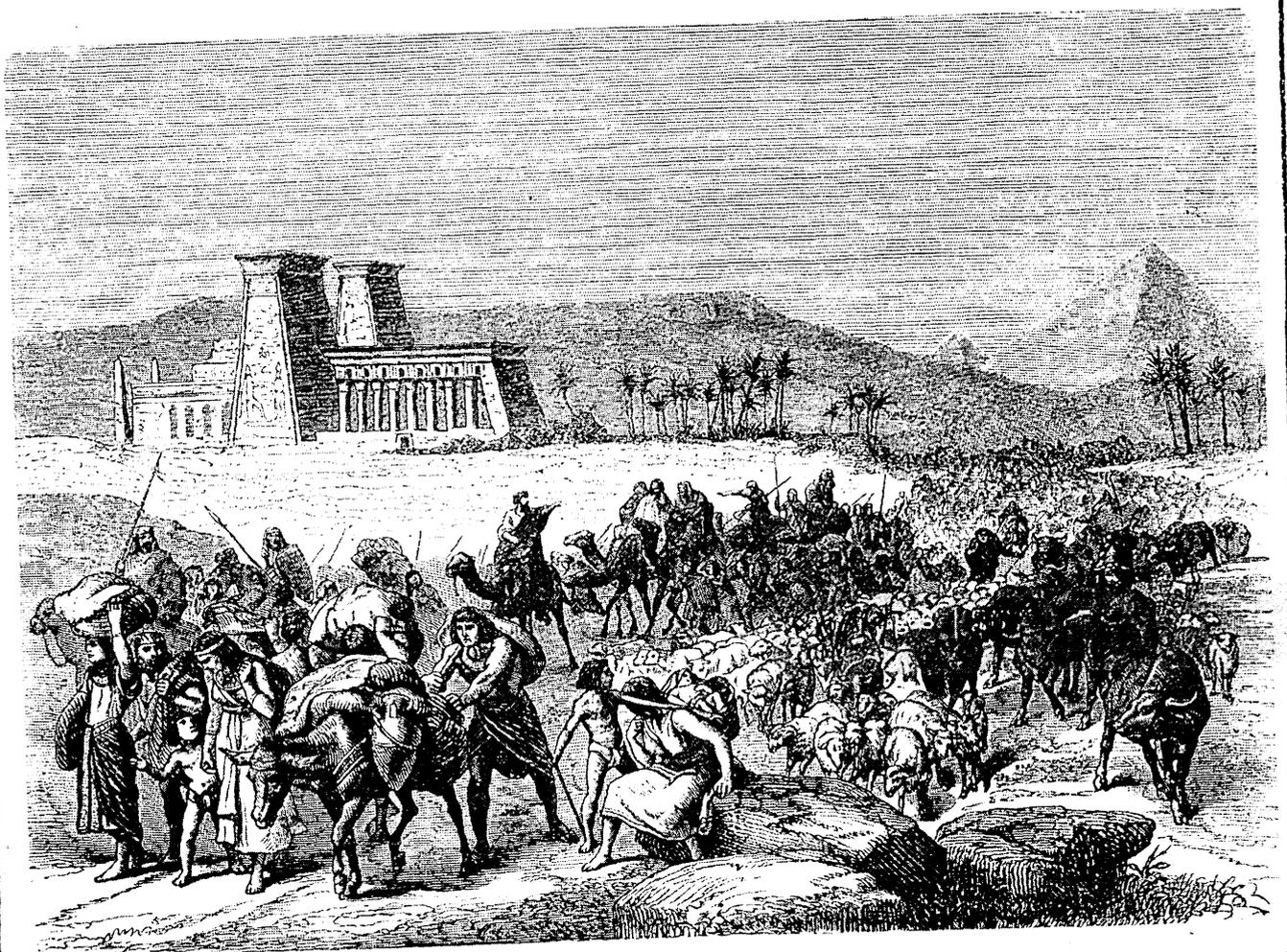


PSALM 106: GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND ISRAEL'S FAILURES



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INTRODUCTION:

This Psalm closes Book IV of the Psalter. It prompts the saints to reflect on Israel's rebellion in spite of God's miraculous works.

Psalms 105 and 106 both recount the rich history of Israel. **Psalm 105** surveys the marvelous acts of God with no emphasis on Israel's numerous sins. **Psalm 106** recounts Israel's numerous sins in disregard of God's mighty acts. The classic commentator Perowne has some interesting observations about these two Psalms and the history of Israel in general:

As in the last Psalm, so here, the history of Israel is recapitulated. In that it was turned into a thanksgiving; in this it forms the burden of a confession. There God's mighty acts for His people were celebrated with joy; here His people's sin is humbly and sorrowfully acknowledged. Nothing is more remarkable in these great historical Psalms than the utter absence of any word or sentiment tending to feed the national vanity. All the glory of Israel's history is confessed to be due, not to her heroes, her priests, her prophets, but to God; all the failures which are written upon that history, all discomfitures, losses, reverses, the sword, famine, exile, are recognized as the righteous chastisement which the sin of the nation has provoked. This is the strain of such Psalms as the 78th, the 105th, the 106th. . .

. . . There is no other poetry in the world of a popular and national kind so full of patriotic sentiment, and yet at the same time marked by so complete an abstinence from all those themes which are commonly found in poetry written for the people. There is not a single ode in honour of Moses or Aaron, or Joshua or David; there is not one which sings the glory of the nation, except as that glory is given it of God. The history of the nation, whenever referred to, is referred to almost invariably for the purpose of rebuke and upbraiding, certainly not for the purpose of commendation or self-applause (J. J. Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, II, 1966, 257-258).

The Psalm bears out well the famous statement by Lewis Sperry Chafer: "**The Bible is not such a book as man could write if he would nor would write if he could.**" Man does not normally speak of his own grievous sins and deserved judgment!

Outline:

- 1A. Praise for God's goodness: 1-3
- 2A. Prayer for God's saving favor: 4-5
- 3A. Panorama of Israel's failures: 6-46
 - in Egypt: 6-12
 - in the wilderness: 13-33
 - during the conquest: 34-46
- 4A. Petition for deliverance: 47

1A. PRAISE FOR GOD'S GOODNESS: 1-3

Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

² Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise?

³ Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.

1b. Praise for God's mercy: 1

2b. Praise for God's greatness: 2

3b. Praise for God's justice: 3

2A. PRAYER FOR GOD'S SAVING FAVOR: 4-5

Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; ⁵ That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

1b. Petition for God's salvation: 4

2b. Petition for God's deliverance: 5

3A. THE PANORAMA OF ISRAEL'S FAILURES: 6-46

The German commentator Hans-Joachim Kraus has summarized the rest of the Psalm extremely well:

The entire history of Israel is seen to be one single immense judgment of wrath by Yahweh, which is interrupted time and again by God's helpful interposition, by the hearing of the cries for help and a merciful remembering of His covenant (v. 45, cf. Psalm 105:8; 111:5, 9). . . It should be recognized that woven throughout all the incidents is the thematic principle, Yahweh's grace and Israel's guilt ("Jahwehs Huld und Israels Schuld") (*Psalmen*, II, 727, translation by MK).

Numbers 14:22 speaks of Israel's "ten murmurings." It might be well to list the ten murmurings alluded to:

ISRAEL'S MURMURINGS: Numbers 14:20-23

1. At the Red Sea where it seemed that Pharaoh's army would destroy them. Exodus 14:10-12
2. At Marah where they found bitter water. Exodus 15:22-24
3. In the Desert of Sin as they hungered. Exodus 16:1-3
4. In the Desert of Sin as they paid no attention to Moses concerning the storing of the manna until the morning. Exodus 16:19-20
5. In the Desert of Sin as they disregarded Moses concerning the gathering of the manna on the seventh day. Exodus 16:27-30
6. At Rephidim as they complained for water. Exodus 17:1-4
7. At Mount Sinai as Aaron led the people in making the golden calf. Exodus 32:1-35
8. At Taberah where the people raged against the Lord. Numbers 11:1-3
9. At Kibroth-Hattaavah in the grumbling provoked by the rabble for quail. Numbers 11:4-34
10. At Kadesh in the Desert of Paran when the people refused to receive the good report of Joshua and Caleb but rather wished themselves dead. Numbers 14:1-3

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See also *The Ryrie Study Bible*, Note for Numbers 14:22.

1b. The Psalmists's confession of sin: 6
We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

2b. Israel's murmuring at the Red Sea: 7-12

- 1c. Israel rebelled at the Red Sea: 7
- 2c. God rescued the nation: 8
- 3c. God divided the Red Sea: 9-10
- 4c. God destroyed their enemies: 11
- 5c. Israel sang His praises: 12 (Ex. 15)

3b. Israel's murmuring for flesh to eat: 13-15

- 1c. They forgot God's miracles: 13
- 2c. They craved different food: 14
- 3c. They were judged: 15 (Num. 11:31-34)

The German Reformer Martin Luther has some fitting but biting comments about Israel: They are gluttons who are concerned more about their stomach and their deprivation than that they consider God's miracles, His Word and ways. . . They want to have their stomach taken care of – may God be in heaven or wherever (Chr. G. Eberle, ed., Martin Luther, *Psalmen-Auslegung*, 1874, 76. Translation by MK).

4b. Israel's jealousy over Moses and Aaron: 16-18

- 1c. The jealousy of some in Israel: 16
- 2c. The death of Dathan and Abiram: 17
- 3c. The destruction through fire: 18

5b. Israel worshiped the golden calf: 19-23

- 1c. Their idolatry: golden calf (Deut. 9:7-29) 19
- 2c. Their iniquity: worship of an animal dependent on the Lord's provision of grass: 20
- 3c. Their indifference to God's miracles:

They forgot God's mighty miracles in Egypt. The forgetting is a spiritual eclipse of God's goodness. How long did it take Israel to forget God's deliverance through the ten plagues, through the crossing of the Red Sea, and the death of the enemy army? Possibly only five days.

- 4c. The intercession of Moses: 23

6b. Israel refused to enter Canaan: 24-27

- 1c. The people did not trust God: 24

- 2c. The people murmured instead of marching: 25
- 3c. This generation died in the wilderness: 26
- 4c. The people and their descendants were scattered about the nations: 27

7b. Israel committed immorality in Moab: 28-31

- 1c. Israel's immoral practices: 28-29
 - 1d. They worshiped a dead idol.
 - 2d. They offered sacrifices to idols.
 - 3d. They practiced sacred prostitution.
- 2c. Israel's immediate punishment: 29 (Num. 25:9)
25,000 died in a plague
- 3c. Phinehas' intervening performance: 30-31
He impaled the immoral couple, the Jew Zimri and the Midianite Cozbi.

Zimri, a prince of Israel	Cozbi, a princess of Midian
Numbers 25:14	Numbers 25:15

8b. Israel rebelled at Meribah: 32-33

**They angered *Him* also at the waters of ^[a]strife,
So that it went ill with Moses on account of them;
³³ Because they rebelled against His Spirit,
So that he spoke rashly with his lips.**

- 1c. Moses brought water out of the rock for a rebellious people:
- 2c. Moses became angry and used harsh words:
- 3c. Moses forfeited entrance into the Promised Land: (Num. 20:8-13)

It would seem that God could have said and should have said that because of their disobedience and their constant rebellion He was through with them but just the opposite is true. God at every turn shows His mercy and longsuffering and keeps His promise that He made with the Israelites to someday give them the Promised Land. His promise is still awaits fulfillment. Never has Israel forfeited the fulfillment because of their disobedience. On a personal basis, they have not experienced the blessings of possessing the land, but at a future time God will bring about the redemption of the entire nation (Rom. 11:26) and then these promises will be fulfilled. Regrettably, many of our evangelical friends deny any future for a racial group called *Israel* in a geographical location called the Holy Land. Covenant theologians, such as R. C. Sproul, insist all of Israel's land promises were already fulfilled under Joshua.

9b. Israel engaged in pagan idolatry: 34-39

1c. Israel failed to destroy the Canaanites: 34

--they were commanded to destroy everyone (Deut. 7:1-6)

--the Canaanites were irremediately wicked (Deut. 9:5) ***It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.***

For a proper understanding of the extreme wickedness of the Canaanites, it is good to consider Leviticus 18:5-30.

1. The abominations of the Canaanites:

v. 24 **Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.**

v. 27 **for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled**

1. Incest 5-19
2. Adultery and promiscuity 20
3. Human sacrifice 21a
4. Blaspheming the name of God 21b
5. Homosexuality 22
6. Bestiality 23

2. The admonition to the Israelites:

v. 25 **For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.**

v. 28 **Lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you.**

The land vomited out the Canaanites. If Israel partook of their sins, they would be vomited out.

1. Violation brings death to the individual.
 2. Violation brings expulsion from the land.
-

2c. Israel mingled with the pagans: 35

3c. Israel practiced idolatry: 36

4c. Israel sacrificed their infants: 37-38

They even sacrificed their sons

And their daughters to demons,

³⁸ And shed innocent blood,

The blood of their sons and daughters,

Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan.

5c. Israel defiled the land: 39

6c. Israel practiced sacred prostitution: 39

- 10b. The Lord's response to the corrupt nation: 40- 46
 - 1c. The divine judgment: 40-43
 - 1d. He abhorred the rebels:
He was as displeased with them as He was with the Canaanites:
 - 2d. He handed them over to Gentile nations:
 - 1e. The nations hated them
 - 2e. The nations oppressed them
 - 3e. The nations enslaved them
 - 2c. The divine mercy: 44-46
**Nevertheless He regarded their affliction,
 When He heard their cry;**
⁴⁵ **And for their sake He remembered His covenant,
 And relented according to the multitude of His mercies.**
⁴⁶ **He also made them to be pitied
 By all those who carried them away captive.**
 - 1d. He made numerous efforts to help them: 43
 - 2d. He was concerned for their condition: 44
 - 3d. He kept His covenant and showed mercy: 45
 - 4d. He caused them to be pitied before their captors: 46

4A. A PETITION FOR DELIVERANCE: 47-48

Save us, O Lord our God, And gather us from among the Gentiles,--
 To give thanks to Your holy name, To triumph in Your praise.

⁴⁸ **Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting!**
And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the Lord!

- 1b. Their request: That the nation might be gathered from captivity and dispersion.
- 2b. The reason: That they might give thanks and offer praise.
- 3b. The benediction: The Lord is to be blessed and praised:
 - Always
 - By everyone
 - In any circumstance
 - Without any reservation

Martin Luther notes the accent of the psalmist:

The Psalm begins with a Hallelujah and ends with the same, for the apparent purpose to thank God most sincerely for the remission of sins and the impartation of His gracious acts. (*Psalmen* Vol. 2, 70).

Kraus makes an excellent observation:

The Psalm needs to be read in light of Romans 11:22 and I Corinthians 10:11. These are examples of inexhaustible grace and incomprehensible guilt (“*unerschöpflichen Gnade und unbegreiflichen Schuld*”) which are presented in Psalm 106. (Kraus, (*Psalmen*, II, 723, translation by MK).

CONCLUSION:

The historical Psalm, written during Israel’s captivity or soon after the return from captivity, sets the pattern for the believer’s attitudes. He should:

1. Rehearse God’s gracious leading in the past.
2. Remember his transgressions.
3. Repent of his sins.
4. Reflect on God’s grace and mercy.
5. Recognize the eternal greatness of God.
6. Rejoice in his salvation.