**“HE WHO SOWS IN TEARS”**

**PSALM 126**

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INTRODUCTION

Yahweh “turned again the captivity,” or “turned again the restoration/the restored ones.”

Yahweh rehabilitated the nation.

In the midst of such humiliation, the people were given an amazing reprieve, an unbelievable blessing.

Thus, in the midst of our trials and adversity, we must cast our burden on the Lord.

1. JOY RELIVED (1-3)
2. A dream come true—in fact, they hardly dared dream that such a thing could happen! (1)

* We should not follow the alternate verb “restored to health.”
* The dreams spoken of here are not prophetic dreams—indicating amazing divine revelation.
* “The first colony of exiles had returned to Palestine. The permission to return had been so unexpected, the circumstances which had led to it so wonderful and so unforeseen, that when it came it could hardly be believed. To those who found themselves actually restored to the land of their fathers it seemed like a dream. It was a joy beyond all words to utter. God, their fathers’ God, had indeed wrought for them, and even the heathen had recognized His hand” (P., p. 390).

1. Laughter and joyful shouting (v. 2)
2. For mouth filled with “laughter,” cf. Job 8:21.
3. The “joyful shout” is a key term in this psalm—here, v. 5, and v. 6. Cf. this joyful shout in Isaiah often—e.g. 44:23; 48:20; 49:13; 51:11; 54:1; 55:12 (often in Messianic times.
4. Recognition among the nations (2c).
5. Yahweh has done great things for them.
6. Literally it is “Yahweh has made great to do with them.”
7. Gladness among the Jews (3).
8. Repetition of the words of 2c, with the change of “them” to “us.”
9. Israel repeats the words of the heathen neighbors.
10. Israel adds, “We are glad!”
11. JOY RECLAIMED (4-6)

* Now that God has done what seemed impossible, they cry out confidently for more!
* Return even more of our captives—like filling the dry wadis of the desert; also, work a total change in our situation.
* The settlers who had come were indeed a small group, and much more waited to take place—both for those returned and for those still to return from captivity. That seems to be the burden of vv. 4-6. What had taken place, in light of the statement in v. 4, “was but as the trickling of a tiny rill in some desert waste. Hence the prayer bursts from the lips of the psalmist, ‘Bring back our captives like mighty streams, which swoln by the wintry rains, descend to fertilize the parched and desolate wilderness’” (P., p. 391). The opposition and discouragements faced by the returnees seem to form the background of vv. 5-6 and the many tears (cf. Ezra 4:11-24). However, faith still expects a fruitful and joyful harvest (v. 6). It is likely that the physical mention of water and crops are intended as figures of all the needs of the people, physical, emotional, and spiritual, and especially for the blessing of the return of more captives from the land of captivity, like the influx of new fresh waters in the dry channels in the wadis of the Negev.

1. Like streams in the Negev (4).
2. “Streams” are the channels or dry beds where water runs after the rains.
3. The “Negev” is literally “the South,” and refers to any area south of Hebron and down to Beer-Sheba.
4. Such sudden change in dry beds to raging torrents of water speaks of the amazing turn of events Yahweh can bring; the idea of temporariness is not in view here.
5. Like sowers in the fields (5-6).

* The picture is not only of Yahweh blessings upon them, but also of their active involvement.
* They must be about the Lord’s work—sometimes it seems slow and it is arduous. For the present difficulty, see II Cor. 9:6 (don’t sow sparingly).
* The anticipated results are often long awaited (Gal. 6:7-10; James 5:7-8).

1. Sowers in tears, will reap in joy (v. 5).

* This is a proverbial type statement.
* Without rain, there is little prospect of growth, and rain is often uncertain both in its quantity and timing.
* Tears can and do accompany the process of planting crops, for many setbacks and troubles must be faced. Crop failure can occur also because of diseases and pests, and a multitude of other problems can place the average farmer in a tearful mood during the process involved in the preparation and “sowing” of crops.
* But, with God’s blessings, the rains do come, and **sadness is turned to gladness**.

1. Patient labor brings certain results (v. 6)

* Note the emphasis upon the individual in v. 6.

1. “Going forth”—literally “to go/going he goes” (infinitive and finite verb together, just as in the opposite below in “to come/coming he comes.”

* The emphasis seems to be “he goes to and fro.”
* “Weeping” accompanies his going, with every step he takes—another infinitive absolute.
* “Carrying seed” for sowing—literally “a drawing out of seed,” or “a trail of seed.”
* Some think the rare term speaks of “the bag” for holding the seed,” but more likely the idea is of the seed itself as “drawn out” and then scattered abroad in a trail of seed.
* One thing is for certain, nothing in the expression gives the idea of “precious seed”! That reading seems to have come from Martin Luther’s German translation. As beautiful as the expression is, the text does not support it.

1. “Coming back”—literally to come/coming he comes” (same formation as for the “going.”

* Here the idea is “surely he will come back.”
* He comes with “shouts of joy”—as in vv. 2 & 5.
* He is bringing/carrying—the same participial formation used with the going out—his sheaves with him.” The result of all of the labor and of the tears.

CONCLUSION

A patient, plodding, and often troubling effort in sowing the seed—the process at times seems hopeless.

The task must be performed faithfully, hopefully, and confidently due to the divine Sovereign behind the process who guarantees a reaping following sowing.

The “sower” must wait for the Lord’s blessing!

* Sowing in the return from exile, and the finishing of the work in the land to which returned.
* But, can apply to any genuine effort in the Lord’s cause to which He assigns his people—whether building a church spiritually, building a literal building, raising finances, or even winning the lost.
* We must not overly spiritualize the “sowing” and “reaping” as though the primary intended meaning is **soul-winning** in this psalm. Moreover, nothing in the context indicates that the seed represents the Word of God!
* Remember, we must interpret Scripture by its **context**.