

Psalm 109

Not in Sunday Mass or Office

People whom the psalmist has loved have turned against him. He lists at some length (verses 6-19) the terrible things that they wish upon him. He turns to YHWH, praying that their curses will fall on them instead, and that he himself will be vindicated. Do not expect to find anything here of Jesus' injunction to love one's enemies, but the psalmist's cry to God for protection and justice is quite moving. The title reads: 'To the leader. Of David. A Psalm*.'

On the subject of the silence of God see the following:

**¹Do not be silent, O God
whom I praise.**

YHWH, will you keep silent, and punish us so severely?

– Isaiah 64:12

Why do you look on the treacherous, and are silent when the wicked swallow those more righteous than they?

– Habakkuk 1:13

You, YHWH, I call on you; my rock, do not refuse to hear me. If you are silent to me, I shall among those who go down to the Pit.

– Psalm 28:1

I call all day, my God, but you do not answer; all night long I call and cannot rest.

– Psalm 22:2

You have seen, YHWH; do not be silent!
O Lord, do not be far from me!

– Psalm 35:22

Hear my prayer, YHWH, attend to my cry; do not be deaf to my tears. For I am your guest, a stranger passing by, like all who have gone before me.

– Psalm 39:12

O God, do not remain silent; do not hold your peace and do nothing, O God!

– Psalm 83:1

Part One. The psalmist presents his case

**²For wicked and deceitful mouths speak out against me,
contending against me with lying tongues.**

**³They beset me with words of hate,
and attack me without cause.**

**⁴In return for my love they accuse me,
even while I pray for them.**

**⁵They reward me evil for good,
and hatred for my love.**

The ill will of his enemies

Part Two. The curses invoked against him by his accusers

The language has parallels in curse formulas from Mesopotamia. Compare Deuteronomy 27-28. The Hebrew for ‘accuser’ is šāṭān [שָׂטָן].

**⁶They say, ‘Appoint a wicked man against him;
let an accuser stand on his right.**

**⁷When he is tried, let him be found guilty;
may his pleading be reckoned as sin*.**

⁸May his days be few; may another seize his post.

Verse 8 is applied to Judas in Acts 1:20

⁹May his children be orphans, and his wife a widow.

We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows.

– Lamentations 5:3

Give their children over to famine; hurl them out to the power of the sword,
let their wives become childless and widowed.

May their men meet death by pestilence, their youths be slain by the sword in battle.

– Jeremiah 18:21

**¹⁰May his children wander about and beg;
may they be driven out of the ruins they inhabit.**

**¹¹May the creditor seize all that he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil.**

**¹²May there be no one to do him a kindness*,
nor anyone to pity his orphaned children.**

**¹³May his posterity be cut off;
may his name be blotted out in the second generation.**

**¹⁴May the guilt* of his father be remembered before YHWH*,
and do not let the sin* of his mother be blotted out.**

**¹⁵Let them be before YHWH continually,
and may his memory be cut off from the earth.**

**¹⁶He did not remember to show kindness*,
but pursued the poor* and needy* and the brokenhearted to their death.**

**¹⁷He loved to curse; let curses come on him.
He did not appreciate a blessing*; may it be far from him.**

**¹⁸He clothed himself with cursing as his coat,
may it soak into his body like water, like oil into his bones.**

**¹⁹May it be like a garment that he wraps around himself,
like a belt that he wears every day.’**

Part Four. The psalmist pleads with YHWH

²⁰May that be the reward of my accusers from YHWH,
of those who speak evil against my life.

²¹But you, YHWH my Lord, act on my behalf for your name's sake;
because your kindness* is good, deliver me.

²²For I am poor* and needy*,
and my heart* is pierced within me.

²³I am gone like a shadow at evening;
I am shaken off like a locust.

²⁴My knees are weak through fasting;
my flesh has become gaunt.

²⁵I am an object of scorn to my accusers;
when they see me, they shake their heads.

²⁶Help me, YHWH my God!

Save* me according to your kindness*.

²⁷Let them know that this is your hand;
you, YHWH, have done it.

²⁸Let them curse, but you will bless*.

Let my assailants be put to shame; may your servant be glad.

²⁹May my accusers be clothed with dishonour;
may they be wrapped in their own shame as in a mantle.

³⁰With my mouth I will give great thanks to YHWH;
I will praise him in the midst of the throng.

³¹For he stands at the right hand of the needy*,
to save* them from those who would condemn them to death.