

Psalm 114

When God created the heavens and the earth it was all good. All living and nonliving things resonated to God's rhythm. Man is powerless in some respects; but we were able to affect the whole universe because we could disobey. In some respects, we wounded nature and all creation with our choices. God cherishes the notion of reuniting with us as he intended.

This psalm records a very brief period in history when God's people were in a peak relationship with God. The conditions for perfect faith may not be what you think. The Garden of Eden and the millennium are not the healthiest conditions for the relationship between God and man. Both periods of perfection bred rebellion and disaster. Eve became dissatisfied, and agreed to bypass God's rules for living. Likewise a massive attack on Jerusalem from many people will come after a thousand years of peace and plentiful living.

At the end of the millennium the wicked will be raised. Satan, will be loosed from his bonds and will then have an earth full of people (all the nations of the world) to control. "Satan shall ... go out to deceive the nations ... of the earth, ... to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city" (Revelation 20:7-9).

Agur's proverb put it well:

Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God. (Proverbs 30:8-9)

We cannot maintain a healthy appreciation for our blessings in a long-term perfect condition. We also fall apart when the quality of life is in an absolutely miserable condition. The peak faith condition seems to be during the deliverance from misery. We know that we are in God's care, custody and control, because we have not been able to deliver ourselves. That appreciation fades quickly as life gets better.

The Hebrews did well fighting the inhabitants of Canaan; until afterwards, they had settled in and were partaking of the good life. Then they looked elsewhere for entertainment.

And the Lord said to Moses: “Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. (Deuteronomy 31:16)

Perfect faith seems to be a temporary state or transition. This psalm is about capturing that honeymoon in a bottle and savoring it.

Read Psalm 114:1-2: Our faith can be compared to a rainbow. It is only visible under perfect conditions; and then it is gone. It is like a rare phenomenon. God dealt with men as individuals in the beginning. There were only exceptions among men who had true faith. Noah and his family may have been among a billion unbelievers. Abram was called out of idolatry. Who knows if he had many faithful contemporaries? The rarity of Abram’s faith was worth memorializing to God. He created an ancestry (Israel) to carry on and perpetuate his faith traditions.

When did God Address His People as a Nation Instead of Just as Individuals?

God promised Abraham that a nation would come from him. He also made this same promise to Isaac and Jacob. When did they become more than a family; and were referred to as a nation? We tend to think of nations only in their homeland.



A Kurdish woman dances during Nowruz celebrations on March 24, 2018, in Tokyo, Japan. Nowruz, marking the first day of spring, is widely celebrated by Kurdish communities around the world. An estimated 2,000 Kurds live in Japan, many of whom are claiming refugee status owing to alleged human rights abuses in Turkey and Iraq. CARL COURT/GETTY IMAGES

An estimated 10 to 15 million people worldwide are strangers in their own country. In many cases, they were born and raised in a country that denies them citizenship based on ethnic or religious discrimination. Since no government recognizes them, they can't get a birth certificate, attend school, see a doctor, own property or get married. In extreme cases, they are targets of violence and human trafficking.

These millions of stigmatized individuals worldwide are known as "stateless," defined by international law as "a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law." Some stateless people are refugees, because they have fled their homeland to find refuge in another country, but not all refugees are stateless. Nor are most stateless people refugees.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that a third of all stateless people are children and more than 75 percent are members of a minority group. Because stateless people, like refugees, are vulnerable to serious human rights abuses, the UNHCR launched the #ibelong campaign in 2014 to eradicate statelessness in 10 years.

Did Israel become a nation when their descendants returned with Joshua to their homeland to re-occupy Canaan...or was it before then?

What happened to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the time that they entered into Egypt, to their exodus 430 years later (other than multiplying)? They entered Egypt as a dysfunctional, disconnected extended family of 70 persons. They first experienced an extended time of population growth, agricultural success and wealth; and then they became enslaved. Prior to that, you cannot say that their thoughts and goals were *collective* or *unified*. It was each man for himself. There were tribal leaders who had departed from the rest of the family. There were factions based on which tribes originated from different wives of Jacob. The famine forced them all back together to travel for food and survival.

God spoke to men as individuals before that; and not so much as a group. God spoke to Adam and Eve, Enoch, and to Noah, and then to Abraham. After that, God spoke to

Isaace, Jacob and then Joseph individually. God told Abram that he would form a nation from his seed. When exactly did that happen?

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years (Exodus 12:40-41)

There may have been 144 years of freedom in Goshen, Egypt; before the enslavement of the Israelites under another Pharaoh. When the Hebrews eventually escaped; God began to speak to the tribes of Israel collectively. Moses became his spokesman.

'Then the Lord said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt." ' (Acts 7:33-34)

Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. (Exodus 12:1-3)

God Marries a Nation of Abraham's Descendants

We know that the beginning of the 40 years in the wilderness was when God *proposed to marry Israel* (collectively) as his bride. There was a brief period when the Hebrews adored God like a *newlywed bride*; and they spoke in unison towards God.

Thus says the Lord: "I remember you, The kindness of your youth, The love of your betrothal. When you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown. Israel was holiness to the Lord, The firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them," says the Lord.' " (Jeremiah 2:2-3)

There was a brief period when the children of Israel willingly followed God. They began to act like a herd of sheep; instead of individualistic goats.

So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take

*away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.
(Exodus 13:20-22)*

There was a brief celebration of God's protection and deliverance. They worshiped and uniformly consented in unison.

Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war; The Lord is His name. (Exodus 15:1-3)

The ideal relationship between the couple (God and Israel) was very brief. The complaining started a month later. It was a short honeymoon. God's people are compared to sheep. The notable characteristics of sheep are timidity, and a mob mentality to stampede.

And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (Exodus 16:1-3)

"This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, 'Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: 'Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.' (Acts 7:38-43)

Their honeymoon was very brief; but we can enter into that adoring, lovestruck state at any time. How do we get from being *fearful whiners in Christ*...into content and comforted followers of our good shepherd? God wants us to have an abundant life...not a life of continual vexation. It has a lot to do with our focus and fellowship with God.

What does it mean to say that Judah was *God's sanctuary* and Israel was *his dominion*? Isn't Jerusalem God's city...and Israel God's country? God does not dwell in church buildings or city halls or in castles. He lives in his believers.

Solomon built Him a house. "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the Lord, Or what is the place of My rest? (Acts 7:47-49)

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. (Romans 8:9)

Read Psalm 114:3-8:

The Earth is a Witness

We have a ton of grace, and we are very shielded from God's overwhelming power. Whenever God draws close to anything in nature it is overcome and greatly affected.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be [d]burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness (2 Peter 3:10-11)

When God descended on Mount Sinai to meet with Moses and give the Ten Commandments. The earth shook and the mountain was on fire and smoked.

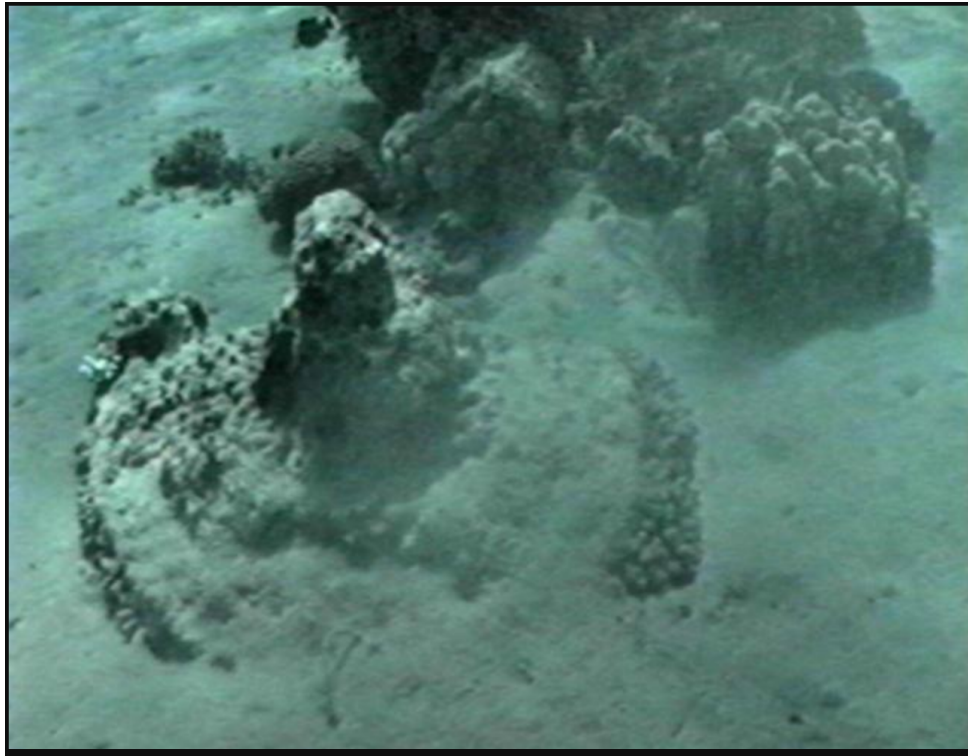
Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when

the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. (exodus 19:16-19)



When God blew on the Red Sea it stood upright and exposed its ocean floor. We have found the chariot wheels and axles and horse bones in the bottom of the Red Sea.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians." Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen." And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. (Exodus 14:21-27)



When God brought Israel to the Jordan River during the annual peak flooding, he made the river back up and open up to expose the ground to let two million men, women and children and their livestock cross.

Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; and Joshua said to them: “Cross over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.” And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the Lord had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day. So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the Lord had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua; and the people hurried and crossed over. Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely

crossed over, that the ark of the Lord and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people. And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the Lord for battle, to the plains of Jericho. On that day the Lord exalted[b] Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life. Then the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying, "Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan." Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord had come from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before. (Joshua 4:4-18)



God supernaturally intervenes for men in all kinds of ways. The earth and the universe tremble when God is near. We can blindly see past the oblivious; but nature recognizes what is happening. The earth is not a person; but it knew when Cain killed Abel...and it responded.

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's

blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.” (Genesis 4:9-12)

We use scientific calculations to study the universe; but we have no power to change anything in it. God stopped the rotation of the earth to the sun and moon, just to help Joshua complete a battle victory.

..the Lord will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. (Zechariah 14:3-4)

Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: “Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.” So the sun stood still, And the moon stopped, Till the people had revenge Upon their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord heeded the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel. (Josh 10:12-14)

We have to be tuned into the obvious. The power of the Holy Spirit is required to pull us into his story.