

What (the best) God cares about (Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35)

God's a divine warrior but no cheap bully.

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One of the things that seems to delight some of the biblical writers is mocking the enemies of the day, sometimes by poking fun at the gods whom those enemies hold in high and hallowed esteem. Take, for example:

- Psalm 115 and its sometimes sly, sometimes in-your-face taunting of false gods who have the requisite equipment to see and taste and smell and feel but can't exercise any of those senses
- Or the hapless god of the Phoenicians, Dagon, who falls flat on his face when sharing a locked cubicle with the Ark of the Covenant in 1 Samuel 5
- And let's not forget the various artisans whom Isaiah (44:9 and following) describes as carving the wood from a tree for firewood to warm themselves and to bake an occasional cake, then carving the leftovers into an idol which they then bow down and worship.

The creator of Psalm 68 is quite particular when it comes to ridiculing foreign gods and those who would foolishly worship them. The enemy here seems to be the Canaanites and their primo god Ba'al.

The psalmist has the God of Israel boldly one-up Ba'al by usurping that unworthy's assumed lofty purviews—riding on the clouds or in the heavens—and assuming his saving powers, the miraculous capability of pouring rain precisely when and where

it's needed.

In an odd way, this psalm can be parable-ish; it seems to be leading the original audience and us latter day overhearers down the path of gloating: "Our God's better than your god! Nyaaaaah."

But when we have, as another wise teacher advised, "ears to hear and eyes to see," we begin to notice something sobering. Yes, our God is the divine warrior, who scatters enemies hither and yon, but this God's not some cheap neighborhood braggadocio buffoon, getting a kick out of bullying.

Although this is indeed a song of victory, a procession to celebrate the accession of our God to the throne of heaven above all other deities and would be deities, the concern and preference of this God of ours is for the have-nots of the world: widows and orphans and prisoners and homeless, oh my.

Could foreigners and immigrants and strangers and folks not like us be lurking there, too?