

Psalm 74

A Lament Over God's Rejection of Israel and a Plea for Him to Remember and Act

A Maskil of Asaph.¹

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A1 A LAMENTATION OVER ELOHIM'S REJECTION OF ISRAEL 74:1-9

B1 The Query of Elohim's Angry Rejection 74:1

- C1 The Query of His Unending Rejection: *{1}* O God, why have You rejected *us* forever?
- C2 The Query of His Anger: Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?

B2 A Plea to Elohim to Remember 74:2

- C1 His Purchased Assembly
 - D1 *{2}* Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old,
 - D2 Which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your inheritance;
- C2 Mount Zion, His Home: *And* this Mount Zion, where You have dwelt.

B3 The Evidences of Elohim's Rejection 74:3-9

- C1 The Destruction of the Temple 74:3-7
 - D1 The request to Elohim to examine personally the damage to the temple: *{3}* Turn Your footsteps toward the perpetual ruins; The enemy has damaged everything within the sanctuary. 74:3
 - D2 The desecration by Elohim's adversaries 74:4
 - E1 Yelling mockingly in the place of assembly: *{4}* Your adversaries have roared in the midst of Your meeting place;
 - E2 Setting up signs proclaiming their conquest: They have set up their own standards for signs.

¹ Ps 74 Superscription - Asaph: The references to the destruction of the temple here, as in Psalm 79, seem to preclude the Asaph of David's day as being the author. So the Asaph in question is evidently an Exilic author of the same name writing after 586 BC, or, as Allen P. Ross (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary [TBKC]*) argues, an Exilic member of the Asaph Music Guild. While conceding the possibility of an Exilic provenance, Franz Delitzsch (K & D) argues that a possible reference to synagogues (74:8) and the absence of any prophet (74:9) point to a Maccabean provenance shortly after 167 BC. The present writer leans toward an Exilic origin of this psalm.

- D3 The damage caused to the sanctuary 74:5-7
 - E1 Compared to a forest felled by axe: {5} It seems as if one had lifted up *His* axe in a forest of trees. 74:5
 - E2 Smashed carved work: {6} And now all its carved work They smash with hatchet and hammers. 74:6
 - E3 Burned and defiled 74:7
 - F1 Burned: {7} They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground;
 - F2 Defiled Elohim's name: They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name.

- C2 The Destruction of All the Meeting Places of Elohim in the Land 74:8
 - D1 Their motive - complete subjugation: {8} They said in their heart, "Let us completely subdue them."
 - D2 Their method - burning all the meeting places: They have burned all the meeting places of God in the land.
- C3 The Interminable Absence of Any Prophet 74:9
 - D1 {9} We do not see our signs; There is no longer any prophet,
 - D2 Nor is there any among us who knows how long.

A2 AN APPEAL TO ELOHIM TO REMEMBER AND ACT 74:10-12

B1 The Query of Elohim's Inaction against the Adversary 74:10-11

- C1 How Long Will Elohim Permit the Enemy to Blaspheme? 74:10
 - D1 {10} How long, O God, will the adversary revile,
 - D2 *And* the enemy spurn Your name forever?
- C2 Why Does Elohim Not Destroy the Enemy? 74:11
 - D1 The Query of His Withdrawal: {11} Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?
 - D2 The Command to Destroy! From within Your bosom, destroy *them!*

B2 A Reminder of Elohim's Past Sovereign Actions 74:12-17

- C1 Asaph's Address of Elohim as His Sovereign Deliverer 74:12
 - D1 His king from ancient times: {12} Yet God is my king from of old,
 - D2 Known for His deeds of deliverance: Who works deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth.
- C2 An Enumeration of Elohim's Deeds 74:13-15
 - D1 Delivering Israel at the Red Sea 74:13-14
 - E1 Dividing the sea: {13} You divided the sea by Your strength; 74:13a
 - E2 Destroying the Egyptian army
 - F1 You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters. 74:13b
 - F2 {14} You crushed the heads of Leviathan;²
 - F3 You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. 74:14
 - D2 Providing Israel with water in the desert: {15} You broke open springs and torrents;
 - D3 Drying up the Jordan to usher Israel into Canaan: You dried up ever-flowing streams. 74:15
- C3 Praise of God as Sovereign Creator 74:16-17
 - D1 Creator and Ruler over Day and Night 74:16
 - E1 {16} Yours is the day,
 - E2 Yours also is the night;
 - E3 You have prepared the light and the sun.

² 74:13,14 - sea monsters, Leviathan: Many believe Leviathan to have been a seven-headed monster in Baal mythology (see Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, Psalms 73-150, p. 297). Be that as it may, there is nothing mythological about God's confronting Job with a real Leviathan in Job 41: 1 ff. (40:25 ff. in MT). Leviathan as God described it to Job, is a sea-monster with dragon-like, fire-breathing qualities! It makes no sense whatever that God would have attempted to convince Job of His own sovereignty by speaking of a mythological creature that did not exist. On the contrary, the discussion in Job assumes Job knew exactly what God was speaking about, and had, in fact, actually seen a Leviathan. Here in Psalm 74, both sea monsters and Leviathan symbolize Egypt's armies, smashed by the sea and washed up on the beaches as carrion for bird and beast.

D2 Establisher of Boundaries: {17} You have established all the boundaries³ of the earth;

D3 Creator of Seasons: You have made summer and winter. 74:17

B3 A Call upon Yahweh Elohim to Remember and Act 74:18-23

C1 To Remember the Blasphemy of the Enemy 74:18

D1 {18} Remember this, O LORD, that the enemy has reviled,

D2 And a foolish people has spurned Your name.

C2 To Deliver His Afflicted from the Wild Beast" 74:19

D1 {19} Do not deliver the soul of Your turtledove to the wild beast;

D2 Do not forget the life of Your afflicted forever.

C3 To Remember His Covenant Because of Violence in the Land 74:20

D1 {20} Consider the covenant;

D2 For the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.

C4 To Restore the Honor and the Praise of the Afflicted 74:21

D1 {21} Let not the oppressed return dishonored;

D2 Let the afflicted and needy praise Your name.

C5 To Arouse Himself to Plead His Own Cause in View of the Noisy Reproach of His Adversaries: {22} Arise, O God, *and* plead Your own cause; (74:22a) 74:22-23:

D1 Remember how the foolish man reproaches You all day long. 74:22b

D2 {23} Do not forget the voice of Your adversaries,

D3 The uproar of those who rise against You which ascends continually. 74:23

³ 74:17 - boundaries: This may refer to the boundaries of the sea and dry land.

EXPANDED ANALYSIS OF PSALM 74

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