

Psalm 20: Prayer for victory in battle



Psalm 20 (19) (Mode 1. 5....65 / 3.....23)

It would appear that Jerusalem is under siege. Those living in the city have assembled in the temple to plead with the Lord (YHWH) to come to the aid of the king and the army.

A first century BC Aramaic version of this psalm in Egyptian script has been discovered which has the Egyptian god, Horus, where the psalm reads YHWH. Is this a translation from an ancient Egyptian text which the psalmist has borrowed, or did the devotees of Horus borrow Psalm 20 and adapt it?

A campaign is about to begin. The king is fighting YHWH's cause and according to the current ideology, a nation's gods were expected to fight at the head of the army.

‘Hezekiah appointed combat commanders over the people, and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, ‘Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him; for there is one greater with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles’(2Chronicles 32:6-8).

In time of trouble may the Lord respond to your plea.
May the God of Jacob protect you.
From the sanctuary may God send you help,
give you support from Zion.

May God recall your many offerings,
and look with favour upon your sacrifices.
May God grant you the desire of your heart,
and fulfil every one of your plans.

‘The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart;
and the Lord has appointed him to be ruler over his
people.’(1Samuel 13:14).

‘O Lord God, because of your promise,
and according to your own heart,
you have wrought all this greatness,
so that your servant may know it’(2Samuel 7:21).

May we shout for joy over your deliverance.

May we raise our standards in triumph.

The president of the assembly pronounces a favourable oracle

“The Lord will fulfil
all your petitions.”

Now I know that the Lord's anointed
will be victorious.

The Holy One will grant him deliverance,
giving strength to his victorious right arm.

Some boast of chariots and horses,
but we invoke the Lord our God.

They will waver and fall,
but we will stand firm.

Give victory to the king, Lord;
answer us when we cry out to you.

This shout rises from the assembly in support of the petition of the king, as the troops prepare to march out to defend their city against the army that is besieging the city. They are praying to be rescued from the attacking army.