

Psalm 87:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there.

Analysis

God speaks of Gentile nations: "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there" (Hebrew azkir Rachav u-Vavel l-yod-ay hineh Peleshet v-Tzor im-Kush zeh yullad-sham). "Rahab" symbolizes Egypt, "Babylon" Israel's oppressor—yet God claims them as birthplaces of His people. This astounding prophecy envisions Gentiles born into Zion, registered as citizens of God's city. Isaiah 19:23-25 similarly prophesies Egypt and Assyria worshiping with Israel. The New Testament fulfills this: Gentiles grafted into Israel (Romans 11), all believers citizens of heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Historical Context

Written by the sons of Korah, this psalm celebrates Jerusalem as God's chosen dwelling. Yet even Zion's exclusivity becomes inclusive—those born in pagan lands become citizens through God's sovereign grace. This anticipates the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) and the multiethnic worship of Revelation 7:9. The "register" recalls the book of life (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 20:12).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does this prophecy of Gentile inclusion demonstrate that God's plan always encompassed all nations?
2. What does it mean to be "born" in Zion, and how does spiritual birth supersede physical descent?
3. How should the global scope of God's redemption shape Christian mission and our view of cultural diversity in the church?

Interlinear Text

אַזְכֵּר יְהֹוָה	בְּרַבְּךָ לְ	וּבְּךָ לְ	לֹא דָעַ	הָבָת הָ
I will make mention	of Rahab	and Babylon	to them that know	H2009
H2142	H7294	H894	H3045	
פָּלַשְׁתָּה וְצִוְּרָה עַמּוֹד עִשְׂרָה	וְצִוְּרָה עַמּוֹד עִשְׂרָה	וְצִוְּרָה עַמּוֹד עִשְׂרָה	וְצִוְּרָה עַמּוֹד עִשְׂרָה	וְצִוְּרָה עַמּוֹד עִשְׂרָה
me behold Philistia	and Tyre	with Ethiopia	this man was born	H8033
H6429	H6865	H3568	H3205	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 45:12 (Parallel theme): And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.

Psalms 68:31 (Parallel theme): Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

Psalms 89:10 (Parallel theme): Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.

Job 9:13 (Parallel theme): If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.