

Summer Psalms
GREAT THINGS
Wednesday, July 30
Reading: Psalms 125-126

Psalm 126:3 *The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. 4 Restore our fortunes, LORD, like streams in the Negev.*

Psalm 125 is about security. It could be a dangerous journey for the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. There were bandits hiding in the hills and wild animals that might attack along the way. But that first view of Jerusalem made them feel safe. Crowning the top of Mount Zion was the Temple. It stood tall, gleaming in the center of Jerusalem. With mountains surrounding it, Jerusalem was secure. Looking at this awesome site, the pilgrims thought of their security in God. Those who trust in Him are surrounded by God's goodness and protection.

In Psalm 126, the feeling of security is gone. The Jewish nation has suffered a defeat, but God had "restored the fortunes of Zion." This psalm may refer to the invasion of the Assyrian army where God destroyed the army of Sennacherib (2 Kings 18-19) or the end of the 70-year Babylonian captivity (Ezra 1). Whatever the historical situation, it was a great deliverance because the nations heard of the "great things" God had done for them and they too were filled with joy (126:1-3).

The final three verses contain a prayer and a promise (126:4-6). They were in need of God to restore them again. It is a dry period for the psalmist.

The Negev is that dry, arid region which lies south of Judah. The streams which irrigate the Negev dry up in summer, and then, after many months of drought, the parched wadis, the dried river beds, are flooded with sparkling, rushing torrents of water. In but a few days, these can turn the parched barrenness of that land into a green fruitful plain. This is the prayer of Zion in distress! ¹

We all have dry seasons in our life. The promise is that times of weeping can be turned into songs of joy. The farmer sows his seed in hope of a good harvest. But droughts and storms were unpredictable and could endanger all his hard work ("sowing in tears"). Yet he sowed his seed, trusting in God's provision and timing. This would cause him to rejoice when the harvest came in.

The pilgrims coming to Jerusalem would take comfort in this image. Though their days might be filled with tears from enemy oppression, they could trust in God to bring a harvest of joy when He restored them.

This salvation was fully realized hundreds of years after this psalm was written. Jesus probably sang these songs on His final journey to Jerusalem for Passover. Could these verses have been in His mind when He predicted His death?

"Unless a kernel of what falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24)

Through His sorrow "for the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Truly, "the Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy" (126:3).

¹ J. M. Flanigan. What the Bible Teaches – Psalms, p. 559