

Psalm 76: God's Judgment



Psalm 76 (75) (Mode 3. 3....12 / 4.....271)

Typical of the times, this psalm sees victory or defeat in war as determined by God. It asserts the irresistible power of God against God's enemies. It celebrates victory in battle. Its origin may have been in Judah after the fall of Samaria and the forced withdrawal of Sennacherib and his army from their siege of Jerusalem.

God, you are known everywhere in Judah,
your fame is great in Israel.

Your tent is pitched in Jerusalem,
your command post on Mount Zion.

There you break the flaming arrows,
shield and sword, all weapons of war.

‘I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on my
mountains trample him under foot; his yoke
shall be removed from them, and his burden
from their shoulders’(Isaiah 14:25).

You, O Lord, are resplendent,
majestic with mountains of plunder.

‘God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise’(Habakkuk 3:3).

‘Teman’ means ‘of the south’. It is used of northern Edom. Mount Paran is located south of Judah and west of Edom.

‘Out of the north comes golden splendour; around God is awesome majesty’(Job 37:22).

The stouthearted are stripped of their spoil.

They are dazed, unable to move.

At your battle cry, O God of Jacob,

both rider and horse lie stunned.

You are awesome indeed!

Who can stand before you once your anger is aroused!

‘Lord, God of our ancestors, are you not God in heaven? Do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In your hand are power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you’(2Chronicles 20:6).

From the heavens you utter judgment.
The earth reels, and is hushed in silence
when you rise up as judge
to defend the oppressed.

‘Enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth’(Isaiah 2:19).

‘Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan, I will now rise up,’ says the Lord; ‘I will place them in the safety for which they long’(Psalm 12:5).

When you are robed in fury,
even warriors must praise you.

Make your vows to the Lord your God.
Carry out what you have promised.
Bring your gifts
to the one who is awesome,
who cuts off the breath of princes,
and inspires fear in the kings of the earth.

Terrible as is the might of an aggressive army, it is no match for the Lord. The psalmists call the people to make thanksgiving offerings to their Lord who has protected them from the violent intent of their enemies.