1.0 Introducing Psalm 44

- “A Maskil of the sons of Korah”—see notes on Psalms 32 (“Maskil”) and 42 (“the sons of Korah”). This heading is found on Psalms 42, 44, and 45.
- Psalm 44 evidently refers to an otherwise unknown military defeat by one of the kings of Israel.
- “This psalm is perhaps the clearest example of a search for some other cause of national disaster than guilt and punishment.”—Derek Kidner, Psalms 1–72, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 168.
- Verse 11’s “scattered us among the nations” does not automatically place the setting for this psalm in the period of time following the exile to Babylon. Israel had suffered other deportations, such as the one to Edom (Amos 1:6, 9).
  - Psalms 44:9 and 60:10 nearly identical.

Reading Psalm 44 (NAU)

44:1 A Maskil of the sons of Korah.

O God, we have heard with our ears,
Our fathers have told us
The work that You did in their days,
In the days of old.

44:2 You with Your own hand drove out the nations;
Then You planted them;
You afflicted the peoples,
Then You spread them abroad.

44:3 For by their own sword they did not possess the land,
And their own arm did not save them,
But Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your presence,
For You favored them.

44:4 You are my King, O God;
Command victories for Jacob.
44:5 Through You we will push back our adversaries;
Through Your name we will trample down those who rise up against us.
44:6 For I will not trust in my bow,
Nor will my sword save me.
44:7 But You have saved us from our adversaries,
And You have put to shame those who hate us.
44:8 In God we have boasted all day long,
And we will give thanks to Your name forever.  Selah.

44:9 Yet You have rejected us and brought us to dishonor,
And do not go out with our armies.
44:10 You cause us to turn back from the adversary;
And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.
44:11 You give us as sheep to be eaten
And have scattered us among the nations.
44:12 You sell Your people cheaply,
And have not profited by their sale.
44:13 You make us a reproach to our neighbors,
A scoffing and a derision to those around us.
44:14 You make us a byword among the nations,
A laughingstock among the peoples.
44:15 All day long my dishonor is before me
And my humiliation has overwhelmed me,
44:16 Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles,
Because of the presence of the enemy and the avenger.

44:17 All this has come upon us,
but we have not forgotten You,
And we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant.
44:18 Our heart has not turned back,
And our steps have not deviated from Your way,
44:19 Yet You have crushed us in a place of jackals
And covered us with the shadow of death.

44:20 If we had forgotten the name of our God
Or extended our hands to a strange god,
44:21 Would not God find this out?
For He knows the secrets of the heart.
44:22 But for Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.
44:23 Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O Lord?
Awake, do not reject us forever.

44:24 Why do You hide Your face
And forget our affliction and our oppression?

44:25 For our soul has sunk down into the dust;
Our body cleaves to the earth.

44:26 Rise up, be our help,
And redeem us for the sake of Your lovingkindness.

For the choir director; according to the Shoshannim.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 44

2.1 Outline

I. Description of God’s Past Work (vv. 1-3)
II. Declaration of Confidence (vv. 4-8)
III. Disgrace of Present Suffering (vv. 9-16)
IV. Declaration of Innocence (vv. 17-22)
V. Development of Petition (vv. 23-26)

2.2 Notes

• vv. 1-3 The Past Work of God
  ■ Specific reference is to the conquest of Canaan.
  • Joshua 6 — the fall of Jericho.
  ■ Compare Deuteronomy 4:37-38; 7:7-8; 9:4-6.

• v. 3 “Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your presence”
  ■ These metaphors refer to God’s power and grace.
  ■ For “light of Your presence,” see Psalms 4:6; 89:15.

• vv. 4-8 Declaration of Trust/Confidence
  ■ This confidence is both personal (vv. 4 and 6) and corporate (vv. 5 and 7-8).
  ■ Such faith is the result of the knowledge of God’s past deeds for His people.

• v. 4 “You are my King, O God”
  ■ Emphatic; “You alone are my King.”
  ■ Compare Psalms 10:16 and 29:10.
  ■ An individual king expresses his faith in his Sovereign God.

• vv. 8, 9 “Selah. Yet . . .”
  ■ For the meaning of “Selah,” see notes on Psalms 3 and 9:16.
“Selah” ends the first major section of the psalm and “Yet” commences the second major section.

“Yet” (“And now” in some translations) introduces a contrast to the preceding verses.

- **vv. 9-16 The Present Disgrace**
  - Note the repeated references to God (“You”/“Your”). He is in control and has done or allowed these devastating events to occur.

- **v. 11 “scattered among the nations”**
  - See Leviticus 26:33 and Deuteronomy 28:37, 64.

- **vv. 17-22 Protest of Innocence**
  - The people do not claim sinless perfection.
  - Their claim is to loyalty to their covenant relationship with God.

- **v. 17 “dealt falsely with Your covenant”**
  - This phraseology is the opposite of Psalm 89:33 (“deal falsely in My faithfulness”).

- **v. 19 “a place of jackals”**
  - The picture is either of the wilderness or of ruins taken over by wild animals.

- **v. 19 “the shadow of death”**
  - The psalmists use deep or dense darkness to depict desperate or threatening circumstances.
  - Compare Psalm 23:4.

- **v. 22 “for Your sake we are killed all day long”**
  - This is the key to understanding the solution to Israel’s plight.
  - Confirmation that God’s people can suffer innocently.

- **v. 23 “Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O Lord?”**
  - See Psalm 13:1.
  - Compare Mark 4:35-41.

- **v. 26 “redeem us for the sake of Your lovingkindness”**
  - “[T]he love of God is of such quality that even the terrible defeats of the present moment are not without a purpose and will not, even in the worst extremity, sever the believing one from God.” — James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 2:378.
3.0 Singing Psalm 44

**Thou Art the Mighty King of Kings**
(Tune: “I Sing the Mighty Power of God”)

Thou art the mighty King of kings,
    The Lord of lords most high:
Israel is safe beneath Thy wings;
    Thy servant shall not die.
Through Thee we shall the victory gain,
    Though hosts of hell oppose:
Thou art our God; and Thou wilt reign,
    And conquer all our foes.

We trust not in our bow or sword;
    For weakness is our pow’r:
In Thee we trust, Almighty Lord,
    Through every dangerous hour,
To Thee we look, Thou God of love,
    Thy holy Name adore:
Oh, may we rise to Heav’n above,
    To love and praise Thee more.

— Words: Joseph Proud (1745-1826)
Music: “Ellacombe” (1784, German)

4.0 Praying Psalm 44

- Thank You, Father, for saving us—we did not save ourselves. [v. 3]
- You are my King, O God. I will obey and serve You. [v. 4]
- Examine my heart, because You know its secrets. [v. 21]
- Lord, teach me how to suffer for Your sake. [v. 22]
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5.0 Applying Psalm 44

- Only God is the Author and Finisher of our salvation.
- God’s people may at times suffer for His sake alone.
- God remains faithful in His love for us.