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Thunder Lighting and Arrows

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Thunder, Lighting and Arrows.

Topics.

- The waters saw you, o god, they were afraid; the deep trembled.
- The clouds poured out water; skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side.
- The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook.
- Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.
- You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

THE WATERS SAW YOU, O GOD, THEY WERE AFRAID; THE DEEP TREMBLED

- **Psalm 77:16-20:** When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; indeed, the deep trembled. ¹⁷The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side. ¹⁸The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook. ¹⁹Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen. ²⁰You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The statement, "the waters saw you, O God, they were afraid; the deep trembled," (v16) can refer to both the waters of the Red Sea and the Jordan River, Asaph personifies the waters as being conscious of the presence of God and fleeing in alarm and dread from His presence. Habakkuk and John use similar language in the following two verses:

- The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. ¹¹The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. (Habakkuk 3:10-11)
- Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. (Rev. 20:11)

Three other common views:

1. Since the sea in some contexts of Scripture is used to symbolise great masses of people the verse maybe alluding to the LORD in the pillar of fire and of the cloud looking down on the Egyptian forces and throwing them into a panic and the Egyptians seeing Moses stretching out his hand over the sea and the water returning to its normal course and covering the chariots of the Egyptians forces and their horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that followed them into the sea. (Exodus 14:24-28).
2. It may be a poetical expression that carries the idea that the deep waters of the Red Sea felt the visible effects of the LORD's powerful presence as if they were conscious of God's presence and ready to flee from His face and that quiet caves of the sea, far down in the depths

were moved with fear and the very bottom of the ocean was left bare as the water rushed away from its place, in terror of the God of Israel.

3. Some see it as the language of personification and interpret the verse in the following way: "they saw your majesty in the midst of the sea, O God; they saw your power upon the sea." The waters felt and perceived the power of God, in causing a strong east wind, which dried it up and made way for the children of Israel to pass through it on dry land. The psalmist of Psalm one-hundred and fourteen uses similar language, he wrote: "The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. What ails you, O sea, that you flee?" (Psalm 114:3-5).

THE CLOUDS POURED OUT WATER; SKIES GAVE FORTH THUNDER; YOUR ARROWS FLASHED ON EVERY SIDE

- **Psalm 77:17:** The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side.

Since we are not told what event, the statement, "the clouds poured out water; skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side," refer to, it may embrace all storms in general as the following verses do:

- **Job 77:36-33:** Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea. ³¹For by these he judges peoples; he gives food in abundance. ³²He covers his hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark. ³³Its crashing declares his presence.
- **Job 37:2-5:** Keep listening to the thunder of his voice and the rumbling that comes from his mouth. ³Under the whole heaven he lets it go, and his lightning to the corners of the earth. ⁴After it his voice roars; he thunders with his majestic voice, and he does not restrain the lightnings when his voice is heard. ⁵God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend. (See also Psalm 29).

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But it is also possible when Asap was writing, "the clouds poured out water; skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side," he had three different events in mind and was alluding to them, should this be so the following three events would be the most likely three:

1. **The clouds poured out water:** may embrace the flood in Noah's generation and the hail that fell upon the Egyptians.
 - **Genesis 7:12-19:** The rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights --- NOW GO TO VERSE EIGHTEEN --- ¹⁸The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. ¹⁹And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered.
 - **Exodus 9:23-26:** Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. ²⁴There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. ²⁵The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field. ²⁶Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail.
2. **Skies gave forth thunder:** may refer to the extraordinary manifestation of God at Mount Sinai, amidst lightnings, thunders, and tempests.

- **Exodus 19:16-18:** On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. (Exodus 19:16-18).
3. **Your arrows flashed on every side:** since arrows were commonly used in ancient warfare and often bound with rags and dipped in some combustible substance and set alight, then hundreds of these arrows were fired into houses, grain-fields, haystacks, or towns to set them on fire which naturally gave the appearance of flashing arrows falling on every side, and God is pictured in Scripture as a mighty warrior riding upon a chariot with a bow firing arrows to destroy the enemies of His people.
- **Psalm 18:6-14:** In my distress I (David) called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help --- NOW GO TO VERSE TEN --- ¹⁰He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind --- NOW GO TO VERSE FOURTEEN --- ¹⁴And he sent out his arrows and scattered them (David's enemies); he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.
 - **Psalm 144:1-8:** Blessed be the LORD, my (David's) rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle --- NOW GO TO VERSE FIVE --- ⁵Bow your heavens, O LORD, and come down! Touch the mountains so that they smoke! ⁶Flash forth the lightning and scatter them; send out your arrows and rout them! ⁷Stretch out your hand from on high; rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, ⁸who speak lies and falsehood.

With this in mind it is possible when Asap wrote the words, "Your arrows flashed on every side," he had all of the great victories and triumphs God had given Israel in mind.

THE CRASH OF YOUR THUNDER WAS IN THE WHIRLWIND; YOUR LIGHTNINGS LIGHTED UP THE WORLD; THE EARTH TREMBLED AND SHOOK

The English Standard Bible says:

- **Psalm 77:18:** The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook.

The King James Bible says:

- **Psalm 77:18:** The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. (Psalm 77:18).

This maybe an allusion to the great victory Deborah and Barak had over Israel's enemies of which Deborah and Barak sang a song saying:

- **Judges 5:3-5:** Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; to the LORD I will sing; I will make melody to the LORD, the God of Israel. "LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water. ⁵The mountains quaked before the LORD, even Sinai before the LORD, the God of Israel.

Or it may be a reflection upon God's majestic and awesome power displayed in all that has been previously spoken concerning the flood during Noah's generation, the destructive hail upon the Egyptians, God descending upon Mount Sinai, the Red Sea parting and all the great victories and triumphs God gave to Israel especially since the entire Psalm is highlighting God's awesome power displayed throughout history.

- **Job 37:5:** God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend.
- **Psalms 29:2-4:** Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendour of holiness. ³The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters. ⁴The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

YOUR WAY WAS THROUGH THE SEA, YOUR PATH THROUGH THE GREAT WATERS; YET YOUR FOOTPRINTS WERE UNSEEN

- **Psalms 77:19:** Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.

The words, "your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen," carries the idea that without eyes of faith God is not seen performing the workings of His great wonders and miracles and in bringing about His plans and purposes upon earth. No one can follow God's tracks by foot or by the eye. The invisible, immortal, Holy, Almighty God, the creator of all things, and source of all life is alone in His glory, and His ways are hidden from mortal man. It is without doubt God will accomplish His purposes and plans, but the means are too vast and mysterious for human understanding.

The author of Ecclesiastes wrote:

- **Ecclesiastes 8:16-17:** When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, ¹⁷then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However, much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. (Eccles. 8:16-17).

The expression God's footprints were unseen means that no-one can trace God's tracks there is nothing by which man is able to determine God's works under the sun the Almighty is far beyond the understanding of man's mortal mind to be able to work His ways upon earth.

YOU LED YOUR PEOPLE LIKE A FLOCK BY THE HAND OF MOSES AND AARON

- **Psalms 77:20:** You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The words, "you led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron," mean that God led them through the sea, the wilderness and into the Promised Land with care and tenderness as a shepherd leads his sheep and never deserted them, but always remained faithful in his dealings with them. Asaph looking back over Israel's history, saw that there was abundant reason for confiding in God, and that though His ways are mysterious we should trust, and be encouraged by the past however incomprehensible His works, and be confident that our salvation is secure, and that all which seems dark and mysterious in the dealings of God will one day be made clear.

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