

Psalm 132

Vigil of the Assumption
Evening Prayer Thursday Week 3

This belongs to the sub-group 120-134 which have the title: 'A Song of Ascents.' It is a ceremonial chant recalling the transfer of the ark to David's city (2Samuel 6) and then to the temple (1Kings 8). It recalls the link between David's desire to build God a house and God's promise to build a house (that is, a dynasty) for David (2Samuel 7). There are elements that suggest that it comes from the time of the Chronicler (5th century BC).

Now rise up, YHWH God, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. Let your priests, YHWH God, be clothed with salvation, and let your faithful rejoice in your goodness. YHWH God, do not reject your anointed one. Remember your steadfast love for your servant David.

– 2Chronicles 6:41-42

However it is not certain that such a ceremony would have actually taken place at that time, since the ark may not have featured any longer in the Jerusalem cult (see the legend of its being hidden by Jeremiah - 2Maccabees 2:4-8).

Part One. Prayer for the king

One thinks of the Suffering Servant:

He has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God,
and afflicted.

– Isaiah 53:4

The arms of Joseph were made agile by the hands of
the Champion of Jacob.

– Genesis 49:24

The Sovereign, YHWH of hosts, the Champion of
Israel.

– Isaiah 1:24

I am YHWH your Saviour, your Redeemer, the Cham-
pion of Jacob.

– Isaiah 49:26 (= 60:16)

David found favour with God and asked that he might
find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob.

– Acts 7:46

**¹YHWH*, remember in
David's favour all the
hardships he endured;**

**²and how he swore to
YHWH and vowed to the
Champion of Jacob:**

**³I will not enter my house
or climb into my bed,**

**⁴I will not give sleep to my
eyes or rest to my eyelids,**

**⁵until I find a place for
YHWH, a dwelling place
for the Champion of
Jacob.'**

Transfer of the Ark

⁶We heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the fields of Jaar.

⁷Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool.

The transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem is being recalled, and perhaps ceremonially re-enacted. ‘Ephrathah’ is mentioned in Genesis 35:16,19; 48:7; 1Samuel 17:12; Ruth 1:2 and Micah 5:1-2 (see Matthew 2:6). It refers to the region of Bethlehem, just south of Jerusalem. David came from this area.

Ephrathah, the father of Bethlehem.

– 1Chronicles 4:4

The ‘fields of Jaar’ refers to Kiriath-jearim where the ark was installed after being captured back from the Philistines (1Samuel 6:21 - 7:2).

⁸Rise up, YHWH, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might.

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, ‘Arise, YHWH, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you.

– Numbers 10:35

Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him.

– Psalm 68:1

King David rose to his feet and said: ‘Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had planned to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of YHWH, for the footstool of our God.’

– 1Chronicles 28:2

God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple.

– Revelation 11:19

⁹Let your priests be properly attired, and let your faithful shout for joy.

The priests are to be clothed in the right vestments for the occasion (compare verse 16 where the vestments signify salvation). They are to do God’s will in everything.

The ‘faithful’ [Hebrew *h̄sîdîm*] are those who welcome God’s covenant love [Hebrew *hesed*] and are faithful to the covenant.

¹⁰For your servant David’s sake do not deny audience to your anointed* one.

This includes a prayer for a restoration of the Davidic dynasty.

Part Two

God's commitment to David's dynasty and to the temple

This is a powerful affirmation of faith at a time when there was no king in Judah. Note that the promise made by God is conditional (see also Psalm 89:29-38). The writers of the New Testament saw this promise realised in Jesus, the son of David.

Since he was a prophet, David knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne.

– Acts 2:30

He chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves. He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever. He chose his servant David, and took him from the sheepfolds.

– Psalm 78:68-70

On that day I will cause a horn to sprout up for the house of Israel, and I will open your lips among them. Then they shall know that I am YHWH.

– Ezekiel 29:21

It is you, YHWH, who light my lamp;
my God, you clear away my darkness.
With you I can leap into the fray,
with my God I can scale any wall.

– Psalm 18:28-29

He brought out the king's son, Joash, put the crown on him, and gave him the covenant; they proclaimed him king, and anointed him; they clapped their hands and shouted, 'Long live the king!'

– 2Kings 11:12

¹¹**YHWH gave David under oath a promise from which he will not turn back:**

'A son of yours I will set on your throne.

¹²**If your sons keep my covenant* and my decrees that I shall teach them, their sons also, forever more, shall sit on your throne.'**

¹³**For YHWH has chosen Zion; he wants it for his residence:**

¹⁴**'This is my resting place forever; here I will reside, for I want it.**

¹⁵**I will abundantly bless its provisions; I will satisfy its poor* with bread.**

¹⁶**Its priests I will clothe with salvation*, and its faithful will shout for joy.**

¹⁷**There I will cause a horn to sprout up for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed* one.**

¹⁸**His enemies I will clothe with disgrace, but on him his royal crown will blossom.'**