

Psalm 132: Davidic Dynasty



Psalm 132 (131) (Mode 2. 5...31 / 4.....32)

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, Lord God, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. Let your priests, Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let your faithful rejoice in your goodness. Lord 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

Lord, remember David
and the many hardships he endured;

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)

Remember how he swore an oath to you,
O Mighty God of Jacob:

‘I will not enter my house
or lie down in my bed;
I will not close my eyes,
nor will I sleep,
till I find a place for the Lord,
a dwelling place for the Mighty God of Jacob.’

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

(Acts 7:46)

We heard of the ark in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields of Yearim.

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-yearim where the ark was installed after being captured back from the Philistines (1Samuel 6:21 - 7:2).

‘Let us go to your house;
let us kneel at your footstool.’
Go up, Lord, to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.

‘Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say: Arise, Lord, let your enemies be scattered’(Numbers 10:35).

‘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 the Lord, 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).

Let your priests be properly attired,
and 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' [h^asidim] are those who welcome God's covenant love [hesedd] and are faithful to the covenant.

For 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

You once swore to David
and you do not break your word:
'A son of yours
I will set on your throne.

If your heirs keep my covenant
and the decrees that I have made,
their sons also, for ever more,
will sit on your throne.'

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).

The Lord has chosen Zion,
wanting it for his residence:
‘This is my resting place,
I have chosen to live here for ever.

I will bless it abundantly.
Its poor will have food.
Its priests I will clothe with holiness,
its faithful will shout for joy.

Here David’s stock will flower.
I will prepare a lamp for my anointed.

‘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 the Lord’(Ezekiel 29:21).

‘It is you who light my lamp; Lord, my God, lights up my darkness. By you I can crush a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall.’

(Psalm 18:28-29)

His enemies I will cover with disgrace,
but on him the royal crown will shine.'

'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).