

Psalm 29

Translation & Commentary

by James Jordan

a Psalm.

b by David

- 1 Ascribe to Yahweh, O sons of mighty ones,
- 2 Ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength.
- 3 Ascribe to Yahweh His glorious name;
- 4 Worship Yahweh in the majesty of holiness.

- 5 The voice of Yahweh is upon the waters;
 - 6 The Mighty One of the glory thunders,
 - 7 Yahweh is upon great waters.
- 8 The voice of Yahweh is powerful,
- 9 The voice of Yahweh is majestic,
- 10 The voice of Yahweh breaks cedars, one!"
 - 11 Yes, Yahweh shatters the cedars of Lebanon.
 - 12 And He causes them to skip like a calf,
 - 13 Lebanon and Sirion like a son of wild oxen.
- 14 The voice of Yahweh is striking with flashes of fire;
- 15 The voice of Yahweh causes the wilderness to whirl;
 - 15 Yahweh causes the wilderness of Kadesh to whirl.
- 17 The voice of Yahweh causes does to give birth,
 - 17 And uncovers honeycombs,
 - 19 And in His temple everything says, "Glory!"
- 20 Yahweh sat enthroned at the flood;
- 21 And Yahweh sits at King forever.
- 22 Yahweh gives strength to His people.
- 23 Yahweh blesses His people with peace.

Commentary

Here we have the seven-fold Voice of Yahweh, bracketed by two sets of four lines about Yahweh. The central seven-fold Voice section uses "Yahweh" ten times, for a total in this psalm of eighteen usages of "Yahweh" (3 x 3 x 2). The psalm, obviously, is about Yahweh.

Yahweh is glorious, or "heavy," and that four times. We are to ascribe glory and strength to him (ln. 2). We are to speak of His glorious name (ln. 3; literally "glory of His name," but not "the glory of His name"). We are told that the



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Mighty One ('el) of the Glory thunders (ln. 6), perhaps a reference to the Shekinah Glory Chariot. And finally (ln. 19) everything in His temple speaks of His glory. We must recall that in David's day this "temple" consisted of people and the musical worship of the psalms together with the reproduced glory sounds of cymbals, trumpets, and massed strings. It is the sound of glory, not the sight of it, that is spoken of.

The glory-sound (so unlike the passive music of so many churches) reproduces the "voice" of Yahweh. "Voice" can just as easily be translated "sound," but since it is a Person's "sound" we prefer to translate "voice." The seven-fold Voice of Yahweh reminds us of Genesis 1, especially since in Genesis 1 the seven days include ten acts, and here "Yahweh" occurs ten times from lines 5 to 19. The first Voice is Yahweh upon the waters, clearly alluding to the first day of Genesis 1. The reference to Glory in line 19 seems to bring us to the seventh day. For the rest, however, no obvious correlations spring to mind.

Line 17 is often translated "strips the forest," but the word for forest in Hebrew is masculine, and here it is feminine plural and means "honeycombs." In the sabbath time, the female deer gives birth, and the honey of the Land of Milk and Honey is uncovered, as it was for Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:25-30). The honey Jonathan ate caused his eyes to brighten, restoring his life, giving him a new birth of energy, parallel to the calving of the doe. It was the gift of Yahweh to help him fight the sabbatical Holy War.

The whirling of lines 15-16 links with birth, for the same verb is used for dancing and for the travail of birth. The wilderness in which Israel sojourned for forty years gave birth to a new Israel as they crossed the Jordan and circumcised themselves (Joshua 5).

Line 20 alludes to Noah's Flood, for the word "flood" here is used only elsewhere in Genesis 6-11. The God who brought the first creation brings the second as well.



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