

## Psalm 76

Prayer during the Day Sunday Week 2 and 4

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. Its title reads: 'To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm\* of Asaph\*. A Song.'

### Part One. The victorious revelation in Zion

The prophet Isaiah, a contemporary of Sennacherib, uttered the following oracle:

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

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

### Part Two. The unmaking of the aggressors

No matter how powerful the enemies, they are no match for the Almighty.

YHWH, 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

It is always in your power to show great strength, and who can withstand the might of your arm?

– Wisdom 11:21

**<sup>1</sup>God manifests his presence in Judah, his fame is great in Israel.**

**<sup>2</sup>His abode is in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.**

**<sup>3</sup>There he shattered the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war.**

[Selah\*]

**<sup>4</sup>Splendid are you, majestic with mountains of plunder.**

**<sup>5</sup>The stouthearted\* were stripped of their spoil; they sank into sleep; none of the troops was able to lift a hand.**

**<sup>6</sup>At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse lay paralysed.**

**<sup>7</sup>You are awesome indeed! Who can stand before you when once your anger\* is roused?**

God's judgment

### Part Three. Judgment

**<sup>8</sup>From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still**

There is a frightened silence as the earth awaits God's judgment.

Enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from the terror of YHWH, and from the glory of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.

– Isaiah 2:19

**<sup>9</sup>when God rose up to establish judgment\*, to save\* all the oppressed of the earth.**

**[Selah\*]**

YHWH responds:

Because of violence against the poor,  
because the needy groan, I will now rise up.

I will keep them safe as they give their testimony.

– Psalm 12:5

Jesus' idea of the judgment is the same: it is a vindication of those who have placed their trust in God.

**<sup>10</sup>You overcome human rage, you protect those who escape it.**

**<sup>11</sup>Make vows to YHWH\* your God, and carry them out; let all who are around him bring gifts to the one who is awesome,**

**<sup>12</sup>who cuts off the breath of princes, who inspires fear in the kings of the earth.**

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