

Psalm 46 – Study Guide¹

I strive to advocate, among other things, three core elements to those under my care and influence: 1) A big/proper view of God, 2) An expectant longing for the Lord's return, and 3) Maintaining an eternal perspective. I emphasize these things because I am persuaded that the Scriptures emphasize these elements and that they shape one's thoughts, life, and worship. Here in Psalm 46 we see another area of emphasis that requires proper attention: The LORD's relationship both with Israel and the nations. Within this emphasis is another point of consequential emphasis, the city of Jerusalem.

It is at this time I pause to express a concern that grieves me. While it may be an insufficient and therefore an unfair observation, it appears to me that frequently the first three emphases that I addressed (big view of God, the Lord's return, and an eternal perspective) are functionally viewed as dismissive to putting an emphasis on The LORD's relationship with Israel and the nations and with having any particularly consequential view of Jerusalem. The exception would be that the nations are viewed as a consequential subtheme of gospel advancement.

I know that there are theological systems that frequently result in this general dismissal of the particular emphasis on nations, of greatest consequence – national Israel and its city of Jerusalem. However, without an overt advocating of a theological system I want to simply look at the text of Psalm 46 and advocate that The LORD has a view to the nations, he has a precious relationship with Israel, and has and will regard Jerusalem as a place of his unique and magnificent holy habitation.

First, as someone who frequently is looking at the big picture and the culmination of Redemptive History, I want to lay a foundation for The LORD's attention to the details of nations and peoples because I am concerned that we are frequently coming to the text with some unmerited presumptions that manifest themselves in things such as the following questions. Why does Israel matter when the Lord has redeemed his bride, the Church? Is it not strange that at the culmination of Redemptive History the Lord would pause to have a seemingly short 1,000 year reign in Israel? Is Jerusalem still a city of importance beyond contemporary political strife?²

Consider the Lord's attention and affection for the "small" and "temporal":

"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, **but** it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." Deuteronomy 7:6-8

"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? **Yet** you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet...." Psalm 8:3-6

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. **But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.** Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." Matthew 10:29-31

¹ Prepared by David Crowe for Pray's Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School

ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

² We have contextually borrowed Jerusalem as a "launching place" for our gospel advancement when we refer to our personal home towns as "our Jerusalem" rather than recognizing that the literal Jerusalem was the first place that the gospel was to expand from to its literal surrounding areas and to the ends of the earth. Can we extract principles, yes, but not at the expense of failing to first and primarily recognizing context.

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’” James 4:13-15

It would appear that The LORD cares for a small nation that he made a covenant promise with before their even being constituted as a nation. Further note that the timing of their taking their promised land by conquest was in direct correlation with The LORD judging those other nations.

It would appear that The LORD has a unique regard for man – crowing him with glory and honor, making him steward of the natural creation. *See Psalm 8 Study Guide for further.* It would appear that Lord is intimately familiar with the smallest of details in his care of man whose life is so temporary that it can be compared with a vapor or mist. On this note, it is interesting that persons are willing to place great emphasis on the redemption both of the corporate church and the singular man, but then wholly disregard a covenant promise with a nation whose relationship with God constitutes the majority of the Scriptures... disappearing into an allegorical foundation while the very real descendants of this nation are stripped to a remnant of having been something, but now nothing. Psalm 46 was written for Israel. It is the Lord’s kindness that having been grafted into the blessings of Israel we can rejoice in The LORD/Yahweh who demonstrates magnificence and keeps his promises.

I urge you to be careful that you are not imputing your value system on what God should think is important when he has told us what he values as important - things such as a big view of God, a longing for his return, and an eternal perspective, which is wholly consistent with the small and temporal things, too. Just as man is of no small consequence in his relationship to his creator so Israel and Jerusalem are of no small consequence as the object of affection and promise by the infinite and glorious God. This is a special song of comfort and encouragement to a people and to their city, which was and will be the holy habitation of the Almighty.

Structure

David Crowe

- 46:1-3 In view of God’s keeping there is no fear of judgment as demonstrated by natural chaos.
- 46:4-7 The stability, peace, and protection of God’s presence and the lack in his absence.
- 46:8-11 The works of The LORD, from desolation to exultation by The LORD who is present.

John MacArthur

In providing a general summary of Psalm 46, John MacArthur, also provides the reason and breakdown of his understanding of the psalm’s structure. “The major burden of Ps.46 is that God provides stability for His people who live in two exceedingly unstable environments.”³

- I. The Unstable Environments of Nature (46:1-3)⁴
 - A. The Affirmation of His Stability (46:1)
 - B. The Application of His Stability (46:2,3)
- II. The Unstable Environment of the Nations (46:4-11)
 - A. The First Chorus (46:4-7)
 - B. The Follow-Up Chorus (46:8-11)

³ The MacArthur Study Bible, NKJV. Word Bibles, 1997. (Hereafter: MacArthur), Pg.783

⁴ MacArthur, Pg.783

English Standard Version Study Bible

The ESV Study Bible sees Psalm 46 as having two stanzas marked by a refrain (46:7, 11).⁵

46:1-7 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
46:8-11 God will Be Exalted Among All Nations

Arnold Rhodes⁶

46:1-3 God Our Refuge in the Midst of Chaos
46:4-7 God Our Help in the Midst of the City
46:8-11 God Our Hope in the Midst of the Nations

Willem VanGemeren⁷

46:1-3 The presence of God in cosmic troubles.
46:4-7 The presence of God in judgment.
46:8-11 The presence of God on earth.

VanGemeren offers some further structural insight stating that the first two sections clearly belong together based on vocabulary and theme, but the third section, while consistent with the overall psalm, appears to be further developed and have a prophetic tone to it.⁸

Derek Kidner⁹

The ascendancy of God in sphere after another.

46:1-3 His power over nature.
46:4-7 His power over the attackers of the city.
46:8-11 His power over the whole warring world.

General Introductory Comments

Thematic Groupings

Psalm 46 is the first of a trilogy of psalms grouped together 46-48 and this trilogy consists of songs of triumph.¹⁰ Psalm 46 is also one of the “songs of Zion” which also include Psalms 48,76,84,87,122.¹¹ James Boice¹² and The ESV Study Bible¹³ both list of the “songs of Zion” with the exception the ESV Study Bible excluding Psalm 84.

Jerusalem

The ESV Study Bible affirms that this is a psalm celebrating Zion “...as the special city, to which God has pledged himself and through which he will bless the world.”¹⁴

⁵ English Standard Version Study Bible. Crossway Bibles, 2008. (Hereafter: ESV SB) Pg.994

⁶ The Layman's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Volume 9. Arnold B. Rhodes. John Knox Press, 1966 (Hereafter: Rhodes), Pg.80

⁷ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition: Psalms, Volume 5. Willem A. VanGemeren. Zondervan, 2008 (Hereafter: VanGemeren), Pg.403

⁸ VanGemeren, Pg.403

⁹ Derek Kidner; Kidner Classic Commentaries: Psalms 1-72. IVP Academic (Digital Copy), 1973. (Hereafter: Kidner), Pg.191

¹⁰ MacArthur, Pg.783

¹¹ MacArthur, Pg.783

¹² An Expository Commentary: Psalms, Volume 2. James Montgomery Boice. Baker Books, 1994 (Hereafter: Boice), Pg.390

¹³ ESV SB, Pg.994

¹⁴ ESV SB, Pg.994

Thematic Emphasis

Willem VanGemereren concurs with my own conclusion that Psalm 46 appears to have a feeling of a theophany of judgment and care, "God's coming down to judge the nations is portrayed as throwing the world of nature into convulsion...."¹⁵

There is also a striking contrast between the natural and national chaos and the comfort and care for Israel and the city of Jerusalem. This contrast extends into the call to consider The LORD's works and the peace that he will bring whether it is received joyfully or by compulsion. Ultimately there is a very strong Psalm 2 foundational presence and it do one well to give Psalm 2 due attention before giving further treatment of Psalm 46.

Historical Context/Background

"Its robust, defiant tone suggests that it was composed at a time of crisis, which makes the confession of faith doubly impressive. But as the crisis is left unidentified, and the psalm ranges far beyond any local situation, there is little to be gained by historical speculation."¹⁶

By way of contrast James Boice states that the backdrop to the psalm was likely a divine intervention of The LORD on behalf of Jerusalem with the two prevailing theories being either the deliverance account in 2 Chronicles 20 or 2 Kings 18-19.¹⁷ These two accounts cannot be treated in detail here, but at the minimal familiarity with their narratives will prove helpful. If their contextual tie was more pronounced fuller treatment of them would be all but required for proper study of this psalm.

Header/Introduction

From the Header/Introduction we observe the following:

The psalm was for the choirmaster and was therefore likely used in some corporate context.

The psalm was written or produced by the Sons of Korah who we are encountering for the first time as they are in the second and third books of the Psalms and this is our first psalm in the second book of the Psalms. Their role in Psalm 46 also is an element to consider when attempting to identify possible historical contexts that served as background in some way.

The psalm had some sort of musical or liturgical instruction "according to Alamoth." Regarding this term MacArthur states that "Alamoth" could have been a musical term indicating that the song was intended to be sung by females at a higher range.¹⁸ C.F. Keil and F.Delitzsch appear to agree that this is a term for singing in a higher range and state that there was also the possibility of young men singing at a higher range or even in a falsetto.¹⁹

The psalm was a song as were many of the psalms, but here it is explicitly stated. It should provoke the church to consider the theme and quality of our own songs for worship as this was an inspired song for the worship of God by his people.

¹⁵ VanGemereren, Pg.403

¹⁶ Kidner, Pg.191

¹⁷ Boice, Pg.390

¹⁸ MacArthur, Pg.783

¹⁹ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch; Keil & Delitzsch: Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 5 – Psalms. Hendrickson Publishers, 2001. (Hereafter: Keil & Delitzsch), Pg.337

46:1-3 In view of God's keeping there is no fear of judgment as demonstrated by natural chaos

Terms

Refuge: Place of shelter, protection, and safekeeping.

Strength: The capacity to execute actions (necessary and elective) - the greater the strength the greater the capacity to do - also referenced as might and power.

Note that Israel's first song as a corporate nation was a song of victory and praise on the shore of the Red Sea where their prior enslavers and pursuers were washing up... leaving Egypt, Israel experienced one final miracle in the dramatic Exodus... the parting of the sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's pursuing army. This song of victory and praise established The LORD's strength for Israel: "The LORD is my strength and my song...." (Exodus 15:2) and "...you have guided them by your strength...." (Exodus 15:13).

Help: To render aid or assistance, provide deliverance.

Roar, Uproar, Turmoil, Rage, Moan, Howl, Loud

Selah: Probably a pause in the music or for contemplation.²⁰

Summary

The LORD's disposition and relation with Israel is that he has been and is their refuge (place of shelter, protection, and safekeeping, their strength (providing the capacity to execute action), and a very present help (provider of aid, assistance, and deliverance). Therefore even in the midst of a tumultuous chaos of earthquakes, landslides, and a violently crashing sea I am comforted in my secure keeping and help.

46:1

In addition to being Israel's refuge, place of protective care, and their strength, providing them the means to do what they are called to do, The LORD is also a very present help in trouble. Therefore, it is reasonable to inquire why Israel was in need of refuge and help? As addressed there was likely some historical context that precipitated the writing of the psalm, but as such a context is not directly mentioned we are not compelled to that conclusion. There is also the reality that Israel was a nation of struggle and were in need of help from both the natural elements and the nations who were not always allies (possible allusion to 46:6). Whatever the need the psalmist and the nation could testify that The LORD is a very present help and in this truth there is great comfort.

Note the similarities between this verse and the duplicated verses of seven and eleven:

46:1 - Refuge and strength

46:7/11 - Fortress

46:1 - Very present help

46:7/11 - The LORD of hosts is with us

Thematically similar:

46:4 holy habitation of the Most High

46:5 God is in the midst of her

²⁰ Boice Pg.389

Refuge, Strength, and Help

These characteristics of The LORD expressed in 46:1 are not unique references, but deep rooted characteristics of The LORD's relationship with his beloved - he strongly cares for and protects them.

Psalms 22:19	"But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O <i>you my help</i> , come quickly to my aid!"
Psalms 27:9	"Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O <i>you who have been my help</i> . Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!"
Psalms 28:7-8	" <i>The LORD is my strength</i> and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. <i>The LORD is the strength</i> of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed."
Psalms 59:9	"O <i>my Strength</i> , I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress."
Psalms 59:17	"O <i>my Strength</i> , I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love."
Psalms 61:3	"...for you have been <i>my refuge</i> , a strong tower against the enemy."
Psalms 62:7-8	"On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, <i>my refuge is God</i> . Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; <i>God is a refuge for us</i> ."
Psalms 63:7	"...for <i>you have been my help</i> , and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy."
Psalms 71:7	"I have been as a portent to many, but <i>you are my strong refuge</i> ."
Psalms 73:28	"But for me it is good to be near God; I have made <i>the Lord GOD my refuge</i> , that I may tell of all your works."
Psalms 94:17	"If the LORD had not <i>been my help</i> , my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence."
Psalms 94:22	"But the LORD has become my stronghold, and <i>my God the rock of my refuge</i> ."
Psalms 118:14	"The LORD is <i>my strength</i> and my song; he has become my salvation."

46:2-3

Therefore (or in light of God being our refuge, strength, and very present help in trouble) we will not fear. These elements of provision, power, and presence eliminate a context in which fear can germinate or mature.

It appears that the psalmist then addresses the scope of comfort that this fearless disposition can stand: the earth giving way, the mountains moving into the heart of the sea, the sea water roaring and foaming, and the mountains tremble at its swelling. It is as though he is saying in light of these established facts of The LORD's provision and care: they will not fear even if these frightening elements were realities.

At the core of the message is that there is much movement and that is frightening unless you are fixed to the immovable and sure help of God.

Not Fear

As it has been important to give proper attention to a genuine fear of God so it is important to give a proper attention to a genuine lack of fear in God. This is reminiscent of our study in Psalm 23 where an otherwise frightening context (the valley of the shadow of death) is stripped of its fearfulness not because of new information or increased strength, but because of the immediate presence of the Good Shepherd. So here, the preceding "therefore" which points back to the preserving and protecting presence of The LORD, takes "fear's authority and opportunity" away. It has nothing by which it can anchor itself - even when the surrounding contexts are fearful, fear itself has been neutralized. It is like being in a submarine and staying dry - it is not that water is absent or that

with tremendous pressure it would seek to burst in and consume you with its presence and dangers, yet you are dry and secure. Need you fear... only if your refuge, strength, and present help is not sufficient... but it is, so there is no need or proper place for fear.

This is a preservation and relief from the tumultuous chaos of natural elements, but this preservation from fear is clearly established in relation to men too, as seen later in the psalm when addressing the nations. *This will be further developed when we study Psalm 118.*

Now, because I have labored to make a case for "fearing" The LORD I want to help make it clear that submitting to that greater/proper fear alleviates all other fears. It is because we fear God that we can in every other way be fearless. Note how consistent this "therefore" pattern of being relieved of fear in view of The LORD's presence/help is throughout the Psalms.

Psalm 27:1	"The LORD is my light and my salvation; <i>whom shall I fear?</i> The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"
Psalm 27:3	"Though an army encamp against me, <i>my heart shall not fear</i> ; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident."
Psalm 56:3-4	" <i>When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.</i> In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; <i>I shall not be afraid.</i> What can flesh do to me?"
Psalm 56:11	"...in God I trust; <i>I shall not be afraid.</i> What can man do to me?"
Psalm 91:5	" <i>You will not fear</i> the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day...."
Psalm 112:7-8	" <i>He is not afraid</i> of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries."
Psalm 118:6	"The LORD is on my side; <i>I will not fear.</i> What can man do to me?"

Judgement

I simply could not look past the consistent use of "desolation" throughout the Old Testament (found in Psalm 46:8). It is consistently used of divine judgment and frequently in a Theophany (a manifestation of The LORD's presence) context that would include judgment. In light of this and with the other elements of the psalm in view it appeared to provide continuity throughout the psalm. However, if the third portion of the psalm is not as smoothly consistent with the first two sections and is a shift to a prophetic emphasis, then the argument would have less potency if it relied on the inclusion of "desolation" alone, but it appears consistent with judgment and judgments accompanying a Theophany.

I find further support with Psalm 46's general contextual association with Psalm 2 which is also heavy on judgment, but not driven by judgment.

46:4-7 The stability, peace, and protection of God's presence and the lack in his absence

Terms

Glad/Rejoice

Fortress or stronghold: A strong bastion or place of protection/defense.

Summary

Jerusalem, the holy habitation of The LORD, is immovable and at peace amidst both the natural chaos that surrounds her and the clamoring of the raging nations and tottering kingdoms. The presence of the immovable God anchors and secures his beloved city.

46:4

In a very striking contrast we have creation thrashing and even undoing itself and then reference to a river producing streams that make glad the city of God. It is peaceful context where the presence of God is abiding.

The city of God is Jerusalem, the one place in all the earth that The LORD chose to secure his special presence with man and in particular with Israel, his witness bearing nation and people of covenant promise.

Jerusalem is only referred to as "The City of God" one other time and that is in Psalm 87 (one of the other "songs of Zion") which was also of the sons of Korah and it contains similar terminology: 87:1 holy mount, 87:5 The Most High, 87:7 reference to springs (of water). Psalm 87 also provides further insight regarding "The City of God": 87:1 The LORD founded the city, 87:2 the city is more beloved than all other places in Israel, 87:3 "Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God."

The LORD is absolutely holy and anything/one that would associate with him or his presence must be made holy/set apart - consecrated in purity. The LORD's special city, his place of special dwelling among men was a holy/consecrated/set apart habitation. This was not just a city that happened to be playing host to the Ark of the Covenant, this was a city set apart by God Almighty. Israel was to be a holy nation and of Jerusalem it is said, "On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob." Psalm 87:1-2

To further appreciate this most precious city note that while Jesus strongly rebuked cities for their unbelief (Matthew 11) he wept over Jerusalem (Matthew 23).

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' " Matthew 23:37-39

We also know that Jerusalem will be the centerpiece of the New Heavens and New Earth (Revelation 21). The New Jerusalem, the holy city where God will dwell with his people.....

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

Revelation 21:1-3

Jerusalem, The Holy City

Nehemiah 11:1	"Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in <u>Jerusalem the holy city</u> , while nine out of ten remained in the other towns."
Isaiah 52:1	"Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O <u>Jerusalem, the holy city</u> ; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean."
Matthew 4:5	"Then the devil took him to <u>the holy city</u> and set him on the pinnacle of the temple...."

Matthew 27:52-53	"The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into <u>the holy city</u> and appeared to many."
Revelation 11:1-2	"Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample <u>the holy city</u> for forty-two months."
Revelation 21:10-11	"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me <u>the holy city Jerusalem</u> coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal."

The Most High, greatest of great and superior of all, has taken up his abode in this city in a limited and temporal way here, and in a most complete way in the expectant days to come.

An Unshakeable/Impenetrable City

Ultimately it appears to me that the psalm as a whole is a contrast of judgment and peaceful preservation. This psalm is speaking to the now moment (the time at which it was written), but it is not as though Jerusalem was absolutely impenetrable or exempt for possible destruction (we know otherwise: the Babylonians and Romans have each conquered and leveled her). Rather this is addressing *the preservation with presence* - The LORD's presence is a preservation of this beloved city. However, when Israel had both persisted in her sin and later rejected her Messiah, his presence effectively departed (Ezekiel 9-11 and Matthew 23-24) and Jerusalem was destroyed both times.

Now significant portions of the beloved city are reduced to archeological fixtures, arches, portions of the old exterior wall, and the "Wailing Wall" (all that remains of the last Temple). However... there will be a restoration of the city and from this city Jesus will rule and reign on the throne of David for 1,000 years. Again Jerusalem will be unshakable and impenetrable. After this when the New Heavens and New Earth are established the New Jerusalem will be established forever and will never be shaken and never be overrun.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'" Revelation 21:1-4

Regarding these very matters, Zechariah beckons us to both look back and look forward.

Looking Back:

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.' But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. 'As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate.'" Zechariah 7:9-14

Looking Forward:

“And the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain. Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. Thus says the LORD of hosts: If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in my sight, declares the LORD of hosts? Thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.’ Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Let your hands be strong, you who in these days have been hearing these words from the mouth of the prophets who were present on the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for beast, neither was there any safety from the foe for him who went out or came in, for I set every man against his neighbor. But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as in the former days, declares the LORD of hosts. For there shall be a sowing of peace. The vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its produce, and the heavens shall give their dew. And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong.’ For thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘As I purposed to bring disaster to you when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the LORD of hosts, so again have I purposed in these days to bring good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; fear not. These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD.’ And the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore love truth and peace. ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going.’ Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’” Zechariah 8:1-23

God’s Choice: Jerusalem

“God’s choice of Zion, or Jerusalem, had been as striking as his choice of David, and the wonder of it keeps breaking through; for it is only as God’s abode that it is either strong or of any consequence; yet as such it will be the envy of the world and the mother-city of the nations.”²¹

River and Streams

Mindful that the psalms employ imagery and illustration they are also frequently rooted in that which is immediate observable and present (not unlike the mountains which surround Jerusalem). It is on account of this that I am persuaded that the reference to a river and its streams could be metaphorical in application and poetic reference, they were also a critical part of the city of Jerusalem that the psalmist personally knew and experienced. This being said it appears that the reference would have been to the Gihon Spring.

VanGemeren states that the river is a metaphor of blessing and restoration – referencing it as a glance back to the garden of Eden and a promised comfort established in several other passages.²²

VanGemeren’s metaphor can hold up because a natural river/spring, such as the Gihon Spring, would provide life sustaining refreshment to the cities inhabitants. It seems like this a natural blessing and one that is peaceful, gentle, and a grace - this all in contrast to the preceding chaos.

²¹ Kidner, Pg.193

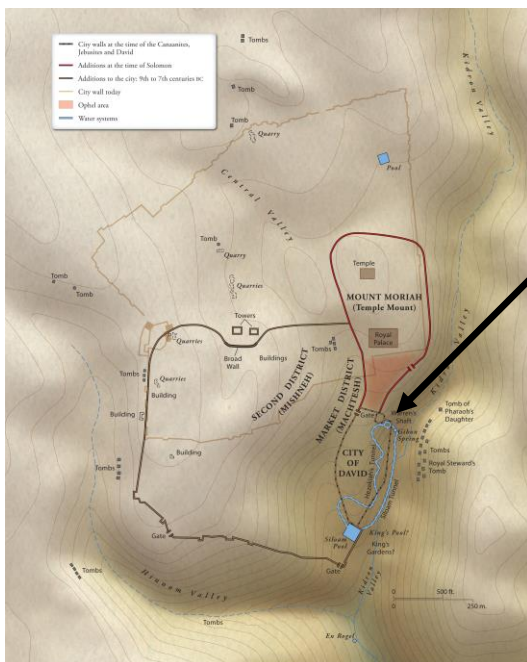
²² VanGemeren pg.405



23

Gihon Spring

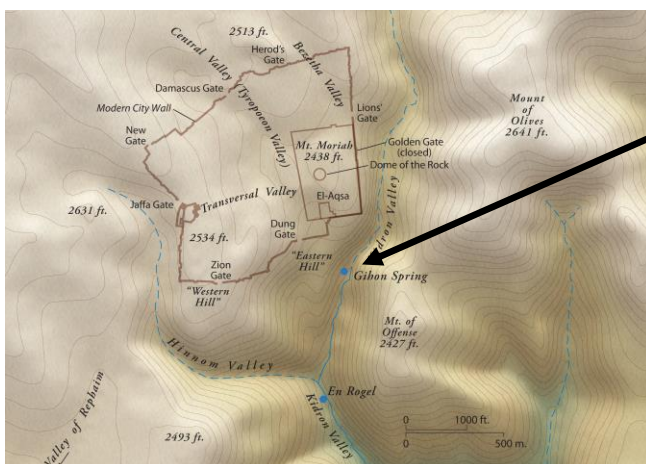
The spring chamber of the chief water source of Jerusalem¹



24

Jerusalem Topography

In many ways the western ridge is the more natural one to settle on, both because it has a relatively large surface area and thus can support more people, and because it is higher and seems to have better natural defenses (higher, steeper slopes) than the eastern ridge. In spite of these features, it was the lower, cigar-shaped, 15-acre southern portion of the eastern ridge that was settled first. The reason why the ancient core of Jerusalem developed on this insignificant, down-in-a-basin hill was that the only good-sized spring in the whole area—the Gihon Spring (photo p. 138)—was located alongside the eastern ridge in the Kidron Valley.



25

Old Testament Jerusalem

Gihon (spring)—The major water source for the city of Jerusalem located just E, of the city in the Kidron valley. There Solomon was crowned king (1 Kgs 1:33, 38, 45). Hezekiah blocked its upper outlet (2 Chron 32:30) and repaired the city wall above it (2 Chron 33:14) in anticipation of the Assyrian advance on Jerusalem.—*Ain Umm ed-Deraj/Ain Sitti Maryam*. 138, 143, 167, 242, **242**, 243, 244, **246**, 247, **248**

²³ Carl G. Rasmussen, *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible*, Revised Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010) (Hereafter: Rasmuessen), 138.

²⁴ Rasmuessen, Pg. 246

²⁵ Rasmussen, Pg. 242.

46:5

An Inhabitation of Peace

The opening statement here affirms the inhabitant's identity of 46:4: God is in the midst of her. Now, because God is in Jerusalem she will not be moved. This is in direct contrast to the opening statements of 46:2-3 (earth giving way, mountains moving and trembling, and a tumultuous sea) and it is in direct contrast to that which will follow in 46:6 (raging nations and tottering kingdoms). God's presence is a presence of preservation and peace.

Note now, that while I have labored to defend the integrity of the original context and a proper evaluation/esteeming of Jerusalem as New Testament believers we also recognize that we are inhabited by the Spirit of God and can take *like* comfort in the immediate preservation and peace that the Lord provides his own. It is not that we can apply this in some metaphorical sense – “that the enemy will not breach the walls of my heart/soul,” but that we have a resolute peace that is provided by the Comforter that has come and his peace is sure and enduring.

“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” John 14:25-27

A telling movement

The "immovable" mountains move... they slip and the nations totter, but by striking contrast the city of God's special habitation does not move. Just as fear finds no place in the company of those secure in The LORD so neither sliding, tottering, or moving is found in the city of God.

When Morning Dawns

God's city is immovable and he will render help, aid, assistance to his beloved city when the new day comes.... Is this communicating comprehensive care - from the very start? It is difficult to say with certainty. VanGemeren suggests that the statement that God will help Jerusalem when morning dawns is a way of stating that, “...the Lord will not let them suffer unduly long....”²⁶

It is this portion of the psalm that lends itself to the consideration of the two precise historical contexts, whose references are provided in the background section above, because in both cases Israel's day began with the morning sun casting light on a supernatural deliverance by the hand of God.

46:6

The Unstable Nations/Kingdoms

While there is duplication of language and thematic tone between this verse and 46:2-3 I do not think that the opening was a metaphorical reference to the nations and kingdoms. I see the continuity between the two to be showing the breadth of the tumultuous chaos when there is an absence of The LORD's presence, save his presence in judgment.

²⁶ VanGemeren, Pg.406

God has not taken up a special dwelling among them and they rage and totter in their instability and turmoil. The nations are raging like the sea's waves are crashing and the kingdoms are tottering like slipping mountains. This is all in direct contrast to the holy habitation of The LORD. These are the rumblings of the wrath of the Father being quickly kindled. The resolution... pay homage to the Son.

The Voice of The LORD

"As in some other places, judgment is seen here in both its aspects: first the outworking of the inherent instability of evil, where the fitting sequel of rage (or to be in tumult) is to be insecure (to totter, on which see also on 5, above); and secondly the intervention of God, whose voice will be as decisive in dissolving the world as it was in creating it (cf. 33:6,10)."²⁷

46:7/11

This verse comes at the end of the second section, just before the second *Selah* pause and it is repeated exactly in verse eleven at the end of the third/final section and it is also followed by a *Selah* pause.

Kidner states that the first half of the verse "LORD of hosts" speaks of might and the second half of the verse "God of Jacob" speaks of grace.²⁸

LORD of Hosts

1 Samuel 1:3 is the first time that this title is used for The LORD which is interesting as Samuel transitions Israel from the time of the Judges to the time of the Kings, but also because it is a war title and The LORD has been fighting for and on behalf of his people since the Exodus.

The NET Bible translates "LORD of hosts" as "The LORD who commands armies" and it provides the following translation footnote: "The title 'LORD of hosts' here pictures the LORD as a mighty warrior-king who leads armies into battle (see Ps 24:10). The military imagery is further developed in vv.8-9."

MacArthur synonymously uses Divine Warrior with LORD of hosts.²⁹

LORD of hosts, hosts representing the armies of Israel and/or angelic armies³⁰

What is clear is that while nations rely on their armies to defend them and advance their interest the people of Israel are the people of The LORD of hosts – a God who commands not only the affairs of men, but of angels too. There is a unique peace in entrusting yourself to that which is absolute in its security and as sure in their victory.

God of Jacob

God of Jacob - synonymous with God of Israel. Jacob was the last of the three patriarchs and his name was changed from Jacob to Israel after he wrestled with the Angel of The LORD all night (Genesis 32). The people of God assumed his name and are referenced by both Jacob and Israel though they are properly, prominently, and primarily referred to as Israel.

Interestingly 12 out of the 19 times that "God of Jacob" is used in the Old Testament is in the Psalms, but there is not any indication or reason to believe that it is a diminished or lesser title. The other references, including the New Testament usages, appear to be an overt tie to the person of Jacob so as to say, Yahweh, the God of Jacob.

²⁷ Kidner, Pg.193

²⁸ Kidner, Pg.193

²⁹ MacArthur, Pg.784

³⁰ Boice, Pg.392

The God of Jacob is he who entered covenant promise with the nation of Israel (superseding the aforementioned city and embracing the scope of the nation) and having sworn by himself this is an unbreakable and sure covenant. There is no greater refuge than the sure promise of God and being kept in him.

46:8-11 The works of The LORD, from desolation to exultation by The LORD who is present.

Terms

Come, behold/see/observe

Still or Idle

Know: Ranging from cognitive to intimate awareness or understanding of facts, truths, or persons.

Exalted: Raised above/up, set apart, made much of, extol.

Summary

Peace by compulsion or submission, The LORD, the God of Jacob, will be exalted throughout the earth. There is peace, but one must kiss The Son.

Future Deliverance

Boice states that this final section, 46:8-10, is referencing a future and final deliverance of the same nature and quality that is articulated in Psalm 2:8-9 and on this I joyfully agree.³¹

“Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

Regretfully though, Boice, like others who capitulate to an allegorical interpretation of the sure promises of The LORD to his beloved Israel, sees this deliverance not as Psalm 46 plainly reads, but as being applied exclusively in the eternal state. He even goes so far as to not recognize a literal New Jerusalem which is perplexingly disappointing to me, “It has its culmination in the new spiritual Jerusalem, a *symbol of heaven*, which has been prepared by God as the final dwelling place of the saints.”³²

In direct contrast to Boice’s conclusion VanGemeran states, “The last strophe encourages God’s people to look forward to the final establishment of the kingdom of God on earth....”³³

³¹ Boice, Pg.391-392

³² Boice, Pg.390

³³ VanGemeran, Pg.403

46:8

Come, Behold

Come and behold is a call to remember The LORD's longstanding and faithful works. "The recitation of the mighty acts of God plants deep in the memory of God's people the evidences of his care, protection, and providential rule."³⁴ I would add that it is nothing short of both an unhealthy deficiency and tragedy for the Church to fail to assume this practice of recalling the magnificent works of The LORD, too. There is a clear expectation of drawing from the breadth of the Lord's work in exercising proper worship and as a people grafted into the blessings of Israel so also are we a people grafted into their testimony of praise to the God who promises and magnificently fulfills.

The works of The LORD: desolation and the cessation of war (46:9).

"Although the outcome is peace, the process is judgment."³⁵

Desolation

Reference to The LORD judging the unfaithfulness in Israel.

Deuteronomy 28:37	In the form of severe warning before entering the promised land.
2 Kings 22:19	It is inevitably coming on account of the wicked disobedience of the people, but Josiah's broken heart would be spared these days.
2 Chronicles 29:8	Hezekiah is restoring the Temple and recounting that the nation was suffering the judgment of The LORD on account of their wicked disobedience.
2 Chronicles 30:7	Hezekiah is calling the people to repentance and restoration, to not conduct themselves like their faithless fathers and brothers who were a desolation by The LORD.
Psalms 73:19	The wicked, though appearing to prosper for a season, are destroyed in a moment....
Isaiah 5,13,24	Continues with a pattern of judgment from The LORD.
Jeremiah 2,4,5,8,18,19,25,29,42,44,46,48,49,50, and 51	Also continues with a pattern of judgment from The LORD.
Ezekiel 23, Hosea 5, Joel 1, Micah 6, Zephaniah 2, and Zechariah 7	Further continues with a pattern of judgment from The LORD.

46:9

Peace from War

As referenced above, it appears that this is a continuation of the articulation of the works of The LORD.

This appears to be an absolute defeat as the weapons of opposition, the tools of warfare are destroyed. There will be no more combat, war has been made to cease.

We see a picture of this with Joshua and Israel's absolute victories including hamstringing the enemies' horses and burning their chariots with fire (Joshua 11).

³⁴ VanGemeren, Pg.407

³⁵ Kidner, Pg.193

46:10

Be still and know. I will be exalted.

This appears to be a direct statement (and the only one) by The LORD.

“This twin command to not panic and to recognize His sovereignty is probably directed to both His nation for comfort and all other nations for warning.”³⁶

If MacArthur is correct, and it appears that he is – especially with a Psalm 2 backdrop, then this is spoken to the peoples that are unstably roaring and tottering and to his covenant nation whose name was birthed from a night of unrelenting wrestling. Stop. Be still. Recognize that The LORD is God. He comes in majesty to protect and majesty to judge. He will be exalted.

Boice states that this is a “conquered peace” and I concur that it is a peace by compulsion. However, Boice then went on to make a very helpful tie to the call to “be still and know that [The LORD] is God...” advising that this is a call to a peaceful surrender before the compulsory submission.³⁷ This should again draw our attention back to Psalm 2, specially verse 10-12.

“Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

There is a view to a future day, but only the rebellious fool would seek to hold out to that day. The promise keeping God of Israel will assume his throne in Jerusalem and homage will be paid to the Son. It would be wise to yield now lest you plead that the mountains not only move, but that they would crush you that you might escape his wrath.

God's relationship with the earth in Psalm 46

46:6 Melting it in with fire

46:8 Brought desolation on it

46:9 Ends its wars

46:10 Place of exultation

46:7/11

See 46:7 above. 46:11 is an exact replication of 46:7.

³⁶ MacArthur, Pg.784

³⁷ Boice, Pg.392