

# PSALM 126

A Song of Ascents.

<sup>1</sup> When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

<sup>2</sup> Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations,  
'The LORD has done great things for them.'

<sup>3</sup> The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.

<sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

<sup>5</sup> May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.

<sup>6</sup> Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.

I must admit that even though I have read this psalm before, reading it again first thing on a Saturday morning, tears came to my eyes. I entered some inner space connecting with the experience the psalmist points to.

The psalm is a prayer of petition, an appeal, a cry to God: "Restore our fortunes, O Lord," and the imagery is that of a desert region in Israel – the Negeb(v) – which through skilled irrigation techniques, was able to be made fertile. The "watercourses" were the means of restoring the fortunes of a dry desert region.

What a powerful image, is it not? Aren't there times in our lives (certainly in mine there is) when living through something that wears us down and exhausts us emotionally and spiritually, perhaps some misfortune or a difficult relationship that has just been too much, can feel like passing through a desert, when we are parched and thirsty with no water in sight? What would restoration look and feel like? What kind of hydration could refresh us and bring us back to life and perhaps some new life?

For Israel, clearly, one way refreshment may begin to happen is through remembering... remembering better times... Such times seem so distant it's as if they are a dream. Did it ever really happen or did we dream it? We were in our homeland, full of promise and hope in the future and full of joy and abundance in the present. We remember all the laughter and the

shouts of joy when we were gathered together for celebrations at the great festivals of the harvest that would mark our seasons each year.

But is that it? Are we just to find our bits of refreshment by simply remembering happier times? No. For the psalm also provides creative expression weaving together the imagery of a successful harvest of food with inner hope of spiritual restoration. Like seeds sown in the ground, our tears are sown, given over to God, entrusted as deep feelings of our hearts' distress at this time... And we are trusting that there will be a harvest out of those seeds that will yield to the joy of restored life again... As we sow the seeds with our tears we are hoping, praying and trusting that a harvest of good fortune will be ours to gather in time.

But is this just wishful thinking, pie in the sky, disconnected from reality? Is it just a roll of the dice or a flip of the coin hoping luck will come to us once again? Or, is naming our pain, shedding our tears and creatively and collectively expressing ourselves also a way of situating ourselves spiritually for restoration to happen? We refuse to give up and give in, even though we may collapse for a time, parched and weary in a desert. We get up and keep walking, praying and singing through our tears. We keep our feelings alive even as they are painful. We refuse to shut down and numb ourselves. And regardless of whether there is a "happy" ending to our story, we open our hearts to joy amidst the tears, and also the blessing of friendship and community as we pass through the trials of life. We may walk through a desert, but we don't have to walk alone. There is God and there are the angels who befriend us or reach out to us in community whom God also sends our way. Who are your angels? How does God restore you?

**PRAYER:** Restore our fortunes, O God, those of us who are longing for some restoration. Whether we have been down for a while, whether we have just been flat and merely coasting, or whether it's more of an up and down thing with us... refresh us with some watering, some renewed motivation and purpose, even at this time of our lives. We are alive this moment because of the breathe and heart beat you make possible for us. What is our purpose right now? How may we be of service? How may we find our abundance and our peace, even in the simple moments and relational connections? How may our attitude and openness to the possible in the midst of the challenging help us see the light and the path we have not yet seen? "Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb..." Amen.