

Psalm 113: The Lord raises the poor from the dust



Psalm 113 (112) (Mode 5. 5...6..1 / 1...6 / 6...5)

This is the first of the so-called Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113-118) used on the celebration of the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and Dedication.

It is an acclamation of praise and joy at God's 'name'(YHWH), praising God especially for raising up the poor.

Praise, O servants of the Lord;
praise the Lord,
now and always.

From the rising of the sun to its setting,
praised be the Lord,

God's personal name is kept hidden in mystery.

‘Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name”. But God said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face”’(Genesis 32:29-30).

‘A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like that of an angel of God, most awe-inspiring; I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name ... Then Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, “What is your name, so that we may honour you when your words come true?” But the angel of the Lord said to him, “Why do you ask my name? It is too wonderful””(Judges 13:6,17-18).

God reveals his name to invite us into dialogue.

‘Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them: ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you’, and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I am Who I Am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites: I Am has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites: YHWH, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations””(Exodus 3:13-15).

‘The Lord (YHWH) descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, “The Lord.” The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin”’(Exodus 34:5-7).

We are to enter this dialogue (we are to use God's name) respectfully.

‘Give me an undivided heart to revere your name.’

(Psalm 86:11)

‘The nations will fear the name of the Lord.’

(Psalm 102:15)

‘I am called by your name, Lord, God of hosts.’

(Jeremiah 15:16; Jeremiah is ‘Yirm^eyah’)

‘This one will say, “I am for the Lord,” another will be called by the name of Jacob, yet another will write on the hand, “for the Lord” and adopt the name of Israel.’

(Isaiah 44:5)

The Lord is on high, above all nations.

God's glory shines over the heavens.

The Lord is Lord of heaven, the only real God.

‘The Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one.’

(Zechariah 14:9)

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory’(Isaiah 6:3).

Who is like the Lord our God?

Mi ka YHWH Elohenı?

who is enthroned on high

The Lord is the Most High God ('El 'Elyôn)

'The Most High uttered his voice'(Psalm 18:13).

'You have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling place'(Psalm 91:9).

'Let them know that you alone, whose name is the Lord,
are the Most High over all the earth'(Psalm 83:18).

The Lord looks down upon heaven and earth

‘Thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit’(Isaiah 57:15).

‘Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and glorious habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The yearning of your heart and your compassion? They are withheld from me’(Isaiah 63:15).

to raise the poor from the dust.

God raises the needy from their misery,
to seat them with princes,
with the leaders of the people.

These final verses speak of God's action on the earth. Compare the Canticle of Hannah (1Samuel 2) and the Magnificat of Mary (Luke 1:53-53)

'He raises up the needy out of distress'(Psalm 107:41).

‘The children born in the time of your bereavement will yet say in your hearing: “The place is too crowded for me; make room for me to settle.” Then you will say in your heart, “Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away – so who has reared these? I was left all alone – where then have these come from?”’ (Isaiah 49:20-21)

In his Letter to the Philippians 2:6-11, Paul speaks of Jesus humbling himself and being raised up.

‘Sing, O barren one who did not bear; burst into song and shout, you who have not been in labour! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord.’

(Isaiah 54:1 - quoted Galatians 4:27).

‘Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?’(James 2:5).

It is God who gives a home
to the barren woman,
and gladdens her heart with children.

We might reflect on the following scene:

‘Jesus said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took Mary into his own.’

(John 19:27)