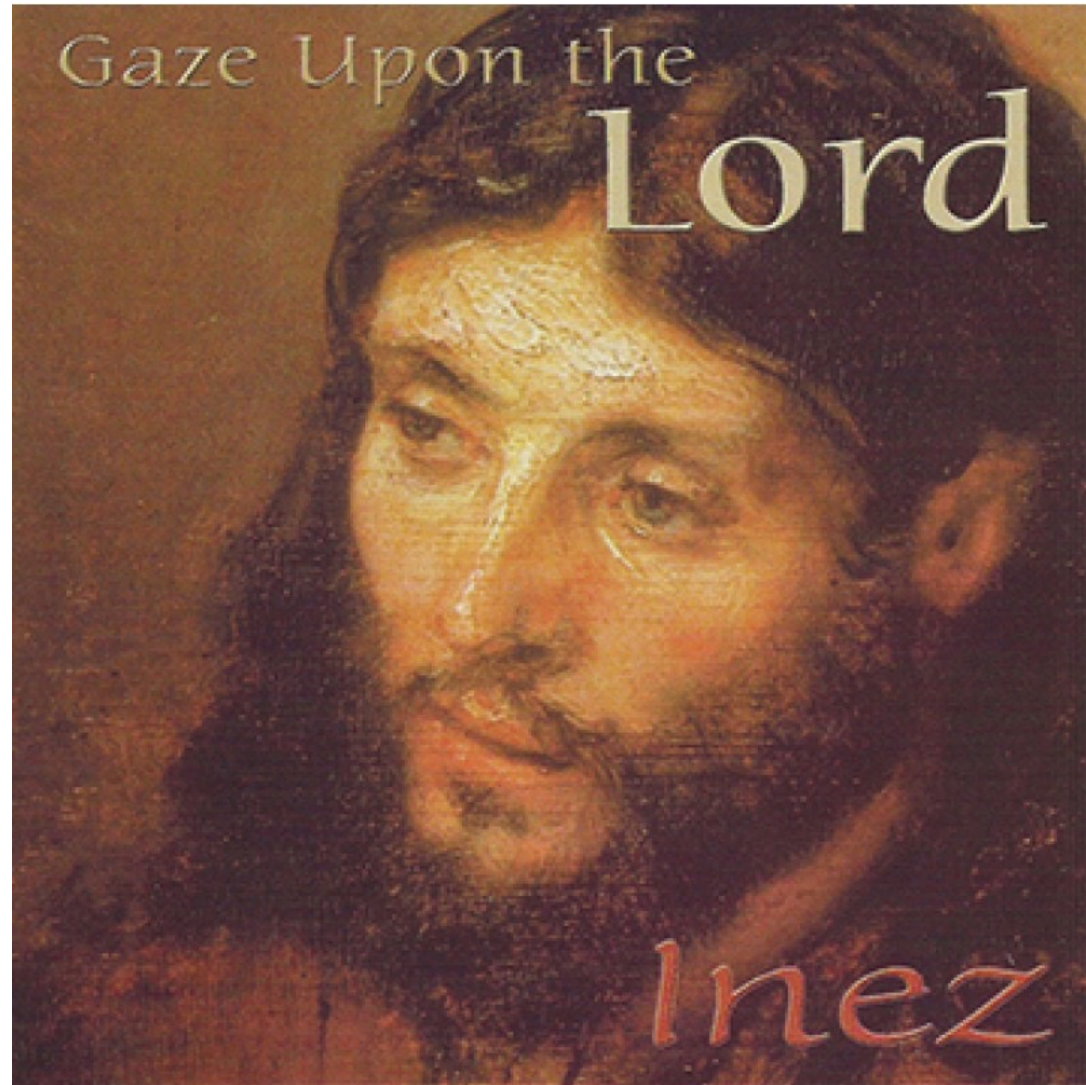


Psalm 141:

‘My eyes are turned towards you, my God



Psalm 141 (140) (Mode 1. 5....65 / 3.....23)

The Psalmist is under pressure to join forces with 'those who do guilty deeds'(verse 4). Perhaps he is being pressured to join those collaborating with the Syrian rulers who were trying to undermine the Torah at the time of the Maccabees.

I call upon you, Lord; come quickly to me!
Listen, for with you I am pleading.
Let my prayer rise to you like incense,
the lifting up of my hands like an evening sacrifice.

‘King Ahaz commanded the priest Uriah, saying: Upon the great altar offer the morning burnt offering, and the evening grain offering’(2Kings 16:15).

‘At the evening sacrifice I got up from my fasting.’
(Ezra 9:5)

‘Gabriel, whom I had seen before in a vision, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice’(Daniel 9:21).

Lord, set a guard on my lips.

Watch my every word.

‘Who will set a guard over my mouth, and an effective seal upon my lips, so that I may not fall because of them, and my tongue may not destroy me? Lord, Father and Master of my life, do not abandon me to their designs, and do not let me fall because of them! Who will set whips over my thoughts, and the discipline of wisdom over my mind, so as not to spare me in my errors, and not overlook my sins?’(Sirach 22:27 - 23:2).

Do not let my heart turn to any evil,
or consider doing what is wrong.

Let me never join the wicked
to indulge in their feasting.

The wicked are enticing him with the delicacies of a luxurious lifestyle (verses 4 and 5). He is severely tempted to go along with them; hence the intensity of his plea (in verses 1-5).

He wants the Lord to keep guard not only over his mouth, but also over his heart that he will not let attachment to pleasures distract him from obedience to the Torah.

If the just correct me,
I take their rebuke as a kindness

He would prefer that the ‘faithful’ [the ‘Hasidim’] strike him down than that he would betray the Torah. The Hasidim are determined to resist the aggressive cultural imperialism of Antiochus IV and to remain faithful to the Covenant. The author needs their correction to strengthen him against the temptations of the ‘good life’.

Proverbs 1:10-16

‘My child, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, “Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us wantonly ambush the innocent; like Sheol let us swallow them alive and whole, like those who go down to the Pit. We shall find all kinds of costly things; we shall fill our houses with booty. Throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse” – my child, do not walk in their way, keep your foot from their paths; for their feet run to evil.’

The oil of the wicked will never touch my head.

My prayer is continually against their wicked deeds.

‘You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows’(Psalm 23:5).

‘The wise, when rebuked, will love you’(Proverbs 9:8).

‘Whoever rebukes a person will afterward find more favour than one who flatters with the tongue.’

(Proverbs 28:23)

‘You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment’(Luke 7:46).

When they are handed over to those who will condemn them, then they will learn that I have spoken the truth.

Like a rock that one breaks apart on the ground,
so will their bones be strewn at the mouth of the grave.

The psalmist anticipates the judgment of God upon them. They will be flung headlong as from a precipice into the gaping hole of Sheol. They will be hurled over the precipice, like Jezebel from the balcony.'

(2Kings 9:33)

'Your proud heart has deceived you, you that live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is in the heights. You say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord'(Obadiah 3-4).

But my eyes are turned toward you, O God, my Lord;
in you I seek refuge.

Do not leave me defenceless.

Keep me from the trap that they have laid for me.

The following two lines are not in the liturgy

Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
while I escape.

The psalmist is praying that they will fail and will
be punished as they deserve.

‘The terror you inspire and the pride of your heart have deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill. Although you make your nest as high as the eagle’s, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord’(Jeremiah 49:16).