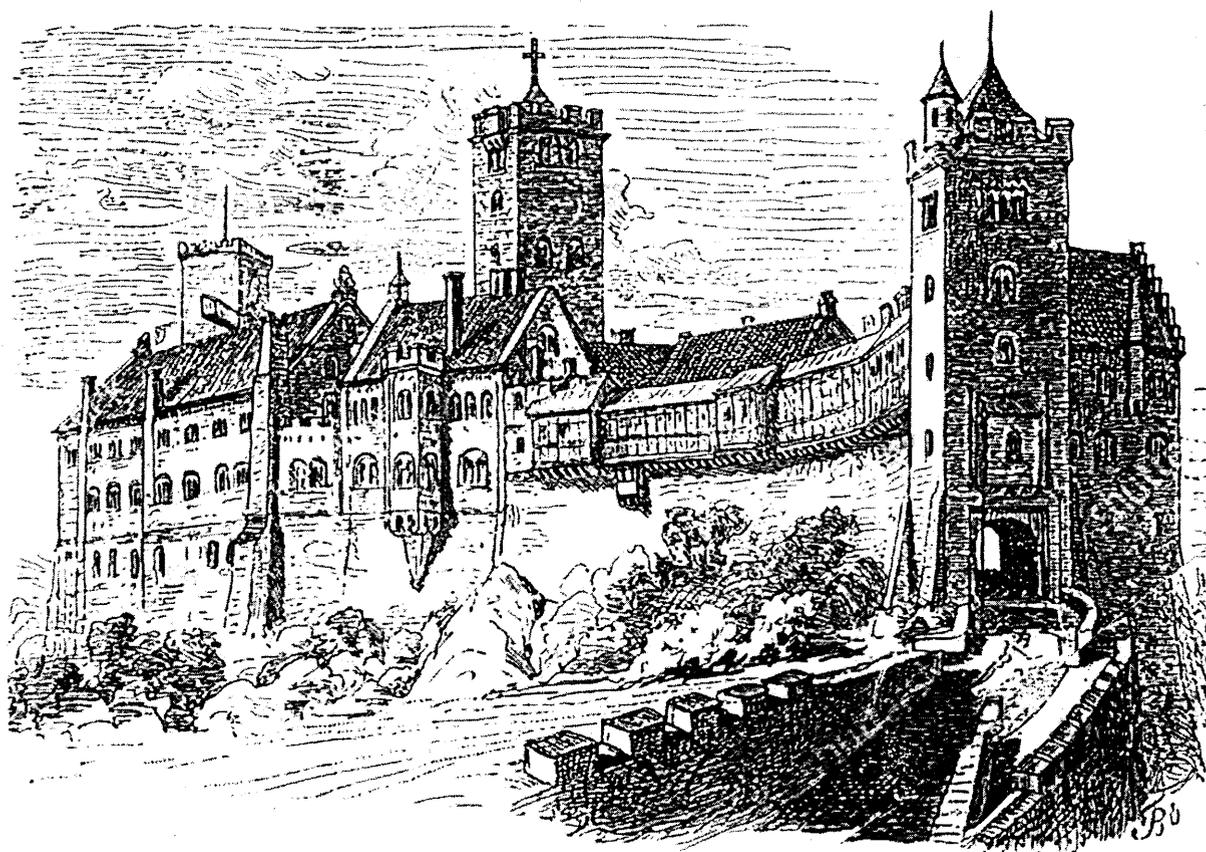
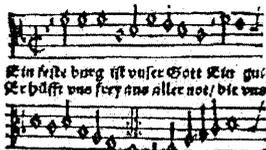


# A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD: PSALM 46



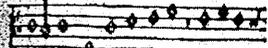
Der 46. Psalm / Deus  
 noster refugium et  
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Martinus Luther.

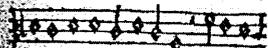


te wehr und waffen /  
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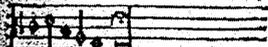
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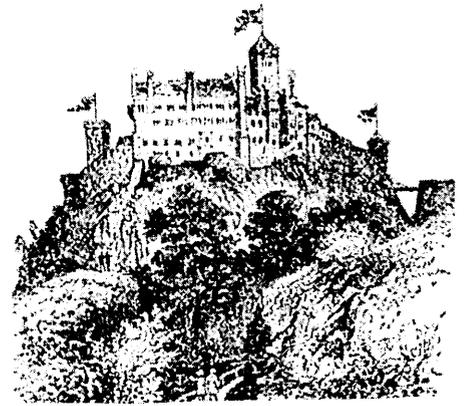


Si die unser macht ist niches gethan /  
 wir sind gar bald verloren / Es steeht

für uns der rechte man / den Gott hat  
 & ist selbst



## A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD: PSALM 46



### 1A. INTRODUCTION:

#### 1b. The occasion:

Psalm 46 and the two following psalms are hymns of triumph composed on the occasion of some great deliverance. Most commentators feel that the psalms celebrate the death of the Assyrian army in the reign of King Hezekiah when neither king nor army could help Israel (2 Ki. 18). God directly intervened and sent His angel to smite the hosts of the Assyrians. Undoubtedly, this marvelous deliverance filled the nation of Israel with wonder and joy.

#### 2b. The title:

Psalm 46 is known as Luther's Psalm. Even the liberal German commentators borrow the title from Luther's hymn. So Hans-Werner Kraus, in his classic German commentary, entitles the psalm "Yaweh is a Mighty Fortress."

Luther's famous Reformation hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," is based on Psalm 46. In times of great opposition, Martin Luther would say to his friend Philip Melancthon, "***Come, Philip, let us sing the 46<sup>th</sup> Psalm.***" Many believers in times of trial have found courage and comfort in the psalm as they rested in the truth that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." V. 1.

#### 3b, The authorship:

To commemorate the supernatural defeat of the Syrian army, the hymn of praise was possibly penned by King Hezekiah or perhaps by Isaiah. There are great similarities between this psalm and the language of Isaiah, especially 33:2.

O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

#### 4b. The outline:

Psalm 46 consists of three strophes, the conclusion of each is indicated by the term "Selah," and that of the last two by the refrain, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

The psalm can be outlined, as John Phillips has done:

**1. The refuge: 46:1-3**

**2. The river: 46:4-7**

**3. The ruler: 46:8-11**

(*Exploring the Psalms*, Vol. I, 1988)

Our outline is the following:

1. The mighty protection of God: the believer's refuge, 1-3
2. The magnificent city of God: the believer's security, 4-7
3. The marvelous deliverance of God: the believer's peace, 8-11

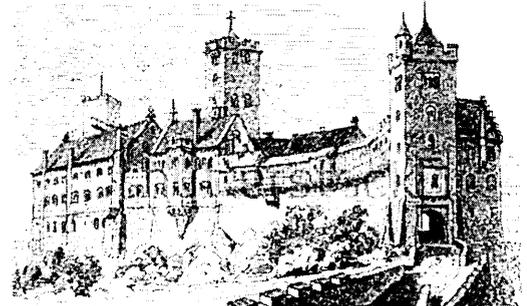
**2A. THE MIGHTY PROTECTION OF GOD: THE BELIEVER'S REFUGE, 46:1-3**

- 1b. The divine protection: 46:1

**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**

- 1c. A refuge in conflict:

The psalmist uses two different words for a place of safety. Here the word refuge (*machseh*) refers to a place of safety and quiet, whereas in the other two instances in verse 7 and 11, "Jacob is our refuge" the word is a reference to a castle or a tower on a hill which is unapproachable and thus impregnable. The word *mishgav* is often translated as high tower but, indeed, it is a reference to a fortress or a castle, offering safety. Martin Luther, reflecting on his stay in the Wartburg Castle for 300 days, called it his "isle of Patmos." When he penned the most famous of his songs, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," he undoubtedly had that castle in mind, in which God protected him as assuredly as the psalmist had promised the believer in Psalm 46.



- 2c. A strength in weakness:

- 3c. A helper in trouble:

It has been observed that Psalm 46 is a great musical treatise on the sovereignty of God. Regardless of the extreme urgencies and emergencies in life, none can possibly be greater than God can handle. The psalmist's confession in verse 1 is one that all trusting souls can and should make.

The term "a very present help in trouble" is best rendered, "a help in trouble is He very surely found." When we are helpless and the situation seems hopeless, God is there to help.

- 2b. The diverse problems: 46:2-3

**Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;**

**<sup>3</sup>Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.**

A MIGHTY  
FORTRESS  
IS OUR GOD,  
A BULWARK  
NEVER FAILING.

The psalmist speaks of the shaking of the very foundations of the earth. He writes of the catastrophe of the earth and the cataclysm in the sea.

- 1c. The rending of the earth:
  - 2c. The removal of the mountains:
  - 3c. The roaring of the sea:
  - 4c. The rocking of the mountains:
- 3b. The devotional pondering of the text:

The word “**Selah**” may be a musical notation, but most commentators feel it is there for as an enjoiner for the reader or the singer of the psalm to pause and ponder the significance of the words.

**3A. THE MAGNIFICENT CITY OF GOD: THE BELIEVER’S SECURITY, 46:4-7**

- 1b. The revelation of the river: 46:4

**There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.**

- 1c. The references to the river:  
This river is not just mentioned here but in a number of other passages, such as the ones listed belows:

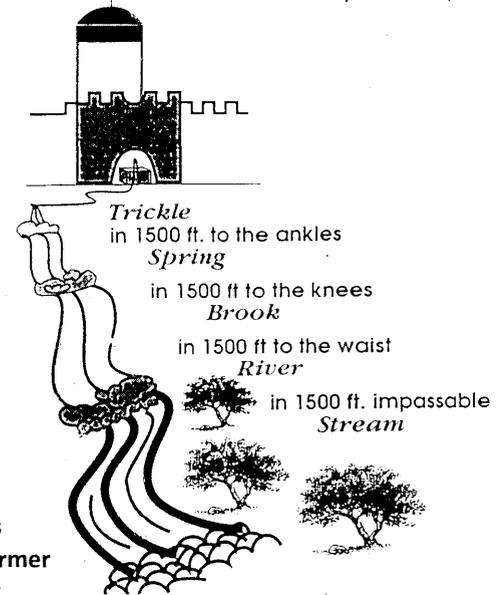
**Ez. 47:1** *Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.*

**Zech. 14:8** *And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.*

**Joel 3:18** *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.*

- 2c. The response to the river:

*The River of Life*



Several commentators assume the stream is a reference to the Gihon Spring, which provided water for the city under siege in the days of Hezekiah. It will be remembered that he built a conduit for the Spring of Gihon, 1777 feet long and hewn out of solid rock, into a reservoir, the Pool of Siloam, inside the city walls. He completely camouflaged the ancient spring on the outside of the city so that the enemy would not know it was there. Throughout the fearful and fateful siege, there was “a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.”

John Philips in his *Exploring the Psalms*, Vol. I, takes that position and it certainly is possible to see it as a historical river. On the other hand, the passage might well refer to the future of the river as indicated in the verses above. The river mentioned by Ezekiel, Zechariah and Joel is an eschatological stream which begins at the very top of the temple mount in the millennial temple and cascades eastward toward the Dead Sea, filing the desert and rejuvenating the Dead Sea. Zechariah mentions one branch that flows westward into the Mediterranean Sea.

While it is probably best to understand this as an eschatological river, it is certainly possible that the psalmist had the Spring of Gihon in mind which to this very day flows steadily from inside the caverns under the ancient city of the Jebusites into the Pool of Siloam and thence is used by the people nearby.

Others have suggested that the stream is a metaphor of the grace of God which is unending and life-giving, giving the believer spiritual help and health.

2b. The residence of God: 46:5

**God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.**

1c. The divine presence:

2c. The divine protection:

1d. Permanent protection:

2d. Timely protection:

Don Jennings in his *Scripture Studies on Psalm 46* underscores the importance of verses five and seven, “God is in the midst. . .she shall not be moved; . . .The Lord of hosts is with us. . .”

God is always “in the midst” of His people. He is the:

*Omniscient One* – “God is in the midst...” therefore, He knows us individually and corporately; He knows us and He knows our enemies; He knows how and where to safeguard us until the threats subside for He is the All-Knowing God.

*Omnipotent One* – “she shall not be moved; God shall help...” He is able to preserve and deliver us from any and all problems and problem persons.

*Omnipresent One* – He is with His people in all exigencies of life and will never leave nor forsake them for “The Lord of hosts is with us” (*Jennings Scripture Studies, Psalm 46* [italics in the original]).

- 3b. The raging of the heathen: 46:6
  - 1c. The rebellion of the nations:
  - 2c. The retribution from the Lord:
- 4b. The refuge of the believers: 46:7

**The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our tower. Selah.**

- 1c. God’s presence affirmed:
- 2c. God’s protection asserted:

It is worth noting that two terms are used for God here, “**the Lord of hosts,**” and “**the God of Jacob.**” The terms speak of an **innumerable company** and an **impregnable castle**. The Lord has at His disposal myriads of angels; one sufficed to slay the entire Assyrian army. For the believer, the Lord is an impregnable castle. Many castles have been destroyed in warfare or through earthquakes or fires. Two of the castles that have never been destroyed and that have proved to be that kind of castle, fortress or tower of which the Psalmist speaks. Once we’re hidden in God, nothing and no one can attack us.

- 3c. The admonition to the believer: **Selah**

The believer is to contemplate this blessed truth. The refuge of the believer is a person, not a place. Every believer has this refuge available when trials and troubles come, when problems and conflicts beset the believer. God is there. He is sovereign and He has an infinite number of possibilities at His disposal to help the believer. What a wonderful three-fold encouragement in the Psalm, He is a **shelter**, He is a **fortress**, He is a **tower**.

#### **4A. THE MARVELOUS DELIVERANCE OF GOD: THE BELIEVER’S PEACE: 46:8-11**

- 1b. The invitation of the psalmist: 46:8

**Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.**
- 1c. The invitation to observe God’s works in war:
  - 1d. Defeat of the enemy armies:

2d. Desolation of the enemy's land:  
The terrible things, in the plural, would most likely refer to the astonishment of the people and the desolation of the land.

2c. The invitation to observe God's works in peace: 46:9

**He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder: he burneth the chariots in fire.**

1d. The cessation of wars:

2d. The destruction of weapons:

God is not an absentee Landlord who has removed Himself from His universe. He is not a Commander watching His troops getting slaughtered. He is on the battlefield wreaking desolation and destruction upon His enemies, breaking bows and spears and burning chariots. We are reminded of the promise of old, Do not be afraid or dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's (2 Chron. 20:15)

2b. The invitation of the Lord: 46:10

**Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.**

1c. Rest in His presence.  
The phrase, "Be still," can best be rendered "Let your hand sink down," or "Let be," that is, cease your efforts. May we let God do the fighting for us.

2c. Realize His power:

3c. Rejoice in His prominence:

3b. The invitation to the believer: 46:11

**The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.**

1c. Realize the presence of the Lord:

2c. Rely on the protection of the Lord:  
The believer is on the winning side. God will continue to help him.



## **5A. CONCLUSION:**

Israel is delivered from certain destruction by a sovereign God who used one of His many angels to decimate the entire host of the Assyrians. After that, the most cruel of all nations never gained prominence as an empire. God intervened in behalf of His people, as He will intervene for us.

The believer is promised to ultimately have the victory in the struggle of life. We are said to be not just overcomers (1 Jn. 5:5) but more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37).

We as believers are engaged in spiritual warfare. Ultimately we will be victorious, as we put on the whole armor of God, described in Ephesians 6. Satan and his demons are out to destroy our country, our churches and our homes. Let us thank God that we can claim the victory of Calvary and the power of the blood as we fight the good fight of faith, knowing that we are on the victor's side.

While we carry on a day-by-day struggle, may we realize the Savior is there, He can help, He will help, and we will never be ultimately defeated.

Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts

**PSALM 46 PART 1**

*The church's safety and triumph among national desolations.*

God is the refuge of his saints,  
When storms of sharp distress invade  
Ere we can offer our complaints,  
Behold him present with his aid.

Let mountains from their seats be hurled  
Down to the deep, and buried there,  
Convulsions shake the solid world,  
Our faith shall never yield to fear.

Loud may the troubled ocean roar,  
In sacred peace our souls abide,  
While every nation, every shore,  
Trembles, and dreads the swelling tide.

There is a stream, whose gentle flow  
Supplies the city of our God;  
Life, love, and joy still gliding through,  
And wat'ring our divine abode.

That sacred stream, thine holy word,  
That all our raging fear controls:  
Sweet peace thy promises afford,  
And give new strength to fainting souls.

Zion enjoys her Monarch's love,  
Secure against a threat'ning hour;  
Nor can her firm foundations move,  
Built on his truth, and armed with power.

Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts

**PSALM 46 PART 2**

*God fights for his church.*

Let Zion in her King rejoice;  
Though tyrants rage, and kingdoms rise,  
He utters his almighty voice,  
The nations melt, the tumult dies.

The Lord of old for Jacob fought,  
And Jacob's God is still our aid:  
Behold the works his hand has wrought,  
What desolations he has made!

From sea to sea, through all the shores,  
He makes the noise of battle cease;  
When from on high his thunder roars,  
He awes the trembling world to peace.

He breaks the bow, he cuts the spear  
Chariots he burns with heav'nly flame;  
Keep silence, all the earth, and hear  
The sound and glory of his name.

"Be still, and learn that I am God;  
I'll be exalted o'er the lands;  
I will be known and feared abroad;  
But still my throne in Zion stands."

O Lord of hosts, Almighty King,  
While we so near thy presence dwell,  
Our faith shall sit secure, and sing  
Defiance to the gates of hell.

# THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB



Destruction of Sennacherib's Host  
Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

*Words:* George Gordon,  
Lord Byron, *Hebrew*  
*Melodies* 1815.

*Music:* CHRISTMAS SONG,  
Karl P. Harrington, 1904 (🔊  
📱📺). Alternate tune:

- STARLIGHT  
(CRUSIUS), Carl F.  
Crusius, 1921 (🔊📱📺  
)



Lord Byron (1788-1824)

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,  
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;  
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,  
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;  
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,  
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:  
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,  
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;  
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord.



#### DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB'S HOST.

Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.—*2 Kings xix, 32-37.*

**This miraculous event forms the historical background to Psalm 46.**