

Day 1: January 1

The first reading is from David, world famous for his battle with Goliath as a youth. Archaeology has found a reference to him on the Tel Dan stele. Biblical chronology places his life from 1037–970 BC. He reigned over the half kingdom of Judah c.1007–1000 BC, and he reigned over the united Kingdom of Israel c.1000–970 BC.

David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah. (2 Samuel 5:4-5)

David was a brilliant shepherd, a warrior, an accomplished musician, songwriter and a poet. Many of the Psalms are by David. The word 'psalms' in English is from the Greek ψαλμοί (*psalmoi*), meaning "songs sung to a harp". The following is a song of praise and worship. It captures delight in observing the commands of God which are seen in the order in nature. David also observed that the commands of God make human lives orderly and happy. This psalm introduces the concepts of God's commands, justice, human wrong doing, sin and the ideas of the 'fear of the LORD' and of 'redemption'.

Psalm 19

(1) <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse¹ shows his handywork.

(2) Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge.

(3) Without speech nor language, their voice is not heard.

(4) Their line² is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them has he set a tabernacle³ for the sun,

(5) Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber rejoices as a strong man to run a race.

(6) His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat of it.

(7) The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

(8) The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening⁴ the eyes.

(9) The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

(10) More to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

(11) Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward⁵.

(12) Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

(13) Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous⁶ sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression⁷.

(14) Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer⁸.

(King James Version updated with reference to the Hebrew text)

- 1 The Hebrew *râqîya* means to spread out or increase the area of a sheet of metal by making it thin
- 2 A measuring line, cord, or ruler. The string line and measure such as a builder uses to set out a building.
- 3 Hebrew *'ôhel* tent, covering and by extension the 'Tabernacle' of worship and also 'dwelling place'
- 4 Enlightening is related to David's theme to the sun that goes forth
- 5 A Hebrew word for 'heel' as in the 'end of a thing', or the result, or outcome.
- 6 Hebrew literally says 'out of pride' of 'out of arrogance'.
- 7 The Hebrew is 'out of rebellion', which is in English trans-gression, as rebellion is 'crossing the line'
- 8 To redeem according to the Oriental law of kinship is to be the next of kin (and as such to buy back a relative's property, marry his widow, be the avenger, revenger, deliver, purchaser, or give a ransom for).