–Save This Page as a PDF–

Ministering Before the Ark
First Chronicles 16: 4-43

Ministering before the ark DIG: How is David's kingdom further strengthened by giving thanks to ADONAI with this psalm of thanks? How would this psalm bring the twelve tribes closer together as one people? In the song's first stanza (verses 8-12) what does David urge us to do and why? What memories for Isra'el are evoked by reference to God's wonders and miracles or judgments? In the second stanza (verses 13-18), who are His chosen ones? What news about God do you suppose Jacob heard from his parents and grandparents? In the third stanza (verses 19-22) who are those esteemed by God? How are they protected? In the majestic fourth stanza (verses 23-33), what actions are we instructed to take? Who or what is called upon to participate and why? Why all the earth? What will happen? In the benediction (verses 34-36), what common human needs are addressed? How will YHVH meet them as no one else can? What familiar names appear after the benediction of this psalm? How does David organize them for worship?

REFLECT: The occasion for this psalm was the return of the ark of God and the establishment of David's reign. How could you use this psalm today? What qualities of YHVH mentioned in this psalm or praise are you most comfortable with? Are there any you are uncomfortable with? Why? Which divine attribute can be applied to a problem you are going through right now? How is the worship in this psalm multi-racial or multi-lingual? What multi-tunes do you hear? What message would that bring to your culture?

1000 BC

Once **the Ark** had arrived in **Yerushalayim** and been placed in the tent prepared for **it**, some of **the Levites** previously involved in the procession were appointed to continue the worship in music. It goes without saying that it was not **the Ark** itself that was being worshiped, but the **God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. **He** is **YHVH**, **the One** who came to rescue **His** people from slavery in Egypt and to make

them **His** own through the encounter at Sinai. Therefore, **He** was, and is, the object of the continual praise of **Isra'el**, and once more **the Ark** is the focus of this praise. It is called **the ark of the covenant of God**.[269]



It is no surprise that the multi-talented genius of **King David** included music and poetry. **He** set the tone (no pun intended) for worship in **God's** holy place through all the years to come. **David's** appointment of **the Levites** to minister in music and praise to **YHVH** was a significant advance in the history of **Isra'el's** worship. **His** previous arrangements for music had been planned for just one occasion (**to see link click Cr – The Ark Brought to Yerushalayim**); but now a continuing service was envisioned (see **16:37-42** below). For with **the Ark** permanently enshrined in **Jerusalem**, those **Levites** who had formally been charged with **its** transport could then be reassigned to other appropriate duties.[270] **Then He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to extol, thank, and praise ADONAI, the God of Isra'el. Asaph was** elevated to **the chief** position probably because of personal ability (**Asaph** and **his** descendants composed **Psalms 50** and **73** through **83**)**, and next to him in rank were Zechariah, then Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel. They were to play the lyres and harps; Asaph was to sound the cymbals, and the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel were to blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of covenant of God (First Chronicles 16:4-6).**

From this point on, we have a model psalm of thanksgiving that has, with only slight modifications, been adapted from three different psalms as follows: Verses 8-22 = Psalm 105:1-45; verses 23-33 = Psalm 96; and verses 34-36 = Psalm 106:1, 47-48.

The first stanza: That day David first appointed Asaph and his associates to give praise to ADONAI in this manner: Give praise to the LORD, proclaim

His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Sing to Him, to testify publically to His greatness, sing praise to Him; tell of all His wonderful acts. His treatment of Isra'el is a lesson and a warning to all the Gentile nations, and it is for Isra'el to spread this knowledge among the goyim. Glory in His holy name because holiness is the essence of ADONAI's nature; let the hearts of those who continually seek the LORD rejoice. Look to YHVH and His strength; seek His face always. Remember the wonders He has done (see the commentary on **Exodus Bj – The Ten Plagues of Egypt**)**, the judgments He pronounced** (see the commentary on **Exodus By – At Midnight the LORD Struck Down all the Firstborn in Egypt**)**, and His miracles (First Chronicles 16:7-12).** The wonders of old summarize the message of **Psalm 105:1-15**.

The second stanza: You His servants, the descendants of Isra'el, His chosen ones to spread the knowledge of God and His Torah, the children of Jacob. He is ADONAI our God; His judgments are in all the earth and all the Gentile nations are subject to His rule (Genesis 18:25). He remembers His covenant forever, the promise He made, for a thousand generations, the covenant He made with Abraham (see the commentary on **Genesis Eg – I am the LORD, Who Brought You Out of Ur of the Chaldeans to Give You This Land**)**, the oath He swore to Isaac (Genesis 26:3). He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree (Genesis 28:13), to Isra'el as an everlasting covenant, "To you I will give this land of [Palestine] as the portion you will inherit" (First Chronicles 16:13-18).** Although **the** Hebrew **patriarchs** wandered without a home of **their** own, **they** had been promised **Palestine**, though it was only **their descendants,** who were **David's** contemporary audience, who received it **(Hebrews 11:9).**

The third stanza: When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in the land that was not yet theirs, they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another. A famine drove Abraham to Egypt (Genesis 12:10) and Isaac to the Philistines (Genesis 26:1), while Jacob was compelled to flee to Haran (Genesis 28:10). He allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake He rebuked kings, "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm" (First Chronicles 16:19-22)! Nowhere in the Bible (other than here) are **the patriarchs** called **anointed ones** or **prophets**, because those titles are usually only reserved only for kings and/or priests; but here **the patriarchs** are also called **prophets** in the sense of being recipients of **God's**

special revelation. **Psalm 105:16-45** then continues **Isra'el's** history on into the time of **Joseph**.[271]

The fourth stanza: Since **Psalm 96** is cited in its entirety, the changes introduced are of special significance. Two clauses of **Psalm 96** are absent from this context: **96:10c: He will judge the Gentile nations fairly** and **96:13b: He will judge the world rightly and the Gentile nations with His faithfulness.** Although not adjacent, these verses share a similar idea; their absence would, therefore, seem to result from the wish to link **Psalm 96** more closely to its new context. The universal **judgment** of **the Gentile nations**, and **the world** at large, is not the immediate concern of **David's psalm of thanksgiving**.[272]

Sing to ADONAI, all the earth; proclaim the Good News of His salvation day after day (First Chronicles 16:23; Psalm 96:1-2 CJB). The Ark had come to **Tziyon**, **a new song (Psalm 96:1)** was needed . . . a fresh outburst of praise to **YHVH**.[273]

Declare His glory among the Gentile nations, His marvelous deeds among all peoples (First Chronicles 16:24; Psalm 96:3 CJB). The people of God must provide leadership by giving **praise** to **His Name**, **day after day**. Thus, **the Gentile nations** and **all peoples** will hear **the Good News** that **the Ark** had found a home in **the City of David**.

Having told us *what* we are to do in **Psalm 96:1-3**, the psalmist now tells us *why* we are to do it in **verses 4-6**. **For ADONAI is great and most worthy of praise; He is to be feared more than all gods (First Chronicles 16:25; Psalm 96:4 CJB). David's new song** was based on **His great God**, who is **most worthy of praise**. Moreover, **He is to be feared**. This sense of **fear** includes a sense of awe before **His** supreme, almighty power **(Psalm 111:10)**.

For all the gods of the Gentile nations are idols, but ADONAI made the heavens (First Chronicles 16:26; Psalm 96:5 CJB). YHVH alone is **God**, and all other deities are fakes. They cannot be **gods**, because **Ha'Shem** alone has made **heaven**. The pagans may claim that their **gods** have power over the heavenly realms, but **ADONAI** negates that claim with one of **His** own, namely, that **He** alone created **the heavens**.[274]

Splendor and majesty are before Him; strength and joy are in His dwelling place (First Chronicles 16:27; Psalm 96:6 CJB). David's expression "**in His**

dwelling place” represents a change from the original phrase**, “in His sanctuary”**, in **Psalm 96:6. “In His sanctuary” is** appropriate enough when **the Tabernacle was at Gibeon (First Chronicles 16:39)**, but not appropriate **now that the Ark** was in its new location at **Yerushalayim**.

The God of the universe had come to **Tziyon**, the center of the universe: **Give ADONAI His due, all you families of the Gentile nations, give ADONAI His due of glory and strength (First Chronicles 16:28; Psalm 96:7 CJB).** In this call for universal worship of **YHVH**, **David** remembered what **the LORD** had said to **Abraham, through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed (Genesis 22:18).**

What are we to offer **God** in worship? **Give YHVH the glory due to His name; bring an offering, and come into His presence (Psalm 96:8** says **courtyards** instead of **presence). The Presence of ADONAI** is an allusion to **the Ark**. **Worship,** surrender, bow down, to **ADONAI in the splendor of His holiness (First Chronicles 16:29; Psalm 96:9a CJB).**

Tremble before Him, all the earth (Psalm 96:9b CJB)! The world is firmly established, immovable (First Chronicles 16:30; Psalm 96:10b CJB). The idea of men **trembling before Him** took on a fresh reality with the arrival of **the Ark**, over which the Sh’khinah **glory** rested **between the two cherubim (Numbers 7:89).**

Once again, worship turns to witness. **Let the heavens rejoice; let the earth be glad (Psalm 96:11a CJB); let them say among the Gentile nations, “ADONAI is king” (First Chronicles 16:31; Psalm 96:10a CJB)!** The confession challenges all other **gods**, all other rulers and authorities. There is only one **King**, and **He** dwells above the cherubim.

With the coming of **the Ark** to **Jerusalem**, all nature is called upon to celebrate! **Let the sea roar, and everything in it; let the fields exult, and all that is in them. Then the trees in the forest will sing before ADONAI, because He is coming** (Hebrew: *bo*) to live among **His people (First Chronicles 16:32-33; Psalm 96:11b-13a CJB).** While earlier messianic prophecies had foretold of our **Lord’s** universal, millennial reign **(Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17; First Samuel 2:10)**, these words – **He is coming** – may be the first in all of written Scripture (**Job 19:25** may well have been *spoken* earlier) to set forth the doctrine of the glorious Second Coming of **Yeshua Messiah** (see the commentary on **Isaiah**

Kg – The Second Coming of Jesus Christ to Bozrah).

The benediction: The song ends with the opening and closing words of **Psalm 106: 1 and 47-48**, as a personal cry in which the singers of **David's** day take hold of the covenant relationship for themselves: **Give thanks to the LORD; for He is good, for His compassion endures forever** (see the commentary on **Ruth Af – The Concept of Chesed**)**. Cry out, "Save us, God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the Gentile nations, that we may give thanks to Your holy name, and glory in Your praise."** We have praised **You** for all that **You** have done and said in **the past**; now we ask **You** to act and speak on our behalf also![275] **Praise be to ADONAI, the God of Isra'el, from eternity past to eternity future" (First Chronicles 16:34-36).**

Then David left Asaph and his associates before the ark of the covenant of YHVH now in **Jerusalem, to minister there regularly, according to each day's requirements. He also left Obed-Edom and his sixty-eight associates to minister with them. Obed-Edom son of Jeduthun, and also Hosah, were gatekeepers (First Chronicles 16:37-38). Hosah** had not been mentioned previously. **He** was another **doorkeeper**, though of the clan of **Merari (First Chronicles 26:10-11)**, compared to **Obed-Edom of Kohath (First Chronicles 26:1-4). Obed-Edom's father** is also named for the first time and is not to be confused with Jeduthun (alternate name for Ethan) the chief musician in **First Chronicles 16:41-42**, because Ethan belonged to the clan of Merari. **Obed-Edom** continued in **his** dual role of both musician and **doorkeepe**r.[276]

David left Zadok the priest and his fellow priests before the Tabernacle of the LORD at the high place in Gibeon to present burnt offerings to ADONAI on the bronze altar (see the commentary on **Exodus Fa – Build an Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze**) **regularly, morning and evening in accordance with everything written in the Torah** in connection with the services of **the Tabernacle, which He had given to Isra'el (First Chronicles 16:39-40).** The reference to **Zadok** as **priest** of **the Tabernacle** at **Gibeon** reveals the reason for the retention of two high priests. **Zadok**, of the Aaronic line of Eleazar **(First Chronicles 6:4-8)**, was in charge of **Tabernacle** at **Gibeon**, while **Abiathar**, of the line of Ithamar **(First Chronicles 24:6)**, officiated at the new temporary **tent** in **Yerushalayim**. The origin of **Gibeon** as the site of **the Tabernacle** is not known but it must not have been deemed unsuitable since **David** appointed **Zadok** as **priest** there and later on **Solomon** offered sacrifices

there with **God's** approval **(First Kings 3:4-10)**.[277]

While **Asaph** was with **Abiathar** in **David's** temporary **tent** that housed **the Ark**, **Heman and Jeduthun** (also called **Ethan** in **First Chronicles 6:44** and **15:17**) functioned with **Zadok** at **the Tabernacle** at **Gibeon** with **the rest of those chosen and designated by name to give thanks to the LORD, "for His love endures forever." Heman and Jeduthun were responsible for the sounding of the trumpets and cymbals and for the playing of the other instruments for sacred song.** The main purpose of the tradition of **the Tabernacle** at **Gibeon** is to present a line of unbroken continuity in the religious establishment of **Isra'el** from its inception by **Moshe** to the United Kingdom of **David** and **Solomon**.

In the development of the orders of **priests** there were probably exchanges from the **singers,** to **the gatekeepers** and *vice versa*. Just as **the Korahites** were definitely singers, according to **Psalms 42:1**, **44:1**, **45:1**, and so on, they eventually became **gatekeepers (First Chronicles 9:19 and 26:1-19)**, so one may assume that **Jeduthun** and **his sons also** served in this dual role.

Then the **two stages** of transferring **the Ark** were then completed with **blessings**; the **first stage** with **the blessing** of **Obed-Edom** and **his household (First Chronicles 13:14)**, and the **second stage** with **David blessing his household** after the successful accomplishment of the task **he** undertook. **Then all the people left, each for their own home, and David returned home to bless his family (First Chronicles 16:41-43).** Furthermore, this closing verse serves as an excellent basis for the following chapter, which begins: **After the king was settled in his palace (First Chronicles 17:1a).**[278]