

James Tissot "The Choristers". It is James Tissot's take on the "Sons of Korah"

**Series: Preparing For
Anything- Psalm 46**

Message:
"When God
is in Control."
Psalm 46:5-6



As we move into the final months of this very troubling year there is a need to prepare ourselves for anything. Psalm 46 will be our guide. This psalm is one of 10 [possibly 11] psalms written by a group of Levites called the "Sons of Korah". Their ancient ancestor is mentioned in Numbers 16 as the Levitical leader of a revolt against Moses.

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In the introduction for Psalm 46, the Psalm in Hebrew is identified as "A Psalm of the sons of Korah, a song for virgins..." Likely the Hebrew word "alamoth" [means young virgin woman] in this circumstance, likely, is being used as a musical notation indicating that this Psalm was written to be sung by sopranos. When it was translated into Greek in the centuries prior to Jesus the translators struggled with the meaning of this statement for they translated it: "For the end, for the sons of Core; a Psalm concerning secret things."

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5 God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.
6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He
uttered His voice, the earth melted.

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Isaiah by James Tissot

James Tissot "Isaiah"

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Probably the reason that this was written for sopranos is found in verses 5-6. Jerusalem is described as a woman set upon by circumstances. She is at the edge of her resolve when God steps in to defend her.

Isaiah would picture Jerusalem as a virgin who would shake her head and laugh in triumph behind the back of her enemies the Assyrians. Such an image was common metaphor in ancient literature.

Jeremiah would also picture Israel, Judah and Jerusalem as virgins set upon by the nations. We do not know when this Psalm was written. It may well date to the time of king Hezekiah and Isaiah.

Isaiah 37:21-23

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Isaiah 37:21-23

21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying,
"Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Because you have
prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria,
22 'this is the word which the LORD has spoken
concerning him: "The **virgin**, the daughter of Zion, Has
despised you, laughed you to scorn; The daughter of
Jerusalem Has shaken *her* head behind your back!
23 "Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?
Against whom have you raised *your* voice, And lifted up
your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel.

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Ptolemy I Soter [305-282 BC] and Seleucus I Nicator [305-281 BC] were both generals in Alexander The Great's army. They were at times allies and later bitter rivals. They would both carve out kingdoms from Alexander the Great's conquests. Ptolemy would establish a dynasty that would rule Egypt and Libya for nearly 300 years. Seleucus would carve out Syria and most of Asia Minor. Ptolemy's last descendent to reign over Egypt was Cleopatra. Seleucus VII would be the last of the Seleucid dynasty. Antiochus IV would be the last powerful emperor of the Seleucid rulers. Surprisingly the Romans would take possession of both kingdoms in a period of just over 20 years.



Above Ptolemy I and
below Seleucus I



Above Ptolemy I and
below Seleucus I

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These two powerful Greek dynasties would be in almost continual conflict during the centuries that passed. The Jewish people were sandwiched between these 2 kingdoms. Often, they were used as political pawns in the struggle. Sometimes they were able to play off the kingdoms gaining for themselves relative independence. This is the era when the Old Testament was translated into Greek. We now call this translation the Septuagint. It took many generations to translate. Clearly in the translation of this Psalm the political realities of the time affected the translation and application of the Psalm.

They lived in an era of espionage, feints and conspiracies. The Greek version of this psalm seems to reflect this world.

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Isaiah 8:11-15

11 For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: 12 "Do not say, '**A conspiracy,**' Concerning all that this people call **a conspiracy,** Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. 13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; *Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.* 14 He will be as a sanctuary, But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense To both the houses of Israel, As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many among them shall stumble; They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken."

Above Ptolemy I and
below Seleucus I

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Twin Towers in
March of 2001

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We all see things through the lens of our present experience. The translators saw the words at the beginning of this psalm through the lens of their experience. Trepidation characterized living in Palestine in the era prior to Roman occupation, when the Greek kingdoms [Egyptian Ptolemies & Syrian Seleucids] embroiled the Jewish people in their political wrangling. These circumstances undoubtedly affected the way these translators interpreted the meaning of the word “alamoth”. It had already accrued “prophetic and eschatological” importance because of Isaiah and Jeremiah’s use of the word.



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After the invasion of Iraq, a conspiracy theory sprang up that blames the destruction of the Twin Towers of controlled explosions set off by the CIA or other nefarious actors within the Federal government to facilitate a war with Iraq. No matter how you may feel about the war in Iraq or are skeptical of our government there is absolutely no proof that such a conspiracy ever existed. Isaiah warns us that when we are feeling stressed out it is easy to clutch at explanations that are far afield. Certainly conspiracies do exist but as Chuck Colson indicated conspiracies tend to fall apart quickly due to the self-interests and greed of the participants.

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KEEP
CALM
AND
CARRY
ON

1939 poster produced by
the British government at
the outset of WW2

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Matthew 18:14-20

14 "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 18 Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 **For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.**"

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In a world of conflict and political unrest it was easy to see conspiracy in everything, even a simple musical notation. As Christians we must be careful that we do not allow ourselves to be blinded by present circumstances to the point that we miss the reality of what God intends and desires.

The writers of Psalm 46 were confident that God was in the midst of their circumstance and that He was in control. God is in our midst and we will not give way to fear.

We belong to Him we know that He will move heaven and earth for us.

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God in all circumstances has everything
under control so we will not fear.