

TEXTUAL ISSUES PSALM 42 & 43

Psalm 42. *I need You, I praise You.* O God, just as a thirsty deer gasps water when thirsty, so my spirit gasps for You. I thirst for God, for the living God. O when can I go and meet with God?

I've been living on tears, salty tears, for days—knuckleheads around me mock: *Where is your God?* When my spirit pours out like this, I remember going to temple, with all the others, shouting joyfully and praising Him with thanks within the festive crowd of worshippers.

Spirit, why are you so down cast? Why are you so disturbed? Here's the answer: put your hope in the Lord God—continue to praise Him, my Savior and my God!

- Q When have you been the most thirsty for sustenance from the Lord God?
- Q What happens to you when only tears, salty tears, are your sustenance?
- Q Why don't we shout with joy as we go to corporate worship together?
- Q How does hope in God and praising Him overcome a diet of tears?

Since my spirit is downcast within, I will look outward to You from Jordan—to the very heights of Hermon itself, the limit of my country. You call to me from within Your creation—the roar of Your waterfalls, the waves of Your presence have swept over me. Daily the Lord God Yahweh directs His love—at night His presence is as a song within my heart, a veritable prayer to the God of my life.

I say to the Rock, my God—Why have you forgotten me? Why must I dwell in sadness, and continue to be oppressed by this world of knuckleheads? I suffer mortal agony; yet, the knuckleheads continue to mock, all day long, taunting me with *Where is your God?*

So, why are you so down, o my spirit? Why are you so disturbed? Again the answer: put your hope in the Lord God—continue to praise Him, my Savior and my God!

- Q Why is it good to look at the limits of God's land & bounty He's provided for us?

PSALM 42

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

³My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

⁴These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng.

⁵Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and ⁶my God.

My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. ⁷Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.

⁸By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life.

⁹I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" ¹⁰My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

¹¹Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

- Q What can we learn, when our spirit is down, by gazing upon His creation and it's wonders?
- Q Why a song at night, and a directing light show during the day?
- Q How do you answer the question—"Where is your God, now?"
- Q How well does the psalmist's advice regarding a downcast soul work for you when you're downcast?

Psalm 43. *Help me, let me praise You. So, O God, defend me—be my attorney before this ungodly nation—rescue me from their deceitful and wicked ways, these people of deceit and wickedness.*

Here's my brief—You are God, my very stronghold, yet I feel you've rejected me. Why do I have to go about not only depressed, but oppressed by the knuckleheads in my life? Send forth Your enlightenment, Your Truth—let them guide me. Let them bring me to Your holy exaltedness, to the very place where You reside.

Once that happens, then I will go the altar of God at temple, to God I will go, with joy and delight, praising You with the harp. O God, my God!

So again, I ask—My spirit: why are you so down cast within me? Why are you so disturbed? Here's the answer: put your hope in the Lord God—continue to praise Him, my Savior and my God!

- Q What unique advantages does the Lord God Yahweh have when representing you in the court of public opinion, especially ridicule by the deceitfully wicked knuckleheads in your world?
- Q What is this light, this truth which guides us to the very "mountain of God?"
- Q Why is praise dependent upon that trip "to the holy mountain?" In other words, what is praise without the "joy and delight," even with a harp within a festive crowd of worshippers?
- Q How well does the psalmist's advice regarding a downcast soul work for you when you're downcast?

PSALM 43

Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; rescue me from deceitful and wicked men.

²You are God my stronghold.
Why have you rejected me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?

³Send forth your light and your truth,
let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy
mountain, to the place where you dwell.

⁴Then will I go to the altar of God,
to God, my joy and my delight.
I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.

⁵Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

ADVANCED BIBLE COMMENTARY FOR PSALM 42-43²⁵

Ps 42-43 A prayer for deliverance from being "oppressed by the enemy" (42:9; 43:2) and for restoration to the presence of God at his temple. That these two psalms form a single prayer (though they are counted as two psalms also in the Septuagint) is evident from its unique structure (see notes below) and the development of common themes.

Ps 43 may have come to be separated from Ps 42 for a particular liturgical purpose. The speaker may have been a leading member of the Korahites whose normal duties involved the liturgical activities of the temple (see especially 42:4 and Ps 42 title). It may be that the "ungodly nation" (43:1) referred to was the Arameans of Damascus and that the author had been taken captive by the Arameans during one of their incursions into Judah, such as that of Hazael (see 2Ki 12:17-18). (This attack by Hazael affected especially the area in which the Korahites, descendants of Kohath, had been assigned cities; see Jos 21:4,9-19.) See also notes below.

This psalm begins Book II of the Psalter, a collection that is distinguished from Book I primarily by the fact that the Hebrew word for "God" (*Elohim*) predominates, whereas in the first book the Hebrew word for "the LORD" (*Yahweh*) predominates.

Structurally, the three stanzas of this psalm are symmetrical (each contains four verses), and each is followed by the same refrain (42:5,11; 43:5). The middle stanza, however, has at its center (see note on 6:6) an additional verse (42:8) that interrupts the developing thought and injects a note of confidence, such as comes to expression also in the threefold refrain. Apart from the refrains, the prayer is framed by an expression of longing for God's presence (42:1) and a vow to praise God at his altar (43:4). For other psalms with recurring refrains see Ps 46; 49; 59; 80; 107. title

For the director of music. See note on Ps 4 title. *maskil.* See note on Ps 32 title. *of the Sons of Korah.* Or "for the Sons of Korah"; see "For Jeduthun" in Ps 39 title. "Sons of Korah" refers to the Levitical choir made up of the descendants of Korah appointed by David to serve in the temple liturgy. The Korahites represented the Levitical family of Kohath son of Levi. Their leader in the days of David was Heman—just as Asaph led the choir of the Gershonites and Jeduthun (Ethan) the choir of the Merarites (see 1Ch 6:31-47 and Ps 39 title). This is the first of a collection of seven psalms ascribed to the "Sons of Korah" (Ps 42-49); four more occur in Book III (Ps 84-85; 87-88).

42:1-4 Longing to be with God at temple.

42:1 *deer pants for . . . water.* Because its life depends on water--especially when being pressed by hunters, as the psalmist was by his oppressors.

42:2 *living God.* See Dt 5:26. *When . . . ?* Circumstances (see v. 9; 43:1-2) now prevent him from being at the temple. *meet with God.* Enter his presence to commune with him (see Ex 19:17; 29:42-43; 30:6,36).

42:3 *day and night.* See vv. 8,10.

²⁵Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.

42:4 *leading the procession.* Suggests the author normally had a leading role in the liturgy of the temple.

42:5 The refrain: faith encouraging faith (see 27:13-14 and introduction to Ps 27).

42:6-10 The cause and depth of the trouble of his soul.

42:6 *soul is downcast.* See vv. 5,11; 43:5. *therefore I will remember you.* As he remembers (v. 4) in his exile the joy of his past intimacy with God, so now in his exile he remembers God and painfully wonders (vv. 7,9-10), yet not without hope (v. 8). (But some believe that the clause should be rendered "because I remember you.")

from the land . . . from Mount Mizar. Probably indicating that the author speaks from exile outside the contemporary boundaries of Israel and Judah. Some think the author locates himself at Mount Mizar (a small peak or village, not otherwise known) on the flanks of Mount Hermon somewhere near the headwaters of the Jordan. Others translate the Hebrew for "from" as "far from" and understand "the land of the Jordan" to refer to the promised land (which lies along the Jordan and from which the author was separated). The mention of "the heights of Hermon" may then be a reference to the high peak that marked the northern border of the land (see Dt 3:8; Jos 11:17; 13:11; 1Ch 5:23) and looked down upon it (see 133:3; SS 4:8). Some have suggested that "Mount Mizar" is an additional reference to "the heights of Hermon," calling that high peak the "little mountain" (literal translation) in comparison with Mount Zion (see 68:15-16).

42:7 *deep calls . . . your waterfalls.* Often taken to be an allusion to the cascading waters of the upper Jordan as they rush down from Mount Hermon. It is more likely, however, that this is a literary allusion to the "waterfalls" by which the waters from God's storehouse of water above (see note on 36:8)—the "deep" above—pour down into the streams and rivers that empty into the seas—the "deep" below. It pictures the great distress the author suffers, and the imagery is continued in the following reference to God's "waves and breakers" sweeping over him (see 69:1-2; 88:7; Jnh 2:3,5; see also note on 32:6). God's hand is involved in the psalmist's suffering, at least to the extent that he has allowed this catastrophe. He seems to the psalmist to have "forgotten" (v. 9)—to have "rejected" (43:2)—him. But he makes no link between this and any sin in his life (see Ps 44; 77).

42:8 The center: confession of hope in all the trouble. That is, "Day-and-night [cf. v. 3] the LORD directs his love, and his song is with me" (see 3:7). *the LORD. directs his love.* Sends forth his love, like a messenger to do his will (see 43:3).

43:1-4 Prayer for deliverance from the enemy and for restoration to God's presence. **43:1** A plea in the language of the court (see introduction to Ps 17).

43:2 Echoes 42:9.

43:3 *your light and your truth.* Personified as God's messengers who work out (1) his salvation (light; see 27:1) and (2) his faithful care in behalf of his own (truth; see 26:3; 30:9; 40:10). May these guide me back to your temple. *holy mountain.* See 2:6.