

Psalm 81:1-2

Sing aloud to God our strength; Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute.

The title of this Psalm reads: To the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. A Psalm of Asaph. It appears that Asaph, one of the three worship leaders appointed by the Levites, wrote this psalm and possibly gave it the Chenaniah who was apparently the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath, in Hebrew Al Gittith, indicated the instrument designated to play the psalm. A Gittith was a stringed instrument.

Maybe these stringed instruments were native to Gath a city of the Philistines. (I don't know this for a fact.) The inhabitants of Gath were called Gittites. David lived in Gath while hiding from Saul and later took its towns from the hands of the Philistines.

The Hebrew word used for sing is the word ranan. Ranan means to creak, to emit a stridulous sound, or to shout aloud for joy. Joyful is the Hebrew word renanah which means a shout (for joy), joyful voice, singing, triumphing. Shaown is the Hebrew word translated shout and means uproar (as a rushing), destruction, noise, pomp, rushing, tumult. You get the idea that Asaph was exhorting the children of Israel to make some noise in joyful celebration.

Asaph gave two descriptions of God (Elohyim); the God of Jacob and God our strength. He used the Hebrew word owz for strength which means force, security, majesty, praise, and strong. This is the same word used in Psalm 8:2 which says, *“Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have ordained strength, because of your enemies, that you may silence the enemy and the avenger.”* Jesus quoted this verse in Matthew 21:16 when the chief priests and scribes complained about those who were worshipping him. However, he substituted the word strength for the word praise.

The word song in verse two is the Hebrew word zimrah. A zimrah was a musical piece, or a song to be accompanied by an instrument, a melody or psalm. The timbrel was a tambourine. The harp and lute (psaltery) were stringed instruments.

Scripture references:

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 59:16

But I will sing of your power; Yes, I will sing aloud of your mercy in the morning; For you have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble.

Psalm 66:1

Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!

Psalm 95:1

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.

Psalm 108:2

Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn.

Psalm 144:9

I will sing a new song to you, O God; On a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to you...

Psalm 149:3

Let them praise his name with the dance; Let them sing praises to him with the timbrel and harp.

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