths.

**Psalm 84:1** - "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!"

amiable = *yědiy*d - well beloved, pleasant

tabnacles = *mishkan* - dwelling places, tabernacles; the dwelling place of God in the Tabernacle or Temple

The plural could be used poetically to denote "excellency," or it could signify the different coverings and partitions within the Tabernacle; or the different locations on Shiloh and Gibeon that preceded David taking the Tabernacle to Jerusalem, and then the Temple built by Solomon.

Jesus referred to himself as the Temple. Spiritually it could also refer to God dwelling in each of his people.

**Psalm 84:2** - "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

longeth = *kacaph* - from a root "to become pale"; to long for, desire; also put to shame

"courts" - the courtyard of the Tabernacle in which stood the Brazen Altar and the Laver where the priests ministered.

crieth out = *ranan* - cry out with a strident voice, to give a ringing cry

Rashi - to pray fervently

**Psalm 84:3** - "Yea, (yet) the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for

herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God."

i.e. among or near thy altars

swallow = "turtledove" by the Septuagint and the Targum

Targum: "and the turtle a nest for herself, whose young are fit to be offered up upon thine altars"

Even the birds can frequent the Temple precincts, while David is prevented.

Christ, like David here: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have roosting-places, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (**Matthew 8:20**).

**Psalm 84:4** - "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah." i.e. continually, forever

Targum: "Blessed are the righteous..."

**Psalm 84:5** - "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them."

Targum: "Whose strength is in thy Word"

strength = *ʾoz* - force, security, majesty, praise

ways = *mēcillah* - a highway, staircase

Septuagint: a going up (as on a pilgrimage) See Judges 20:31 - "...in the highways, (*mēcillah*) of which one goeth up to the house of God."

**Psalm 84:6** - "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools."

Baca = from the balsam-trees that wept "tears" of gum resin, thus the valley of weeping or tears. Probably a forbidding and arid portion of the journey.

The pilgrimage to the Temple includes passing through times of suffering, grief and repentance.

well = *ma`yan* - spring, fountain

- **Isaiah 12:3** - "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells (*ma`yan*) of salvation.

rain = *mowreh* - rare word, early rain, Teacher of righteousness (Septuagint)

The word rendered "rain" - מורה *môreh* - is from ירה *yârâh*, to throw, to cast, to place, to sprinkle, and may denote an archer, or the early (former) rain, or teaching - **Isaiah 9:15; 2 Kings 17:28**, or a teacher - **Isaiah 30:20; Job 36:22**.

filleth = *`atah* - cover

pools = *B<sup>e</sup>râkâh* - blessings or, with a different vowel, can mean pools.

As the pilgrims travel through difficult terrain on their way to the festival at Jerusalem God covers them and provides rain, a symbol of divine favor or blessing, a foretaste of what they will enjoy when they reach Jerusalem.

Rashi: the Teacher enwraps us with blessings...

**Psalm 84:7** - "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

- **Deuteronomy 16:16** - "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God..."

"from company to company" or "host to host" follows the alternative meaning of the Hebrew word, and suggests a picture of the actual progress of the various bands composing a pilgrimage caravan.

**Psalm 84:8-9** - "O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed."

Rashi: David Your anointed

Kimchi, a 12th cent. rabbi, takes this to be a prayer for the speedy coming of the Messiah.

**Psalm 84:10** - "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

"doorkeeper" - better, "I had rather wait on the threshold, as not worthy to enter the Temple precincts. ..."

**Psalm 84:11** - "For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

- **Malachi 4:2** - "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings..."

Targum: "For the Lord God is like a high wall and a strong shield," reading *shemesh* (= sun), but taking it in the sense of battlement.

**Psalm 84:12** - "O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

- **Psalm 32:2** - "Blessed ('esher) is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."