

## Day 126 Psalms 4, 12, 20, 25, 32, 38

### Psalms of Meditation and Prayer

#### Psalm 4

This is an accompanied song addressed to the director of music, played on strings (*Neginot*) by or for David.

v.1 – 2 The Psalm begins with a distress call to God and a complaint against the faithlessness of men – it is quite a powerful cry, and end with a *Selah* pause for musical reflection.

v. 3 – 4 There is then a moment of recollection, that anger can lead to sin, and thus there is an admonition not to be hasty but to quietly reflect, followed by another *Selah* musical pause.

v.5 – 8 The Psalm changes feel to a song of gratefulness with prayer for the light of God to shine. The joy of knowing the Lord is far greater than that of the pagans in the midst of their riots of excess at harvesttime. Because of this change of heart, the singer is able now to let go of the distress of the song's start, and to sleep, knowing that the Lord is watching over him.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2604.mp3>

#### Psalm 12

This is an accompanied song addressed to the director of music, played on an eight-stringed harp (*Sheminit*) by or for David.

This whole Psalm is a cry to God in the midst of feeling marginalized and oppressed by the godless, who say they will not listen to the Lord. But there is a promise from the Lord to protect from the slander, and to use the process as a refining and purifying, so that even though the godless look powerful, the Lord maintains the security of the godly oppressed.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2612.mp3>

## **Psalm 20**

For the director of music, an accompanied song by or for David, or in his style.

This is a battle-psalm, a cry for the Lord's rescue in the midst of a threat to the nation. The prayer is for the Lord's support and help, and success. The army banners are ready to fly in victory, but there is a recognition that it is not military strength and equipment which brings victory, but the rescue in the invocation of the Lord's divine name, which brings down the enemy and raises up His people.

The Psalm ends with a cry for the King to be preserved in the midst of the conflict.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2620.mp3>

## **Psalm 25**

A song of David

This Psalm seems to be written from a deep sense of sin and failure, with a feeling of impending shame in the opening section. There is an ongoing appeal here also to the compassion and *chesed* obligation of God to His covenant, which makes provision for sin and rebellion to be forgiven.

God's nature is to correct, not to destroy, to restore, not to oppress. Thus, towards the end of the song, and appeal is made for the Lord to turn towards him and show him favour, in the midst of enemy threats, and for protection from the One who is the refuge and redeemer of Israel.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2625.mp3>

## **Psalm 32**

This is a wisdom song, a *maskil* of David.

In contrast to Psalm 25, this psalm rejoices in the forgiveness of sin, and therefore invites the sinner not to be caught in the turmoil and affliction of guilt, but to make confession openly to God, who forgives.

There is a warning towards the end of the Psalm not to persist in self-pity, or to resist the Lord's call, for that would be stubborn and end in pain and suffering.

The song ends with a call to rejoice to those who know the Lord.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2632.mp3>

## Psalm 38

This song is an accompanied Davidic song, written as a reminder to the Lord.

The song expresses pain and remorse for guilt carried, which the singer interprets as the root cause of his physical condition, including back pain and wounds that don't heal. His friends are staying away because he is repulsive to them, and he is in deep depression, not talking or listening to what is said to him.

The song ends with a cry for God's rescue from the dire situation.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2638.mp3>

## Day 127 Psalms 42, 53, 58, 81, 101

### Psalm 42

This is a song of wisdom addressed to the director of music, by the Korahite gate-keepers.

v.1-4 The singer opens with a cry of longing for God's presence, remembering times of being with the crowd worshipping the Lord together. The experience is likened to the deer braying loudly for water (Heb תַּעֲרָגָה *ta'arog*), a deep painful longing.

v.5- 7 The singer is downcast at the lack of the experiential reality of God in his life, and feels as though he is trapped in the surf at the seashore, with the incoming stormy waves knocking him over each time he gets up.

v.8 – 11 But he reminds himself of the *chesed* obligation of God to His promise, although he feels as though God has forgotten him. He sees enemies pressing in, but at the end of the psalm, confesses his hope in God, and the faith that he will again find the place of fulfillment in Him.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2642.mp3>

### Psalm 53

In common with Psalm 88, this is a song of instruction and wisdom, a *maskil*, sung to the melody “*the sickness of the oppressed*”, this time attributed to David, and addressed to the music director.

When the content of the song is heard, the tune makes sense – this is a lament for the faithlessness of mankind who have rejected Him and His ways. They are in line for disaster and shame, for God cannot run with them. The song ends with a cry for rescue to come, and for Israel to be able to rejoice again.

Perhaps this is a psalm which many in the western church today might be able to closely identify with, as we find ourselves on the margins of an increasingly antitheist society.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2653.mp3>

### **Psalm 58**

Like the following Psalm 59, this is a written-down song, a *miktam* by or for David, for the director of music, sung to the same melody, ‘do not destroy.’

This Psalm is a diatribe against vindictive and unjust leaders who abuse power, and who are as dangerous and venomous as a cobra that attacks its charmer. The singer calls them for to be stopped in their tracks – particularly powerful is the image of a slug melting away as it moves, presumably from dehydration – and for vengeance to be meted out.

The song ends with a bloodthirsty prophecy against the unjust rulers, whose outcome will be terrible, but will be seen as a vindication of the righteous, and proof that there is a God who *right-wises* in the earth.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2658.mp3>

### **Psalm 81**

This is a song for the Gittite harp, by or in the style of Asaph, addressed to the director of music.

v.1-7 The first half of the Psalm is a call to praise the Lord at the new moon festival, when the *shophar*, the ram’s horn sounds. This was a sign for Israel of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt, and God’s meeting them in the desert, desiring to relate to them as their loving God. This leads into a musical interlude *Selah*, a pause for the singers to reflect.

v.8 – 16 But the second half of the Psalm is a complaint that Israel would not listen to the invitation, would not hear the Lord’s voice calling them. Because of this, they were left to their own destructive devices, despite the Lord’s tender desire to feed them with the finest of provisions, a salutary ending to a psalm beginning in joy....

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2681.mp3>

## **Psalm 101**

An accompanied song by or in the style of David.

This is a kingly psalm, meditating on the responsibilities of godly leadership.

First, there is the need for character and integrity – the singer sings of *chesed* obligation and *mishpat* – the quality of right-wising, putting into order what has gone into chaos and disorder.

He sets himself to walk in integrity, acting to put right what is wrong in his area of rule. He will look for the dependable and faithful, and not allow the duplicitous to work with him, on a day-by-day basis.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26a1.mp3>

## **Day 128 Psalms 111, 130,131, 141, 146**

### **Psalm 111**

This is one of the Psalms which opens with a command of praise, *Hallelu Yah!* – Praise the Lord ! (loudly, expressively.)

The singer first declares their intention to give personal testimony to God's greatness in the gathering of His people, then goes on to enumerate a number of attributes of the Lord, including His actions, His provision and dependability and His rescue in redemption through His covenant.

The closing verse of the Psalm holds a nugget of truth which appears here for the first time, and is developed later in the Proverbs –

רֵאשִׁית חֹכְמָה יִירָא אֲדֹנָי *Reshit chokhmah yir'at Adonai*

A source of wisdom, the fear of the Lord.

This is most often rendered in English – the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fear here is best understood as 'awe' or honour for, rather than terror. When we recognise that God is the source of everything, we are in a place to live in harmony with Him, and to understand all around us.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26b1.mp3>

### **Psalm 130**

This is one of the songs of 'going up' to Jerusalem, a pilgrim song.

The theme of this Psalm is the low state of man in his shame and guilt over his sin, and the favour of God shown in offering forgiveness to the sinner. The Lord does not keep a record of sin, but has shown *chesed* obligation and complete redemption. This causes the singer to hope and to wait for the Lord's response.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26d0.mp3>

### **Psalm 131**

This is a further song for going up to Jerusalem at the festival times.

This beautiful short Psalm simply has the singer placing themselves in the position of a little child in the arms of the Lord, rather than worrying about matters beyond their competence to resolve. There is a strong picture here of the mother-embrace of God, and the satisfied child (Heb גָּמַל *gamul* from root word to benefit or to wean) in her arms.

On this basis, the singer urges Israel to rest in the Lord.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26d1.mp3>

### **Psalm 141**

This is an accompanied song for or in the style of David

There is a tradition which links this Psalm to David's flight from Saul to the Philistines in Gath. He is asking the Lord to protect him while he is among the Gentiles, from doing anything which will defile him for God's service. He would rather have the rebuke of the godly than to get mixed up with sinners.

Rather, he is against these evil rulers and wants their downfall. He is therefore fixing his eyes on the Lord to keep him out of the traps of the pagans around him.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26e1.mp3>

### **Psalm 146**

This is a further *Hallelu Yah* Psalm, an opening call to Praise the Lord in open expression.

The singer begins by addressing himself, setting himself to give exuberant praise to God.

This is in contrast to the praise of and confidence in human power, which is subject to mortality and ends in futility.

The Lord is then focused on in praise as the God of the Fathers, the maker of all things. He is dependable, and brings relief, release and justice to those oppressed. He cares for the stranger, widow and orphan, but opposes evil.

The Psalm ends with a word to praise this everlasting God who never fails.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26e6.mp3>

## **Day 129 Psalms 2, 22, 27**

### **Psalms of the Anointed One (Messiah)**

In the life of Israel, the King was acknowledged as the Anointed One (Heb מָשִׁיחַ *Meshiach*, from root word *mashach* meaning to anoint.) But there is a looking through that office to one who will one day bring in a new age of peace and security for Israel, and this looking gives rise to the Messianic hope, the faith that God will one day cause the uncertainties to cease through the action of one great leader. Many of the songs, then, and the prophecies of Israel anticipate that time.

### **Psalm 2**

The futility of nations' ignoring the supremacy of the Lord is laughable, and here are the Lord and His *meshiach*, meaning directly the King, laughing at the plans of tribute nations and peoples to break away from their rule, for God has installed His chosen one in Zion.

The song goes on to place the King as God's own son, a term often used of the King of a nation. This King will continue to have power over the tribute nations, and will conquer the rebellious among them. It would be therefore be wise for those who rise against Israel to be reconciled before they find retribution falling on their heads.

For Christian readers, there is much in this Psalm of Messianic hope for the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, who is to be worshipped and feared among the nations of the earth. He is the great Son of David, who therefore also inherits all the promises made to David, this being one of the most direct.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2602.mp3>

### **Psalm 22**

This is an accompanied song of David, or in his style, addressed to the music director, to the melody *Ayelet ha-Shachar*, 'The Morning Doe'.

v.1-18 The first part of the song is written out of agonizing bitterness of soul, and physical strain. Despite the Lord's being acknowledged as the unique Lord, the singer is in an extremely low and self-deprecating place – 'I am a worm', he feels as though God has forsaken him, mocked and rejected.

Enemies are around, in the context of its writing, perhaps linked to the peoples of the trans-Jordan area of Bashan, in the north-east of Israel, who are oppressing. The pictorial presentation of the condition of the singer is powerful – he is like broken pottery, his heart is wax, and he can see his bones through his skin, so that he can count them. In an ultimate degradation, his enemies are even gambling to divide up his clothes among them, which he will not need, because they see him as already dead.

v.19 – 31 The latter part of the song is a cry for help, and expresses hope in the Lord's ability to turn even the direst situation around. The call is for rescue from a God who does not despise or disdain suffering.

There is faith in the God who provides for all the nations, rich and poor, and even those yet unborn will hear of God's integrity in His actions to rescue those in need.

This Psalm is the one where Christian readers most obviously see depicted the coming sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ in his passion and death. The first verse is the cry of Jesus on the cross, although Jesus cries it out in Aramaic, rather than the original Hebrew, making it all the more poignant and personal. He is not just quoting the Bible, but taking it as His own cry in His mother-tongue. *Eloi, Eloi, lama savachtani?*

We see echoes of the cross throughout the Psalm – the mockery by men, the division of Jesus' clothes which are gambled for, the thirst of dying in the heat, the final failure of the heart. It is a powerful and impacting Messianic song, which we cannot read without thinking on the Saviour's crucifixion.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2622.mp3>

## **Psalm 27**

A Davidic song.

By contrast to Psalm 22, this is a song of hope and courage.

v.1-3 Because the Lord is protecting, as light, rescuer and defence, the singer does not give in to hopeless fear.

v.4 – 6 In the midst of the threat, the singer asks that he might again be in the Lord's presence in His dwelling-place; this is his life's purpose, to be safe in the embrace of the Lord Himself, hidden from the enemy in His shelter, out of reach of opposition, free to enjoy song and music to the Lord.

v.7 – 12 It is as though the singer comes out of a reverie of the presence of the Lord, and calls out in the midst of the danger for the protection of the Lord. He is needing to know God's presence with him, and that God will not forsake him.

v.13-14 The song ends with a return to the hope of the opening verses – the singer will live to see God's goodness, and takes courage in the Lord.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2627.mp3>

## Day 130 Psalms 45, 47, 48, 87, 110

### The Lord is King

#### Psalm 45

Addressed to the director of music, this is a *maskil*, a wisdom-song, to the melody, 'Lilies' (*Shoshanim*), a love song written for the occasion of a royal wedding.

This is a psalm which is often spiritualised, but actually describes a wedding between the king and one of his brides. Adam Clarke in his commentary suggests it is a marriage of Solomon being referred to, possibly with an Egyptian princess.

v.1 The poet addresses his song to the king, and his heart is bubbling up like a fountain (Heb רַחַשׁ *rachash*) in the writing of it.

v.2 – 9 The first part of the psalm describes the king in his array coming to his wedding, the blessing of the Lord upon him. His valour is praised, as he rides out to meet his bride.

In the midst of the song is an acclamation of God's power and authority, the one who has set the king in a secure place, because of His righteousness. The king is richly robed and spiced, and is now standing beside his bride.

v.10 – 17 The second part of the Psalm addresses the bride, encouraging her to turn her thoughts away from her father and to her husband, who is enthralled by her beauty, as she stands in her garments of fine work, woven with gold thread. She comes to the wedding with her bridesmaids into the palace.

There is a promise that her sons will inherit their father's fame, and they will be known throughout generations. This is an important hope for the wife of a king who could not hope to make her own mark beyond bearing healthy sons for her husband. It is of note that in the genealogies, the names of mothers of princes are often remembered.

This psalm is most often linked with the Messianic hope, of the bridegroom as the deliverer who will come and marry his bride, the people of God, and whose kingdom will never end. While this is not the immediate context of the psalm's writing, like any song,

it can be adapted to speak of other relationships to the encouragement of believers and followers of Jesus.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2645.mp3>

### **Psalm 47**

Addressed to the director of music, this is an accompanied song by the Korahites.

This Psalm exalts the Lord as the King of all the nations; with exuberant, expressive praise, with clapping and shouting, the Lord is applauded for the fulfillment of his promise to his people, and his intervention in the military field for them. This leads into a *selah* reflection by the musicians.

Like a king going up to his palace or his throne, the Lord has ascended amidst praise and trumpets. From his throne, he oversees the kings of the nations who belong to Him alone.

This psalm is a statement of the belief in the supremacy of the Lord (YHWH) over all powers and authorities, a theme which will be developed in the prophets and in the New Testament.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2647.mp3>

### **Psalm 48**

This is a song, with accompaniment, in the Korahite style.

v.1 – 3 The singer rejoices in the situation of Jerusalem, the place of the Temple, where God dwells, the place David chose for his permanent residence. It is a secure place, and as safe and desirable as the northern mountains.

v.4 – 8 Those who seek to destroy Jerusalem are confounded by its strong defences, and are pushed back. This is because God Himself secures the city with His presence. This leads into a *selah* musical reflection.

v. 9 – 11 Being in this secure place provokes reflection on the *chesed* obligation of God to His covenant promise, leading to rejoicing at God's righteousness and justice.

v.12 – 14 There is an encouragement to take in the full glory of the city and its strong defences, reflecting the dependability of God forever.

This psalm is taken often by Christians to speak of the church as the new Zion, the place of God's dwelling. While the psalmist is undoubtedly speaking the praise of Jerusalem, there is a sense in which these words can be applied to the people of God, who also reflect God's promised faithfulness.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2648.mp3>

### **Psalm 87**

This is a further song, (Sheer) to accompaniment (*Mizmor*) by the Korahite clan.

This song speaks of the unique place of Jerusalem among all the great nations of the earth. God loves it enough to live there, and it is held in high esteem – this thought leads into a *selah* pause for musical reflection.

In Egypt (Rahab may be a poetic reference to Egypt) and in Babylon, and in distant Ethiopia, people will esteem those who are natives of Zion. In fact, Jerusalem will become known because of the great names coming from her, and having Jerusalem as one's birthplace will be a mark of honour in the nations, recognizing that something special flows through the lives of those from Jerusalem.

Again, this song is enjoyed by Christians, thinking of the people of God as Zion, and the joy of being part of the people of God.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2687.mp3>

### **Psalm 110**

An accompanied song, by or in the style of David.

This song is written to honour the King, whom God has placed at His right hand until all his enemies are subdued. It may be from the time when David no longer went out with his troops, but stayed in the safety of Jerusalem, because it is his troops who will go out and defend the city.

There is reference to God's intention to make the king also a priest, not of the order of Levi, but of Melchizedek. This is a reference to the mystical figure referred to in Genesis 14.18ff who served Abraham bread and wine, but whom Abraham also blessed with offerings. The myth growing up around this figure was that he had a divine origin, and he comes to be associated particularly with the Messiah in the days to come. This is worth noting, because David, while a king, does much in terms of setting in place worship and service of the Lord in Israel, and is thus seen in a rather priestly light.

The song ends with a promise to give the king victory, even with space to take a refreshing drink at a brook to gain strength, unlike those who are pursued in dread.

This Psalm is quoted in the New Testament as one that refers directly to the coming Messiah. In Matt 22.44, Luke 20.42 and Acts 2.34 it is argued that the Lord who is addressed verse 1 of this psalm is not David, but Jesus Christ Himself, who has been exalted and all things will be placed beneath His feet. He is the one also who has been made a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5. 6,10) We see again the son of

David in Jesus, who inherits the Messianic and Davidic promises, foreshadowed here in the writings of the praises of Israel.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26b0.mp3>

**Psalm 72.20** The conclusion of the prayers of David son of Jesse.

However, more Psalms will be found later in the context of Israel's ongoing story.

## Day 131

**1 Kings. 1. 1 – 53, 2 Sam 23.1-7, 1 Kings 2.1 – 10, 1 Chron.29.28-30 then 29.23-25** (mirrored in 1 Kgs. 2.12, 2 Chron.1.1)

### Solomon Becomes King

1 Kgs.1 1-4 King David is dying, and despite the strange recruitment of Abishag the Shunammite to warm him, David continues to decline.

1 Kgs 1. 5-10 With David's firstborn, Amnon, killed by his second son, Absalom, who has also died in battle after his rebellion, Adonijah, son of his wife Haggith, born when he was in Hebron, (2 Sam. 3.2-5) now makes a move to grab the throne which he sees rightfully his, as heir apparent.

He gathers supporters, including David's commander, Joab and Abiathar the priest, and calls a crowd for a ritual at En Rogel, (Heb עֵיִן רֹגֵל *Traveller's Fountain*) just to the south of the city of Jerusalem, although he very pointedly leaves out inviting Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest or his half brother, Solomon.

11 – 14 However, Nathan informs Bathsheba of what is going on, and reminds her of David's promise that their son Solomon would become king. He urges her to make representations to David, and Nathan will back her up.

15-27 Bathsheba and Nathan tell the king what is happening, and remind him of the promise that Solomon would be king. Bathsheba fears that she and Solomon will be treated very badly if Adonijah has the crown, and so David is asked to rule on who he has chosen for the succession.

28-31 David now renews his promise with an oath that Solomon will succeed him.

32-37 David sends Zadok, Nathan and Benaiah to anoint Solomon at Gihon, putting the prince on the old king's mule as a sign of his approval, calling them to return with him, to sit on David's throne.

38-40 This is the part of the story about which Handel wrote his wonderful *Zadok the Priest* anthem, when Nathan and Zadok go with Solomon to Gihon, just at the eastern side of the city, near the later pool of Siloam, where the old tabernacle is set up, and take from there the holy oil to pour over Solomon, the sign of the Spirit's anointing on him as King of Israel. And, as Handel reminds us, they sing 'Long Live King Solomon!' (Heb. **יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה** *Ye-chi ha-melekh Shlomo!*), the ground shaking with the noise.

41-48 At the southern end of the city, at En Rogel, Adonijah and his party hear the *shophar*, the ram's horn, and the shouting of the people and are informed by Abiathar's son, Jonathan, that Solomon has been declared king, and anointed by Zadok, and is now sitting on the throne of David. David has also been congratulated, and is worshipping the Lord for His faithfulness!

49-53 Adonijah's celebration turns into a quick getaway by the guests, with Adonijah himself rushing to the tabernacle to grab hold of the horns of the altar, the place of refuge for those in danger of life. He appeals to Solomon for clemency, fearing that Solomon will have his head off for his presumption. However, Solomon shows mercy, and allows Adonijah to return home.

2 Sam 23.1-7 On his deathbed, David gives his last song, his final psalm. He is described in eulogical terms as 'the man exalted by the Most High, anointed by the God of Jacob, the delightful minstrel of Israel.' It is a powerful and moving song, with David acknowledging His reliance upon the Spirit of God. He has been shown that the wise ruler, who rules fearing the Lord, is like the light of morning at sunrise, or the brightness after a storm. This bears seeing in the original Hebrew for the beauty of its poetry and its economy of words. – the emboldened syllables are stressed.

**רוּחַ יְהוָה דִּבֶּר-בִּי וּמִלָּתוֹ עַל-לְשׁוֹנִי** (*read right to left*)

*Ruach Adonai dib-ber bi | u-millato al le-shoni*

Spirit of the Lord spoke in me and His word on my tongue

**אָמַר אֵלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִי דִבֶּר צוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל**

*Amar Elohey Yisra'el li | dib-ber tzur Yisra'el*

Said the God of Israel to me, spoke the rock of Israel

**מוֹשֵׁל בְּאָדָם--צַדִּיק מוֹשֵׁל יִרְאֵת אֵלֹהִים**

*Moshel ba'adam tzaddiq | moshel yir'at Elohim*

The ruler of people, the righteous, the ruler in fear of God

יְכָאוֹר בֶּקֶר יִזְרַח-שָׁמֶשׁ בֶּקֶר לֹא עָבוֹת

*U-khe'or boqer yizrach-shamesh! boqer lo abhot*

And as light of morning rising of sun morning no clouds

מִן גֵּיהַּ מִמָּטָר דְּשָׂא מֵאֶרֶץ

*Minogah mi-matar de-she' mey-aretz*

As brightness from rain of grass from the land

David is confident in death of God's covenant, and in His ability to rescue and save, while the works of the evil will end in futile fruitlessness.

1 Kgs. 2.1 – 9 David now draws his son close, and gives him his last words. He commends the way of the Lord to him, as the key to blessing. David then does something which seems quite vindictive, to settle old scores after his passing.

He instructs Solomon to ensure the death of Joab, who has been a thorn in David's side at times, causing the death of Abner and Amasai and supporting the coronation of Adonijah, against David's wishes. He then instructs Solomon in v.7 to *do chesed*, that is fulfil covenant obligation to the family of Barzillai, the man who gave such support to David in his dark days of the coup of Absalom; they are to eat at the king's table. But Shimei, the relative of Saul, who cursed David as he fled Jerusalem into enforced exile, but whom David spared in mercy on his return, is now to be pursued and his life ended for his insults.

2.10 , 1 Chron 29.28 (c AD 971) David dies, and is buried in Zion; old and fulfilled, succeeded by Solomon.

1 Chron. 29.29-30 David's chroniclers appear to have been Samuel, Nathan and Gad, three seers and prophets. (It is interesting that prophets took such care to record the reign of King David.)

1 Chron. 29.23-25 Solomon is now established as the new King, honoured and blessed by the Lord, the God of his father.

## Day 132

**1 Kings 2. 13 – 46, 1 Kings 3.1, 9.16 1 Kings 3.2 – 28 & 2 Chron. 1.2-6**

### **Solomon Consolidates His Reign. (c.971 AD)**

1 Kgs. 2. 13 – 46 Solomon's half-brother, Adonijah, approaches the King's mother, asking her to intercede for him to be given their late father's concubine, Abishag to wife. On the surface, this seems a simple request, and Bathsheba agrees to present the petition to Solomon.

Bathsheba goes to the King, and it is of note to see how Solomon treats his mother with honour, rising to greet her, bowing to her and having a seat brought for her. However, her request on behalf of Adonijah sparks Solomon's anger; he sees in it another attempt by Adonijah to wrest the kingdom from him, and sees Abiathar and Joab as implicated in it. Because of this, Solomon acts swiftly and has his half-brother executed by Benaiah.

He then dismisses Abiathar the priest; he holds back from killing him, out of respect for his role in the restoration of the ark and because of his support for David, but sends him back to Anathoth, fulfilling the word of the Lord through the *Ish-Elohim*, the prophetic man of God, that Eli's descendants would be removed from the priesthood. (1 Sam 2.27-36)

Joab hears what Solomon is doing, and flees for sanctuary to the tabernacle and holds on to the altar, as Adonijah had done. But this time, Solomon ignores his pleas for clemency, and has him killed, on the basis of retribution for the bloodguilt he carried for the deaths of Abner (2 Sam.2) and Amasai ( 2 Sam.20.)

The king now installs Benaiah as his general, and Zadok as the priest. It is interesting to see how political the appointment of the office of High Priest is, given the fact that this is an hereditary role which earlier was separate from the throne.

It is hard for us, so far removed from the age of Solomon and David, to reconcile the precepts of a God of love and justice with what seem like vindictive and draconian actions on the part of one of His admired servants. Yet we are all children of our time, and Solomon acts in ways appropriate to his time and culture. He saw a threat in Adonijah and removed it, albeit on a pretext; we may not be his judge, only learn from these actions and choose rather to follow Christ, faithful to Him and His ways.

Lastly, in this passage, Solomon puts Shimei, the relative of Saul who insulted David when he was fleeing Absalom, (2 Sam.16.5) under house arrest in Jerusalem, and forbids him to leave, on pain of death. Three years later, Shimei pursues some escaped slaves to Gath, but his action is witnessed, and as a consequence he is executed by Benaiah.

The writer comments at the end of this blood-letting

וְגַם יָשָׁב שְׁלֹמֹה אֶל כִּסֵּה הַמְּלֻכָּה *Ve-gam yashav Shlomo al kisseh ha-malukhah*

Thus established Solomon on throne of the kingdom

1 Kgs.3.1, 1 Kgs 9.16 In a move to establish a protective alliance with the neighbouring superpower, Solomon marries the daughter of Pharaoh. They live in the old stronghold of Zion until the palace and new walls of the city are completed.

It must be said here that any alliance with the old slaver, Pharaoh, will not produce good fruit in the end, and for Solomon, this is the first step on a long, slippery slope. He has forgotten the words of the law in Deut.17.16 about not going back to Egypt, and it will lead to worse to come.

His new father-in-law, the Pharaoh, gives his daughter an unusual wedding gift – the city of Gezer, sacked and burned.

### **Solomon Asks for Wisdom**

1 Kgs.3.2-3, 2 Chron 1.2-6 , 1 Kgs 3.5 – 28

It is remarkable that Solomon, for all his walking in the ways of his father, still worships at the high places. In particular, the old tabernacle is on a hill in Gibeon, while the ark itself is housed in the tent David pitched for it in Jerusalem. This is a strange, two-centre mode of worship. However, we read that Solomon loves the Lord.

While Solomon is at Gibeon, the Lord speaks in a dream, and offers Solomon anything he asks. Solomon acknowledges the *chesed* obligation of the Lord to his father, in giving him the throne, but he confesses his need of help in this task from the Lord, since the job of king is quite overwhelming. He asks for something wonderful from the Lord, which is not immediately seen in the English - a *lev shomea* (Heb. לֵב שׁוֹמֵעַ ) which means, literally, a ‘listening heart.’ English translations have ‘discernment’ and ‘understanding’ but the term, ‘listening heart’ is very special. Solomon will have seen his father David’s practice of seeking the Lord in all his decisions, and Solomon wants the same, so that he can ‘*right-wise*, judge Your people’.

This is pleasing to the Lord, because Solomon has not put his own interests first, but those of God’s people. Because of this, God grants him a *wise and understanding heart* (Heb לֵב חָכָם וְנָבוֹן *lev chakham ve-nabhon*) Wisdom and understanding in the Hebrew culture are not the accumulated head-knowledge of the book-learned, but are the practical tools to enable the *right-wising*, the doing things right, doing justice, which is so desperately needed in good government.

As well as wisdom, God adds in riches and wealth as a blessing. Solomon is so thrilled that when he wakes, he wants to offer worship. But, take note, he doesn’t do it at Gibeon,

but he returns to Jerusalem and sacrifices before the ark, the place of God's presence, the first wise act of his new giftedness.

The chapter ends with an example of Solomon's *wise and understanding heart*. Through clever discernment, he realises that the prostitute mother of a living baby, stolen by a neighbouring prostitute whose child has died, will show herself by wanting at all costs to protect her child alive – even willing to give it to the wrongful woman, rather than see it killed by the king's sword, while the dead baby's mother would, in her vindictiveness and grief, allow the live child to be destroyed. Thus he reveals the true mother, and returns the baby alive. This depth of understanding, this *lev shomea*, brings awe to the nation.