

Psalm 123 - The Plea of the Pilgrim:-

This is a devout plea by an individual on behalf of his people. It may be that the pilgrim is remembering the time of exile in Egypt or the time of the exile. Note that the title does not ascribe it to a specific author. It reflects on the dependence of Israel on the Lord God.

Verses 1 – 2, The eye of hope:-

The psalmist refers to ‘eyes’ four times in these verses in order to emphasise the fact that the pilgrims are seeking the Lord’s favour. Just as the servants look to their superiors for favour, so those in the band of pilgrims look to the Lord and wait for His mercy.

Verses 3 – 4, The plea for mercy:-

The measure of their need is indicated by the repetition of this cry for mercy. The previous mention of servants and masters coupled with the contempt “*for those that are at ease*” suggests that it refers to the widespread servitude of Israel during the Exile or the time in Egypt.

* * * * *

Psalm 124 – The Deliverer of the Pilgrim:-

This can be read as the answer to the ‘plea for mercy’ in the previous Psalm. The example of the escape from the chariots of the Egyptians in the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus chapter 14, especially verses 30 – 31) is still read as part of the Passover celebrations.

Verses 1 – 5, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side”:-

The opening sentence is an invitation for the liturgical response in verse 2. The congregation / group of pilgrims repeat the words of the leader. It was only by the help of the Lord God that Israel avoided being “*swallowed up alive . . . swept away . . . the torrent would have gone over us*”.

Verses 6 – 8, Thanksgiving to God:-

“*Blessed be the Lord*”. The Psalmist uses vivid picture language to describe the narrow escape and to heighten the expression of gratitude. The last verse refers to the calling on “*the name of the Lord*” in prayer, recognising Him as the source of help.

The Reading from Exodus chapter 14 is used as part of the Easter Vigil (Saturday Evening to early on Easter Day). Remember how great a deliverance the Lord God has wrought for us in the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ and give thanks.

*“The Lord has triumphed gloriously.
The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.
The Lord has given us the victory.
The Lord has triumphed gloriously”.*

From the ‘Song of Miriam’. Exodus chapter 15