

When David Was in the Desert of Y'hudah

Psalm 63: 1-11

A psalm of David when he was in the Desert of Judah.

DIG: Why is David in the desert? What dangers await him there? What memories keep David going? What is better than life? How can David devote himself to the love of God at a time and place like this? What does it mean to swear by God?

REFLECT: How desperate is your longing for a relationship with God? What do you long for the most? Which verse of this Psalm best fits your relationship with God? Are you a "clinger" in relationships? How tight is your grasp on YHVH? Explain.

This Psalm is associated with David's stay in the Judean wilderness during his escape from Sha'ul. Once more, the worst had brought out David's best, in words as it did in deeds. In this poem he tells of the longing for the Sanctuary that consumed him, and the consolation he found in reflecting upon YHVH during his banishment from home. There may be other psalms that equal this outpouring of devotion; but few, if any, that surpass it.¹²⁰

A. Longing for ADONAI: O God, You are my God; I will seek You earnestly. The phrase I will seek You earnestly comes from the Hebrew root (*shr*), to which the noun *dawn* is related. This gave rise to the tradition of Psalm 63 as a morning psalm with the translation **early will I seek You.**¹²¹ The longing in these verses is not the groping of a stranger, feeling his way toward the LORD, but the eagerness of a friend, almost of a lover, to be in touch with the one held dear.¹²² **My heart thirsts for You, my body longs for You in a land parched and exhausted, where no water can be found (Psalm 63:1 CJB). As the traveler there pines for water, so David yearns for the spiritual refreshment that only God can provide.** David's whole soul is deeply restless and unsatisfied without the LORD.

B. Vision of God's Grace: David gives another reason for his thirsting after God. Having so often known the reality of His *chesed* (see my commentary on **Genesis Af - The Concept of Chesed**), the desire to offer praises to ADONAI had become the real purpose of his life, more precious than existence itself. I used to contemplate You in the Sanctuary, seeing Your power and glory; for your *chesed* is better than life. My lips worship You (Psalm 63:2-3 CJB). David changes metaphors from that of the desert to that of a prophetic vision. He has a vision of God's holiness, power and glory. Even as Isaiah had a vision of God's holiness and glory (see the commentary on **Isaiah Bo**

- **In the Year King Uzziah Died**), so David confesses that he has had a glimpse of the beatific vision. The great God he worships is the **Great King**, who promised to be present among His people in the **Sanctuary**. The symbol of His presence was the **ark of the Covenant** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fr - The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace**).¹²³

C. In Praise of ADONAI: Yes, I will bless you as long as I live; in Your name I will lift up my hands (First Kings 8:54; Psalm 28:2; Lamentations 3:41; Ezra 9:5). The result of this worship is that David's soul is satisfied. I am as satisfied as with rich food, literally *as with marrow and fatness*. The Torah demanded that no fat be eaten because all the fat belongs to ADONAI (Leviticus 3:16). Here, as a result of worship, YHVH gives His own food to David and he is filled. Again David responds in praise. My mouth praises you with joy on my lips (Psalm 63:4-5 CJB).

A. Longing for ADONAI: David not only worships the LORD in public, but he also seeks Him in private. It is a good thing to meditate on what God has done for us. It shows how faithful Ha'Shem has been in our lives. When I remember You on my bed in the stillness of the night and meditate on You in the night watches. The verb mediate is also used in Psalm 1:1-2: How blessed are those who reject the advice of the wicked, don't stand in the way of sinners or sit where the mockers sit! Their delight is in ADONAI's Torah; on His Torah they meditate day and night. David found security even in the perilous hours when an enemy could strike under the cover of darkness. For you have been my help; in the shadow of Your wings I rejoice; my heart clings to You; Your right hand supports me (Psalm 63:6-8 CJB).¹²⁴ Thus God kept him safe even though Sha'ul wanted to kill him.

B. Vision of God's Judgment: David is in a battle. His enemies sought to destroy his life. Because of God's power and glory, however, they would be destroyed. They will go down to the lowest parts of the earth, namely Sh'ol (see the commentary on **Jude Ak - The Angels Did Not Keep Their Positions of Authority**). May they be given over to the power of the sword; may they become prey for jackals to come and eat their corpses, without a proper burial (Psalm 63:9-10 CJB). The weapons that they intended to use against the innocent will be turned against them, and they will be destroyed.

Like David, we too have our enemies. Rabbi Sha'ul reminds us, however, that our real foes are not human and thus our weapons must be spiritual: For although we do live in the world, we do not wage war in a worldly way; because the weapons we use to wage war are not worldly. On the contrary, we have God's power for demolishing strongholds. We demolish arguments and every arrogance that raises itself up

against the knowledge of God (Second Corinthians 10:3-5a CJB). While the devil **comes to steal and kill and destroy** (John 10:10), it is he who will finally go to the lowest parts of the earth, even the lake of burning sulfur where he will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Revelation 20:10). So it is vital that, like David, we remember ADONAI at night and know Him as our help, our Protector, and our power. Under His wings we can join David and rejoice and shout for joy.

C. In Praise of ADONAI: David concludes that **the king will rejoice in God**. The third person singular is "court language," so that means that this psalm applies to the line of Isra'el's kings climaxing in **Messiah**. Notice **David's** joy is not merely in winning the battle; it is in the **God** who wins the battles for **him**. The danger in worshiping ADONAI for His benefits when we receive the overflowing of His gifts, is that we end up worshiping the benefits and not the **God** who gives them to us. Furthermore, **all who swear by God will glory in Him**. To **swear by God** is to take an oath of loyalty. **While the mouths of the liars will be reduced to silence** in Sh'ol by **God's** judgment. Our King is Yeshua. As He rejoices in YHVH, so do we (Ps 63:11 CJB).¹²⁵