

Day 105 2 Sam 19.5 – 20.26

David Restored

2 Sam. 19.5-8 Joab, David's commander, now takes charge of this dangerous situation; David has just won a civil war, but is in danger of losing the peace. Joab gives him a verbal slap on the face to put things in perspective. He is humiliating those who have defended him by his hiding away in mourning. The people need to see him, as a rallying point for the divided nation. Indeed, many of Israelites have already gone back west of the Jordan, their pretender dead and their cause lost.

David sees sense, and takes his place at the gates of Mahanaim, uniting the people there to him.

19.9 – 14 David moves to quell the uncertainty in the country about who is now ruling, and engages the priests in his restoration, inviting them to call on the leaders of David's tribe of Judah to recognise David's authority and to bring him back to Jerusalem. This will give David vital support from the religious leaders which will lend weight to his cause.

However, David acts to pay back Joab for his killing of Absalom, and promises Amasai that he will be his commander of the army in Joab's place. Joab has disobeyed David's orders, hence David's anger. However, as will be seen, David does not follow through on this threat.

19.15 – 23 David now begins his journey back to Jerusalem, and at the crossing of the Jordan, is met by Shimei the Benjamite, who in 16.5ff had cursed David on his flight from the city. Now Shimei throws himself on David's mercy and asks forgiveness. Abishai, brother of the commander Joab, pushes for Shimei's death, but David, perhaps knowing where the root of all this tragedy lies, and taking the opportunity to distance himself from Joab's whole family in his displeasure, pardons Shimei.

19.24-30 Saul's grandson, Mephibosheth, to whom David did *chesed* in 2 Sam 9 by restoring to him his grandfather's estates, now comes to find David. He is in a sorry state, unkempt and dirty. He pours out his story of betrayal by Ziba, his servant, who accused him to David of staying in Jerusalem to regain the throne. But Mephibosheth pleads not guilty to this charge, saying that Ziba left him, lame and helpless to do anything.

David now acts wisely – who knows the true story? - and divides the land he had given to the servant Ziba between him and Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth protests his loyalty to David, saying that Ziba can have all the land; Mephibosheth is just glad to see his patron back safe. Whether this is flattery or genuine relief is not revealed to us.

19.31-40 Eighty-year-old Barzillai the Gileadite had been David's key support and provider during the time in Mahanaim. David wants him to come back to Jerusalem so that he can return the provision, but Barzillai says he is too old, recommending instead his servant Kimham for this honour, to which David agrees. There is a tender parting of ways; this old man has been a father to David in his troubles.

At this point, at the Jordan crossing, David has succeeded in rallying all of Judah, and half the tribes of Israel beside.

19.41-20.2 However, David has another challenger. Inter-tribal rivalry arises, similar to that seen in Judges from the tribe of Ephraim. This time, Judah is in the heat of the accusation, for their taking on themselves the restoration of David, who, after all, is one of them. A row erupts, and a Benjamite, Sheba Ben-Bikri, calls the disgruntled Israelies to forsake David, and to follow him. Thus only Judah is left to David, to accompany him home.

20.3 David, back in Jerusalem, takes the step of distancing himself from the concubines Absalom had slept with, providing for their upkeep, but not coming close to them.

2 Sam 20.4-26. Amasa the new commander proves to be an unreliable aide to David, not bringing Judah together timely enough to advance against the new pretender. David thus resorts to Joab's brother, Abishai to rescue the situation and take the troops out.

Amasa eventually catches up with Abishai and Joab's men, but in an act of vengeance and retribution for letting down the king, Joab stabs and kills Amasai. Joab now steps in and takes command, and calls the troops back under his command.

The troops of Judah pursue Sheba's army to Abel, and there besiege him. In a deal with a woman of the city, Joab says he will spare Abel if she throws him down Sheba's head. The woman advises the city of the deal, and Sheba is put to death. The civil war is over.

Joab is thus restored to favour and command and David is back in place in Jerusalem.

Day 106 2 Sam 21. 1-14; 2 Sam.24.1-9;1 Chron.21.1- 22.19; Psalm 30

Two National Tragedies

The stories in the readings for this day are some of the most troubling in Scripture in terms of understanding how and why a loving God would act in such a seemingly vindictive way towards men. Yet we also must remember the holiness and the nature of a God who has already declared that He cannot overlook sin, nor treat it as a light thing. It is always toxic to His creation, and sometimes the effects of that toxin in the system take years to work through, even giving rise to fatal consequences. Not until God comes as the Word made flesh and finds a way of rescuing us from the poison of sin will we see a way out of the pattern of sin and death which are so closely linked in the Old Testament.

The Pacification of Gibeon

2 Sam 21.1 – 14. When there has been famine for three years in the land, David enquires of the Lord what can be done to alleviate it. The Lord highlights the toxicity of the action of Saul against the people of Gibeon, (who were protected by an oath dating back to the time of Joshua), when Saul tried to wipe them out in contravention of the covenant Israel had with them. This covenant-breaking is so serious, that it has consequences into the future which affect all of Israel.

The Gibeonites, it has to be remembered are a vassal people, and have no rights under the law of Israel. But David is a man of *chesed*, of covenant obligation, and he understands the terrible consequence of oath-breaking, even to those they should have removed.

David invited them to name their penalty for the genocide perpetrated against them by Saul. They ask for seven of his descendants to be executed as retribution for Saul's deeds. David agrees.

One of Saul's descendants, of course, is Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan; however, David's covenant with Jonathan to protect his offspring prevent him from handing over Mephibosheth Ben-Jonathan. Thus David hands over to the Gibeonites two sons of Saul, born to Saul's concubine Rizpah along with five of his grandsons, born to Saul's daughter Merab by a man named Adriel. These are then executed, at the beginning of the harvest, and their bodies exposed 'before the Lord', so that the Lord can see the price paid by their sacrifice. It is a deeply troubling outcome.

In a touching insight into a mother's grief, we are told that Rizpah, widow of Saul and mother of two of the men, Armoni and another Mephibosheth, goes out and prevents the bodies from being attacked by the carrion birds and predators as they lie rotting. All through the harvest, until the rains come, she watches over the corpses. David hears of her gruesome watch, and does something compassionate in the light of her grief. The remains of Saul and Jonathan, after their final battle, had been recovered and taken for burial by the people of Jabesh-Gilead, across the Jordan. However, David now orders their bones to be taken and buried correctly in Saul's family grave at Zela in Benjamin, a sign on David's part that the matter is now settled. He also brings with Saul and Jonathan's remains the bodies of the seven sons, and has them also properly interred.

Perhaps it is the compassion more than the revenge which turns God's heart toward Israel, but however it occurs, the famine ends, and God answers their prayer.

The Unauthorised Census

2 Sam.24.1-9, 1 Chron. 21.1- 30 (mirrored in 2 Sam 24.10 – 25)

Since the days of Moses, it has been the law of Israel that no census of Israel may be made without sacrifice and tax. The people are the Lord's possession, and to count them is to do so for Him.

Uncharacteristically, perhaps, given his life-long habit of enquiring of God, David chooses to count the armies of Israel without due process before the Lord. The Chronicles account actually states that the idea came from Satan himself (1 Chron.21.1) and despite warnings from Joab, David's general, the army commanders are sent to count the men.

The reason this is such a terrible action on David's part is because it is about the power he is taking to himself. The count is made, throughout Israel, totaling 1,100,000 men. But Joab was so repulsed by David's command, that he disobeys, and does not count the Levites or the Benjamites.

In 1 Chron.21.7, we are clearly told that David's count was sin, and David realises it, coming to God to pray for forgiveness. A terrible choice is put to him through the prophet

Gad – either choose famine, sword or plague as punishment. David takes plague, and for three days the Lord’s anger is poured out on the nation through sickness, in which seventy thousand die.

There is a significant moment, though, in God’s own experience – His compassion overwhelms His wrath, in 1 Chron 21.15. Just as God is about to destroy Jerusalem, David’s city, He repents of the terrible judgment, (Heb על־הַרְעָה נִינַחַם *va-yenachem al ha-ra’ah*), calling the angle of the Lord to stay his hand.

David now takes personal responsibility for the sin of the unauthorized count, and the Lord through Gad instructs David to build an altar, where he saw the angel standing, at Araunah’s threshing-floor. David buys the property from Araunah at full price, despite Araunah’s offering it for free to David. David knows he cannot offer what has not cost him something, particularly under these circumstances. He gives Araunah about seven kilograms of gold, a high price for a piece of property. He prays and the destruction stops; this is the place where Solomon will later establish the Temple.

There is a note at the end of this story that the Tabernacle was at this time in Gibeon, but David feels unable to go there, because of the terrible anger of the Lord they have seen.

Preparations for the Later Temple

1 Chron.22.1 – 19 It is of note that at no time has God ordered a Temple to be built. God gave to Moses the pattern of the Tabernacle, which still exists in David’s time. But David wants to build this expression of worship to the Lord, which he is prevented from doing because of his being a ‘man of blood’, and knows that his son will eventually do that.

Thus the Temple is an expression of man’s devotion to the Lord, not a sign of God’s intention, as the Tabernacle is. God has already told David that He cannot be contained in a building made by humans. However, God does appear ready to co-operate with David and Solomon, and the Temple building preparations go forward.

Stone and wood are dressed and cut, much of it by the foreign labour in Israel. David is intent on doing as much as he can to prepare for his son’s task after his death.

David’s charge to Solomon is a revealing one. He tells his son that he wanted to build the Temple, but the Lord would not let him because of the blood on his hands. Instead, Solomon, the man whose name means ‘peaceful’ would, in a time of peace, build ‘a house for my Name.’ David now hands over the work to Solomon, and charges him to complete the construction he has commenced, with the help of Israel. It seems that Solomon from this time took over the building of the Temple, even before his father’s death.

Psalm 30

This is a song for Temple dedication, David’s contribution to the future day of joy when Israel would have a new place of worship together.

David begins with returning thanks to the Lord for rescuing Him from danger and death. He calls on the ones given over to God to sing and praise, for the hope He brings them.

David recalls how God has been with him in good and dangerous times, and has shown him mercy.

The Psalm ends with an exclamation of joy; God turns weeping into dancing and mourning into joy, and provokes thanksgiving forever from His people.

Day 107 1 Chron 23 – 26.11

David Prepares the Priesthood for the Temple

1 Chron 23.1ff David realises that he is in the twilight of his days, and so he is anxious to leave a legacy of order for the Temple which will be built. He therefore calls a national convention of the leaders and priests of Israel, to set in place the new constitution.

This is a major change in the way the priesthood operate. For one thing, there are many thousands of Levites, all who have a right to minister before the Lord. Also, because they are no longer a wandering people, the tasks of taking down and re-erecting the place of worship are no longer relevant. These are taken into account in David's reorganisation.

There are thirty-eight thousand Levites, to be divided up into twenty-four thousand being engaged in Temple work, six thousand to be officials and judges, making rulings on religious matters, four thousands gatekeepers, and, very important given that it is David making these changes, four thousand musicians for praise.

23.7 – 23 (See also 1 Chron.24.20-30a) There is now a listing of the clans of Levi, under their three chief headings, the Gershonites, the Kohathites (who also include the descendants of Aaron and Moses), and the Merarites.

23.24ff (See also 24.30b) Although we are given the numbers of Levites as being those of thirty years of age and over, David actually has counted in also those between twenty and thirty, even though Levites may not commence their serving until age thirty.

David now moves to re-assign duties to the Levites based on their more static operation, with the Temple to be in one place.

23.28-32, 24.31. The Levites were to serve the Aaronic priesthood (the descendants of Aaron were specifically given the responsibility of High Priesthood) in all of the duties of preparation and administration of the Temple. Also, morning and evening they are to have worship offices, as well as on New Moons and at festivals.

The service is regulated into divisions, which are appointed by lot carried out in David's presence by the priests, presumably with the urim and thummim carried in the High Priest's breastplate.

24.1-5 First, the Priests themselves, the descendants of Aaron, are put into divisions. We are reminded that a whole section of the descent of Aaron is missing, because of the sin of his sons Nadab and Abihu in the desert. However, the descendants of Eleazar and Ithamar have given rise to a priesthood, of which Zadok is the present leader. So as not to favour the larger clan of Eleazar over Ithamar's clan, the lot is used with scrupulous justice.

24.6-19 A Levite scribe, Shemaiah Ben-Nethanel, now records how the lots for the Aaronic priests come out, so that there is no future dispute. This also gives the order of their duties of service in the Temple. It is perhaps worth noting that John the Baptist's father, Zacharias, a priest, was of the eighth order of the priesthood, the order of Abijah. (v.10, See Luke 1.5)

25.1-5 David now introduces an innovation into the worship of the Temple. In conference with his army generals, he appoints the clans of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun to be prophets accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. Jeduthun is particularly noted for his ability to prophesy while playing the harp, thanking and praising God. It is worth noting, then, the Davidic order which links the moving of God's Spirit with the making of music, which encourages altered states of consciousness, as David had already proved when soothing Saul in his earlier years.

The musician-prophets are listed in order.

25.6-31 As with the priests, so the musicians are put into divisions; the three main leaders Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun are accountable directly to King David, presumably because of his excellent ministry in song and music. Then, the younger musicians were attached to older ones for mentoring and training. There are two hundred and eighty-eight of them, divided into twenty-four rosters of twelve, called *watches* or *guards* (Heb מִשְׁמֶרֶת *mishmeret* from root word *shamar* meaning to keep or guard.)

26.1-11 A further tranche of Levites are appointed to the role of gatekeepers of the new Temple, the 'security staff', as it were. These would be entrusted also with the purity of the place of worship from those not qualified to enter.

Particularly mentioned is the family of Obed-Edom (probably not the same Obed-Edom the Gittite who hosted the ark). His sons are described as leaders in his family *because they were very capable men*. They are also described as being strong enough to take on the work.

Day 108 1 Chron. 26.12 – 29.22

David's Convention Concludes

1 Chron.26.12-19 The assignment of Levites to the security duties of the Temple, again with a roster for the various gates and the planned storehouse.

26.20 – 28 Levites are now also put in charge of the treasuries, of those things dedicated to the Lord, in Hebrew called *qadashim* (Heb. קְדָשִׁים), meaning, the 'holy things', holy being that which is surrendered to the Lord for His use and purpose only. This includes those items of booty taken by Saul, Abner and Joab under Samuel's direction, and made forfeit (Heb חֵרֶם *Cherem*) to the Lord.

26.29-32 Levites are also made *right-wisers*, or judges in Israel, for work away from the Temple, and civil servants to the King, for genealogical work, a kind of registrar function.

- 27.1-15 The army is organized into twelve divisions, who will serve David on a monthly rota basis, with twenty-four thousand in each division. Of note here are Benaiah, who was listed among David's thirty mighty men (v.6) and Asahel, a brother of Joab, who had fallen foul of Abner, but who is mentioned here, succeeded after his death by his son Zebadiah.
- 27.16-22 Also over each tribe a commander is appointed – the word in Hebrew is *Nagid* (Heb. נָגִיד from the root word *nagad* meaning to front, to proclaim), one who 'fronts' in the battle.
- 27.23,24 There is mention here of the disastrous unauthorized count of the fighting men, which was started but not completed – we see here that the reason that counting people was such an issue was because God had promised to make the Israelites as numerous as the stars in the sky, thus a census was a demonstration of lack of trust in God's promise.
- 27.25 – 31 David's royal household also includes those who take care of the wealth of David, his livestock and land.
- 27.32-34 Also noted are David's closest councilors, including the failed Ahithophel, who hanged himself after betraying David's trust and siding with Absalom, succeeded by Jehoiada and Abiathar, who stayed faithful to David's part.
- 28.1 Thus, all these are part of the great Jerusalem convention assembled by David.
- 28.2-8. David addresses his people, explaining his plan for a Temple, and God's response that He would establish David's dynasty. David proclaims that Solomon is his heir, and that he will build the Temple at Jerusalem. He enjoins upon them obedience to the law of the Lord.
- 28.9-19 David then charges his son in the presence of his people to follow the Lord and to build the Temple, and he entrusts to him the precious plans, which the Chronicler says, 'the Spirit had put in (David's) mind, with instructions for all the structures and furnishings. He ends by saying, ' This has all been given in writing from the hand of the Lord upon me', pointing to an inspiration upon David similar to that upon Moses.
- 28.20.21 He encourages Solomon to be wholehearted in the work, which David has already facilitated through the organization of the priesthood to serve.
- 29.1 – 9 David now raises the matter of the resourcing of the work of the Temple, and makes an appeal to Israel, leading them in dedicating a vast amount of his own wealth to the building programme. The leaders respond by also giving generously, which causes the people to applaud them, and David is also greatly heartened.
- This Temple will be referred to in coming generations as the Temple of Solomon, but in terms of its planning and resourcing, it could equally be called the Temple of David!
- 29.10 – 20 David presents a Song of praise to the Lord for His goodness, acknowledging the Lord's sovereign power, to whom belongs the Kingship, ultimately (v.11) He

recognises that all wealth and honour come from God, and the song ends with praise and thanksgiving.

This is followed up with a prayer of dedication of the gifts promised, recognizing the source of all they have as in the Lord. It is a moving and powerful prayer demonstrating David's reliance on the Lord for His life and position. He also prays for Solomon to have power to carry out the work he has been given.

The whole assembly fall down before the Lord and worship Him.

29.21.,22 The convention ends next day with great sacrifices to the Lord, with feasting and drinking 'with great joy in the presence of the Lord', and Solomon receives the anointing of heir apparent with Zadok anointed the High priest alongside him.

Day 109 Psalms 5 -7, 10,11

Psalms - The Sung Worship of Israel

We have already seen in the Story that David magnifies the place of sung worship in the liturgy of Israel, organising singers and musicians to be present on a continuous basis in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple. The book of Psalms is called in Hebrew *tehillim* (Heb. תְּהִלִּים plural of the word *tehillah* תְּהִלָּה from the root word *halal*, meaning praises.) however, the word *tehillah* when used in the Scriptures is most often translated 'praise'. Only in Psalm 145 is it actually used as the designation of a Psalm.

The term most often used (in 58 Psalms) to describe the song is *mizmor* (Heb מִזְמוֹר from root *zamar* meaning to play an instrument.) Thus the title of the Book could be better rendered 'Praises'.

As has been mentioned before, the songbook of Israel's praise is poetic, but not in the rhyming, metred way English speakers are familiar with. Hebrew poetry is usually formed of lines, balanced around a centre pause, with the second half either developing or echoing the previous. So, *The Lord is my shepherd/I shall not want*, or, *Why do the heathen rage/Or the people imagine vanity?* Sometimes this can be extended to a threefold echoing, as in Psalm 1

Happy is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly

Who does not stand in the ways of sinners

Who does not sit in the seat of scoffers.

The Psalms will be looked at in groups, beginning with a number of Psalms of Complaint and Lament. It is wonderful that in the praise of God He allows man to pour out to Him the deepest and darkest emotions of his being, which God values and listens to.

Psalm 5

The directions for this Psalm, which form verse 1 in the Hebrew version, state that it is dedicated for the director of music, to be played on flutes (Heb. נְחִילֹת *nechilot*) and is a *mizmor*, a played song, by or in the style of David.

The Hebrew term ‘of David’ can also mean ‘to David’ or ‘in the style of David’.

v.1-3 The Psalm opens with a prayer for God to hear, because the Psalmist’s heart is heavy. Perhaps the stress has kept him awake, or it is the first thing that comes to mind when he wakes up in the morning.

v.4-6 An acknowledgement that the Lord is dealing with the toxicity of sin and will not endorse lifestyles of selfishness.

v.7- 9 The singer is coming to the Lord not in his own right, but because of the *chesed* of the Lord, because of His promise to bless. There is no such dependability in the heart of those who are against God. Perhaps the Psalmist has a particular adversary in mind?

v.10-12 The prayer ends with a call for God to remove the wicked, and to bring their plans to frustration, while allowing those who follow the Lord to prosper and to be blessed.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2605.mp3>

Psalm 6

This is a prayer for deliverance, again to be given to the director of music, to the accompaniment of strings (Heb. נְגִינֹת *neginot*) probably an eight-stringed instrument , since the word *Sheminit* (Heb שְׁמִינִית) comes from the word for ‘eight’. It’s a composition of or in the style of David.

v.1 – 3 The composer is crying out from the depths of distress, and seems almost to not be able to bear it any longer.

v.4 There is a direct appeal to God to turn around, to come and save, because of His *chesed*, His obligation by covenant to do so.

v.5-7 There is a reminder that the dead don’t sing, and if the Psalmist dies, that will not allow him to praise God in this body, which is swimming in tears, a very powerful image of the sorrow of this soul.

v.8-10 The address then turns to those who would triumph over the distress of this person, and they are repelled by the fact of God’s rescuing nature. Even though God is a while in coming, there is full faith that the Lord has heard, and is acting on the prayer, suddenly changing the situation around.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2606.mp3>

Psalm 7

This Psalm is a *shiggaion* (Heb שִׁגְּיוֹן) of David. The term *shiggaion* is not totally clear, but comes from a root word *shagah* meaning to stagger or wander about, as though drunk. It is a poem written under intense emotion, which perhaps rambles in its complaint.

The occasion of this song is David's oppression by an adversary, Cush, a Benjamite. (Remembering that Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, thus it could be a supporter of Saul against David.)

v.1- 5 David is hiding in God, because his pursuer is going to tear him apart. If I have done what I am accused of, he says, then let me be punished for it by Cush.

At the end of verse 5 is the Hebrew word *selah* (Heb סֶלָה) which in most English versions is not translated. It comes from a root meaning to pause, and is most probably an instrumental break from the words, a moment for the musician to interpret the emotion of the words just heard, while the singer thinks or savours the thought.

v.6-9 This is a series of appeals to God to intervene – ‘arise’, ‘awake’, ‘rule’, ‘judge’, ‘bring an end’ – they all look for God's vindication against the pursuer.

v.10 – 13 Here is a threat – if you don't change, this will be the outcome! God is ready to defend His beloved with weapons poised.

v.14 – 16 The evildoer will find the evil he has done landing on his own head.

v.17 The Psalm ends with praise to God for His integrity.

This Psalm shows a strong confidence in a God who is able to deliver from the threat of evil.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2607.mp3>

Psalm 10

There are times when we feel God has moved far away from us, when we feel as if He is not listening. While that is not the truth, at the same time, we can express that emotion to God, maybe using the words of such a psalm as this to give vent to the pain.

There is no ascription to this Psalm, it just dives straight into the matter.

v.1 This is a clear complaint – God seems to be distancing Himself, to be far away in trouble.

v.2-11 A litany of the injustices done by the godless, seemingly impervious to the coming reckoning by God.

v.12 – 15 The Singer calls on the Lord to act, to intervene – Arise O Lord! God is not oblivious to the things being done, and will call to account.

v.16- 18 Justice matters to the Lord, and He is King, defending orphans and the oppressed, so that humans will be prevented from terrorising one another.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2610.mp3>

Psalm 11

This is ascribed to David, designed for the use of the music director.

v.1 – 3 This is a psalm of standing one's ground against oppressive threats. The Lord is the protector, although the enemy is looking very aggressive.

v.4 – 7 There is a suggestion here that the trials of the righteous are just that – trials, to try and test their faith. The word used here is Hebrew *bakhan* (Heb בָּכַח) meaning to test or assay, like metals. There is something formative in the trials we go through which have a creative, characterising element. Yet the wicked who are just out for violence God can't work with. He is the *right-wiser*, and those who stay faithful will see Him face to face.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2611.mp3>

Day 110 Psalms 13, 17, 23, 26, 28, 31

Psalms in Trouble

The theme of crying out to God in trouble continues in these Psalms; perhaps the most famous Psalm of all, the twenty-third, is included in today, a reminder that it is a Psalm written, not in a time of peace and safety, but in a time of trial and danger.

Psalm 13

Entrusted to the the chief musician, this is another accompanied song in the style of or by David.

v.1-2 The poetry of the Hebrew language is seen in the repetition of the cries, four times in these verses, 'How long?' , literally 'Until when?' (Heb אַתְּ-רַגְלִי *ad-anah?*) The poet pours out his sense of abandonment and anguish in prayer to the Lord.

v.3-4 If God does not come through, he feels as though he will die. Perhaps his life is actually threatened – David's life was in danger many times. If that happens, God will lose out the glory and the enemy will gloat over his conquest.

v.5-6 But the Psalm ends with hope and with thanksgiving. The Psalmist is relying on the *chesed* (Heb חֶסֶד) of the Lord, the obligation to His vow, and his heart rejoices in that obligation to rescue him; in the Hebrew, the word rejoice is *yagel* (Heb יָגַל) which comes from the root word *gil* meaning to spin around, to whirl in a dance; this is active rejoicing, not just a feeling of pleasure.

The last verse is particularly succinct and memorable; where the NIV has thirteen words, the Hebrew has just five – a beautiful economy of language and simplicity of rhythm;

אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי גָמַל עָלַי

(Above is read right to left)

Ashirah lAdonai ki gamal 'alai

I will sing to the Lord for He has satisfied me

The word ‘to satisfy’ is worth noting – the word is *gamal* (Heb גָּמַל) which is the same root as the word for ‘camel’ in Hebrew. It is because in the word there is a sense of serving and carrying, like a mother caring for a baby, (the word is used again in Ps.131.2) and these great beasts of burden were a help and a great good in the desert places.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2613.mp3>

Psalm 17

This is actually described in the introduction as a Davidic prayer (Heb. תְּפִלָּה *tephillah*, from root *palal* meaning to intercede or to pray.)

v.1-5 The singer asks the Lord to examine and vindicate him as he cries out this prayer, maintaining that he comes clean before God in his request.

v.6-7 The intercessor is sure of the Lord’s response, because of his *chesed*, his covenant responsibility to rescue those who call and shelter in the Lord.

v.8 Although we love the poetry of the English rendering of this verse, ‘Keep me as the apple of your eye’, the Hebrew original has no mention of an apple. This was the old English way of describing the eye-pupil, appearing first in a work called ‘Gregory’s Pastoral Care’ and ascribed to Alfred the Great c885ad. The Hebrew, however, says ‘keep me as the *ishon bat-ayin* (Heb כִּפְאֵי שׁוֹן בַּת-עֵין) meaning, ‘the wee man of the daughter of the eye’! The daughter of the eye is the pupil, and the little man is perhaps the reflection of the image of what is seen in the eye. To keep someone as safe as the pupil of the eye is a powerful description, since when something attacks us, our reaction is immediately to close our eyes, and protect them with the lids which are their cover. The singer here is asking to be covered over, to be shielded from the attack upon him.

And as a bird covers its young and keeps them from harm, the Lord is called upon to bring his wings over the intercessor.

v.8-12 The Singer feels trapped and threatened, as though in the grip of an angry lion.

v.13-15 He calls on the Lord to rescue and save, to confront the enemy. And he is confident that the provision of the Lord will be sufficient for him, because he will see the Lord’s face when he wakes, and will be satisfied with its appearance.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2617.mp3>

Psalm 23

This accompanied *mizmor* song is one of the most evocative and beloved of all the Psalms.

v.1 – 3 The picture is of the Lord as an eastern shepherd, the one who goes ahead of the sheep, protecting them from danger and finding them pasture and water, which refresh the hungry and thirsty sheep.

v.4 Even in dangerous places, the shepherd protects from the attack of wild animals – David knew what it was to face the bear and the lion, to which he bears witness in 1 Sam.17.34, and so the sheep are safe in his care.

v.5 Even in enemy territory, the shepherd finds provision for his charges; oil on the head is important in hot climates to guard against the sun, the protection of the Lord is with him.

v.6 Good (Heb טוֹב *tov*) and covenant obligation *chesed* (Heb חֶסֶד) will accompany him all his life, and the Lord's house will be his dwelling always.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2623.mp3>

Psalm 26

This Psalm is simply entitled 'Of David' or 'For David'

v.1-8 The Singer maintains his integrity before the Lord, and invites his examination, keeping God's *chesed* and *emet* (truth) constantly before him and telling the Lord's goodness to others.

v.9-12 He asks not to be lumped in with the sinful, but for the Lord to redeem and preserve him, living to praise God in the great assembly.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2626.mp3>

Psalm 28

Again this is simply described as 'Davidic' (Heb לְדָוִד *leDavid*)

v.1-2 The call to the Lord to be heard, with the lifting up of hands as a sign of thanksgiving – in Hebrew, the word for 'hand' and 'thanksgiving' are linked to the same root word.

v.3-5 There is a plea to be separated from the ungodly, and for them to be recompensed according to their harmful deeds.

v.6 – 9 A sense of relief and joy comes, a call of blessing to the Lord for His response, leading to the expression of joy in song and exuberant dance (Heb אָלַץ *alaz*, to jump

with joy.) The Psalm ends with the acknowledgement of the Lord as the strength, salvation and shepherd of His people.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2628.mp3>

Psalm 31

The ascription is to the music director, an accompanied Davidic song (*mizmor*)

v.1-5 An affirmation of trust in the Lord as the fortress and rock, with a call for deliverance from those oppressing.

v.6-9 The Singer has rejected the ways of the wicked, but has trusted in the *chesed*-faithfulness of the Lord, who has spared him from his enemy.

v.9-13 Here is a real cry of pain to the Lord, with inner anguish and brokenness – ‘I have become like shards of pottery’ (v.12) because of the criticism of others.

v.14 – 20 Here is the confession, however, of faith in the Lord and in his *chesed* obligation to His covenant (v.16) which will put the wicked to shame and silence.

v.21 – 24 There seems to be a turn-around in the state of the singer here, seeing perhaps how his sight was clouded by his own pain – the Lord has responded, and there is a final exhortation to those who trust Him to have courage and be strong.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2631.mp3>

Day 111 Psalms 35, 41, 43, 46, 55

Psalms Sung in Need

In these Psalms today, there is a strong theme of God as Rescuer and vindicator of the oppressed. When times are tough, God can be relied on, as we see in Psalm 46, to be a constant help in trouble.

Psalm 35

The ascription simply says ‘Davidic, of David’

v.1 – 3 The song opens with a cry for vindication. There is a beautiful economy and harmony of language in the opening words in Hebrew, which, unfortunately we miss in the English;

רִיבָה יְהוָה, אֶת-יְרִיבַי ; לָחֵם, אֶת-לֹחְמַי
(Above is read right to left)

Reevah Adonai et-yerivai, lecham et-lochamai

Contend o Lord my contender, fight my fighter

It is an appeal for rescue, for the Lord to say, I am your *Yeshua* (Heb יְשׁוּעָה), your Rescue, your Salvation from those who attack.

v.4-8 Here are a series of punishments the psalmist appeals for, to see his enemies stopped in their tracks. Whether God will actually cause them to fall into a pit remains to be seen, but the singer is able to express the pain and frustration of his heart to the Lord in the prayer.

v.9-10 This will bring joy and relief to the singer, and praise for God's rescues and ability to turn things around.

v.11-16 What is evening more painful is that these attackers have been the object of the singer's concern and prayer; now they turn against him.

v.17-24 The appeal is that the enemies should not be able to gloat over his predicament, and that God should stir Himself to action on the singer's behalf.

v.25-28 He does not want the mockers to have the last word, but the righteous, supporting the righteous cause, which will lead to the singer praising God for his justice.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2635.mp3>

Psalm 41

The Psalm is for the director of music, a *mizmor*, accompanied song of or after David. The Psalm appears to be written in a time of illness.

v.1-4 The singer of the Psalm sings of the Lord's justice shown to those who are open-hearted towards the oppressed; such a one will not be abandoned in his sickness.

v.5- 8 There are voices wanting his death, and who are speaking evil of him.

v.9 There is a worse pain than that, even the close friend who has been sustained at his table is plotting his harm. (David experienced this through his son Absalom and his counselor Ahithophel.) Jesus used this verse of the betrayal of his disciple Judas in John 13.18.

v.10-13 But the singer holds on to the goodness and power of God to restore, and prays for recovery. The Psalm ends with the blessing of God and a double 'Amen'.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2641.mp3>

Psalm 43

There is no ascription at the beginning of this Psalm.

v.1 The opening cry of this song is directive to the Lord, the sound of a claimant seeking justice.

שִׁפְטֵנִי אֱלֹהִים וְרִיבָה רִיבִי מִגּוֹי לֹא-חֲסִיד

(Above is read right to left)

Shoph-teyni Elohim ve-reevah rivi mi-goy lo-chasid

Judge (for) me God and plead my plea with the Gentile not faithful

The first word, *shoph-teyni* is from the root word *shaphat*, meaning to right-wise, to judge. Note that this is not a plea for punishment, but a plea for justice. The concept of judge is not so much about penalty as about setting right, restoring what is good.

The case is against a *goy lo-chasid*, a Gentile or a nation who has not shown *chesed*, who has broken covenant obligation.

v.2- 4 God has the ability to change this situation, to change mourning into rejoicing and oppression into praise.

v.5 The verse ends with a refrain which is found also in Psalm 42, an encouragement to one's own being not to be despondent, but to keep hoping in God, for rescue is coming.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2643.mp3>

Psalm 46

This Psalm, for the director of music, is not composed by or in the style of David, rather it is ascribed to the sons (or disciples) of Korah. This refers to the Korahites, the clan of Levites described in 1 Chron. 9.19 as gatekeepers of the Tabernacle. It is a song (Heb שִׁיר *Sheer*) to be sung in the *alamot* style, which means 'girls', and could indicate a maidenly style, or even a high-pitched or falsetto range. However, this cannot be for certain.

v.1-3 A bold statement is made of God's constant help in trouble, even in cataclysmic natural disasters. The verse are followed by a *selah*, a pause, probably for the musicians to interpret the words just sung.

v.4-7 Jerusalem is a city in the desert, there is no river which flows anywhere near it. Thus the Psalmist cannot be thinking of a physical, geographical feature. Rather, he is speaking of the presence of the Lord, His personal dwelling among His people which is the joy of His people, even when nations around may be in turmoil. Another *selah* follows this declaration.

v.8 – 11. The Lord is putting an end to war and strife, so that the conflicted nations will stop, cease their strife. The Hebrew is striking here in its brevity

הֲרָפוּ וּדְעוּ כִּי-אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהִים *Har-pu oo-de'u ki anokhi Elohim*

Cease and know that I am God

One word which recurs in this Psalm is repeated here finally at the end – the God of Jacob is the fortress (Heb מִשְׁגָּב *misgav* from the root word *sagav* to be lofty and inaccessible). The word in Hebrew denotes a high place with a wide view below, from which enemies can be spotted approaching.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2646.mp3>

Psalm 55

Given to the director of music, this is a *maskil* (Heb מַשְׁכִּיל from root word *sakal* meaning to be wise, prudent or instructive. Therefore, this is a song with a moral; a Davidic composition.

v.1-8 This is a sorry state that the singer is in; in crying to the Lord, he pours out the anguish of his heart, and longs for the wings (Heb אֵפֶר *ever*, a pinion-feather) of a dove (Heb יוֹנָה *Yonah* – the same as the name in Hebrew for Jonah, who also fled!) to fly away into the desert. At the end of this lamenting part, there is a *selah* pause to be filled, presumably with the plaintive sound of an instrument.

v.9 – 15 The reason for the desire to escape is that it is a close friend who has betrayed him – David was familiar with this kind of rejection at close quarters, from Saul, from Absalom, even from his wife, Michal. His anger is clear in his desire for their end.

v.16 – 19a The mood changes as the singer turns to God for help, the one who rescues, and who redeems the situation. The judgment is left with him, and a *Selah* follows.

v.19b – 21 The issue is that the friend has violated his covenant (Heb חִלַּל בְּרִיתוֹ *Chillel berit-o*) meaning, he has dissolved and defiled his promise, one of the worse things that could be done, especially in David's eyes, who holds covenant so dearly. There is a powerful image in the words which describe this vile action – *his speech smooth as butter, his heart at war; his words are like oil, yet his sword is drawn.*

v.22-23 The song ends with a call to place whatever life deals on the Lord's shoulders, who will sustain and help, while the evil will receive retribution for their deeds. As a last word of affirmation, the Psalmist repeats his trust in the Lord.

וְאֲנִי אֶבְטַח-בְּךָ *Va-ani evtach bakh*

And I will trust in you

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2655.mp3>