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A Taste and Longing for Heaven

Psalm 126

Throughout the Bible, we read of a longing on the part of God's people for glory/heaven. Speaking of the Patriarchs of old we read:

Hebrews 11:16a, "But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is a heavenly one..."

We see it in the Psalms.

Psalm 42:2, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

We see it in Paul when he is speaking of the final state and the resurrection of the dead.

Philippians 3:13-14, "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

It is this longing with which the Bible ends.

Revelation 22:20-21, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

I'll never forget the exhortation of my professor in seminary when we studied the Book of Revelation

15 Words of Exhortation for Christian Pilgrims

1. **Psalm 120**: We must ensure that the burdens of this life drive us to Christ.
2. **Psalm 121**: In our burdens, we must know that God will never abandon or forsake us.
3. **Psalm 122**: In Christ our identity is that of a worshipper who exalts in the character of God.
4. **Palm 123**: The love/mercy of God is that which buoys us in life!
5. **Psalm 124**: In light of the darkness of this world, we must be spiritually vigilant to be driven by the person and work of Christ!
6. **Psalm 125**: Commending and encouraging the genuine servant of God over and against the false servant.

The Book of Revelation was not written to make us prophets, but to give us the same passion that the book closes with: a longing for others to know 'the grace of God' and a longing for Christ's return. (Reymond, 1988)

That no doubt is why Hebrews indicates that THE longing of the genuine child of God living by faith is the final state.

Hebrews 13:14, "For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come."

Philippians 3:20, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is this "longing" that is addressed in Psalm 126. The Songs of Ascents can be taken in reference to three different "Jeruselems."

- The literal "city of Jerusalem" which housed the temple (Galatians 4:25).

- The “Jerusalem above” which is the city into which we enter upon salvation (Galatians 4:26).
- The “New Jerusalem” into which we will enter and what we shall become following the Last Judgment (Revelation 21:9-10).

While some restrict the application of Psalm 126 to the “Jerusalem above” and so life in the current age, this Psalm is best understood in light the “New Jerusalem” and so our heavenly home in Glory. Consider, the Psalm begins in v. 1 talking about the restoration God provided for His people from exile. But then in v. 4 it contains a prayer for *ANOTHER* “restoration from captivity.” If their captivity had already been restored, why is the Psalmist praying for yet another one? Because “the captivity” of v. 4 refers NOT to the Babylonian captivity, BUT the captivity of all God’s people in this state of sin and misery (with which all my commentaries agree). Recall how Peter addressed the Christians of his day.

1 Peter 1:1a, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered [this is the language of the Diaspora] throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia...”

Peter understood that because of our current state of sin, all God’s people are exiles waiting to go home.

1 Peter 1:3-4, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead [what is this hope?], to obtain an inheritance [whose first reference in the New Testament is the Promised Land of Glory] which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

So, as “aliens and strangers” what is our “living hope”? It is entering into the Final State, the New Jerusalem, our eternal home in Glory!

It is this Promised Land, this restoration that ultimately is in mind in Psalm 126.^{1,2} Notice, the Psalm begins with an allusion to the first restoration of God’s people to the Promised Land.

[An Allusion to the First Restoration of God’s People to the Promised Land, vv. 1-3.](#)

Psalm 126:L, “When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion, we were like those who dream.”

Recall, roughly 70 years following the first exile of God’s people into Babylon (605 BC), God raised up a secular ruler, Cyrus the Persian, who issued a proclamation calling any

amongst God's people, who were willing, to return to Palestine and rebuild the temple. You recall those willing were 40,360 people (cf. Ezra 2:64).

And it truly was like a "dream"!^{3,4,5} This gesture on the part of Cyrus was unprecedented in the ancient world as the deporting of conquered peoples was THE primary tool to ensure peace in conquered regions. Yet again, beyond any Jew's wildest "dreams" at the time, Cyrus commissioned God's people to return in 538 BC.

Ezra 1:1-4, "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying, 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. And every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.'"

This is just crazy! NOT ONLY were God's people allowed to return home, BUT Cyrus made sure that they returned home with wealth, power, security, AND with the temple vessels.

Ezra 1:7, "Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods."

The next verse describes the festival-spirit which accompanied God's people as they left en masse

Psalms 126:2, "Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with joyful shouting;⁶ then they said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.'"

How could they NOT! The most powerful man in the world at the time, Cyrus, understood that this return was of God. Accordingly, any and all in authority — whether that be in Persia, Egypt, Greece, or Rome- would have chalked this up to the kind and glorious intention of God!⁷ The conclusion?

Psalms 126:3, "The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad."

After recounting the glorious restoration which the Lord brought about for His people, the Psalmist arrived at this confession.

Yet we must see that this is BUT one of countless things God has done and is doing for His people right now. From upholding our beating heart (Hebrews 1:3) to sending His angels to protect His people (2 Kings 6:17), the Lord has an eye for our best in and through all things (Romans 8:28)! Knowing this, what impact ought this to have on us? I don't know about you, but it most certainly "makes me glad"!

The word for "glad" (גָּדַל [sameach]) speaks of a gratitude/relief which encompasses the entire person as it arises from both "the heart" (cf. Ex. 4:14; Psalm 19:8; 104:15; 105:3) and "the soul" (Psalm 86:4). We are speaking here of Biblical "joy" which is NOT a human emotion BUT- to use the words of Johnathan Edwards- a Religious Affection (which arises from a conviction or realization about God and/or His kingdom). It is as John put it...

1 John 3:1a, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!..." (NKJV)

This is an exclamation of joy!

Yet the "joy"/"gladness" in this case arose as the Psalmist reflected upon God's past redemptive work in which He restored His people to a land which their sin forfeited. AND THAT IS THE KEY HERE. Recall, when God organized His people into a Theocratic Nation, He gave this warning.

Leviticus 26:14-16a, 17a, "But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, I, in turn, will do this to you... I will set My face against you so that you shall be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you shall rule over you..."

Because God's people as a Theocracy failed to honor the Lord, God's people were conquered and brought into exile! Accordingly, that God should restore His people to the Promised Land after their rebellion was ALL of grace! Now, it was in light of this former grace that the Psalmist approached God in v. 4 and offered a specific prayer, a longing for another restoration: The new heavens and earth.

[A Longing for Another Restoration: The New Heavens and Earth, v. 4.](#)

Psalm 126:4, "Restore our captivity, O Lord..."

In other words, do it again! Truly, as we have seen, the "restoration" in mind here was NOT that of ethnic Israel to the Promised land, BUT that of "true Israel" — the people of

God — to heaven! Recall, when God created man, He placed Adam and Eve in a paradise to co-reign with Him over this world.

Genesis 1:27-28, “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

What is most noteworthy here is that God was/is the Ruler of this world. Yet, having made man in His image, the Lord gave us a noble calling: to co-reign with Him over creation.

However, just like with the Theocracy, this divine calling was predicated upon Adam’s obedience to the Lord’s commands.

Genesis 2:16-17, “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.’”

Now we know what Adam did; he rebelled against God and so was cast out of Paradise! We read this of Adam:

Genesis 3:23b-24, “...the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

All of this is bad news, yet essential news if we are going to understand the Psalm before us. For listen to the words of the Apostle Paul.

1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.”- as our Federal Head, Adam’s sin condemned the human race. Yet God sent a Second Adam... a second Federal Head by which we are saved, Jesus Christ!...

Speaking of this salvation, Peter proclaimed these words after healing a lame man:

Acts 3:18-21, “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and return, that (1) your sins may be wiped away, (2) in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that (3) He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive UNTIL

THE PERIOD OF THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”- our salvation was secured and applied to us with a glorious end in mind... what Peter identified here as “the period of the restoration of all things.”

Do you understand the significance of this? The moment man fell from the Garden of Eden, God set in motion a plan to restore His people to the Garden — which we understand is the New Heavens and Earth! That is what all of Redemptive History is moving toward! As such as Christians we are to long for the new heavens and new earth.

2 Peter 3:13b, “...we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

That is the essence of the longing reflected in Psalm 126:4a, “Restore our captivity, O Lord...” Yet there is more.

Psalm 126:4b, “Restore our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the South.”

The expression literally reads, “as the streams of the Negev.”⁸ South of Jerusalem, south of Palestine is a wilderness, which is a harsh and brutally hot desert. In the Bible Survey course, I describe this area with the following:

This climatic zone contains the desert areas of Palestine beginning in the southern Negev and moving further southward. It is part of a major subtropical arid zone that includes the Arabian and Saharan deserts. Only two to six inches of precipitation fall in these arid areas per year. (Thurston, 2010, p. 10)

Accordingly, there are riverbeds in this region, yet they are bone dry. However, there are those rare times when a storm hits this region and dumps massive amounts of water on it.⁹ When that occurs, the dry river beds are deluged and become raging rivers. One moment they are dry... the next they are in chaos!¹⁰ And that is how it is going to be when Christ returns to this earth for judgment. Paul speaking of the Second Coming wrote these words:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...”

The “twinkling of an eye” refers to the time it takes for a beam of light to pass from the outer perimeter of the eye to the retina- which speaks of suddenness/rapidity of action! It is as Paul said in 1 Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, “For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman

with child; and they shall not escape.”

It is this suddenness, this chaotic climax that is behind the metaphor, “as the streams in the South.”¹¹ It is toward this event that all things in this life are headed. This in part is the end game behind all God’s plans.

Accordingly, looking back upon the glory, gladness, and joy that God’s people experienced when one day they were living in the Diaspora and the next they received the commission to return, the Psalmist here longed for and so prayed that God essentially would do the same for all His people living in this fallen world, “Restore our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the South.” In the vocabulary of the New Testament, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20a)

With that, the Psalm climaxes with an encouraging contrast between the child of God living in this world and their lives in the next — which is the point of this Psalm!

The Glory that Awaits Us, vv. 5-6.

Psalm 126:5-6a, “Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy¹²...”¹³”

Reflecting upon vv. 1-2, the “tears” and “weeping” speak of the trial and difficulty that we face as children of God living in this estate of sin and misery.¹⁴ And the references to “sowing” and “carrying his bag of seed” speak to the kingdom labor we do as His servants in this age — and it is labor. On Paul’s First Missionary Journey, we read these words:

Acts 14:19-22, “But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he arose and entered the city. And the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith [what was it that Paul said that encouraged them?], and *saying*, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’”

This was “encouraging” because it is easy to conclude, when facing trial, that we’ve done or are doing something wrong. Yet that is NOT always the case. Consider Paul’s response, “It is through many tribulations we MUST enter the kingdom of God.” Listen to how John as a child of God thought of himself:

Revelation 1:9a, “I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and

kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus...”

This is what we are as servants of Christ- “fellow partakers in the tribulation and kingdom [work] that is in Jesus”! Recall Paul’s words to the Philippians:

Philippians 1:29-30, “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.”

Trial... difficulty... labor are NOT unique experiences typical of the life and calling ALL who endeavor to “sow Kingdom seed” in this fallen world. The point is this: serving God in this state of exile — in a world that hates Christ and so will hate us — is going to be difficult.¹⁵ And so, “we sow in tears.” We go “to and fro weeping, carrying [our] bag of seed”! Yet, as difficult as it may be, the joy we have in the next age will eclipse any and all present grief, sadness, or pain!

That is what is behind the language of this Psalm when it talks about “reap[ing] with joyful shouting” and “com[ing] again with a shout of joy.” This ultimately does NOT reference the joy that comes from ministry in the here and now (cf. 3 John 4). RATHER, it has an eschatological focus to it, as in John.

John 16:22, “Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.”

When we enter into the final state, we enter into the “joy of the Lord” — that is what awaits us in Christ. Describing this joy, Henry Alford put it this way upon the return of Christ and our entrance into the Final State:

What rush of hallelujahs fills all the earth and sky! What ringing of a thousand harps bespeaks the triumph nigh! O day, for which creation and all its tribes were made; O joy, for all its former woes a thousand-fold repaid! ¶ O then what raptured greetings on Canaan’s happy shore; what knitting severed friendships up where partings are no more! Then eyes with joy shall sparkle, that brimmed with tears of late; orphans no longer fatherless, nor widows desolate. (Great Commision Publications, 1990, p. 323)

There is a final statement here that serves as the “topping on the cake.” Notice the end of v. 6.

Psalm 126:6b, “He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying *his* bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves *with* him.”

“Sheaves”¹⁶ were a large quantity of the stalks of cereal grass (like wheat/rye) bound together. As such, it represents the fruit of the labor which we exert for Christ in this life. This fruit we will accompany us in glory.



Revelation 14:13, “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.””- truly, we will enter Glory “bringing our sheaves with us!”

See, Christ has NOT, NOR will He ever miss the smallest act of service done in this life for Him. Speaking of what constitutes a genuine child of God and hence the true Jew, Paul said this:

Romans 2:29, “But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

This is referencing one of the “rewards” promised to the child of God at the end of their life. There is a day in our future when we will stand before God and BE COMMENDED! This is anticipated in Matthew. Speaking of the Last Judgment, Christ told a parable depicting the praise that awaits all in Christ:

=Matthew 25:21-23, “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave [What is that, but Commendation?!]; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy [the approbation/gladness] of your master.’ The one also who *had received* the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’”-

Truly, “our deeds follow us!” Recall Peter’s words on the Second Coming of Christ:

1 Peter 1:6-7, “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith [proven in the fires of life], *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”- recall, at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb in the New Heavens and Earth, Christ is going to approach each one of us and personally give us “praise and glory and honor.”¹⁷

So, truly, while we minister in this state of sin and misery — though we “sow in tears”

and go “to and fro weeping, carrying our bag of seed” — nevertheless the day is coming when we will enter the Final State with “joyful shouting.” There, we truly will “come, with a shout of joy, bringing our sheaves *with us*.”

It is this song God wants us to sing frequently as we go about our business as His servants! For it truly is this that will compel us forward and onward in this state of sin and misery.

I want to close with three words from Samuel Rutherford which reflect the glory of the teaching of Psalm 126:

If you saw Him who is standing on the shore, holding out His arms to welcome you on land, you would not only wade through a sea of wrongs, but through hell itself to be at Him. (Rutherford, 1997, p. 128)

I wonder many times that ever a child of God should have a sad heart, considering what their Lord is preparing for them. (Rutherford, 1997, p. 106)

If ye knew the mind of the glorified in heaven, they think heaven came to their hand at an easy market, when they have got it for threescore or fourscore years wrestling with God. When ye are come thither, ye shall think, ‘All I did, in respect of my rich reward, now enjoyed of free grace, was too little.’ (Rutherford, 1997, p. 51)

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End Note(s)

¹ “Matching this is the other picture of revival, in terms of farming at its most heart-breaking; all its joys hard-won (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6) and long-awaited (Galatians 6:7–10; Jas 5:7f.). But whatever the uncertainties of literal farming, the psalmist is as sure of this harvest- God’s blessing of seed sown, and his visiting of his people- as are the apostles.” (Kidner, 2014, p. 476)

² “In Psalm 126, the memory of those singing, laughter-filled days of the past becomes, not nostalgia, but the ground of a strong hope for even better days to come.” (Boice, 2005, p. 1112)

³ “It is hard for us to appreciate the opening stanza, because not many of us have experienced anything quite like this homecoming. These ecstatic people had been released from a dreary, seventy-year-long captivity and returned to their native land, and they were so overwhelmed with this sudden turn of fortune that they almost imagined they were dreaming.” (Boice, 2005, p. 1110)

⁴ “The restoration was remarkable. The writer says the people were so filled with joy and blessing that they had to pinch themselves to make sure it was real, like the disciples who were ‘in disbelief because of their joy’ when seeing the resurrected Christ (Luke 24:41). The psalmist says that this blessing was like a dream, but it was indeed a reality. It was a radical restoration; they were laughing and shouting for joy (v. 2b; cf. Isaiah 44:23; 48:20; 49:13).” (Daniel L. Akin, 2021, p. 212)

⁵ “This unexpected change for the captives totally amazed them so that the people of Israel felt as though they must be dreaming, as did Peter when he was delivered from prison in Acts 12:9. They had experienced the surprising grace of the Lord, who exceeded their greatest hopes, as only he could (cf. Ephesians 3:20).” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes, 2019, p. 475)

⁶ “A few experiences in life might be close to that of the returning exiles. For some people falling in love is a bit like this ‘almost dreaming’ joy, but in most cases it lacks the release from something terrible beforehand. Recovery from a serious illness might be an example of deliverance, but such recoveries usually lack the element of suddenness. Besides, after a prolonged illness recovery is most likely to be a sober, cautious thing, like the reaction of Boniface in Byron’s ‘Prisoner of Chillon,’ who, the poet tells us, regained his freedom ‘with a sigh.’ ¶ Perhaps the closest approach to what Psalm 126 describes is some persons’ experiences of conversion to Jesus Christ, for that really is a deliverance, a great deliverance, and rare is the sudden conversion that is not accompanied by great joy and genuine thanksgiving to God.” (Boice, 2005, p. 1110)

⁷ “Even the pagans around them observed the empirical evidence of the hand of the Lord at work. Those who had earlier asked sarcastically, ‘Where is their God?’ (Ps 79:10), when Jerusalem was reduced to rubble, have had to acknowledge that he is alive and active for Israel. The ultimate result of the restoration of Israel, then, was not the prominence of Israel but rather the glory of the Lord, for his acts accomplished his doxological purpose.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes, 2019, p. 476)

⁸ “The writer uses a word picture to express the people’s need for God to send renewal. Streams in the Negev would have been a dramatic transformation. This area was usually dry, but on rare occasions when it rained, the water would gush down the streambeds (VanGemeren, ‘Psalms,’ 791). That’s a great picture of God’s blessing.” (Daniel L. Akin, 2021, p. 213)

⁹ “The wadis in the arid region of southern Israel are dry streambeds for most of the year, but when rain falls and transforms the wadis into torrents, the desert blooms like a garden.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes, 2019, p. 476)

¹⁰ “Sudden bounty has its perfect illustration here, since few places are more arid than *the*

Negeb, and few transformations more dramatic than that of a dry gully into a torrent. Such can be the effect of a downpour, which can also turn the surrounding desert into a place of grass and flowers overnight.” (Kidner, 2014, pp. 475-476)

¹¹ “The Negev is a desert, which the psalmist felt his life to be at the time he wrote this psalm. It has gullies that are the remains of former streams. They are parched, barren, hot, and comfortless. At those rare times when rain descends on the highlands to the north, the rivulets of water come together in streams descending from the hills and then rush down to fill the barren wadis with abundant sparkling and refreshing water.

The essence of this image is how suddenly these gullies fill up, which is how the people’s freedom from Babylon came. One moment they were in exile. The next they were on their way home.” (James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 107–150: An Expositional Commentary*, p. 1113)

¹² “The psalm does not give us... joy as a package or as a formula, but there are some things it does do. It shows up the tinniness of the world’s joy and affirms the solidity of God’s joy. It reminds us of the accelerating costs and diminishing returns of those who pursue pleasure as a path toward joy. It introduces us to the way of discipleship which has consequences in joy. It encourages us in the way of faith to both experience and share in joy. It tells the story of God’s acts which put laughter into people’s mouths and shouts on their tongues. It repeats the promises of a God who accompanies his wandering, weeping children until they arrive home, exuberant, ‘bringing in the sheaves.’ It announces the existence of a people... who along with whatever else is happening are able to say, at the center, ‘We are glad.’” (Peterson, 2000, pp. 97-98)

¹³ “The old translations, and some of the new (e.g. jb, tev), take this psalm to be about captivity and release. But the key phrases in verses 1 and 4 can embrace much more than this, and indeed verses 4-6 give a picture of toil crowned at last with blessing, rather than of the bare mercy of homecoming.” (Kidner, 2014, pp. 474-475)

¹⁴ “Exceptional joy usually doesn’t last a long time. It can’t, really, because life is always a combination of ecstasy and agony, good times and bad times, joy and suffering. Joy is wonderful. Eugene Peterson calls it ‘a product of abundance... the overflow of vitality... life working together harmoniously.’ It is God’s gift to his greatly loved children. But Peterson also adds honestly, ‘Inadequate sinners as we are, none of us can manage that for very long.’ ¶ It didn’t last forever for the psalmist and his generation. If this psalm is about the return of the Jews from Babylon, as it seems to be, we know that those first years in the land were filled with the hard tasks of trying to get established, rebuild the temple, and reconstitute a lost society. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah tell how difficult those years were. The work on the temple was begun (the foundations were laid), then stopped, then begun again. This second temple was so inferior to the first temple- destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and his armies- that the older Jews, who recalled the former days, wept at the disappointing contrast. ¶ The first days of the exiles’ return were certainly wonderful, but they had been succeeded by many days of dark discouragement and hard work.” (Boice, 2005, pp. 1110-1111)

¹⁵ See also John 15:18-20a, If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...”

¹⁶ אַלְמָה (*alummah*)

¹⁷ Wayne Grudem speaking of 1 Peter 1:7 wrote, “He does not specify whether this praise is the praise which God gives to his people on the last day (as in Romans 2:29; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Peter 5:4), or the praise which people give to God. It seems more likely that the initial thought is of praise which God gives to his people, since in this context Peter is encouraging his readers to hope in their heavenly reward (v. 4). Furthermore, it is the genuineness of faith which is here affirmed to be more precious (in God’s sight, apparently) than gold. But in this present age faith does not receive much outward or evident reward. Therefore it would appropriately receive a reward as an expression of God’s approval at the day of final judgment.” (Grudem, 2009, p. 69)