

Psalm 102-103, 110, 116-119, 127-128, 135-139, 146-150

Episode 167 Show Notes

Psalm 89: God's Victory over the Sea, His King, the Lament of the king

1. God's Victory over the Sea (Ps. 89.8-18).
 - a. "Thou hast broken Rahab" (Ps. 89.10)¹
2. "The Lord is our defense and the Holy One of Israel is our king" (Ps. 89.18).
3. "David my servant... my holy oil I anointed him... mine arm shall strengthen him... I will beat down his foes... I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth" (Ps. 89.20-27).
 - a. "His seed will I make to endure forever" (Ps. 89.29).
 - b. "his seed shall endure forever... his throne ... it shall be established forever as the moon" (Ps. 89.36-37). Heb: שְׁמֶשׁ אֶלְעֹלָם יְהִי וְכִסְאֵוֹ כִּשְׁמֶשׁ "His seed to eternity, it/he will exist, and his throne will be as *shemesh*" (My translation). Shemesh, a sun god to Israel's neighbors, is used in this context to mean the sun.²
4. The Lament (Ps. 89.38-52).
 - a. "Thou hast made void the covenant" (Ps. 89.39).
 - b. "Thou hast broken down all his hedges" (Ps. 89.40).
 - c. "How long, Lord? Wilt thou hide thyself forever?" (Ps. 89.46).
 - d. "Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants" (Ps. 89.50).

Psalm 93: God's Victory over the Floods and Many Waters³

1. "The Lord reigneth, he is clothed in majesty" (Ps. 93.1).⁴

¹ See also Ps. 74.12-16. Rahab is both the monster defeated at creation and Egypt at the time of the Exodus and also, by implication, it may be argued, the thought is extended to Babylon at the time of the prophet himself. The return from exile in Babylon is both a new creation and a new Exodus. John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, p. 92. Day also identifies the dragon with Babylon (p. 109, citing Jeremiah 51.34), while he sees the Leviathan in Isaiah 27.1 as "most probably Egypt" but he also includes the possibility that the dragon can be identified with Babylon or Persia (p. 112). He concludes when he says, "When historicized, the dragon and the sea also served to denote the dominant world power of the time, whether Assyria, Babylon or the Seleucids. The sea could also refer to hostile nations in general." Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 139.

² Karel Van Der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter W. Van Der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, Second Edition, Brill Academic Publishers, 1999, p. 764-768

³ John Day observes, "The Old Testament's use of the imagery of the divine conflict with the dragon and the sea is appropriated from Canaanite mythology, deriving from the myth of Baal's conflict with the sea-god Yam and his dragon associates Leviathan" Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, p. 179. Day disagrees with the scholars that identify these symbols with Marduk's conflict with Tiamat. Did the ancient Israelites take this myth literally, or simply use these images in their poetry when speaking of the power of God? Day explains, "Was it (the battle with the dragon and the sea) taken literally or did it simply have the nature of poetic symbolism, as is often suggested, comparable to the citations from classical mythology in the work of Milton? This is a question to which it is difficult to give a uniform and categorical answer." Day, p. 188.

⁴ In this Enthronement Psalm Yahweh's victory over the chaotic waters is clearly associated with his kingship. At the same time it seems clear that it relates to the time of creation, since verse 2 declares, "Your throne is established from of old." This is in keeping with the theme of creation which permeates the Enthronement Psalms (see also Ps. 95.4-5, 96,10, etc.). John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 35-36.

2. “Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting” (Ps. 93.2).⁵
3. “The floods have lifted up... The floods lift up their waves” (Ps. 93.3).⁶
4. “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters” (Ps. 93.4).

Psalm 102: The Righteous Pray for Deliverance

Baker and Ricks explain⁷ the background to Psalm 102: When Jesus died, his body remained on the cross, but his spirit descended into the Underworld where he was awaited by a great congregation of the spirits of the dead who had been faithful in their own lifetimes, and who rejoiced in his coming, “For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138:50). Two psalms that read as though they belonged together recite the longing words of those dead.

During the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, **the people who awaited the Savior were those Israelites who had symbolically died with their king in his final battle. Now they anticipated the Savior’s coming to rescue them from death and hell.** In Psalm 115, we hear two voices: first the Israelites, then the taunting voice of the heathen:

The Israelites:

1 Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,
but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy,
and for thy truth’s sake.

The heathen:

2 Wherefore should the heathen say,
Where is now their God?

The Israelites:

⁵ God’s throne is established. He and the ark are now in the temple. Mowinckel explains, “The fact that Yahweh, represented by his holy ark, enters the Temple in a solemn procession, means and shows that **he now comes as the victorious king, conqueror of all evil powers, of Israel’s and his own enemies.** The fact that he is there, in his Temple, means that earth is once more firm, in spite of the furious uproar of the primeval ocean; earth is once more created as in the beginning, cf. PS. 93. It is the rites which symbolize the struggle and victory of the deity that more especially provide the clear stamp of a real cult drama. In the same way, in Egypt, the death of Osiris and the struggle of Horus, his son, against his enemies, and his victory over them, and the resurrection and enthronement of Osiris, are produced in dramatic form, and thus experienced as reality. An analogous case was Marduk’s triumph over the dragon of the primeval ocean in Babylon, and, in Assyria, Assur’s fight and victory. In Canaan, the content of the cultic drama was Baal’s defeat in the fight against Môt (Death), followed by his resurrection and victory over Môt, his ascension to the throne as ruler over gods and men, and the re-creation of the world and of the Temple. In Israel, too, Yahweh’s royal entry, the festal procession, had much of this dramatic character, with a representation of Yahweh’s fight, victory and accession. Mowinckel, [The Psalms in Israel’s Worship](#), Volume 1, Eerdmans, 2004, p. 20, emphasis added.

⁶ נִשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת “The floods have lifted up”... Day observes, “The name given to the waters in Ps. 93.3 *neharot* recalls Yam’s title in the Ugaritic texts, “Judge River” (*tpt nhr*). In the Ugaritic texts Baal’s victory over Yam results in his enthronement as king (CTA 2.1V.32) Yam is indeed dead! Baal shall be king!” Day, p. 36.

⁷ LeGrand Baker and Stephen Ricks, [Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord?: The Psalms in Israel’s Temple Worship In the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon](#), Eborn Books, 2010, pages 311-315.

- 3 But our God is in the heavens:
 he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.
- 4 Their idols are silver and gold,
 the work of men's hands.
- 5 They have mouths, but they speak not:
 eyes have they, but they see not:
- 6 They have ears, but they hear not:
 noses have they, but they smell not:
- 7 They have hands, but they handle not:
 feet have they, but they walk not:
 neither speak they through their throat.
- 8 They that make them are like unto them;
 so is every one that trusteth in them.
- 9 O Israel, trust thou in the Lord:
 he is their help and their shield.
- 10 O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord:
 he is their help and their shield.
- 11 Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord:
 he is their help and their shield.
- 12 The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us;
 he will bless the house of Israel;
 he will bless the house of Aaron.
- 13 He will bless them that fear the Lord,
 both small and great.
- 14 The Lord shall increase you more and more,
 you and your children.
- 15 Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth.
- 16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's:
 but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

The heathen:

17 The dead praise not the Lord,
neither any that go down into silence.⁸

The Israelites:

18 But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.

Praise the Lord (Psalm 115:1-18).

In Psalm 102, that praise becomes a prayer. Although they are in the Underworld, they are as yet only “appointed to death” (v. 20). Their death was not yet permanent, for in the drama at least, there is still that three-day window before death closes in on them. Through that window one may yet find hope.⁹ The near-dead sing:

1 Hear my prayer, O Lord,
and let my cry come unto thee.

2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble;
incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.

⁸ Berlin and Brettler explain, “The cosmos is envisioned as having three levels: heaven is the abode of God, earth is the domain God assigned to human beings, and Sheol, below the earth, is the realm of the dead. Those who go down into silence are the dead, for in Sheol one cannot praise God.” [The Jewish Study Bible](#), Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 1412. It can be argued that Ps. 115.18 indicates that the dead will praise God when they state, “But we will bless the Lord now and forever. Hallelujah.” At least this is a reading that can be taken if we partition these verses as Baker and Ricks have done, with Ps. 115.18 as a response to the Heathen challenge that the dead do not praise God.

⁹ The Jews believed the spirit lingered near the body for three days, then departed when it began to show signs of decay. *Shemira* (Hebrew: שמירה, lit. “watching” or “guarding”) refers to the [Jewish](#) religious ritual of watching over the body of a deceased person from the time of death until [burial](#). A male guardian is called a *shomer* (שומר) and a female guardian is a *shomeret* (שומרית). *Shomrim* (שומרים) are people who perform *shemira*. In [Israel](#) *shemira* refers to all forms of guard duty, including military guard duty. An armed man or woman appointed to patrol a grounds or campus for security purposes would be called a *shomer* or *shomeret*. Outside of Israel the word is used almost exclusively in regards to the religious ritual of guarding the body of the deceased.

Historically, *shemira* was a form of guard duty, to prevent the desecration of the body prior to burial. In the Talmud, in b. Berachos 18a and Shabbas 151b, the purpose of *shemira* was to guard against rodents, as rodents fear the living and not the dead, an idea derived from Genesis 9:2 which puts the fear of man into other living creatures. *Shemira* is practiced out of respect for the dead, in that they should not be abandoned prior to their arrival in their new “home” in the ground. This serves as a comfort for the surviving loved ones as well. According to the Talmud (Genesis Kabbah 100:7), the soul hovers over the body for three days after death. The human soul is somewhat lost and confused between death and before burial, and it stays in the general vicinity of the body, until the body is interred. The *shomrim* sit and read aloud comforting psalms during the time that they are watching the body. This serves as a comfort for both the spirit of the departed who is in transition and the *shomer* or *shomeret*. Traditionally, *shomrim* read Psalms or the book of Job. *Shomrim* are also encouraged to meditate, pray, and read spiritual texts, or texts about death. [Jewish-funerals.org](#), accessed 7.30.2022.

- 3 For my days are consumed like smoke,
and my bones are burned as an hearth.
- 4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass;
so that I forget to eat my bread.
- 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones
cleave to my skin.
- 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness:
I am like an owl of the desert...
- 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,
and mingled my drink with weeping,
- 10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath:
for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.
- 11 My days are like a shadow that declineth;
and I am withered like grass.
- 12 But thou, O Lord, shalt endure forever;
and thy remembrance unto all generations.
- 13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion:
for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come...
- 17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and not despise their prayer.
- 18 This shall be written for the generation to come:
and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.
- 19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;
from heaven did the Lord behold the earth;
- 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner;¹⁰
to loose those that are appointed to death;

¹⁰ Joseph F. Smith, upon seeing the host of the dead in the Spirit World, related how this is connected to Isaiah's prophecy. He wrote, "Isaiah, who declared by prophecy that the Redeemer was anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, were also there" (D&C 138.42).

21 To declare the name of the Lord in Zion,
and his praise in Jerusalem;

22 When the people are gathered together,
and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

During the festival temple drama, while the king waited in the Underworld for Jehovah to rescue him, the people who were outside, in the physical world, prayed for his restoration to life. Psalm 20 was a plea that the Lord would save “his anointed [the king]” and an expression of assurance that Jehovah “will hear him [the king] from his [Jehovah’s] holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.” The people understood that the king was not yet permanently dead. For, as they prayed for his deliverance, they also prayed that he would find encouragement through their faith. Psalm 20 concludes, “Save, Lord: let the king hear us when we call.” In Psalm 13, **from the Underworld, the young king joined the plea:**

1 How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? forever?
how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
having sorrow in my heart daily?

how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

3 Consider and hear me, O Lord my God:
lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;
and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

5 But I have trusted in thy mercy;
my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

6 I will sing unto the Lord,
because he hath dealt bountifully with me (Psalm 13:1-6).

Johnson found a symbolic meaning in both the king’s death and in his desire to live. He wrote:

Accordingly, while the freedom for which the king longs in his dramatic struggle with the forces of darkness and ‘Death’ is obviously freedom to live and, implicitly, to prosper, it is not a freedom to live altogether in the way of his own choosing or freedom to prosper at the expense of his fellows. It is a freedom to be of service, a freedom to live in accordance with the will of Yahweh and thus to promote, not merely his own personal welfare, but the well-being of the

community as a whole, i.e. the well-being of the nation for whom he has accepted responsibility under the terms of the Davidic covenant.¹¹

Jehovah did act in the king's behalf. He asserted his royal prerogatives, and defeated the earthly enemies of Israel with the powers of nature that only he can command. Psalm 104, which is a hymn of praise, may reflect the outcome of that battle (see Ps. 104.32-35).¹²

1. "My days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth" (Ps. 102.3).¹³
2. The dead cry out "I am withered like grass" (Ps. 102.11).
3. "To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed unto death" (Ps. 102.20).
4. "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee" (Ps. 102.28).¹⁴

Psalm 103: The Lovingkindness of God

Notwithstanding the people's rejection of the Lord at Sinai, he continued to bless them. Those blessings are celebrated in Psalm 103. In that psalm we find a sharp contrast between the lovingkindness of the pre-exilic God of Israel, and the unkind God of the historical books of the Old Testament that were written by post-exilic scholars and priests. It is that marked difference in the personality of God that constitutes one of the major evidences of the post-exilic apostasy. Psalm 103 describes the Lord's dealings with Moses and his people in terms of trust and endearment.¹⁵

It is quite possible the liturgy of the festival temple drama relied at least in part on Moses's great final lecture to his people that is recorded in our book of Deuteronomy. The whole thrust of Deuteronomy's last chapters is in the covenant formula that imposes upon the people the responsibility to love God, and to demonstrate that love by keeping his commandments. During the drama the king—and, by extension, the people also—accepted the burdens and the blessings of the Law of Moses.

Joseph Smith talked about this idea, that we need to understand the true character of God, when he said:

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (or one sent to tell them?) So then faith comes by hearing the word of God. Let us here observe, **that three**

¹¹ Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, University of Wales Press, 1955, p. 137-38.

¹² Baker and Ricks, p. 316.

¹³ This haunting image focuses two ideas, ephemerality and suffering. The supplicant's days burn away to mere smoke, like any rapidly combustible substance set on fire, and the result of the blaze of torment within him is bones charred like a hearth after the fire has burned out. This poem is distinctive among the psalms of supplication in its powerful emphasis on the transience and insubstantiality of human life, an emphasis at certain points reminiscent of Job. Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, Volume 3: The Writings, W.W. Norton & Company, 2019, p. 236-7.

¹⁴ The poem aptly concludes with the mention of offspring. An individual life lasts only a moment, but a kind of perpetuity may be granted to humanity through its continuing progeny. Thus, the last word of the psalm, the verb יָכֹן *yikon* ("unshaken"), is a word attached in general biblical usage to dynasties, to grand public buildings, and to heaven and earth. Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, Volume 3: The Writings, W.W. Norton & Company, 2019, p. 239.

¹⁵ Baker and Ricks, p. 272-274.

priestesses) unto the Most High God. This has direct reference to Alma 13 where Alma made the following observation:

And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption (Alma 13.3).

The manner or method of receiving their commission that they received literally taught them about the Son of God. All of God's children are to take Psalm 110 to heart, see Jesus as their heavenly king, and pay close attention to the manner in which they are ordained. This has strong temple connotations. We are to see Jesus and his life in ordinances of the temple, **but we must also see ourselves**, the promises we have made in the premortal realm, and the future victory over death assured by the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus in Gethsemane and Golgotha's hill long ago.

Baker and Ricks²¹ put it this way:

After their expulsion from the Garden, the king may have played various roles as the drama carried him through the history of Israel. **It was of the utmost importance that the drama show that the king** (and through him, his subjects) **received all the empowering ordinances that would enable him to fulfill his premortal covenants**. Therefore we find in Psalm 110 that he was ordained to "the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek."²² That was necessary because legitimate kingship is a subset of legitimate priesthood. One cannot be a king unless he is first a priest. That is, he can have priesthood without kingship, but not kingship without priesthood. The king's ordination enabled him to perform all of the rites, covenants, and sacrifices of Solomon's Temple services.

In our ancient scriptures, there are only three places where we find references to the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. The first is Psalm 110 where the Lord confers that priesthood upon Israel's king. The second is the book of Hebrews, where Paul twice quotes Psalm 110 in references to the Savior's priesthood (5:6 & 7:17), then refers to it again several other times.²³ The third is Alma 13:15-18, where Alma teaches Zeezrom about priesthood legitimacy.

In the first verse of Psalm 110, the words, "Sit thou at my right hand," was literally an invitation to the king to sit next to God, implicitly to sit upon the throne of God. The invitation was proffered here in conjunction with the ordination to the Melchizedek priesthood, but would not be realized until near the conclusion of the drama when the king would be crowned. Psalm 110 begins by affirming the king's ordination to that priesthood.

²¹ Baker and Ricks, p. 239-240.

²² In the *Legends of the Jews*, we read, "In spite of his great success, Abraham nevertheless was concerned about the issue of the war. He feared that the prohibition against shedding the blood of man had been transgressed, and he also dreaded the resentment of Shem, whose descendants had perished in the encounter. But God reassured him, and said: 'Be not afraid! Thou hast but extirpated the thorns, and as to Shem, he will bless thee rather than curse thee.' So it was. **When Abraham returned from the war, Shem, or, as he is sometimes called, Melchizedek, the king of righteousness, priest of God Most High, and king of Jerusalem, came forth to meet him with bread and wine. And this high priest instructed Abraham in the laws of the priesthood and in the Torah**, and to prove his friendship for him he blessed him, and called him the partner of God in the possession of the world, seeing that through him the Name of God had first been made known among men." Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, "The War of the Kings," 1:233, emphasis added.

²³ See Hebrews 5.10, 6.20, 7.11.

1. "Sit thou at my right hand" (Ps. 110.1).²⁴
2. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion" (Ps. 110.2).²⁵
 - a. The King gives a speech (Ps. 2). This is in connection with his anointing as King of Israel.²⁶
3. "The dew of thy youth" (Ps. 11.3).²⁷
 - a. It is likely that after his ordination, he was anointed to become king.²⁸
4. "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110.4).²⁹
 - a. What happened to kingly authority to act in religious matters? After David and Solomon, where did this authority go?³⁰
5. "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath" (Ps. 110.5).³¹

²⁴ Several of the traditional royal psalms have their place within the framework of the anointment ritual. This applies, e.g. to Psalm 110. It evidently belongs to the moment when the king is led forth to ascend his throne. **The king's throne in the East was looked upon as a symbol of the throne of the deity.** It is on a throne flanked by winged lions (cherubs), like that of Solomon, that the deity himself sits in Syro-Canaanite pictures. Such a winged lion throne (empty!) stood in the Temple in Jerusalem also, and it was supposed that 'Yahweh who sits upon the cherubim' was seated on it invisibly. When the king as the 'son of Yahweh' seats himself on his throne, this is a symbolic expression of the fact that he, as Yahweh's appointed governor, sits on the Lord's own throne, i.e. wields sovereign power in the name of Yahweh. **That is the background of the oracle in Psalm 110.** There reference is made to the holy robe in which the king has been arrayed for the anointing, to the life-giving water from the holy spring—probably the waters of Gihon—with which he has been purified and strengthened, and to the procession from the brook to the king's palace. And at the moment when he ascends the throne, the temple prophet stands forth and proclaims for him in the name of Yahweh that to the king belongs the seat of honour on the right hand of Yahweh, and the priest kingdom 'after the order of Melchizedek' (is the new king). Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, Volume 1, p. 63-64.

²⁵ The JPS translation reads "The LORD will stretch forth from Zion your mighty scepter; hold sway over your enemies!" *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1408.

²⁶ When the king had mounted the throne, and received the 'king's homage' (*Uru'ath mekkh*), it is part of the ceremony that he is to make a speech to his people and his vassals. In so doing he points to the legitimate foundation of his sovereignty and to the way he intends to exert it. He produces, so to speak, his 'political programme' of which we also hear in connexion with Rehoboam, 1 Kgs. 12.14. This is the background of Ps. 2. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, Volume 1, p. 64.

²⁷ The phrase in Psalm 110, "thou hast the dew of thy youth" suggests that the king was ordained rather early on in the drama, when he was represented as being the prince, heir apparent, rather than as a mature king. If that is so, then there may have been another ordinance associated with the prince's receiving the priesthood of Melchizedek, and that would have been a preliminary anointing to become king. Baker and Ricks, p. 241.

²⁸ "kings must be priests, and candidates to immortality must be both priests and kings." Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, Deseret Book, 1975, p. 198.

²⁹ There are a number of instances in the Old Testament where the king acted as ecclesiastical head of the kingdom. One of the earliest accounts of David's using priesthood authority was when he sought to receive a revelation from the Lord, received it, and followed its instructions. Baker and Ricks, p. 245. They cite 1 Samuel 30.6-9 and 2 Samuel 24.18-25 as a couple examples of David's acting as a religious leader. They also cite Solomon's use of religious authority in the dedication of the First Israelite Temple (see pages 248-251).

³⁰ (Some) scholars also believe that after the Babylonian captivity, when there was no more Jewish king, the High Priest assumed the roles the king had played in some of the ceremonies and functions of Solomon's Temple—and that the books of Moses were edited to reflect the High Priest's new role. For example, kings like Solomon and Hezekiah obviously had full access to the Holy of Holies, but in the days of the Savior, when there was no legitimate Jewish king, no one but the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies. Baker and Ricks, p. 252.

³¹ Two things are noticeable in this proclamation. The first is the idea of the world sovereignty of the king of Zion. Ideally he has such a claim because he is the anointed one and Yahweh's governor, and Yahweh is the God of the world. The other point is the basis of the argument for this close relation between Yahweh and the king. He is

- a. Ps. 110.5-7 are promises of invulnerability.³²
- 6. “He shall judge the heathen” (Ps. 110.6).
- 7. “He shall drink of the brook in the way... He shall lift up the head” (Ps. 110.7).³³
 - a. Christ is victorious – Revelation 19.17-18.

Psalm 116: The Invitation to the Feast

Baker and Ricks offer that perhaps it was early in the morning of the eighth day that the people sang the 116th Psalm, which includes an invitation to a feast.³⁴

- 1. “I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord” (Ps. 116.13).
- 2. “I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord” (Ps. 116.17).

The invitation to the meal is found in verses 13 and 17 where both drink and food are mentioned. In verse 17, we are told that the king would offer a thanksgiving offering, which indicated the meat of the

‘Yahweh’s son’, adopted by Yahweh today. It is the election, the anointing and the installation which are viewed as an adoption. Thereby the king is, ideally speaking, world-ruler; and all other kings are his vassals, whose duty it is to pay him homage by ‘kissing his feet’ —the usual sign of homage to the liege sovereign in the East. Mowinckel, *The Psalms*: Volume 1, p. 65.

³² The promise of invulnerability is found in Psalm 110.5-7: “The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.” Gert Jordaan and Pieter Nel explain it this way: Before continuing with the structure of the psalm as such, a brief remark about the concluding verse of the psalm (“He will drink from a brook beside the way; therefore he will lift up his head” (διὰ τοῦτο ὑψώσει κεφαλὴν) is needed. **In the structural schema above the verse is seen as describing the appointed king in his triumph. Commentators agree that “therefore he will lift up his head” refers to a gesture of triumph, so that this verse can be regarded as the triumphant climax of the psalm.** However, the verse begins with a somewhat baffling phrase: “He will drink from a brook beside the way.” Within the context of a victorious triumph, these words do not seem to make sense at all. Therefore some scholars have tried to sidestep the problem by suggesting an alternative vocalization of the Hebrew text. Instead of the Masoretic reading (“he will drink from a brook beside the way”) the Hebrew is vocalized ... which can be translated as **“an inheritance on the way he makes it...”** or **“the bestower will set him on a seat.”** The suggested vocalization presents an attractive option for the analysis of the psalm’s structure, since it perfectly fits into the structural framework as suggested above. However, it has to be kept in mind that the author of Hebrews probably knew the psalm not from the Hebrew text, but from the Greek text of the Septuagint. Hence it can be assumed that he would have followed the interpretation of the Septuagint... Ps 110 is concluded in v. 7 where the king is again the centre of attention, but now as the king who has completed the battle and returns in triumph. The parallel to this seems to be Heb 12:1–29. It develops as follow: in Heb 12:1–3 **the believers are exhorted to fix their eyes on Jesus who, having endured the cross, sat down in glory at the right hand of the throne of God. Jesus is the ultimate king-priest. In itself the exhortation to fix the eyes on the triumphant Jesus is already paralleled in Ps 110:7.** The parallel is taken even further, however, in Heb 12:22–24. Jesus as pioneer and perfecter of their faith takes the believers to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, where they will be with God in glory forever. Thus ch. 12 becomes Hebrews’ counterpart of Ps 110’s “he will lift up his head.” Gert Jordaan and Pieter Nel, *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception*, T&T Clark, New York, 2010, p. 236-238.

³³ Alter identifies the king drinking of the brook in the way as an image of God as warrior pausing to drink during or after his pursuit of the enemy. Alter, p. 266. Gill’s interpretation of the king “lifting up the head” is that “he shall lift up the head as he did in his resurrection, he bowed it when he died, he lifted it when he rose again.” [Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible](#).

³⁴ Baker and Ricks, p. 432.

animals was to be eaten,³⁵ for, like the peace offering, the thanksgiving offering was eaten by the worshipers.³⁶ It was also understood that, because of its sacred nature, it was God who had invited them to the feast. Nelson explains:

Most Israelite sacrifices resulted in a meal shared by the worshipers. The company of diners would consist of family...and a circle of invited guest. ...As such, **sacrifice may be understood as table fellowship with Yahweh for whom a portion of the meal was set aside by burning.** ...Those sharing the sacrificial meal would have seen it as a way of strengthening family and group associations, but also as a way of making person contact with Yahweh.³⁷

Bryce spoke in the podcast during the discussion on Ps. 116 regarding being “safely dead”³⁸ and the idea of having one’s calling and election made sure, specifically in a quote from Elder Bruce R. McConkie.³⁹

Psalm 118: The King’s Gratitude for His Deliverance

1. “Give thanks unto the Lord... I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me... the Lord is on my side; I will not fear” (Ps. 118.1-6).
2. “All nations compassed me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them” (Ps. 118.10).
3. “I shall not die, but live” (Ps. 118.17).
4. “The stone which the builders refused is become the head of stone of the corner” (Ps. 118.22)
 - a. See also: Matt. 21.42, Mark 12.10, Luke 20.17, Acts 4.11, Ephesians 2.20.

Ps. 118.10-12 demonstrate that the king survived his trial and had come away stronger and more capable than before. His covenant relationship with God had been renewed, the covenant of invulnerability had been fulfilled, and his enemies no longer had any power over him. Ps. 118.15-19 then

³⁵ Baker and Ricks (p. 433) explain, “A very early example (perhaps the prototype) of this feast is recorded in 2 Samuel 6. After David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, he “dealt all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as the men, to everyone a cake of bread, and good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine” (v.19).”

³⁶ Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, p. 113.

³⁷ Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* Westminster John Knox, 1993), p. 67-68, emphasis added. We see this tradition carried through as we read D&C 27.

³⁸ “Life isn’t over for a Latter-day Saint until he or she is safely dead, with their testimony still burning brightly” (M Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, May 1996, 28).

³⁹ We don't need to get a complex or get a feeling that you have to be perfect to be saved. You don't. There's only been one perfect person, and that's the Lord Jesus, but in order to be saved in the Kingdom of God and in order to pass the test of mortality, what you have to do is get on the straight and narrow path—thus charting a course leading to eternal life—and then, being on that path, pass out of this life in full fellowship. I'm not saying that you don't have to keep the commandments. I'm saying you don't have to be perfect to be saved. If you did, no one would be saved. The way it operates is this: you get on the path that's named the "straight and narrow." The straight and narrow path leads a very great distance, to a reward that's called eternal life. If you're on that path and pressing forward, and you die, you'll never get off the path. There is no such thing as falling off the straight and narrow path in the life to come. If you're working zealously in this life—though you haven't fully overcome the world and you haven't done all you hoped you might do—you're still going to be saved. You don't have to have an excessive zeal that becomes fanatical and becomes unbalancing. What you have to do is stay in the mainstream of the Church and live as upright and decent people live in the Church—keeping the commandments, paying your tithing, serving in the organizations of the Church, loving the Lord, staying on the straight and narrow path. If you're on that path when death comes you'll never fall off from it, and, for all practical purposes, your calling and election is made sure (Bruce R. McConkie, "The Probationary Test of Mortality," Jan 10, 1982, at the SL Institute).

foreshadow the joyful procession that went up to meet him and would soon dance around the city and enter into its Temple. The king requested that the Temple be opened to him so he could return to be where God is. Thereafter he would perform the ordinances and sacrifices necessary to complete the renewal of the covenants.⁴⁰

Psalm 119: A Prayer to God

Psalm 119 is the longest, and certainly one of the most moving of all the psalms. It is a soliloquy that rivals the soliloquies of Hamlet in its intensity and beauty—suggesting that the drama was performed with all the theatrical power and emotional pathos of a Shakespearian tragedy. For the sake of brevity, only excerpts of the psalm are given here. There is a bit of a problem with the breaking up Ps. 119 into several sections.⁴¹ The whole psalm is a prayer to God—spoken by the young king who is about to die in the heat of battle.⁴²

The greatest portion of Psalm 119 is a series of reminders to God—and no doubt to the king himself as he engaged in his struggle—of his piety and of his devotion to God. Here is one example:

26 I have declared my ways,
and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts:
so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted;
that I might learn thy statutes (Psalm 119.26-27, 71).

Yet, these expressions of devotion are sometimes intertwined with desperate pleas for assistance. Only once was the young king's thought pattern interrupted, when he addressed an adversary— perhaps during a scene of intense sword play:

115 Depart from me, ye evildoers:

⁴⁰ Baker and Ricks, p. 322. For more on the king as priest, and therefore one who can officiate in the Temple, see Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 299-31, 340-44; Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 207-302; Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 212; Ricks and Sroka, "King, Coronation, and Temple" 260-63; Rowley, "Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets," 237; Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*, 13-33. Widengren, "King and Covenant," 1-27; Widengren, *King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion*, p. 10-59.

⁴¹ Baker and Ricks explain that Psalm 119 is difficult to read as it is printed in the King James Bible because each of its major sections begins with a different letter of the alphabet, and breaking it into sections like that causes one to lose the continuity of its message. Lindars expressed the approach of many scholars when he explained: "The alphabetic psalms of the Psalter (xxv, xxxiv, xxxvii, cxi, cxii, cxix, cxlv) and elsewhere (Prov. xxxi 10-31; Lam. i, ii, iii, and iv; Sir. li 13-30) may be called scribal exercises, inasmuch as the pattern of letters has its own importance in addition to the meaning." (Barnabas Lindars, "The Structure of Psalm CXLV," *Vetus Testamentum* 23, 1 (1989): 23.) But notwithstanding the academic appeal of breaking the psalm into alphabetic sections, the full beauty and scope of the psalm can only be found when it is read as a single, uninterrupted unit.

⁴² Baker and Ricks, p. 293.

for I will keep the commandments of my God (Psalm 119:115)..

The young king's world was coming down all around him. Yet he did not cower before the enemy, but was determined to stay alive:

75 I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right,

and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort,

according to thy word unto thy servant.

77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me,

that I may live: for thy law is my delight. ...

94 I am thine, save me;

for I have sought thy precepts.

95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me. ...

but I will consider thy testimonies.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me:

yet I erred not from thy precepts.

116 Uphold me according unto thy word,

that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.

126 It is time for thee,

Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law.

145 I cried with my whole heart; hear me,

O Lord: I will keep thy statutes.

146 I cried unto thee; save me,

and I shall keep thy testimonies (Psalm 119.75-77, 94-95, 110, 116, 126, 145-6).

Toward the end of the psalm, the young king had become surrounded by his enemies, but he did not give in. Rather he assured himself that they were still his inferiors because they did not keep the Law:

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief:

they are far from thy law (Psalm 119:150).

Then it was all over. The king's body was at the gates of death—but his spirit was still alive, and his faith in Jehovah was not weakened. In the last stanzas of this scene, he prays that his soul will live on—so that, even in death, he may continue to praise the Lord:

173 Let thine hand help me;

for I have chosen thy precepts.

174 I have longed for thy salvation,

O Lord; and thy law is my delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee;

and let thy judgments help me.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;

seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments (Psalm 119.173-76).

Those last words of the psalm strike the final chord of the young king's time on the earth, and express the hope that will become the ultimate triumph of the entire festival drama: In his last appeal to Jehovah, as his soul approaches the darkness of death and hell, the king pleads: "seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." That was his testimony of who Jehovah is, and of his knowledge of Jehovah's ultimate authority, and of his anticipation of the saving power of the Atonement. As he entered death, he knew that only Jehovah could save him.⁴³

Psalm 120-134: Psalms of Ascent

Called "songs of degrees" in the KJV, these psalms are considered to have been read during the Feast of Tabernacles and to have been sung as part of the Water Drawing Ceremony that took place during the festival.⁴⁴

One account⁴⁵ of how the Water Drawing Ceremony proceeded is as follows:

⁴³ Baker and Ricks, p. 293-297.

⁴⁴ These 15 psalms of ascent are (by some) connected to the following story:

R. Yohanan said: . . . When David dug the pits, the [waters of the] Deep rose and threatened to submerge the world. "Is there anyone," David asked, "who knows whether it is permitted to inscribe the [Ineffable] Name upon a shard, and cast it into the Deep so that it will subside?" There was none who answered him. Said David, "Whoever knows the answer and does not speak, may he be suffocated."

Whereupon Ahithophel adduced an a fortiori argument original to himself: "If, for the purpose of establishing harmony between man and wife, the Torah said, 'Let My name that was written in sanctity be blotted out by the water,' how much more so may it be done in order to establish peace in the world!" He, therefore, said to him, "It is permitted!"

[David] thereupon inscribed the [Ineffable] Name upon a shard and cast it into the Deep, which subsided sixteen thousand cubits. When he saw that it had subsided so far, he said, "The nearer it is to the earth, the better can the earth be watered. **He uttered the fifteen Songs of Ascent and the Deep rose back fifteen thousand cubits and remained one thousand cubits [below the surface].** Brand, p. 55. See also: Giorgio De Santillana, [Hamlet's Mill: An Essay Investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and its Transmission Through Myth](#), Boston: David R. Godine, publisher, 1977, p. 220.

⁴⁵ Bruce Satterfield, "[John and the Feast of Tabernacles](#)," *The Testimony of John the Beloved: the 1998 Sperry Symposium on the New Testament*, Deseret Book, 1998, pp. 249-265.

"The first hour was occupied with the daily morning sacrifice; from there we proceeded to prayers; from there we proceeded to the additional sacrifice, then the prayers to the additional sacrifice, then to the House of Study, then the eating and drinking, then the afternoon prayer, then the daily evening sacrifice, and after that the Rejoicing at the place of the Water-Drawing all night." (Talmud Sukkah 53a.)

In this description, the order of events of an average day during the Feast of Tabernacles is revealed, albeit incomplete, as will now be shown.

The day began with the normal daily morning burnt offering. However, **during the Feast of Tabernacles a rite was added to the daily burnt offering called the water-drawing ceremony.** During the preparation of the burnt offering,⁴⁶ a procession of priests with the accompaniment of flute playing and singing wended their way from the temple down to the Pool of Siloam where a priest filled a golden flask with water while a choir repeated [Isaiah 12.3](#): "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (see Mishnah Sukkah 4:9; 5:1; Talmud Sukkah 48b). [The Pool of Siloam](#) was a collecting pool for the spring Gihon, the major water supply for Jerusalem. The Jews referred to water from springs or streams fit for drinking as "living water." **Living water was considered the most superior form of water for ritual purification.**⁴⁷

The priests returned to the temple via the Water Gate, a gate on the south side of the wall immediately surrounding the temple within the court of Gentiles.⁴⁸ Arriving at the Water Gate a blast was made on

⁴⁶ The Mishnah describes the rite of the burnt offering as being performed in four parts with each part being determined by lot. The first lot was the clearing of the ashes from the Altar (Yoma 2:2; Tamid 1:4). The ashes were cleared from the Altar "at cockcrow or close to it, either before or after it" but during "the Festivals at the first watch" for "before cockcrow time drew near the Forecourt was already filled with Israelites" (Yoma 1:8). Josephus tells us that the temple gates which were normally kept closed until morning were opened at midnight during festivals (*The Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.2.2). The second lot determined "who should slaughter, who should toss blood, (and) who should remove the ashes from the Inner Altar, (and) who should clear away the ashes from the Candlestick, (and) who should take up the limbs [of the burnt offering] to the Altar-slope" (Yoma 2:3; see also Tamid 3:1). The animal could not be slaughtered before dawn, therefore, the Captain of the Temple (*sagan ha kohanim*) said to one, "Go forth and see if the time has arrived for slaughtering." The priest went to a high point of the temple to see if the light of morning lit up the east "as far as Hebron." If so the animal could be slaughtered (Yoma 3:1; see also Tamid 3:2-7). The third lot determined who would offer the incense upon the Inner-Altar (Yoma 2:4; Tamid 5:2-6:3). The fourth lot determined which priests would offer the burnt offering on the Altar (Yoma 2:5; Tamid 4:3). For detailed descriptions concerning the offering of the morning and evening burnt offering (the Tamid) see Shmuel Safrai, Ritual in "Temple," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971): Vol 15:974-977; Shmuel Safrai, Daily whole-offerings in "The Temple," in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 2:887-890; Aaron Rothkoff, Second Temple Period in "Sacrifice," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971): Vol 14: 607-609; and Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. A new version, revised and edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black. 2 Vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 2: 299-308.

⁴⁷ According to Mishnah Mikvaoth 1:1: "There are six grades among ritual baths, in ascending order of superiority." These are (1) water in cisterns, (2) water of rain drippings, (3) mikvehs, (4) wells, (5) salty water or hot water from a spring, and (6) living water (Mikvaoth 1:1-8). Only "living water" could be used in the purification of lepers (Lev. 14:5) and the defilement caused by dead corpses (Num. 19:17).

⁴⁸ The main sources for a description of the temple come from the Mishnah and Josephus. But there is discrepancy in the different accounts. According to Middoth 1:4-5 and Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 15.11.5, there are seven gates into the Court of the Priests including the Nicanor gate (which does not actually open into the Court of Priests but into the Court of the Israelites). In Middoth 2:6, Shekalim 6:3 and Josephus' *The Wars of the Jews* 5.5.2, eight gates are mentioned *not* including the Nicanor gate. Most scholars accept the smaller number placing the

a *shofar*, the Hebrew word for ram's horn. The *shofar* was a signaling instrument used to announce major events such as the beginning of the Sabbath, new moons, the death of a notable, or warned of approaching danger. In this case, the *shofar* announced the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles which began with the water-drawing ceremony.

When the procession of priests and Levites returned from the pool of Siloam, they were met by pilgrims who had come to the Temple Mount. Each pilgrim brought with them a *lulab*, which consisted of a tree branch in one hand and a citron in the other (Mishnah 3:1-7). The *lulab* was to be waved while the morning sacrifice was being offered with the special water libation. The waving of the *lulab* was a Biblical injunction: "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days" (Leviticus 23:40).

Upon the blasting of the *shofar*, the group moved towards the altar of sacrifice located in the Court of the Priests which surrounded the temple. The priest with the golden flask filled with water ascended the altar and prepared to pour the libation on the morning burnt offering. While doing this, the procession that had followed the priest would circle the altar.

It appears that pilgrims joined in with the priests who were circling the altar.⁴⁹ However, this is a matter of debate. George MacRae seems to suggest that this procession was of priests alone.⁵⁰ But an incident mentioned in the Mishnah may suggest otherwise. Mishnah Sukkah 4:9 tells us that after the water was poured into the Silver Bowl, it was said to the officiating priest: "Raise thy hand!" The reason for saying this was that "on one occasion [a Sadducean priest] poured over his feet" the water (for the Sadducees did not hold to this tradition). This so outraged the pilgrims that "all the people pelted him with their citrons." This suggests that if the pilgrims were not in the procession itself they were at least close enough for them to be able to pelt the priest. The only logical places would be the court of the priests itself or perhaps in the court of the Israelites though the latter seems less likely due to its size.⁵¹

Whether walking around the altar or observing the procession, the following was said by the pilgrims while waving their *lulabs*: "We beseech Thee, O Eternal, save us, we pray" (Mishnah Sukkah 3:9; see also

Water Gate as the third gate from the west on the southern side of the Court of the Priests. This would place it close to the laver (see Shmuel Safrai and Michael Avi-Yona, "Temple," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 15:962-967).

⁴⁹ It is Safrai's belief that the people were involved in the procession itself. Says he:

"The people participated in all the rites of the Feast of Tabernacles and, with the exception of the water-libation which was performed by a priest or the high priest, their role in Temple rites and customs was equal to that of the priests. They surrounded the altar with palm-branches and with willow, which is, of course, the essence of the water-libation ceremonies . . . All the people participated in the procession around the altar, (from which they were barred during the rest of the year) with the palm-branch. S. Safrai, "Temple," in *The Jewish People of the First Century*, Brill, 1976, 2:894-895.

⁵⁰ George W. McCrae, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," *The Catholic Bible Quarterly*, Vol. 22, NO. 3, July 1960, p. 272. He states, "processions around the altar by priests, accompanied by the blast of the Shofar, were a regular part of the celebration."

⁵¹ This is the view of J. C. Rylaarsdam who describes this scene in this manner: "The water was brought up in solemn fashion with the blowing of the shofar at the city gate. The pilgrims, singing the Hallel and carrying their lulabs, witnessed the circumambulation of the altar by the priestly procession and waving their lulabs, joined in the great cry: 'Save us, we beseech thee, O LORD.'" *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 Vols. Abingdon, 1962, 1:456.

4:5). The priest who had charge of pouring the water then offered the water libation with a wine libation into two silver bowls on the south-west corner of the altar.

The water-drawing ceremony proceeded in this manner every day of the feast except on the seventh day **when the priests (and possibly the pilgrims) circled the altar seven times instead of just once** (Mishnah Sukkah 4:5). **The circumambulation of the altar seven times ended the water-drawing ritual.** It was not performed on the eighth day (Mishnah Sukkah 4:1, 5),⁵² though it appears that a prayer for rain was given on the eighth day (Talmud Taanith 2a-3a).

Another scholar described the water libation ceremony as follows:

At dawn, the preparations were made for drawing water from the Siloam for the water libation ceremony. There were several stations along the route from the Temple to the Siloam and then back to the Temple, where priests blew their trumpets. First they blew them at dawn, at cock-crow, standing at the Upper Gate, which leads from the Israelites' Court down to the Women's Court. They blew them again when they descended to the tenth step, and again when they reached the Women's Court. Upon their return from the Siloam, the Priests blew their trumpets when the golden flagon was carried through the Water Gate, and a last time when the water was poured onto the altar.

The water libation procession begins at the top of the fifteen steps that lead down from the Israelites' Court to the Women's Court. These steps correspond to the fifteen Songs of Ascent in Psalms composed by King David when he dug the pits and by means of which he raised the subterranean waters to their optimum level. **In their minds' eye, the Priests who descended these steps and the Levites who sang the Songs of Ascent during the water libation ceremony see the subterranean waters rising as they proceed, just as they did for King David. The subterranean waters rise incrementally, a thousand cubits at a time.** This is, in essence, Ezekiel's vision: the spring emerging from the Temple will rise in thousand-cubit stages. The source of this mighty river is the subterranean waters, from which "all the waters of Creation" flow. Initially the water's ascent is below ground and hidden from view. Only when the water reaches the base of the altar can it be seen. After that, the thin trickle of water—"as from the opening of a small vessel"—is amplified into a mighty torrent: "all the waters of Creation will one day issue forth, as if from the opening of this small vessel."⁵³

The Water Drawing Ceremony and the Blessing of Rain

Now we can understand the significance of the water libation ceremony. On Sukkot, the season when the world is judged for water, we ask God for the blessing of rainfall and water. The very act of pouring surface water into the subterranean waters produces a blessing:⁵⁴

⁵² In the Talmud, there is a debate about how often the water-drawing rite was done as well as when it was performed last in the feast (see Taanith 2a-3a). However, the Mishnah, which consists of earlier Rabbinical writings, suggests that the last day the water-drawing ritual was performed was the seventh day (Sukkah 4:1; but see Rabbi Judah's comments in Sukkah 4:9). This agrees with Biblical legislation that requires the waving of the *lulab*, a ritual performed during the pouring of the water on the altar, for seven days (see Leviticus 23:40).

⁵³ Itzhak Brand, [Following the Path of the Water Libation, *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism*](#) 15 (2012), p. 56-57.

⁵⁴ For the background of this notion of sympathetic magic among Jews and non-Jews, see Rafael Patai, *Water* (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 5696), pp. 49–50. Cf. Tabory's vague suggestion in *Jewish Festivals*, p. 199, n. 173: "One can describe the act of the water libation as comparable to priming a pump that will then irrigate the entire world." For a more detailed explanation, see Patai, *Man and Temple*, pp. 36, 50–51; Naeh and Halbertal, "Maayney Hayeshua,"

R. Eliezer said: When the water libations are carried out during Sukkot, the Deep says to its friends, "Let your waters spring forth, I hear the voice of two friends"; as it is said, "Deep calls to Deep at the sound of your water channels." (Ps. 42:8)⁵⁵

This is only the beginning of the blessing. The combination of Ezekiel's vision and the water libation ceremony embodies a much greater blessing for abundant water. The earthly procession, bringing water from the Siloam to the altar and from there to the pits and the Deep, is meant to facilitate and hasten a similar heavenly process in which the spring will emerge from beneath the Temple threshold: rising up from the subterranean waters of Creation to beneath the altar and thence to the Siloam, until it reaches both the Eastern Sea and the Western Sea.⁵⁶

All of these ideas point to the statement made by Christ when he said:

Ἐάν τις διψᾷ ἐρχέσθω πρὸς με καὶ πινέτω. ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ καθὼς εἶπεν ἡ γραφή ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ῥεύσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος.

If any man might thirst, let him come to me and drink. He trusting in me, according to what is written, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water (John 7.37b-38 my translation).

Psalm 127: The Blessing of Children

1. Children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Ps. 127.3-5).⁵⁷
 - a. Modern prophets and apostles have spoken on the importance of children and families.⁵⁸

p. 183; James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (New York, 1922) p. 67. **Frazer examines various magical practices from Australia, Japan, Wales, and Mexico. They involve pouring out water in general, and especially on sacred stones, in order to encourage or instigate rainfall.**

⁵⁵ Brand, p. 59.

⁵⁶ Brand, p. 60.

⁵⁷ The man who begets many sons in his youth creates the equivalent of a little army on which he can depend. In the social structure of ancient Israel, this may not have been an entirely fanciful notion. One might recall that David's original power base was in part a kind of family militia, led by his three nephews. Alter, p. 300.

⁵⁸ President Kimball taught:

About fifty years ago, Mr. F. M. Bareham wrote the following, "A century ago men were following with bated breath the march of Napoleon and waiting with feverish impatience for news of the wars. And all the while in their homes babies were being born. But who could think about babies? Everybody was thinking about battles. In one year between Trafalgar and Waterloo there stole into the world a host of heroes: Gladstone was born in Liverpool; Tennyson at the Somersby Rectory, and Oliver Wendell Holmes in Massachusetts. Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky, and music was enriched by the advent of Felix Mendelssohn in Hamburg." And we might add, and Joseph Smith was born in Vermont, four years earlier.

Quoting Bareham further, "**But nobody thought of babies, everybody was thinking of battles.** Yet which of the battles of 1809 mattered more than the babies of 1809? We fancy God can manage his world only with great battalions, when all the time he is doing it with beautiful babies. When a wrong wants righting, or a truth wants preaching, or a continent wants discovering, God sends a baby into the world to do it."

Psalm 128: Happiness⁵⁹

1. "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands" (Ps. 128.2).
2. "Thy children like olive plants round about thy table" (Ps. 128.3).
3. "Thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Ps. 128.6).

Psalm 135: Israel's History from the Council in Heaven to the Reign of David

1. "The Lord has chosen Jacob... for his peculiar treasure" (Ps. 135.4).
2. "The Lord is above all gods" (Ps. 135.5).⁶⁰
3. God's work in saving Israel out of Egypt (Ps. 135.8-9).
4. The conquest in the Holy Land "Who smote mighty kings" (Ps. 135.10).
5. The reign of David "Blessed be the Lord out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem" (Ps. 135.21).

While most of the thousands of precious infants born every hour will never be known outside their own neighborhoods, **there are great souls being born who will rise above their surroundings.** We see with ". . . Abraham the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones, . . ." and we hear the Lord saying, "These I will make my rulers . . . Abraham, thou art one of them, thou wast chosen before thou wast born" Abr. 3:22-23. He commanded Adam: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" Gen. 1:28. And the Psalmist sang, "'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" Ps. 127:3, 5. President Kimball, *Conference Report*, April 1960, p. 83-86.

Julie Beck taught:

I was recently at a park where I met a group of women with mother hearts. They were young, covenant-keeping women. They were bright and had obtained advanced degrees from respected universities. Now they were devoting their considerable gifts to planning dinner that evening and sharing housekeeping ideas. They were teaching two-year-olds to be kind to one another. They were soothing babies, kissing bruised knees, and wiping tears. I asked one of those mothers how it came about that she could transfer her talents so cheerfully into the role of motherhood. **She replied, "I know who I am, and I know what I am supposed to do. The rest just follows."** That young mother will build faith and character in the next generation one family prayer at a time, one scripture study session, one book read aloud, one song, one family meal after another. **She is involved in a great work. She knows that "children are an heritage of the Lord" and "happy is the [woman] that hath [a] quiver full of them"** Ps. 127:3, 5 She knows that the influence of righteous, conscientious, persistent, daily mothering is far more lasting, far more powerful, far more influential than any earthly position or institution invented by man. She has the vision that, if worthy, she has the potential to be blessed as Rebekah of old to be "the mother of thousands of millions" Gen. 24:60. [Julie Beck, "A Mother Heart," April 2004 General Conference](#), emphasis added.

When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies? The great armistices made by military men or the peacemaking of women in homes and in neighborhoods? Will what happened in cradles and kitchens prove to be more controlling than what happened in congresses? When the surf of the centuries has made the great pyramids so much sand, the everlasting family will still be standing, because it is a celestial institution, formed outside telestial time. The women of God know this. [Neal A. Maxwell, "The Women of God," Ensign, May 1978](#), 10-11.

⁵⁹ The rewards of the good life are spelled out here in an idyll of domesticity. The language is simple and direct; the only two metaphors, the vine and the young olive trees, link the family (evidently an urban family living in Jerusalem) with the world of productive horticulture. Alter, p. 300.

⁶⁰ This hearkens back to the noble and great ones, with Jehovah being the greatest of them all. See Abraham 3.

6. Bryce spoke of the idea that there is “no salvation in worshipping a false god” during our discussion of Ps. 135.⁶¹

Psalms 136: Continuing Israel’s History, from the Grand Council in Heaven and Beyond

1. הַאֱלֹהִים הַיְהוָה “O give thanks to the God of Gods!” (Ps. 136.2), a praise to Heavenly Father.⁶²
2. הַיְהוָה לַאֲדֹנָי הַאֱלֹהִים “O give thanks to the Lord of lords!” (Ps. 136.3) can be read as a praise to Jehovah, the Son of God.
3. His creative works: he made the heavens (v. 5), the earth (v. 6), great lights (v. 7), the sun (v. 8), the moon and stars (v. 9).
4. He “smote Egypt” (Ps. 136.10).
5. He brought out Israel and divided the Red Sea (Ps. 136.12-13).
6. He defeated the enemies of Israel (Ps. 136.15-21).
7. כִּי לְעַלְמֵי עֹלָם “for his mercy/hesed endures forever.”

Psalms 137: By the Rivers of Babylon: A Post-Exilic Psalm⁶³

1. “By the rivers of Babylon... we wept” (Ps. 137.1).
2. “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” (Ps. 137.4).
3. A song against Edom, Babylon, and their children (Ps. 137.7-9).⁶⁴
 - a. “The Edomites” (Ps. 137.7).⁶⁵

Psalms 138: A Thanksgiving Prayer of Praise

⁶¹ There is no salvation in worshipping a false god. It does not matter one particle how sincerely someone may believe that God is a golden calf, or that he is an immaterial, uncreated power that is in all things; the worship of such a being or concept has no saving power. Men may believe with all their souls that images or powers or laws are God, but no amount of devotion to these concepts will ever give the power that leads to immortality and eternal life. If a man worships a cow or a crocodile, he can gain any reward that cows and crocodiles happen to be passing out this season. If he worships the laws of the universe or the forces of nature, no doubt the earth will continue to spin, the sun to shine, and the rains to fall on the just and on the unjust. But if he worships the true and living God, in spirit and in truth, then God Almighty will pour out his Spirit upon him, and he will have power to raise the dead, move mountains, entertain angels, and walk in celestial streets. Bruce R. McConkie, “How to Worship,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 129.

⁶² Note that first this hymn of praise is addressed to Jehovah, who is the covenant god of Israel and the one who conducts the affairs of the Grand Council in Heaven. Then it addresses the Father, Elohim, who presides at the Council. The it addresses Jehovah as Lord of Lords.

⁶³ This psalm was almost certainly composed shortly after the deportation of the Judahites by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E.—the experience of exile is fresh and acutely painful. Alter, p. 312-313.

⁶⁴ *Happy who seizes and smashes / your infants against the rock.* No moral justification can be offered for this notorious concluding line. All one can do is to recall the background of outraged feeling that triggers the conclusion: the Babylonians have laid waste to Jerusalem, exiled much of its population, looted and massacred; the powerless captives, ordered—perhaps mockingly—to sing their Zion songs, respond instead with a lament that is not really a song and ends with this bloodcurdling curse pronounced on their captors, who, fortunately, do not understand the Hebrew in which it is pronounced. Alter, p. 314.

⁶⁵ After the solemn vow never to forget the longed-for Jerusalem, the poem moves into a second angry phase that follows the sorrow of the first: a flashback to the terrible moment when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians with the gleeful encouragement of their Edomite allies. Obadiah 1:8–15 provides a vivid picture of the appalling actions of the Edomites at this historical moment. Alter, p. 314.

Psalm 138 is a prayer of thanksgiving and praise that brings the singers full circle by uniting the events of the Council in Heaven with the sacredness of Solomon’s Temple.⁶⁶

1. “Before the gods will I sing praise!” (Ps. 138.1).⁶⁷
2. “I will worship toward thy holy temple” (Ps. 138.2).⁶⁸
3. “Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Ps. 138.2).
4. “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me!” (Ps. 138.7).⁶⁹
5. “The proud he knoweth afar off... Thy right hand shall save me” (Ps. 138.6-7).⁷⁰

Psalm 139: Meditation on God’s Power

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart:

try me, and know my thoughts:

⁶⁶ Baker and Ricks, p. 436.

⁶⁷ **The “gods” are those who were at the Council in Heaven.** Both Lehi and Enoch witness that they sang in their meetings. Our psalm testifies that they sing still. Enoch wrote:
And who am I to tell of the Lord’s unspeakable being, and of his very wonderful face? And I cannot tell the quantity of his many instructions, and various voices, the Lord’s throne is very great and not made with hands, nor the quantity of those standing round him, troops of cherubim and seraphim, nor their incessant singing, nor his immutable beauty, and who shall tell of the ineffable greatness of his glory ([Secrets of Enoch, 22:3](#)). After 22.3, Enoch is taken before the Lord to see his face and then his earthly garments are removed and he is “anointed with sweet ointment,” and then dressed in garments of glory.

And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God (1 Nephi 1:8).

The psalm does not take place at the Council, but rather it recalls one’s experiences there. It is an expression of hope—of absolute assurance—that one will return to that throne room and sing those hymns of praise again, forever. Baker and Ricks, p. 437

⁶⁸ There has been no change of scene here, so the psalm still projects itself into the eternal future. Therefore, the Temple toward which one longs to worship is the Temple of God in the heavens. Ibid.

⁶⁹ אִם-אֶלֶךְ בְּקֶרֶב צָרָה תִּחְיֶינִי “Though I walk in the midst of trouble/צָרָה you will revive me.” I find this to have a connection to the heart of the word Egypt, מִצְרַיִם, with the *tsar* in the heart of the word. This word can mean “tight place” or “straight place,” hence *Mitsrayim*/Egypt can denote coming out of tight places, or coming out of slavery. God will revive me or give me life even if I am in “trouble” or *tsar*. See: *Mitsrayim: The Narrow Place*, [Haggadot.com](#).

⁷⁰ These verses are probably best understood as a single referent. Its setting is established by the words, “thou wilt receive me,” and “thy right hand shall save me.” Those words also explain why “the proud he knoweth afar off,” for, as Jacob reminds us, those who are proud, and do not know his name, cannot enter his presence. Consider Nephi’s words, “O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, **the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him**, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and **there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived**, for the Lord God is his name. And whoso knocketh, to him will he open; and the wise, and the learned, and they that are rich, who are **puffed up** because of their learning, and their wisdom, and their riches—yea, **they are they whom he despiseth; and save they shall cast these things away**, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them.” (2 Nephi 9.41-42, emphasis added).

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139.23-24).

The psalm asserts the king's worthiness to approach God. The veil before which the king stood was like the one that Moses had made for the Tabernacle (Exod. 26.31; 36.35), except the one in Solomon's Temple was much larger. It was fine white linen with cherubim embroidered on it in threads of blue, purple, and crimson (2 Chronicles 3:14).⁷¹

Psalm 146: The Message of the Angel to King Benjamin – The Messiah's Work

Before his sermon to his people, King Benjamin was awaked by an angel. Baker and Ricks show that the setting of King Benjamin's speech was the Feast of Tabernacles. They state, "The Feast of Tabernacles drama carried two concurrent messages: the first and most easily recognized was the eternal biography of each individual as told through the story of the king, in the context of the work and power of Jehovah. The second was that the biographical account of the king was parallel to and, therefore, representative of, the biography of the God of Israel, first as Jehovah, then as the Messiah, Jesus, and the Resurrected Christ. The angel called attention to the second symbolic meaning of the drama when he paraphrased and elaborated on the 146th Psalm."⁷²

1. The Lord "executeth judgment for the oppressed... giveth food to the hungry... looseth the prisoners" (Ps. 146.7).
2. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind, raises up those that are bowed down (Ps. 146.8).
3. The Lord relieves the fatherless and the widow (Ps. 146.9).
4. "The Lord shall reign forever" (Ps. 146.10).

The message of the angel to King Benjamin reads as follows:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men (Mosiah 3.5-6).

⁷¹ Margaret Barker gives a history of the temple veil: "The veil of the temple was woven from blue, purple, crimson and white thread, and embroidered with cherubim (2 Chron. 3.14); the veil in the tabernacle had been similar. It was a valuable piece of fabric, and both Antiochus and Titus took a veil when they looted the temple (1 Macc. 1.21-22; Josephus, *War* 7.162). In the second temple it was some 200 square metres of fabric and when it contracted uncleanness and had to be washed, 300 priests were needed for the job (*m. Shekalim* 8.4-5). Josephus says it was a Babylonian tapestry (*War* 5.212), a curtain embroidered with a panorama of the heavens (*War* 5.213). The veil separated the holy place from the most holy (Exod. 26.33), screening from view the ark and the cherubim or, in the temple, the ark and the chariot throne. We are told that only the high priest entered the holy of holies, once a year on the Day of Atonement. Josephus, who was himself a priest (*Life* 1), says that the tabernacle was a microcosm of the creation, divided into three parts: the outer parts represented the sea and the land but 'the third part thereof. ..to which the priests were not admitted, is, as it were, a heaven peculiar to God' (*Ant.* 3.181). *Thus the veil which screened the holy of holies was also the boundary between earth and heaven.*" Margaret Barker, [*The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy*](#), p. 188.)

⁷² Baker and Ricks, p. 477.

Psalm 148: Creation

One scholar believed one of the reasons the psalms do not contain a Genesis-like account of the earth's physical creation was that Genesis was actually incorporated into the drama. He wrote that "during the days of the festival the creation story [in Genesis] was therefore either ritually enacted or, at the least, ceremonially read."⁷³

1. Praise him... all his hosts... sun and moon, all ye stars... waters above the heavens (Ps. 148.1-4).
2. Praise him... he has made a decree which shall not pass... ye dragons and all deeps (Ps. 148.6-7).
3. Mountains and all hills... cattle... kings of the earth... all the judges of the earth... men, maidens, old men and children (Ps. 148.9-12).
4. "He exalted the horn of his people" (Ps. 148.14).⁷⁴

Psalm 149-150: The Saints Participate

Aubrey Johnson taught that Psalm 149, "apparently introduces the worshipers as themselves sharing in this ritual performance. ...What is more, we have to note that they are summoned to sing a 'new song'; and this, one need hardly say, is a thought which is particularly appropriate to our festival with its exultant anticipation of a new era of universal dominion and national prosperity."⁷⁵

1. "Sing unto the Lord a new song" (Ps. 149.1).
2. "Praise his name in the dance" (Ps. 149.3).
3. "Let the Saints be joyful in glory" (Ps. 149.5).
4. Praise God in his sanctuary - הִלְלוּ-אֱלֹהִים בְּקִדְשׁוֹ (Ps. 150.1).
5. "Praise him with... the trumpet... psaltery and harp... timbrel and dance... stringed instruments and cymbals" (Ps. 150.3-5).

⁷³ Frederick Borsch, *Son of Man in Myth and History*, Westminster Press, 1967, p. 92. See also, E. O. James, *Creation and Cosmology: A Historical and Comparative Inquiry*, Leiden: Brill, 1969, p. 29.

⁷⁴ "He raises the horn, the power, of His people Israel." *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1445.

⁷⁵ Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, University of Wales Press, 1967, p. 91.