

## Psalm 42 <sup>1</sup>

# "The Yearning of the Exiled, Despairing Soul for Fellowship in God's Presence" <sup>2</sup>

For the choir director. A Maskil <sup>3</sup> of the sons of Korah. <sup>4</sup>

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### A1 THE PSALMIST'S AGONY OF SOUL CAUSED BY HIS INABILITY TO COMMUNE WITH GOD IN THE SANCTUARY 42:1-5

#### B1 His Unmet Yearning for Fellowship with God 42:1-2

C1 His Consuming Thirst for Fellowship with God: {1} As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul <sup>5</sup> pants for You, O God. 42:1

C2 His Unmet Thirst for Fellowship with God in the Sanctuary <sup>6</sup> 42:2

D1 His thirst: {2} My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;

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<sup>1</sup> Psalms 42 and 43: "These psalms comprise a single, sadly beautiful poem in which the writer, exiled in the far north of Palestine (42:6), yearns to return to the Temple in Jerusalem" (Charles Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible [RSB]*).

<sup>2</sup> Title - Fellowship in God's Presence: The exiled psalmist's yearning for God reminds the present day Christian that He is exiled in an alien land with many enemies taunting him for his belief in God, whom no one can see. Saddened by both the taunting and the lack of visible, tangible fellowship with God, the believer yearns for fellowship with God through Jesus in the New Jerusalem, when "...the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away ...." (Rev. 21:3-4) "And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads." (Rev. 22:3-4)

<sup>3</sup> Maskil: See note on Psalm 32 superscription.

<sup>4</sup> Korah: Eleven psalms (if Ps 42-43 are counted as one psalm) are attributed to the sons of Korah -- 42-49, 84-85, and 87-88. There are in these psalms 25 references to Yahweh in 24 verses. Yet, there are 61 references to Elohim in 49 verses, with an additional 6 references to El in 6 verses (one other reference to El designates a strange god). There is one reference to God as Adonai.

<sup>5</sup> 42:1 - soul (*nephesh*): "The basic meaning of *nephesh* in the OT is throat" (Christian Wolf in the *Holman Bible Dictionary*). Strong's initial statement: "prop. a breathing creature." The uses of *nephesh* in the OT include references to (1) a living animate being (sometimes deliberately linked with *chay* -- living), whether animal (Gen. 1:21) or man (Gen. 2:7), (2) life or animus itself (Gen. 9:4, 5, referring to blood as the vehicle of life) (Gen. 19:17, 19 - referring to life itself), (3) persons or people (Gen. 12:5, 14:21), and (4) one's inner being; the seat of one's God-consciousness; one's desires and emotions (Ps. 42:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11). The Scriptures cited are merely illustrative, not exhaustive -- *nephesh* occurs 749 times in 672 verses!

<sup>6</sup> 42:2 title - sanctuary: It is impossible to date the Korahite psalms precisely, and so I have used a generic word. If this psalm was written before Solomon's time, *tabernacle* would be the preferred word; if afterward, the word would be *temple*. However, the psalmist's request in 43:3 for God to lead him back to His holy hill, His dwelling place, suggests that these Psalms were written no earlier than David's time, when he had moved the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:12-17).

D2 His longing to meet God in the sanctuary: When shall I come and appear before God? <sup>7</sup>

**B2 His Constant Sadness Aggravated by the Continual Taunting of Foreigners 42:3**

C1 His Sadness: {3} My tears have been my food day and night,

C2 Their Taunting: While *they* say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

**B3 His Melancholia as He Reflects on Past Times of Corporate Worship of God in the Sanctuary 42:4**

C1 His Present Melancholia: {4} These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me.

C2 His Joyful Memories of the Past

D1 Accompanying the throng of worshipers: For I used to go along with the throng

D2 Leading the procession to the sanctuary: *and* lead them in procession to the house <sup>8</sup> of God,

D3 With joyful song: With the voice of joy and thanksgiving,

D4 Corporately celebrating a religious feast: a multitude keeping festival.

**B4 His Hope Yet to Praise God in the Sanctuary Despite His Present Despair 42:5**

C1 His Perplexity over His Present Despair

D1 {5} Why are you in despair, O my soul?

D2 And *why* have you become disturbed within me?

C2 His Admonition to Himself to Hope in God: Hope in God,

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<sup>7</sup> 42:2 - appear before God: Lit., "When shall I come and appear (before the) faces (*peney*, plural of *pane*) of God? (Note that *pane* always appears in the plural - *peney*.) In 42:2 the Psalmist, isolated from Israel, wants to know when he shall be able to come and appear before the faces of God (in the sanctuary, I believe). In 42:5 the psalmist asserts in faith that he shall yet praise Elohim for the salvation of His faces (in the sanctuary, I believe). In 42:11, the Psalmist asserts, "I shall yet praise Him, [who is] the salvation of my face(s)ward and my God." In the last instance, Elohim enables him to be faceward -- i.e., to have his face toward God in the sanctuary, where he some day, by faith, plans on meeting God again. I think that is the idea. The first two are nouns, the last, an adverb, as though the psalmist were loathe to think that his face could do any benefit for God, but at least in the sanctuary he himself could turn faceward and behold God's face(s).

<sup>8</sup> 42:4 - house: *bayith* (1004) here means the dwelling of God, but cannot be forced to mean the temple. David used this word to describe God's dwelling when there was only a tent in existence (Psalm 23:6).

C3 His Assurance of Someday Praising God in His Sanctuary: for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence.<sup>9</sup>

**A2 THE PSALMIST'S AGONY OF SOUL AUGMENTED BY THE TAUNTING OF HIS ENEMIES WHILE IN EXILE 42:6-11**

**B1 The Despair of the Exiled Psalmist 42:6-7**

C1 His Complaint to Elohim of His Despair: {6} O my God, my soul is in despair within me; 42:6

C2 His Remembering God While Situated in the Mountains of Lebanon: Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon,<sup>10</sup> from Mount Mizar.

C3 His Melancholy Reaction to the Watery Vistas 42:7

D1 His observation of the waterfalls: {7} Deep calls to deep<sup>11</sup> at the sound of Your waterfalls;

D2 He views his own life as inundated by God's billowing catastrophes: All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.

**B2 The Confidence of the Exiled Psalmist 42:8**

C1 That Yahweh Will Exhibit His Loyal Love by Day: {8} The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;

C2 That Yahweh Will Provide Grounds for Praise and Prayer by Night

D1 And His song will be with me in the night,

D2 A prayer to the God of my life.

**B3 The Complaint of the Exiled Psalmist in Regard to His Enemies 42:9-10**

C1 That God has Forgotten Him: {9} I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me? 49:9

C2 That He Mourns Because of Enemy Oppression: Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

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<sup>9</sup> 42:5 - help of His presence (*panaiv*) (plural noun w/ 3rd pers masc. sing. suffix from *paneih*): Lit. "because I shall again praise Him (for the) salvation of His faces [always appearing in the plural]."

<sup>10</sup> 42:6 - peaks of Hermon: *RSB*: "The 20-mile long ridge of Hermon, 40 miles NE. of the Sea of Galilee." Mount Mizar is an unidentified peak in this range. For an unexplained reason, the writer finds himself temporarily exiled in modern Lebanon. He is surrounded by foreigners and thus unable to attend worship at the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

<sup>11</sup> 42:7 - Deep calls to deep: *RSB*: "The floods and cataracts of the headwaters of the Jordan illustrate the waves of sorrow that overwhelm the writer."

C3 That His Enemies Taunt Him Continually about the Absence of His God  
42:10

D1 The brutal effect of their taunting: {10} As a shattering of my  
bones, my adversaries revile me,

D2 The blasphemous content of their taunting: While they say to me  
all day long, "Where is your God?"

**B4 The Hope of the Exiled Psalmist Yet to Praise God in the Sanctuary Despite  
His Present Despair 42:11**

C1 His Perplexity over His Present Despair: {11} Why are you in despair, O  
my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?

C2 His Admonition to Himself to Hope in God: Hope in God,

C3 His Assurance of Someday Praising God in His Sanctuary: for I shall yet  
praise Him, The help of my countenance<sup>12</sup> and my God.

Expanded Analysis of Psalm 42

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<sup>12</sup> 42:11 - my countenance (*panai*) (masc. plural noun w/ 1st person common sing. suffix from *panim*), acc. to the parsing guide, which offers the translation "before.". Strong lists this word as the same as the word faces in vv. 2 and 5. BDB, however, assert that v. 2 and v. 5 are faces (face), but associate *panai* in v. 11 with the adverb *penimah*, which means "towards the (in-) side." A second meaning is "within (lit. faceward, from the point of view of one entering by the opposite door); of a building, usually the temple." I conclude, therefore, that perhaps the psalmist is using a play on words. He is using a word that should be translated countenance, but he is intimating that God will be his salvation ultimately in the sanctuary, which he shall someday be able, once again, to enter.