

An underwater scene with sunlight filtering through the water, creating a serene and peaceful atmosphere. The water is a deep blue, and the light rays are visible, creating a sense of depth and tranquility.

Psalm 114

God and Nature

Psalm 114 – page 614

- 1 When Israel came out of Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue,
- 2 Judah became God's sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.
- 3 The sea looked and fled,
the Jordan turned back;
- 4 the mountains leaped like rams,
the hills like lambs.

Psalm 114

5 Why was it, sea, that you fled?

Why, Jordan, did you turn back?

6 Why, mountains, did you leap like rams,
you hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,

8 who turned the rock into a pool,
the hard rock into springs of water.

Introduction

- Three stanzas: 1 – 4, 5 – 6, 7 - 8
- Written after the Babylonian exile
- Theme(s)?
- Bible stories you recognise?

When Israel came out of Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue,
Judah became God's sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.

- Exodus and its consequences
- The house of Jacob
- People of a foreign tongue is Egyptians
- Judah represents all Israel
- Exodus 19: 3 – 6: Israel is to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation”

The sea looked and fled,

- Exodus 14:21 – 22

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

the Jordan turned back

- Joshua 3: 15 – 17

Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

the mountains leaped like rams,
the hills like lambs.

- Leap – to frolic or gambol, earthquake?
- Baal's voice is said to have caused the high places of the earth to leap or quake

Why was it, sea, that you fled?
Why, Jordan, did you turn back?
Why, mountains, did you leap like rams,
you hills, like lambs?

- God's arrival at Sinai Exodus 19:18-20
- Personification of natural elements
- Absolute power of God

Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,

- The first mention of God
- He is present
- Answer to the questions

who turned the rock into a pool,
the hard rock into springs of water.

- Exodus 17:5 – 6

The Lord answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.”

who turned the rock into a pool,
the hard rock into springs of water.

- Numbers 20:8-13

“Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.”

So Moses took the staff from the Lord’s presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, “Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?”

who turned the rock into a pool,
the hard rock into springs of water.

- Numbers 20:8-13

Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”

These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarrelled with the Lord and where he was proved holy among them.



4 Possible Reasons

- From God
- From the Devil
- We live in a broken, sinful world
- Signs of Jesus returning

From God?

- Dr Edwin Lutzer

“God is the ultimate cause of all natural disasters”

“The Bible explicitly traces natural disasters to the hand of God.”

Are they a warning?

Is God trying to get our attention?

From the Devil?

- Revelation 12:12

But woe to the earth and the sea,
because the devil has gone down to you!

He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his time is short.

- The Devil hates us as we are made in God's image

We live in a broken, sinful world?

Genesis 3:17

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’

“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.”

We live in a broken, sinful world?

Romans 8:20 – 22

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

We live in a broken, sinful world?

- Earth is not as God created it
- Result of geology, weather patterns
- Sin is the ultimate cause of any natural disaster?
- Greed, inequality, injustice, selfishness
- Global warming?

Signs of Jesus returning?

- Luke 21:11, 25b

There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.

God's response

- Could He stop them? If yes, then why doesn't He?

“I don't know why bad things happen, but I believe that even though God doesn't cause evil, He permits it. And I know if God permits something, He plans to bring a greater good out of it. All that you and I can do is trust.” Dom Quaglia

God's response

- God loves us

“When you look around and wonder whether God cares, you must always hurry to the cross and you must see Him there.” Martin Luther

- God redeemed us
- God weeps with us
- Prepared an amazing future for us

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Romans 8:18

Our Response – Trust Him

Job 1:21 The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

- Trust that God is still a God of love and compassion, that he experiences sorrow for disaster victims and that he has power to bring good out of bad situations. Our attitude to disaster may influence our survival

Our Response - Help

- Find ways to help those affected by the disaster, using the gifts and skills God has given us.

Our Response – Challenge

- Explore opportunities to reduce unnecessary suffering in the future. Often there is little we can do to stop hazards, but we can increase people's preparedness and capacity to cope with them. This may involve challenging unequal or broken relationships and upholding biblical values of compassion, equity and justice

Our response – Examine ourselves

- Look at ourselves and assess our own relationship with God and the environment. We should look carefully at how we as individuals, our churches or our nations may have contributed in some way to this disaster, for example, by causing environmental damage and seek to avoid similar mistakes in the future.

Our Response - Pray

- Prayer changes things

Exodus 32:14

Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

Tearfund

http://learn.tearfund.org/~media/files/tilz/publications/roots/english/disaster/roots_9_reducing_risk_of_disaster_1_christian_perspectives_on_disasters.pdf

Isaac Watts, in "The Spectator," 1712.

When Israel, freed from Pharaoh's hand,
Left the proud tyrant and his land,
The tribes with cheerful homage own
Their King, and Judah was his throne.

Across the deep their journey lay,
The deep divides to make them way;
The streams of Jordan saw, and fled
With backward current to their head.

The mountains shook like frightened sheep,
Like lambs the little hillocks leap;
Not Sinai on her base could stand,
Conscious of sovereign power at hand.

What power could make the deep divide?
Make Jordan backward roll his tide?
Why did ye leap, ye little hills?
And whence the fright that Sinai feels?

Let every mountain, and every flood,
Retire, and know the approaching God,
The King of Israel! see him here:
Tremble, thou earth, adore and fear.

He thunders—and all nature mourns;
The rock to standing pools he turns;
Flints spring with fountains at his word,
And fires and seas confess their Lord.