

Psalm 5

Morning Prayer Monday Week 1

This is an appeal to YHWH by a person who is unjustly accused. He does not protest his innocence, but entrusts himself to God's justice. We might recall Peter's words about Jesus:

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

– 1Peter 2:23

The title reads: 'To the leader: for the flutes. A Psalm* of David'.

Part One: A prayer to YHWH

In the towns of Israel judgment takes place in the morning at the city gates. The psalmist is appealing to God to intervene. The same idea is reflected in the following:

Thus says YHWH: Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed.

– Jeremiah 21:12

One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.

– 2Samuel 23:3-4

Morning by morning I will put down the wicked in the land, excluding all evildoers from the city of YHWH.

– Psalm 101:8

I have indeed prepared my case; I know that I shall be vindicated.

– Job 13:18

Part Two: In praise of God's justice

The basic truth expressed here is that we suffer the consequences of what we do. As noted in the article 'Anger of God' in the Introduction, this is stated within the context of an understanding that God controls what happens in the world. A deeper appreciation of God's respect for human freedom, and a deeper awareness that God is love, lead us to realise that it is not God who 'destroys those who lie'. We bring destruction upon ourselves when we do not live according to the truth. Significant, too, is the fact that Jesus ate with sinners. No wonder those brought up on the sentiments of these verses were shocked at his behaviour (see Luke 15:2).

¹Listen to my words, YHWH*; give heed to my murmuring.

²Attend to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for you, YHWH, you are the one to whom I pray.

³In the morning hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you, watching and waiting.

⁴For you are not one who wills evil. The person who does evil is not your guest.

⁵The boastful will not stand before you; you detest those who do evil.

⁶You destroy those who lie. YHWH, you abhor the bloodthirsty and deceitful.

⁷But I, thanks to your great kindness*, have access to your house. I bow down toward your holy temple in awe* of you.

⁸They speak evil of me. In your justice* be my guide, YHWH; make clear your way before me.

See the article 'Kindness' in the Introduction. See also the article 'Fear of YHWH'. The psalmist knows he is always welcome in God's temple. We might think of the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews which develops the theme of Jesus raised to life by his Father and entering the sanctuary of heaven. Again and again throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, God is represented as the one who 'makes clear' the 'way' to life:

YHWH has led me on the way.

– Genesis 24:27

In your kindness you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

– Exodus 15:13

Teach me your way, YHWH, and lead me on a safe path.

– Psalm 27:11

You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

– Psalm 77:20

Part Three: A Plea that his enemies will be condemned

⁹For there is no truth in their mouths; there is nothing inside but an empty cavern. Their throats are open graves; all honey their speech.

¹⁰Make them suffer the consequences of their sin*, O God; bring to nothing their plotting. Because of their many transgressions* cast them out, for they rebel against you.

Paul quotes verse nine in Romans 3:13. Jesus is just as insistent that it matters how we behave and that we are judged according to what we do. However, as noted in the comment on verses four to six, it is important to realise that it is not God who punishes. Punishment is self-inflicted. It is not God who casts the sinner out. It is the sinner who obstinately refuses to welcome the grace offered by God. Nothing we do can change God's loving. We can, however, reject God's offer of life. God's love is unconditionally offered. It is received conditional upon our welcoming it, for love does not force entry into our lives.

Verse ten is the only example in the Bible of the verb 'āšam [אַשָׁם], 'to suffer the consequences of sin' being used in the causative sense: 'make them suffer the consequences of their sin'. See the article 'Sin' in the Introduction. See also the article 'Transgression'.

**Part Four. The joy of one who trusts in God's fidelity
and is faithful to the covenant**

The call to rejoice in YHWH is a frequent one in the Hebrew Scriptures:

When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices;
and when the wicked perish, there is jubilation.

– Proverbs 11:10

May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your saving presence
say continually, 'Great is YHWH!'

– Psalm 40:16

The expression 'love your name' is found only here and in the following text from Isaiah:

The foreigners who join themselves to YHWH, to minister to him, to love the name of YHWH, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

– Isaiah 56:6-7

To 'love the name of YHWH' means to love calling on YHWH. Speaking of God's 'name' is a way of respecting God's transcendence. The setting is the cult and the assembly calling out God's name (YHWH). In other places the Bible speaks of loving YHWH (see Deuteronomy 6:5; 11:1; 13:4).

In Psalm 3:8 the psalmist prayed that God's blessing would be upon his people. Here he gives expression to his faith that YHWH blesses those who do his will. See the article 'Bless' in the Introduction. The psalmist calls us to love YHWH who covers us with his tent, covers us with his wings, and surrounds us with a huge protective shield.

**¹¹But let all who take
refuge in you rejoice;
forever let them sing for
joy.**

**Spread your protection
over them, so that those
who love your name may
exult in you.**

**¹²For you bless* the
just*, YHWH; you cover
them from above and
surround them with the
shield of your goodness.**