

65. Songs of Ascents

Psa 120-134

Next after the meditative Torah Psalter (§58) come these fifteen Songs. They celebrate the return of the Exiles to Jerusalem and the rebuilt Temple. Here are extracts from each of them. They begin by looking backward:

[Recalling Babylon]

- Psa 120** 5 Woe to me that I sojourn in Meshech,
That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!
- Psa 121** 1 I lift up my eyes unto the mountains;
From whence shall my help come?
2 My help cometh from Yahweh,
Who made heaven and earth.
8 Yahweh will keep thy going out and thy coming in,
From this time forth and for evermore.

[Hope of Return]

- Psa 122** 1 I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go unto the house of Yahweh.
2 Our feet are standing
within thy gates, O Jerusalem . . .
5 For there are set thrones for judgement,
The thrones of the House of David.
6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem;
They shall prosper that love thee.
7 Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces.
- Psa 123** 1 Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes,
O thou that sittest in the heavens.
3 Have mercy upon us, O Yahweh,
Have mercy upon us!

[Departure]

- Psa 124** 2 If it had not been Yahweh who was on our side,
When men rose up against us,
3 Then they had swallowed us up alive,
When their wrath was kindled against us.
7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers:
The snare is broken, and we are escaped.
8 Our help is in the name of Yahweh,
Who made heaven and earth.
- Psa 125** 1 They that trust in Yahweh are as Mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever.
2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
So Yahweh is round about his people,
From this time forth and for evermore.

[Arrival]

- Psa 126** 1 When Yahweh brought back those that returned to Zion,
We were like unto them that dream.
2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then said they among the nations,
Yahweh hath done great things for them.
- Psa 127** 1 Except Yahweh build the house,
They labor in vain that build it.
2 Except Yahweh keep the city,
The watchman waketh but in vain.
- Psa 128** 1 Blessed is every one that feareth Yahweh,
That walketh in his ways.
2 For thou shalt eat the labor of thy hands:
Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.
3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine,
In the innermost parts of thy house;
Thy children like olive plants,
Round about thy table.
4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
That feareth Yahweh.
5 Yahweh bless thee out of Zion,
And see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
6 Yea, see thou thy children's children;
Peace be upon Israel.

[Freedom From Enemies]

- Psa 129** 2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up,
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
4 Yahweh is righteous:
He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.
5 Let them be put to shame and turned backward,
All they that hate Zion.
- Psa 130** 1 Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Yahweh.
Lord, hear my voice:
2 Let thine ears be attentive
To the voice of my supplications.
3 If thou, Yahweh, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
4 But there is forgiveness with thee,
That thou mayest be feared . . .
7 O Israel, hope in Yahweh:
For with Yahweh there is lovingkindness,
And with him is plenteous redemption.
8 And he will redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.
- Psa 131** 3 O Israel, hope in Yahweh
From this time forth and for evermore.

[Promises]

- Psa 132**
- 1 Yahweh, remember for David
All his affliction:
 - 2 How he swore unto Yahweh,
And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob:
 - 3 “Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,
Nor go up to my bed,
 - 4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
Or slumber to mine eyelids,
 - 5 Until I find out a place for Yahweh,
A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob.”
 - 11 Yahweh hath sworn unto David in truth;
He will not turn from it:
“Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
 - 12 If thy children will keep my covenant
And my testimony that I shall teach them,
Their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore.”
 - 13 For Yahweh hath chosen Zion:
He hath desired it for his habitation.
 - 14 “This is my resting-place forever:
Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.
 - 17 There will I make the horn of David to bud:
I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.
 - 18 His enemies will I clothe with shame,
But upon himself shall his crown flourish.”

[Conclusion: The Temple Community]

- Psa 133**
- 1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
 - 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,
That ran down upon the beard,
3 Even Aaron’s beard:
That came down upon the skirt of his garments:
 - 4 Like the dew of Hermon,
That came down upon the mountains of Zion:
For there Yahweh commanded the blessing,
Even life forevermore.
- Psa 134**
- 1 Behold, bless ye Yahweh, all ye servants of Yahweh,
That by night stand in the house of Yahweh.
 - 2 Lift up your hands to the sanctuary,
And bless ye Yahweh.
 - 3 Yahweh bless thee out of Zion,
Even he that made heaven and earth.

Chronicles (#66) will soon take up the Promise to David, rewriting history to remove anything that might prevent the restoration of the Davidic Kingship. As for the ideal of Universal *Citizenship*, that will come later (§70).