

Psalm 95

This psalm is our response to the Priestly Blessing of **Numbers 6:22-27**.

The link is in **verse 6** - "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker."

"kneel" = *barak*, the same word translated as "bless."

It also foreshadows (from the viewpoint of our Torah readings) the doom of the cursed generation, whose bodies would drop and be swallowed by the wilderness.

This psalm is quoted in **Hebrews 3 and 4**. It starts with an invitation to praise, and ends with a warning. It belongs to the times of the Messiah, according to some of the rabbis.

Psalm 95:1 - "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation."

"make a joyful noise" - There is no one English expression for the full burst of instrumental and vocal music which is meant by the Hebrew word here applied to the Temple service. The Jewish translation is "let us shout to the rock of our salvation."

- **Ephesians 5:19** - "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"

- **Colossians 3:16** - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..."

"to the rock of our salvation" - "rock" signifies strength, stability, security, safety and shelter

- **1 Corinthians 10:4** - "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

Psalm 95:2 - "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

"presence" = *paniyim* - face The Priestly Blessing assured us that God's face will shine upon us in favor when we come before Him.

Isaac ben Moses Arama (c. 1420 – 1494) - In the days of Messiah, only the sacrifice of praise and the offering of thanksgiving will remain.

- **Hebrews 13:15** - "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

God's Greatness

Psalm 95:3-5 - "For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land."

This is in contrast to the imaginary, powerless and perishable idols that Israel was tempted to worship. The idols have no real existence except in the human imagination. They are gods who are "no gods." (**Jeremiah 5:7**)

Even the angels (who in respect to men are thought as gods) are nothing in his sight, much less the idols, which man's brain invents.

The message is that He reigns - there is nothing that is not under His control and as the Creator, there is no locality that is beyond His presence.

The Lord is identified with Christ in the New Testament:

- **Titus 2:13** - "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ"

Command over the sea - **Matthew 8:26**

- **John 1:1-2** - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

Psalm 95:6 - "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker."

David Kimchi (1160–1235) distinguishes these several gestures, expressed by the different words here used; the first, we render worship, signifies, according to him, the prostration of the whole body on the ground, with the hands and legs stretched out; the second, a bowing of the head, with part of the body; and the third, a bending of the knees on the ground. - *Gill's Exposition*

"Worship" = *shachah* - to bow or prostrate in worship, but even without prostration to honor with prayer, praise and thanksgiving. It shows our loyalty and submission to God as king.

"bow down" = *kara`* - Prostration shows we understand we deserve death.

- **Revelation 1:17** - "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last"

It also indicates a state of humility, as we acknowledge that we have received undeserved favor from the Father.

"Kneeling" = *barak* - essentially a breaking, a breaking down. To invoke God, to ask for a blessing, to praise God

- **Exodus 18:10-11** - "And Jethro said, Blessed (*barak*) be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them."

But also, to bestow a blessing:

- **Genesis 22:18** - "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (*barak*); because thou hast obeyed my voice." [actually "bless themselves" in the Hebrew, but reflexive as quoted by Paul below]

- **Galatians 3:8** - "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

Psalm 95:7 - "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,"

This is a turning point in the Psalm. After portraying God in his role as Good Shepherd caring for his sheep, David, the shepherd, pleads for the sheep to "hear His voice." This is reference to the fact that each flock responds to their own shepherd's voice and can be separated if several flock are mixed.

- **John 10:27-28** - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

What happens when we neglect to 'Hear His Voice'?

Psalm 95:8 - "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work."

"harden" the heart = *qashah* - the same word used when God hardened Pharaoh's heart. It means to become stubborn, calloused, difficult, obstinate and stiffnecked.

"as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation" - In the Hebrew it's "as in Meribah and as in the day of Massah."

- **Exodus 17:7** - "And he called the name of the place Massah (temptation, testing, trial), and Meribah (chiding or strife), because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?"

This was mentioned again when the spies brought an evil report, and the people wanted to go back to Egypt:

- **Numbers 14:23** - "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:"

Massah and Meribah became emblematic of the ten times Israel "provoked" God, which led to him cursing that generation:

- **Numbers 14:29-30** - "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."

Rashi - "tested Me": for nothing.

There was no reason to test God because He had already displayed his power and his presence with them.

"saw my work" - i.e.they "saw the water gush forth from the rock, when at my command Moses struck it" (**Exodus 17:6**), not to mention the previous miracles, plagues and salvation at the Red Sea.

They put God to the test for the purpose of approval. But we don't get to make a "ruling" on God. He judges and tests us.

It was really Christ they were testing:

- **1 Corinthians 10:9** - "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." See **Numbers 21:6**

- **Matthew 12:39** - "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Psalm 95:10-11 - "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."

Rashi - "my rest" - [In] to the land of Israel and Jerusalem, which I called "resting place," as it says below in **Psalm 132:14** - "This is my resting place forever."

This passage is quoted in **Hebrews 3:7-11** almost word for word. Read the whole chapter, and the next chapter regarding the entering the "rest" which is the New Jerusalem.

Our response must be to "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end." (**Hebrews 3:6**) Examine ourselves for "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (**3:12**) lest any of you be "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (**3:13**) But mostly, "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."**(3:19)**

- **Hebrews 4:1** - "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

- **Hebrews 4:11** - "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

So, are we testing God in our lives, challenging Him to prove Himself? obstinately refusing to hear His voice? What more do we want Him to do?

All of these things keep us from entering into rest. Unlike the cursed generation, we have believed and have entered in. But every day is a new challenge. A healthy fear of God and constant appeal to Jesus as our High Priest allows us to "come boldly unto the throne of grace" to obtain mercy and find grace every day. (**Hebrews 4:15**)