

Psalm 94:12-23

The psalm passage is paired with the reading from **Numbers 6** on the Nazarite Vow. Psalm 94 is traditionally recited on the fifth day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Psalm 94:12 - "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked."

Chastening = *yâçar* - the discipline of suffering God uses to correct, to teach or admonish us. Literally to chastise with blows or stripes. Yet, behind it all is the love of a father:

- **Deuteronomy 8:5** - "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth (*yâçar*) his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth (*yâçar*) thee."

- **Proverbs 29:17** - "Correct (*yâçar*) thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul."

Even Jesus -

- **Hebrews 5:8** - "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered"

"rest" - *shâqaṭ* - rest, quietness, tranquility

- **Hebrews 4:9** - "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God"

- **Isaiah 30:15** - "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness (*shâqaṭ*) and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not."

- **Isaiah 57:17** - "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness (*shâqaṭ*) and assurance for ever."

- **Isaiah 57:20** - "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest (*shâqaṭ*), whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

Rashi - "days of evil": For the chastisements cause him to have peace from the days of the judgment of Gehinnom.

"pit for the wicked" - an image taken from the method of hunting wild beasts by digging a pit into which they might fall and be taken.

- **Psalm 7:14-15** - "Behold, the wicked man travails with evil; he conceives trouble and births falsehood. He has dug a hole and hollowed it out; he has fallen into the pit of his making"

- **Psalm 9:15** - "The nations have fallen into a pit of their making; their feet are snared in the net they have hidden."

- **Psalm 57:6** - "They spread a net for my feet; my soul was despondent. They dug a pit before me, but they themselves have fallen into it! *Selah*"

When the wicked "seem" to prosper and triumph, yet believers experience trials and afflictions, we can know that their final punishment in the pit is being prepared - by their own actions - and therefore we can endure with "quietness" rather than impatience, anxiety or fear.

Bottomless Pit (the Abyss)

- **Revelation 20:1-3** - "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

In Greek, the temporary dungeon for fallen angels until the Judgment Day is called *Tartarus* (2 Peter 2:4) and might be the same as the Bottomless Pit. The destination of the dead is *Sheol* (the grave) or *Hades*. Believers who died sleep in Abraham's bosom or paradise. The final and eternal abode of the wicked after the final Judgment is called *Gehenna*.

Roman mythology featured a similar place called *Orcus*, a very deep gulf or chasm in the lowest parts of the earth used as the common receptacle of the dead and, especially, as the abode of demons.

Psalm 94:14 - "For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it."

NET - "For justice will prevail, and all the morally upright will be vindicated."

"At the coming of the Messiah all this good shall be."

- Isaac ben Moses Arama (c. 1420-1494, Spain)

"judgment shall return unto righteousness" - Finally, God's government of the world, which appears to favor the wicked, will be reconciled with His justice.

Isaiah cried out: "judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." (**Isaiah 59:14**)

- **Hebrews 2:9** - "When God subjected all things to him, He left nothing outside of his

control. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels..."

"and all the upright in heart shall be after him," i.e. the Lord; they shall follow him whithersoever he goes, as sheep follow the shepherd.

Targum: "after him shall be redeemed all the upright in heart."

Rashi - [i. e., the judgment of] their chastisements [will persist] until they become righteous because of them. And after the judgment, all those upright in heart will gather, for they will receive their reward.

A Call for Action

Psalm 94:16 - "Who will rise up to defend me against the wicked (*ra`a`*)? Who will stand up for me against the evildoers?"

"evildoers" - those who do "*aven*" - self-exertion, from a root that means "to pant."

This psalm concerns Messiah, according to the rabbis, so this is an appeal by David for allies, who will join him.

The Targum is even more explicit: "who will rise up, for me, to make war with the evildoers?"

The battle is with weapons of faith and the Word of God, preaching the gospel, in exhortation of the brethren and setting our faces "like flint" to go up to the New Jerusalem. Pouring out lives in love for those in need, and identifying idolatry in our own lives and in society.

- **Ecclesiastes 4:1** - "So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter."

David/Messiah in Affliction

Psalm 94:17 - "Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up."

"dwelt in silence" - the grave, death. "Silent" because no one there can praise the Lord.

- **Psalm 115:17-18** - "It is not the dead who praise the LORD, nor any who descend into silence. But it is we who will bless the LORD, both now and forevermore. Hallelujah!"

- **Psalm 6:5** - "For there is no mention of You in death; who can praise You from Sheol?"

Psalm 94:19 - "In the multitude of my thoughts within me your comforts delight my soul."

The meaning is "in the multitude of my distracting, perplexing, anxious, vexing and troubled thoughts..."

"comforts" = *tanchûwm* - consolations

"delight" = *sha`a`* - Literally, to stroke, and so soothe. The Hebrew word is used in Isaiah 66:11 of a mother quieting her child with the breast, and in **Jeremiah 16:7** of the cup of consolation given to mourners at funerals.

Simeon was waiting for "the consolation of Israel" (**Luke 2:25**) - the Messiah.

The Throne of Iniquity

Psalm 94:20 - "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?"

Or "Surely these oppressive and wicked judges and rulers cannot be associated with You, Lord! They are using the law to legislate what is evil."

"mischief" = *`amal* - wearisome labor that leads to worry and misery

"Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, who write misfortune, which they have prescribed to rob the needy of justice, and to take what is right from the poor of My people" (**Isaiah 10:1**).

King Saul pursued David with the whole legal system and government supporting him. The Jewish legal structure and government was marshaled against Jesus.

This speaks to a broader question of what constitutes legitimate authority. David respected Saul's position as anointed king even as he fled from him. Authority must be respected (**Romans 13**) until it is clearly in "fellowship" with the "throne of iniquity."

- **Revelation 2:13** - "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is."

The Antichrist could be called "the throne of iniquity", since the dragon, the old serpent, and Satan gave him his power, seat, or throne. He sits in the temple of God, showing himself as if he was God - in the equivalent place the mercy seat, which was the dwelling place of God.

The Great Whore of Babylon "saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." (**Revelation 18:7**)

Psalm 94:21 - "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood."

Judas said "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that." (**Matthew 27:4**)

- **Revelation 17:6,7** - "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus"

"gather themselves together" - like the tumultuous mob crying "crucify Him!" Our nature is to join that mob ourselves.

Psalm 94:22-23 - "But the LORD is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off."

Targum: "the Word of the Lord shall be my weapon"

"bring upon them their own iniquity" - They will be "hoist with their own petard," like Haman on the gallows he built himself.

According to Babylonian Talmud, Erachin 11a, at the time of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem the Levites were singing this Psalm, and as they came to the words "and He turneth back upon them their iniquity" (**Psalm 94:23**), the enemies pressed into the Temple, so that they were not able to sing the closing words, "Yahweh, our God, will destroy them."

The same thing happened at the Roman destruction, according to Seder Olam Rabba, c. 30. p. 92.

The complete punishment of the wicked was made a certainty at the Cross, but is still placed in the future, at the last judgment. Faith reads the present in the light of the future, and in this we can rejoice.