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**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES**

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**STUDIES  
IN THE  
PSALMS**

**Volume Two (73-150)**

**JOSEPH BRYANT  
ROTHERHAM**

(Translator of "The Emphasized Bible")

Paraphrase by

**KENNETH N. TAYLOR**

from the *Living Psalms And Proverbs*

Questions for Discussion by

**DON DE WELT**

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TABLES.

TABLE I.

TRANSLITERATION OF HEBREW CHARACTERS INTO ENGLISH.

No.	Name.	Form.	Sign.	Form.	Sign.		No.	Name.	Form.	Sign.	Form.	Sign.	
1	aleph	א	,	...	...		13	mem	מ	m	final ׀	m	
2	beth	ב	b	soft ׀	bh, v		14	nun	נ	n	final ׀	n	
3	gimel	ג	g	soft ׀	gh		15	samech	ס	s	...	...	
4	daleth	ד	d	soft ׀	dh	like <i>th</i> in "then"	16	ayin	ע	'	...	...	
5	he	ה	h	...	...		17	pe	פ	p	soft ׀	ph	
6	waw	ו	w	...	u	when a vowel	18	zadhe	צ	z	...	...	
7	zayin	ז	z	...	...		19	koph	כ	k	...	...	
8	heth	ח	h	...	...		20	resh	ר	r	...	...	
9	tét	ט	t	...	...		21	sin or shin	שׁ שׂ	s sh	...	...	
10	yodh	י	y	...	i	when a vowel	22	tau	ת	t	soft ׀	th	as <i>th</i> in "thin"
11	kaph	כ	k	soft ׀	kh								
12	lamed	ל	l	...	...								

The above Table may be put to an interesting special use. It will enable the merely English reader to trace the similarity of certain Hebrew letters, as the well-known cause of errors of transcription. For example, he can perceive how minute is the difference in form between *daleth* and *resh*, and so how easily "silenced" might creep in where "uplifted" should have stood, or *vice-versa*, in 131<sup>2</sup> (see note there); and similarly how readily *kaph* should have usurped the place *beth* in 150<sup>2</sup>.

N.B.—The vowel *ä* may be pronounced as *a* in father; and *é* as *e* in there.

TABLE II.

DIVINE NAMES, AS USED IN THE PSALMS, AND GENERALLY REGARDED AS INDICATING THE FORMATION OF SUCCESSIVE COLLECTIONS OF PSALMS.

	JEHOVAH <sup>a</sup>	YAH <sup>b</sup>	ELOHIM <sup>c</sup> (God)	ELOAH <sup>d</sup> (Eloah)	EL <sup>e</sup> (GOD)	ADONAI <sup>f</sup> (Sov. Lord)	ELYON <sup>g</sup> (Most High)
Bk. I. (1-41)	272	—	15	1	17	12	4
Bk. II. (42-72)	30	2	164	1	15	18	4
Bk. III. (73-89)	44	2	48	—	24	15	9
Bk. IV. (90-106)	103	6	—	—	9	1	4
Bk. V. (107-150)	236	26	7	2	10	7	1

- Obs. 1. The choice of one or other of these Divine Names seems generally to have been determined by intrinsic fitness. (See 9<sup>17</sup>, 19<sup>1, 7</sup>, 83<sup>18</sup>, 119<sup>15</sup>).
- Obs. 2. But occasionally shows an overruling adaptation to time, place, or purpose, by author or editor. (Cp. 14 w. 53; 40<sup>12-17</sup> w. 70; and note all Book II.)
- Obs. 3. Book I. is prevalingly Jehovistic; Book II., Elohistie; Book III., about equally balanced; Book IV., wholly Jehovistic; and Book V., mainly Jehovistic and Liturgical.

<sup>a</sup> Prop. "Yahweh." <sup>b</sup> Abbre. of "Yahweh." <sup>c</sup> Pl. of excellence, when absolutely used.  
<sup>d</sup> Sing. of Elohim. <sup>e</sup> Or "Mighty One." <sup>f</sup> Conventional pron. for Divine name.  
<sup>g</sup> Once used of Davidic King.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### TABLE IV.—ABBREVIATIONS

Aram. : Aramean.

A.V. : Authorized version.

Br. : Briggs.

CMm. : Chief Musician's mark.

Cod. : Codex = written copy.

cp. : Compare.

Del. : Delitzsch.

Dr. : Driver.

ear. pt. ed. : Early printed edition of the Hebrew Bible.

G. Intro. : Ginsburg's Introduction to his Massoretico-Critical Bible.

Gn. : Ginsburg's notes in his Massoretico-Critical Hebrew Bible.

God = Elohim.

**GOD** = **El**.

**God** = Eloah.

*Gt.* : Ginsburg *thinks* (a guarded *opinion*).

Intro. : Introduction to this work.

J.P.S.V. : Jewish Publication (Society Version).

Kp. : Kirkpatrick.

Lm. : Librarian's mark.

mf. : More freely.

ml. : More literally.

M.T. : Massoretic Hebrew Text. (For "Massorites" see Intro., Chap. I.)

Nm. : No mark—whether Librarian's or Chief Musician's.

O.G. : Oxford Gesenius ("B.D.B.")

## TABLES

O.T.P.: Thirtle's "Old Testament Problems."

P.B.V.: Prayer Book version.

Per.: Perowne.

perh.: Perhaps.

P.R.I.: Public Reader's Invitation.

prob.: Probably.

Read: In margin of M.T.

R.V.: Revised version.

Sep.: Septuagint (early Greek version).

shd.: Should.

sp. vr.: Special various reading (sevir) in Gn.

Syr.: Syriac.

T.G.: Tregelles' Gesenius.

U.: Usually.

Vul.: Vulgate (Latin).

w.: with.

Written: In text of M.T.

☞☞: Sign for "Selah." See Intro., Chap. III., "Selah."

# THE PSALMS

## BOOK THE THIRD

### PSALM 73

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Temptation, arising from the Prosperity of the Lawless,  
Triumphantly Overcome.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Under Protest, the Psalmist Confesses how Nearly he had Fallen, by Observing the Prosperity of the Lawless. Stanza II., vers. 6-9, The Evil Wrought in the Lawless Themselves by their Prosperity. Stanza III., vers. 10-14, The Evil Wrought in Others, breeding Sceptical Discontent. Stanza IV., vers. 15-17, The Psalmist's Recoil from the Natural Effect of such a Frank but Incomplete Statement, leads him to Seek More Light. Stanza V., vers., 18-20, The Startling Picture which More Light Reveals. Stanzas VI, VII, VIII, vers. 21, 22; 23, 24; 25, 26, The Psalmist Shames Away his Temptation in three stanzas of great power. Stanza IX., vers. 27, 28, A Final Contrast, Culminating in Public Song.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 After all God is good to Israel  
to the pure in heart.
- 2 But as for me  
my feet had well-nigh stumbled,  
my steps had almost slipped;
- 3 For I was envious of the boasters,  
at the prosperity of the lawless I kept looking.
- 4 For unfettered they are,  
sound<sup>1</sup> and fat is their body:

1. So Gt.—Gn. Cp. O.G. 359a.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 5 Of the travail of common men have they none,  
nor with the earth-born are they wont to be smitten.
- 6 Therefore a necklace for them is haughtiness,  
violence doth envelope them as their garment:
- 7 Their iniquity<sup>2</sup> hath proceeded from fatness,  
the imaginations of the heart have overflowed:
- 8 They mock and wickedly speak oppression,  
from on high they speak:
- 9 They have set in the heavens their mouth,  
and their tongue marcheth through the earth.
- 10 Therefore his people turn back hither,  
and waters of abundance are discovered<sup>3</sup> by them;
- 11 And they say—"How doth GOD know?  
and is there knowledge in the Most High?
- 12 Lo! these are lawless men;  
and yet secure for an age they have attained wealth!
- 13 After all in vain have I cleansed my heart,  
and bathed in pureness my palms;<sup>4</sup>
- 14 And been smitten all the day,  
and been rebuked morning by morning!"
- 15 "If" thought I "I must recount such things as these<sup>5</sup>  
lo! the circle of thy sons shall I have betrayed."
- 16 So I began to think in order to understand this,—  
a travail was that in mine eyes:—
- 17 Until I could enter the great sanctuary<sup>6</sup> of GOD,  
could give heed to their future.<sup>7</sup>
- 18 After all in slippery places dost thou set them,  
thou hast let them fall into ruins:
- 19 How have they become a desolation in a moment,  
come to an end been consumed in consequence of terrors!
- 20 As a dream by one who awakeneth  
Sovereign Lord! when thou bestirrest thyself their image  
wilt thou despise.

2. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

3. So some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "drained out"—Dr. "Supped up"—Del.

4. With special allusion to bribery. "Here evidently referring to the keeping of the palms clean from bribery, robbery and just those forms of violence (ver. 6b) and oppression (ver. 8b) by which the wicked had to a great extent gained their wealth and prosperity"—Br.

5. So, conjecturally, O.G. 456a.

6. Ml.: "holy places," or (possibly) "holy things."

7. Cp. on 37:37, 38.



## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 21 If my heart should become embittered,  
and in my feelings<sup>8</sup> I should be wounded
- 22 Then should I be brutish and without knowledge,  
a stupid beast<sup>9</sup> should I have become with thee.
- 23 And yet I am continually with thee,  
thou hast grasped my right hand :
- 24 By thy counsel wilt thou guide me,  
and afterwards gloriously take me.
- 25 Who (is there) for me in the heavens ?  
and with thee<sup>10</sup> I have no delight on the earth.
- 26 When have failed my flesh and my heart  
the rock of my heart and my portion is God to the ages.
- 27 For lo! they who have gone far from thee shall perish,  
thou wilt have exterminated every unchaste wanderer from  
thee.
- 28 But as for me approach to God for me is blessedness.  
I have fixed in Adonai Jehovah my refuge,  
to tell of all thy praises  
in the gates of the daughter of Zion.<sup>11</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 73

How good God is to Israel—to those whose hearts are pure.

2 But as for me, I came so close to the edge of the cliff!  
My feet were slipping and I was almost gone.

3 For I was envious of the prosperity of the proud and  
wicked.

4 Yes, all through life their road is smooth!<sup>1</sup> They grow  
sleek and fat.

5 They aren't always in trouble and plagued with problems  
like everyone else,

6 So their pride sparkles like a jeweled necklace, and their  
clothing is woven of cruelty!

7 These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever  
wish for!

8. U.: "reins."

9. Ml.: "A hippopotamus"—"a plump colossus of flesh . . . emblem of  
colossal stupidity"—Del.

10. "Having thee"—Dr.

11. Thus found in Sep. and Vul., as in 9:14.

1. Or, "they never have any pains."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

8 They scoff at God and threaten His people. How proudly they speak!

9 They boast against the very heavens, and their words strut through the earth.

10 And so God's people are dismayed and confused, and drink it all in.

11 "Does God realize what is going on?" they ask.

12 "Look at these men of arrogance; they never have to lift a finger—theirs is a life of ease; and all the time their riches multiply."

13 Have I been wasting my time? Why take the trouble to be pure?

14 All I get out of it is trouble and woe—every day and all day long!

15 If I had really said that, I would have been a traitor to Your people.

16 Yet it is so hard to explain it—this prosperity of those who hate the Lord.

17 Then one day I went into God's sanctuary to meditate, and thought about the future of these evil men.

18 What a slippery path they are on—suddenly God will send them sliding over the edge of the cliff and down to their destruction:

19 An instant end to all their happiness, and eternity of terror.

20 Their present life is only a dream! They will awaken to the truth as one awakens from a dream of things that never really were!

21 When I saw this, what turmoil filled my heart!

22 I saw myself so stupid and so ignorant; I must seem like an animal to You, O God.

23 But even so, You love me! You are holding my right hand!

24 You will keep on guiding me all my life with Your wisdom and counsel; and afterwards receive me into the glories of heaven!

25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And I desire no one on earth as much as You!

26 My health fails; my spirits droop, yet God remains! He is the strength of my heart; He is mine forever!

2. Or, "You will bring me unto honor."

## PSALM 73

27 But those refusing to worship God will perish, for He destroys those serving other gods.

28 But as for me, I get as close to Him as I can! I have chosen Him and I will tell everyone about the wonderful ways He rescues me.

### EXPOSITION

It is fortunate that the uniform rendering of the expressive particle *ak*, in vers. 1, 13, and 18 of this psalm, has led to such a striking commencement of a poem which embraces a precious mental history; since, by the combination, in that little word, of an affirmative with a restrictive meaning, it so happily opens the whole case, as to suggest to Perowne the following amplification: "Yes, it is so; after all, God is good, notwithstanding all my doubts." This entitles him to say of the psalmist: "That the result of the conflict is stated before the conflict itself is described. There is no parade of doubt merely as doubt. He states *first*, and in the most natural way, the *final* conviction of his heart."

The next point of importance is suggested by a comparison of 81:26 ("To the pure thou didst shew thyself pure") with the final clause of the psalmist's first statement—to *the pure in heart*. Only a pure mind can vindicate a pure God. In confessing how nearly he had lost his confidence in God's goodness, the psalmist admits that his thoughts had, in a measure, become defiled: he had looked, he had lusted—without taking moral quality into account. Happily, he looked again: until he saw something more than prosperity; and that later look helped to clarify his thoughts. But at first he lingeringly viewed the glitter and the show, until he felt his feet slipping from under him. His attention had clearly been arrested by fascinating examples of godless prosperity: examples shewing the absence of fettering restrictions, sound health, freedom from common troubles, immunity from providential inflictions. It should here be noted how a premature and disturbing notice of the "death" of those well-to-do godless men is avoided, by a critical revision of the Hebrew text, which after all amounts to no more than a re-grouping of the Hebrew letters. Premature such an allusion would certainly be; "for surely," says Delitzsch, "the poet cannot begin the description of the prosperity of the ungodly with the painlessness of their death, and only then come to speak of their healthfulness." Moreover, when afterwards, in vers. 18, 19, the psalmist does

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

undoubtedly confront the death of the lawless, it is very doubtful whether he intends to imply that it is painless. At all events, in his first stanza he confines himself to the fascination of the godless lives to which his attention had been repeatedly drawn.

In the second stanza, however, while the fascination still lingers, certain repulsive features begin to obtrude themselves. A *necklace* and a *flowing robe* are, no doubt, signs of opulence and social importance; but, when the former of these is *haughtiness* and the latter is *violence*, then, alas! for those who have to suffer from them. *Fatness* generates *iniquity*: perverse *imagination*s overflow in speech. *Mocking* at things sacred and divine, such assuming and insolent men *speak oppression*, as their appropriate dialect. With open profanity, their *mouth* sets divine law at defiance, and *their tongue* presumes to propose laws concerning all men and things in the *earth* to please themselves—in their unmitigated selfishness. Such is the purport of the second stanza. It is the result of a second look at the prosperous ungodly. It is proof of a determination to look even worldly fascinations full in the face. The discovery is already being made that it is not all gold that glitters; and, as the result, the snare is already nearly broken.

But, as stanza three shews, there is another source of danger to be considered: "WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY" sometimes perverts our own judgment. What, then, *do* they say? let us not fear to examine it. That these prosperous lawless ones wield a great influence, is, indeed, too apparent. Not only do they influence their own *clan*—each wealthy prince *his* own *people*,—as some expositors take ver. 10a to intimate; but even among *His people* that is, God's,—some there may be who are seduced into the expectation of discovering *waters of abundance* where these enviable wealthy men have already found them: And so these admirers reason themselves into scepticism. It is shallow reasoning, but it is taking. "*Look you,*" say these misguided on-lookers, "*these* are such as good people call '*lawless men*'; and yet see how they *get on*: see how, *for a life-time, they have been secure* from providential visitation, and to what *wealth they have attained!* Talk of Providence—where is it? Does God—if there be one—know anything about it?" So much for vers. 10-12 of this stanza.

It is probably best to take vers. 13, 14 as still continuing to describe "what other people say" who are unduly under the influence of the prosperous lawless ones: only, now, another class

## PSALM 73

of them comes into view—namely the hitherto punctilious people, more alive to their religious “profit and loss account” than to abstract reasonings about the Divine Government. We need not deny that, by voicing the precise difficulty felt by these whining and selfish religionists, the psalmist, at the same time, provides that his own transient doubts of the like kind shall find expression. Suffice it, that the pernicious influence of the ungodly rich has been amply described.

But it is time that the tables were turned, and a decisive solution of the problem were given; and so, here, at ver. 15, we come to the second part of the psalm. It is observable, that the psalmist resumes where he left off; namely, with the consideration of what others would say—only now the “others” are a very different class from those just described. He now brings before him those whom, in their collective capacity, he terms *the circle of God's sons*, amongst whom, therefore, a sense of the Divine Fatherhood is still preserved. “What will these say,” he seems to ask, “if I frankly tell them of these admirations of the godless rich, and these shallow reasonings about their example; if, at least, I tell the story as though *I for myself* seriously felt its spell? Will they not be shocked that I have so betrayed the honour of our Divine Fatherhood?” Happy the reasoner who has a circle of brethren from whom such a counteracting and healing influence may be counted upon; so that, to think of frankly telling *them* of his mental difficulties, is to feel those difficulties more than half solved by anticipation. Thrice happy was Asaph, that he was one of such a companionship of *pure hearted* Israelites—the more so, because he was both a *thinker* and a *prophet*: as a thinker, able to appreciate the mental *travail* involved in working out a difficult problem (ver. 16); and, as a prophet, knowing by experience how a sudden flash of light from the Spirit of God could at once remove difficulties which no mere thinking could solve (ver. 17). Hence, as he here intimates, although he at once *began to think*, he was not sanguine of the results to be expected from that process alone: he counted much more for success upon such a REVELATION as he felt would be more likely to be vouchsafed amidst the congenial influences of the *great sanctuary of God* than elsewhere: *the great sanctuary*, with its leisure and quiet, with its sacred associations, with its solemn sacrifices, with its inspiring music, and especially with its songs old and new, some of which, like 37 and 49, might be found to have anticipated his present difficulties, or at least to

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

favour the making of fresh discoveries by his own mind. It should be noted, however, that the psalmist's late experience and present ponderings are already putting him on the right track for search; that, in fact, he knows the precise point on which he needs illumination: namely the *future* of these ungodly prosperous men: *until I could consider their future*. We do wisely to be thus careful to observe precisely where this stanza breaks off—the exact point to which it leads up; and there can be no mistake that now the language of the psalm leads over from reflection and resolve to that of discovery. In ver. 17 it is resolve: in ver. 18 it is discovery. The discovery is introduced by the significant term *after all*, to which reference has already been made; and the disclosure is thenceforward continued in the form of direct address to Deity. Note the wording: *thou dost set them—thou hast let them fall—when thou bestirrest thyself—their image wilt thou despise*. Plainly it is now the confident language of direct address to Deity. But the language is changed, because the scene has changed: the psalmist is now in *the great sanctuary*, and feels himself to be in the very presence of God, and by the confident directness and assurance of his words shews that he has now *received the further light* which he was resolved to seek concerning *the future* of these ungodly prosperous men. Thus, then, every word of the ensuing stanza demands our most careful attention—and our utmost confidence.

“*After all*,”—he exclaims, in the very language of discovery: “after all the wealth and all the power and show; after all the admiration and envy and the vain reasoning; after all the appearance of thine indifference, as though thou knewest not how thou wast being set at nought: *after all*, thou hast been very much in this very thing, carrying forward thy holy designs. For thou hast been *setting* these very men whom their fellows have so much envied, *in slippery places of uttermost peril*.” We naturally and rightly supply, in undertone, from our other and it may be fuller knowledge of the fairness and equity of God's ways, the important qualification: “Thus—for sins already committed—hast thou been punishing them for their presumption in wilfully persisting in doing without thee.” And it was well, therefore, that we detected, in the first lines sketching the *image* of these men, the note of previous self-determination to evil: they had already become *unfettered*, having brushed aside Divine law and silenced the voice of conscience. “As a punishment for this previous course of sin and self-hardening; and (should we not

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add?) as a last Divine resort to convince them of their folly: *thou dost set them in slippery places.*" Alas! in the actual circumstances revealed to the psalmist, this punishment avails nothing for reformation, but takes effect as punishment with destructive effect. With startling fulness and vigour is this disclosure made: "*Thou hast let them fall into ruins—like a bowing wall which comes down of its own weight with a crash, its ruin being sudden and complete.*" With this revelation the psalmist's mind is deeply impressed—as its exclamatory form shows: "*How have they become a desolation in a moment—so complete! so sudden!*" The final catastrophe is further described by terms piled up for effect: *They have come to an end, have been consumed,*—how could complete destruction be more strongly expressed? But, to this, the significant addition is made: *in consequence of terrors*—who shall venture to say what these terrors are? As in Job 18:11, 14, 24:17, 27:20, 30:15, they may be terrors within the bounds of this life, and closing it; or, as in Ezekiel 26:21, 27:36, 28:19, they may be terrors connected with the Hadean continuation of existence, and ending it. That they do *terminate* the *being* of these erewhile *boasters*, is the one thing which the disclosure makes plain. We have not yet done with this description. Let us complete our notice of it, before we turn back to ask what it all means. With a simple oriental audacity which has in it no particle of irreverence, the psalmist represents the *Sovereign Lord* as having been *asleep* while these godless rich have been indulging their lust of wealth and pomp and power—and cruelty: by all which we understand no more than that Adonai had *interfered* as little as though he had been asleep. But, working out this figurative vein, he says: "*as a dream* (is despised) *by one who awakeneth, Sovereign Lord! when thou bestirrest thyself* (to deal with their case as it demands and deserves) *their image wilt thou despise.*" Here, undoubtedly, much depends upon a right appreciation of the word *image*; since, whatever it is, it is something which Adonai *despises*, and it becomes us to be careful how we define an object of avowed Divine *aversion*! Scholars are not quite agreed in their renderings of this instance of the Hebrew *zelem*. The R.V., Perowne and Leeser follow the A.V. in translating it "image"; but Carter and Delitzsch represent it by "shadow," Driver by "semblance," Briggs and Wellhausen (in P.B.) by "phantom." Now, undoubtedly, there is one passage, namely 39:6, in which—by reason of the context—some such rendering

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is required; and it is further undeniable that the notion of "shadow" lies at the root of the original word; for which very reason, however, it is submitted that "image" is the better translation in the present instance; not only as connecting his passage with the account of man's creation in Genesis (1:26, 27, 9:6), and usefully reminding us in passing that even there man's likeness to his Maker—consisting in his capacity to rule (cp. Exposition on Ps. 8) was after all little more than a "shadow" of the Divine capacity and power to govern; but more particularly and most vitally that the very word "image" is *the* term which takes us to the heart of this most weighty passage. "*Their image*—as a mere caricature of thine own, it is, O Sovereign Lord, which *thou wilt despise!*" Assuredly, it is not the mere frailty of man's ordinary mortal condition, which God despises; nor is it the attenuated semblance of man's former self which alone can penetrate hades "as far as the circle of his fathers" (49:19), which God despises. Out of the former, by transformation, he can raise up new men, mighty as angels and immortal as his own Son; and unto the latter, as still "the work of his own hands," he may come to have a "longing," as Job faintly hoped (14:15). Therefore it is neither of these semblances, as such, that Adonai despises; for *despises* is a strong word, and in neither of the above cases is it consistent with the known condescension of "a faithful Creator" (1 P. 4:19). No! far other than merely these, is the object which here starts forth from the canvas as, so to speak, exciting the contempt of an awakened and affronted God. It is the primary image of God, wickedly, wantonly disfigured. Even we, under Asaph's sympathetic guidance, have, already—within the compass of this psalm—looked on that "image" and loathed it: the *unfettered* free-thinker and free-liver; the fat, sleek pamperer of his precious self; the so-called pet of Providence, stranger alike to ordinary and extraordinary trouble; deeming it an adornment to be *haughty*, and a becoming robe to be *violent*; whose gross mind concocts evil schemes; whose vile mouth propounds and promotes and defends unblushing villainies; whose tongue talks as if all the earth had been made for his convenience—a man therefore who practically deems himself to be his own God! *alas turned devil!* Have we by this time learned to detest him? How great a wonder, then, that a holy God should have left him to himself so long!

Such then, in full, is the description given by Asaph of the revelation which he had received in *the great sanctuary of God*,



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concerning *the future* of the lawless rich bearing this debased *image* of God.

And now what does it all mean? Does it merely mean *sudden* death; or does it rather mean *total* death: an utter destruction of personal being? If any elect to say, "Merely sudden death"; may we not turn upon them with the question, how mere sudden death meets the case? Suppose we could (as we cannot, for want of evidence) accept it as an observed fact, that such presumptuous men do uniformly die sudden deaths; how would that alone solve this mystery of providence? Is there, after all, any such broad distinction to be drawn between slow death and sudden death? What does it signify so much, whether a man is struck down in a moment, or whether he slowly wastes and wears away? It is not at all plain that there is anything material in the difference. Besides, it may with confidence be affirmed, that this is not the direction in which the text points. Certainly, suddenness is there—at least relative suddenness (*in a moment*). But the point emphasized by the accumulated terms of the passage is rather the completeness of the destruction, than the suddenness of the death. Indeed, it looks as though the word "death" had been carefully avoided; but while the common word "death" is avoided, the word *terrors* is emphatically brought in, and some scope must naturally be given in which those terrors may be supposed to effect the terrible overthrow intended: an overthrow so terrible and complete that before the psalm is ended, it is termed both a *perishing* and an *extermination*. In fine, the impression made by the whole passage is, that it is not what is understood as an ordinary sudden death that is meant; but an awful infliction of the utter destruction of the whole being by some unendurable manifestation of Divine wrath: as a Christian, availing himself of New Testament language, might say,—the first and second deaths being blended in one, and the terrors including the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16, 17). These may be regarded as here foreshortened for the practical purpose of summary statement, and because the then current knowledge of the future could not bear the introduction of details. Reverting to what the O.T. itself does teach, we may usefully remind ourselves of that great passage in Isaiah (57:16) which plainly intimates that there is possible such a protracted manifestation of Divine anger, as no man could sustain; and though, there, the intention seems to be, to let in a hope of mercy, yet here the intention is equally visible of excluding such hope.

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Of course, if death were ordinarily to be taken as equivalent to total extinction of personal being, all this would amount to nothing; and our exposition would have to remain unfinished. But, assuredly, we may, with the general consent of Bible readers, dismiss that devastating conception of death as extravagantly unwarrantable; and therefore may reaffirm our present contention that the utter desolation and final extinction of personal being is the true meaning of this passage: first, because it completely fills up the terms employed, and, second, because it solves the providential mystery it was given to explain. After such a revelation, who dare pray to be rich, who can desire to be set in such slippery places? The temptation is gone; and therefore it follows that the answer is complete. In further confirmation of all which, as thus far advanced, suffice it to call attention to the broad, fundamental harmony which this exposition of the Psalms unfolds. In the first of this series of psalms, 37, 49, 73, it was submitted that for the righteous man *there is a future*: for transgressors there is *not*! The confident assurance of the truth of that conclusion has helped us so far through this psalm and nothing else could. That conclusion stands as an immovable principle. Details are yet needed, but some particulars are already being supplied. Here we see not only the principle confirmed; but the detailed and penetrating lesson taught, that *even in this life the Divine image may be so defaced and caricatured as to become an offence to the Almighty and ripe for destruction, as a consequence of unknown terrors!*

In at length advancing to Stanza VI. of this psalm (vers. 21-22), we have to express immeasurable obligation to Delitzsch for suggesting and defending the hypothetic colouring thrown upon it. How disconcerting it would have been to find the psalmist still floundering in (or, if not floundering in, at least lingering over) the doubts, from which the vision in the great sanctuary was given to deliver him! How delightful, by contrast and by helpfulness onward, to perceive that he is now merely shaming his former doubts into perpetual silence. "How unmanly!" he is now heard saying, "to cherish such feelings any longer! How unworthy of the name of a *man*, to harbour such thoughts any more!" He had modestly assumed to be a *thinker*, before he could find opportunity to go into the great sanctuary of God. But now that he has been thither—or is still perhaps remaining there, since his address to God is as yet unbroken—he thinks again, and to some purpose; and his thought is, what

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“a colossus of stupidity” he would be, not now to be satisfied: “I, a man, who can converse with thee, and receive such counsel as thou hast now been giving me!” Furthermore, this merely hypothetic repetition of the old temptation enables us to advance at once, at the close of this stanza, to the natural rendering of the preposition (*with thee*—Gk. rough breathing *'immaka*) which has to do such important service in the very next line, namely the first of Stanza VII. The old doubt only hypothetically put, enables us to anticipate by saying “with thee,” here at the close of ver. 22: “Being, as I am, *with thee*, how stupid such a doubt would now appear.” And then he can follow on in ver. 23 by saying, *And yet I am continually with thee* (*'immaka*). In contrast with the smoothness of which, how awkward and even suspicious to have to render the same preposition first “before thee” (ver. 22) and then “with thee” (ver. 23). We are thus particular down to a particle, because of the extreme value of Delitzsch’s hypothetical translation of vers. 21 and 22: which, thus defended, may now be dismissed.

Stanza VII. thus at once bears us along into the midstream of near fellowship with God and of consequent victorious confidence in Him. “*Thou hast grasped my right hand*, by thus disclosing to me that which for ever shames into silence my doubts. *By Thy counsel wilt thou* (continue to do as thou hast now done) *guide me*, *And afterwards* (leaving us easily to supply the thought, ‘after life’s journey’) *gloriously take me.*” He knows not precisely *how* it will be done, but *glorious in the manner of it* will it assuredly be; and the decisive *act* done, he says, will be to *take me*, even as Enoch was taken to be with God; or, as Ps. 49:15—if just sung in “the great sanctuary”—may have suggested, “*wilt take me* (out of the hand of hades, whether by transformation preventing death, or by resurrection reversing death)” The point of this revelation clearly cannot lie in details, which are confessedly not supplied; but in the broad and simple fact announced, of being *taken* by God. Obviously all turns on the character of him who takes. He who, as an enemy whom I hate, captures me, makes of me a slave, and excites my utmost fears; but he who, as a friend whom I admire and love, captures me, at the same time enraptures me, delights me, and excites my highest hopes. All, then, here turns on the character of God, and of his relation to me. And of this, the next stanza sings.

In language of extreme simplicity and brevity—like the

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lispings of a babe that has not yet learned to speak—and yet of extreme beauty, because everything is suggested that is not expressed, the psalmist (Stanza VII.) says, *Who—for me—in the heavens? And—with thee: having thee—*(whether there or here) *I have no delight on the earth* (where are, or have been, all I have known and loved). Of course, the language is comparative, even while it shrinks from comparison; but the one clear thing which it reveals is the delight in his God now felt, as never before, by this pure-hearted Israelite. It is on the tide of this delight in God himself that he is carried over into the unknown, and is moved to express a conception to convey which no exact words had yet been coined; and the approximate words to express which amount to a contradiction in terms: *When have failed my flesh and my heart—*(in other words, my body and my mind)—*the rock of my heart and my portion* (then and on and ever) *is God age-abidingly*. The mind that rests on that rock cannot sink. The essential Ego will somehow survive the wreck; if it have nothing else in which to inhere, it will inhere in God, or else a sorry *portion* would he be! But, indeed, we have gone too far, in saying that for this conception no language had yet been coined—although, it is true, Asaph may not have been familiar with it: “Into thy hands I commit my spirit” (31:5) probably is a prayer which exactly meets the case, and at all events was honoured by being used by Jesus and by his first martyr Stephen. Nevertheless, in any case, love finds out how to make itself understood; and absolute triumph over death is here radiant as the rising sun. Perfect love to a perfect God gives the victory: the nearest possible *approach* to that God (Stanza IX.) constitutes the highest attainable *blessedness*, and must ever prompt the most joyful *songs of Zion* whether earthly or heavenly.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read verse one and discuss whether or not the conclusion to the problem is here stated.
2. There are several Psalms which discuss the problem of the prosperity of the wicked. (Cf. Ps. 27 and 49) If it was solved before, why raise the issue again? Are there different facets of the problem in each Psalm? Discuss.
3. If all we know about heaven was that which is contained in the Old Testament, how easy would it be for us to endure the arrogant prosperity of the wicked? Discuss.

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4. Into which "sanctuary" did the Psalmist go? Into what sanctuary can we go? Is the church building a sanctuary? Is there a better one?
5. Please be honest with yourself and give a personal answer to the several questions asked in the text: (1) "Does God realize what is going on?"; (2) "Have I been wasting my time?"; (3) "Why take the trouble to be pure?"; (4) "Whom have I in heaven but You?"; (5) "Whom do I desire on earth but Thee?"
6. A large part of the problem is in what others will see and say about the believer—Discuss.
7. Is the problem of this Psalm larger in America or in Asia or Africa or Europe? Discuss.

## PSALM 74

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Ruthless Injuries to the Sanctuary and Oppression in the Land  
by an Enemy, call forth Expostulation with God  
for his quiescence.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3a, In Expostulation for Present Rejection, the Psalmist Reminds God how he had Acquired, Redeemed, and Exalted His Inheritance. Stanza II., vers. 3b-7, Profanation of the Sanctuary Described. Stanza III., vers. 8, 9, Extent of the Desolation. Stanza IV., vers 10, 11, Renewed Expostulation with God. Stanzas V., VI., VII., vers, 12, 13; 14, 15; 16, 17, Divine Activities Aforetime in History and in Creation. Stanzas VIII., IX., X., vers. 18, 19; 20, 21; 22, 23, Earnest Pleadings for Divine Interposition.

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(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Wherefore O God hast thou cast off utterly?  
wherefore smoketh thine anger against the flock of thy  
shepherding?
- 2 Remember thy congregation (which) thou acquiredst  
aforetime?  
(which) thou redeemest to be the tribe of thine  
inheritance,—  
Mount Zion wherein thou didst make thy habitation,

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- 3 which thy footsteps exalted to perpetual dignity.<sup>1</sup>  
 Everything hath the enemy marred in the sanctuary:  
 4 roared have thine adversaries in the midst of thy place of  
 meeting,  
 they have set up their signs for signs.  
 5 A man used to become known as one who had wielded on  
 high  
 in a thicket of trees axes!<sup>2</sup>  
 6 But now the doors<sup>3</sup> thereof all at once  
 with hatchets and hammers they smite!  
 7 They have thrust into the fire thy holy things,<sup>4</sup>  
 to the ground have they profaned the habitation of thy name.  
 8 They have said in their heart—"We will force them down  
 altogether!"<sup>5</sup>  
 they have caused to cease all the festivals of God in the  
 land:<sup>6</sup>  
 9 Our signs we see not,  
 there is no longer a prophet;  
 nor is there with us one who knoweth how long.  
 10 How long O God shall an adversary reproach?  
 shall an enemy blaspheme thy name perpetually?  
 11 Wherefore shouldst thou draw back thy hand?  
 and thy right hand in the midst of thy bosom retain?<sup>7</sup>  
 12 And yet God was my king from aforetime,  
 working victories<sup>8</sup> in the midst of the earth.  
 13 Thou didst divide in thy strength the sea,  
 didst shatter the heads of (river) monsters<sup>9</sup> upon the waters:  
 14 Thou didst crush the heads of the crocodile,  
 didst give him as food to the creatures<sup>10</sup> that dwell in the  
 deserts.

1. So Br., who says: "Requires no change in the unpointed text."

2. Supply, perhaps, in thought: "when the sanctuary was built."

3. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

4. So in some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns.)—Gn.

5. So Del.

6. So Sep. M.T.: "They have burned up all the meeting-places of God in the land."

7. So Br. "From the midst of thy bosom (pluck it forth) and consume." So Driver and others, following M.T. and supplying "pluck forth." Ginsburg says that *kalleh*, "consume," shd. be *selah* (? "lift up," as in 68:4).

8. Or: "a great salvation" (pl. intensive).

9. So Dr.

10. Ml.: "people." Dr.: "folk" as in Prov. 30:25, 26.

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- 15 Thou didst cleave open fountain and torrent,  
thou didst dry up rivers of steady flow.
- 16 Thine is the day yea thine the night,  
thou didst establish light-bearer<sup>11</sup> and sun:<sup>12</sup>
- 17 Thou didst set up all the bounds of the earth,  
summer and autumn thou didst fashion them.
- 18 Remember this! an enemy hath reproached Jehovah,  
yea the people of a vile<sup>13</sup> person have blasphemed thy name.
- 19 Do not give up to a wild beast the life<sup>14</sup> of thy turtle-dove,<sup>15</sup>  
the living host of thy humbled ones do not forget perpetually.
- 20 Look well to thy<sup>16</sup> covenant,  
for filled are the dark places of the land<sup>17</sup> with the  
habitations of violence.
- 21 May the crushed one not turn back confounded!  
the humbled and the needy let them praise thy name.
- 22 Arise! O God O plead thine own plea,  
remember the reproach of thee from the vile<sup>13</sup> person all the  
day:
- 23 Do not forget the voice of thine adversaries,—  
the noise of them who rise up against thee ascending  
continually.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) "Do not destroy."

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 74

O God, why have You cast us away forever? Why is your anger hot against us—the sheep of Your own pasture?

2 Remember that we are Your people—the ones You chose in ancient times from slavery and made the choicest of Your possessions. You chose Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> as Your home on earth!

3 Walk through the awful ruins of the city, and see what the enemy has done to Your sanctuary.

4 There they shouted their battle cry and erected their idols to flaunt their victory.

11. Prob.: "moon."

12. Sep.: "sun and moon."

13. Or: "senseless." Cp. on Ps. 14.

14. U.: "soul."

15. Sep.: "a soul giving thanks unto thee."

16. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

17. Or: "earth." Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Earth."

1. Literally, "Mount Zion."

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5, 6 Everything lies in shambles like a forest chopped to the ground. They came with their axes and sledgehammers and smashed and chopped the carved paneling,

7 And set the sanctuary on fire, and razed it to the ground—  
Your sanctuary, Lord.

8 "Let's wipe out every trace of God," they said, and went through the entire country burning down the assembly places where we worshiped You.

9, 10 There is nothing left to show that we are Your people. The prophets are gone, and who can say when it all will end? How long, O God, will You allow our enemies to dishonor Your name? Will You let them get away with this forever?

11 Why do You delay? Why hold back Your power? Unleash Your fist and give them a final blow.

12 God is my King from ages past; You have been actively helping me everywhere throughout the land.

13, 14 You divided the Red Sea with Your strength; You crushed the sea-god's heads! You gave him to the desert tribes to eat!

15 At Your command the springs burst forth to give Your people water; and then You dried a path for them across the everflowing Jordan.

16 Day and night alike belong to You; You made the starlight and the sun.

17 All nature is within Your hands; You make the summer and the winter too.

18 Lord, see how these enemies scoff at You. O Jehovah, an arrogant nation has blasphemed Your name.

19 O Lord, save me! Protect Your turtle-dove from the hawks.<sup>2</sup> Save Your beloved people from these beasts.

20 Remember Your promise! For the land is full of darkness and cruel men.

21 O Lord, don't let Your downtrodden people be constantly insulted. Give cause for these poor and needy ones to praise Your name!

22 Arise, O God, and state Your case against our enemies. Remember the insults these rebels have hurled against You all day long.

23 Don't overlook the cursing of these enemies of Yours; it grows louder and louder.

2. Literally, "the wild beasts."



PSALM 74  
EXPOSITION

It is clear that the composition of this psalm was occasioned by the desecration of the Temple and the oppression of the Land by some foreign invader; but precisely which event of this kind is here intended, is uncertain. Some have confidently pointed to the time of the Maccabees, when the temple was desecrated under Antiochus: against which may be urged the standing unlikelihood that any psalm had so late an origin, and yet found its way as did this, and the rest, into the ancient Septuagint version of the Old Testament; and the particular objection that the very line in the psalm which might otherwise have seemed to point to a Maccabean origin, viz. ver. 8, "And they have burned up all the meeting-places of God in the land," appears in the Sep. in the milder form, *And they have caused to cease all the festivals of God in the land.* It may be true, that the erection of synagogues cannot be traced further back than to the time of the Maccabees; but it is inconceivable that the Greek translators should have obliterated such an allusion, had it existed in their Hebrew exemplars, though quite possible that later Sopherim should have adapted the Hebrew of the old psalm, so as to conform it to later and more startling events. Others again, have advocated the time of the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar, as having probably given birth to this psalm. And that is a possible date; although the lament over the want of a *prophet* or one who *knew how long* but ill agrees with the presence of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in those days. Even if, to avoid this awkwardness, the origin of the psalm be thrown further down the Exile, and in favour of that time the words be cited, "Lift up thy footsteps to the perpetual desolations," as showing that now the desolation of Jerusalem had lasted a long time,—then it is at least disconcerting to note, what Briggs says, that the same consonants, otherwise vowel-pointed, may be read (surely more in harmony with the immediate context) *Which thy footsteps exalted to perpetual dignity.* Under these circumstances, it may be questioned whether the "Speaker's Commentary" has not more nearly hit the mark in suggesting as the probable time and occasion of origin, the invasion of the Egyptian monarch Shishak in the days of Rehoboam. In favour of this comparatively early date, may be mentioned: the care which the psalmist observes to express rather a desecration than a demolition of the temple; and the aptness of his language in vers. 5, 6 to apply to a time when the *building* of the temple

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was yet a comparatively recent event. While yet the honour of having lifted an *axe* in the Lebanon to supply cedar for the erection of the temple was well remembered, here are profane *hatchets and hammers* engaged in ruthlessly tearing off the plates of gold which covered *the doors*. It seems as though the psalm was written while this profanation was going on; and not merely concerning a conflagration viewed from afar! Given, a psalmist well remembering the glory of the erection of the temple; given also, the instinctive horror felt by such a man on occasion of the first intrusion of foreign feet within the sacred precincts;—and you have probably a more fitting psychological condition to suit the origin of this psalm than any other that can be imagined with due regard to known facts. It is difficult to say why the psalm does not contain a confession of *sin*; as the true reason why such a foreign invasion was permitted, especially as this is made so prominent in the history; but we may perhaps surmise that this element lay, for the moment, comparatively dormant in the psalmist's mind, because of his ignorance of the lengths to which the invader might be permitted to go, and the vividness with which he saw in those broader views of God's gracious purposes in calling Israel to be his people and in making Mount Zion his dwelling-place, such weighty pleas against the destruction which at the time appeared imminent. Whatever the cause of this absence of confession from the psalm, it should be remembered that the fact of its omission bears as much upon one foreign invasion as another: any such invasion—whether Egyptian, Chaldean or Syrian—must have in reality seemed permissible only because of grievous national sin committed.

The course of thought which the psalm actually pursues is noteworthy, especially in respect of the broad collateral facts in history and in nature by which the psalmist strengthens his pleading with God.

After reminding God of the wonderful way in which he had made the Hebrew *congregation* peculiarly his own (vers. 1-3a); and then vividly depicting the present devastation of the sanctuary (vers. 3b-7), and the forlorn condition of the land, especially as regards religious privileges (vers. 8, 9); and after pleading with God no longer to delay his silencing of the profanity of the invader (vers. 10, 11);—the psalmist then enlarges on the almighty deeds of Israel's King. He introduces the great facts clustering around the deliverance from Egypt and the ad-

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mission into the promised land (vers. 12-15)—facts which constituted an almighty handling of the powers of nature and pressing them into the service of creating and redeeming a Nation. At this point, in a stanza of great simplicity and beauty (vers. 16-17) the poet passes on to a notice of the Divine relation to *day* and *night*, *moon* and *sun*, *earth* and *seas*, *summer* as presupposing *spring* and *autumn* as bringing after it *winter*. These allusions are not only beautiful in themselves, and a poetic relief to the mind of the reader but they are true aids to devotion, and give pleasing force to the petitions which they introduce. They suggest more than they formally articulate. They seem to say: "Such, O God, are the praises, which habitually ascend to thee from this holy place; but now, only hear the reproaches and the defiance which are from this very spot directed against thy Holy Name! Canst thou be the Divine *King* whom we thus adore, and not be able and willing to hearken to our prayers?" And then follows a volley of petitions: *remember—do not give up—do not forget—look well—arise—remember—do not forget*. The very close of the prayer is intercessionally dramatic. Instead of a final benediction, we hear the gentle but undaunted voice of this petitioner making a last effort to turn the sustained *din* and *roar* of the *adversary* in the sanctuary into so much prayer for speedy Divine Intervention. Noting these things, even Christian intercessors may learn valuable lessons from this psalm, as to the reality, boldness and scope of prayer. Moreover, it would be upardonable to forget what we owe to Dr. Thirtle for the collateral warrant he affords for moving the inscription *Do not destroy*, from the beginning of the next psalm, where its applicability is not very evident, to the foot of this, where its appropriateness must strike every unprejudiced mind: *that* has really been the prayer of this psalm—*Do not destroy!*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The Temple is desecrated—but when? By whom? Give and defend your opinion.
2. List the descriptive terms for the nation of Israel. Remember "we are the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).
3. List the great works of Jehovah which prove He could overcome these profainers of His holy Temple.
4. To what three attributes of God does the psalmist appeal as reasons for the restoration of worship in the Temple?

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5. Give at least two possible explanations as to why God sometimes delays His blessings.
6. Notice the petitions addressed to God—which also could be addressed to ourselves in relation to God.

## PSALM 75

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song, Enshrining an Oracular Assurance of Equitable Judgment by the Judge of the Earth.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, Congregational Thanksgiving, Promising a Rehearsal of Divine Wonders. Stanza II., vers. 2-4, A Divine Oracle: Declaring that, at the Right Time, Justice shall be Done; and Admonishing that Moral Preparations for Judgment be Made. Stanza III., vers. 5-7, Prophetic Exhortation Enforcing the Oracle. Stanza IV., ver. 8, A Prophetic Warning of Coming Wrath. Stanza V., vers. 9, 10, With Prophetic Exultation, the Psalmist, in the Name of the Nation, Counts on being Employed in the Judicial Adjustment.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph—Song.

- 1 We give thanks to thee O God we give thanks to thee;  
and they who call on thy name<sup>1</sup> tell of all thy wondrous works.
- 2 "Yea! I will seize a right time,  
I with equity will judge:
- 3 Dissolving may be the earth and all the dwellers therein,  
I have adjusted the pillars thereof:
- 4 have said to boasters—"Do not boast!"  
and to lawless ones—"Do not lift up a horn!" "
- 5 Do not lift up on high your horn,  
nor speak against a Rock<sup>2</sup> with arrogance.

1. So "read probably"—Dr. And so (?)—Gn.

2. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn.

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- 6 For neither from the east nor from the west,  
nor from the wilderness<sup>3</sup> (cometh) lifting up;<sup>4</sup>  
7 For God is judge,  
this one he putteth down and that one he lifteth up.  
8 For a cup is in the hand of Jehovah with wine which  
foameth,  
it is full of spiced-wine which he poureth out—from one to  
another,<sup>5</sup>  
surely the dregs thereof shall all the lawless of the earth  
drain out and drink.  
9 But I will exult<sup>6</sup> to the ages,  
let me make melody unto the God of Jacob!  
10 And all the horns of lawless ones will I hew off,  
lifted up shall be the horns of the righteous.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) With stringed instruments.<sup>7</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 75

How we thank You Lord! Your mighty miracles give proof that You care.

2 "Yes," the Lord replies, "And when I am ready, I will punish the wicked!

3 Though the earth shakes and all its people live in turmoil, yet its pillars are firm, for I have set them in place!"

4 I warned the proud to cease their arrogance! I told the wicked to lower their insolent gaze,<sup>1</sup>

5 And to stop being stubborn and proud.

6, 7 For promotion and power come from nowhere on earth, but only from God. He promotes one and deposes another.

8 In Jehovah's hand there is a cup of pale and sparkling wine. It is His judgment, poured out upon the wicked of the earth. They must drain that cup to the dregs.

3. Prob.—"south." "North" perh. omitted as quarter whence the enemy was coming.

4. Heb.: *Harim*, generally—"mountains"; but, according to a Heb. tradition, exceptionally here—"lifting up" (as derived from *rum*, to be high): which seems to strike the key-note of the psalm, for which cp. vers. 4, 5, 7, 10.

5. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

6. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn.

7. And therefore with all the choirs in the temple.

1. Literally, "lift not up the horn."

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9 But as for me, I shall forever declare the praises of the God of Jacob.

10 "I will cut off the strength of evil men," says the Lord,<sup>2</sup> "and increase the power of good men in their place."

### EXPOSITION

Standing where it does, this psalm requires but a moderate exercise of the historical imagination, to bring out its practical effectiveness. It follows well the outcry of the previous psalm. "How long?" by declaring that, *at the right time*, Divine Interposition shall come. With equal fitness, it anticipates the exulting outburst of the psalm which follows it, already claiming the souls of those who are yet waiting, to the sore trial of their faith. It may thus be placed historically anywhere between the invasion of Shishak and the overthrow of Sennacherib the Assyrian, and could, with fine effect, be used in temple worship either during the days of trial which befell Jehoshaphat or during those which came upon Hezekiah.

When the dramatic structure of the psalm is perceived, its dignity and force rise to the sublime. The opening stanza reveals the congregation giving thanks as for an answer received, and as if in anticipation of Divine Wonders to follow.

Then, with an effective change of measure, Jehovah is represented as giving, in the first person, his assurance that in due time he will effectively interpose. Society—and perhaps especially the society of nations—may appear to be *falling to pieces—dissolving*—for lack of the effective grip of the bonds of *equity*; but already Jehovah prophetically declares he has *adjusted the pillars* of the social structure. That those "pillars" are to be understood as fundamental *moral principles*, is at once intimated by the two Divine behests—*Do not boast, Do not lift up the horn*, which two proclamations may perhaps be distributively applied: the former to Israel and the latter to the nations ready to oppress them; though, indeed, both may well be heeded by all concerned, seeing that *boasting* and *oppression* so often go hand in hand.

It is not quite certain at what point the direct Divine address ends; but, having regard to the propriety of letting an oracle appear brief, and to the difficulty of carrying on the direct address to the close of ver. 7, it is probably best to close the quotation at the end of ver. 4. This naturally leads us to take

2. Implied.

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vers. 5-7 as a continuing prophetic address, by the psalmist himself, in enforcement of the Divine Oracle. It seems to be fittingly left to the *psalmist* to emphasize, in amplified hortatory words (ver. 5a), the previous briefer oracular words (ver. 4b); and then that he, *the psalmist*, should go on (ver. 5b) to speak of Jehovah as a *Rock*, in the third person; just as, also, (in ver. 7) he naturally refers to God, in the third person. These niceties may not appear very important, inasmuch as they respect the mere *form* of what must all, in substance, be regarded as a Divine utterance; but an approximately correct settlement of them, sensibly contributes to the impressiveness of the psalm.

The psalmist now, in Stanza IV., gives a highly figurative but effective reason for the urgency of his exhortations to prepare for judgment. Equitable as is the Divine Rule, in the long run, in dealing with both individuals and nations, it nevertheless is framed upon the pattern of "times and seasons,"—"times" of delay, in which God as judge is silent and seemingly inactive, as though he were taking no notice of the moral quality of human conduct; and then, "seasons" of activity, involving the principle of bringing up arrears, and dealing all at once with long series of actions; and implying, where wicked conduct has been in the ascendant, an accumulation of punishment, corresponding with the accumulation of unvisited sin. But an accumulation of punishment implies an accumulation of Divine displeasure, *so far as its manifestation is concerned*. And so we arrive at the conception of stored-up wrath: arrears of displeasure: intensified punishment, involving stroke upon stroke, when it does come. This is the revealed principle of Divine resentment of sin. No doubt this principle could be philosophically defended: as necessitated, not by infirmity in God, but by the limitation of man. But whether or not we can account for such a method of divine government, and successfully defend it, as probably we may; it suffices to maintain, that such in fact is God's governmental method of dealing with the moral quality of the actions of men and of nations. This being so, that very fact lies at the root of such representations as that which here confronts us in this psalm: accumulated wrath breaking forth in accumulated punishment, being figuratively represented as a *cup* in the hand of Jehovah, a cup *foaming* in the activity of its contents, *mixed* as with *stimulating spices* in the intensity of its action, and held forth to the individuals who are to drink, and to be compelled to drain their cup to its *dregs*. Such is the figure. We may

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call it oriental. But, instead of therefore under-estimating it, our wisdom is to accept it as a common, and, in the East, most natural as well as effective style of speech; and at once seek to translate it into our own methods of thought. The following list of passages, alluding to the *wine-cup of wrath*, will shew how familiar the figure is in the Old Testament, and will suggest the deeper principles to which our thoughts are thereby conducted: Job 21:20, Ps. 60:3, Isa. 51:17, Jer. 25:15, 27, 49:12, 51:7, Ob. 16.

Glancing, finally, at Stanza V. (vers. 9, 10), and connecting it with Stanza I., as together constituting the devotional framework of the psalm, we recognise the appropriateness of the observations of Delitzsch: "The prophetic picture stands upon a lyric background of gold; it rises up out of the depths of emotion and is withdrawn again into these same depths . . . The psalm closes as subjectively as it began. The prophetic picture is set in a lyric frame." This is well said. But when the same expositor, in calling attention to the obvious fact that the psalmist in ver. 10 ascribes to himself what he in ver. 7 sets forth as God's own doing, associates this human fellowship in the judicial rectification with the reigning "Church," we respectfully withhold our consent; preferring to connect the *hewing off of the horns of the lawless* with the triumphant *nation* of Israel than with the triumphant *ecclesia*. The callings of the two communities are distinct, and as such should be carefully preserved

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm is "a revelation of the principle of God's government of the world, of His action in human history". Please follow this line of reasoning and outline the principles suggested.
2. This psalm balances well between the two psalms of before and after—explain how.
3. There seems to be a dialogue in this psalm. Who speaks? What is said? Discuss.
4. "Jesus who died shall be justified, God is the ruler yet"—so wrote the song writer. There are at present millions and millions who have never heard—now reconcile this with the rule of God?
5. America and Israel stand together in God's Judgment. Explain and discuss.



PSALM 76

PSALM 76

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song of Triumph over a Divinely-smitten Foe.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, By reason of a Recent Interposition in behalf of Jerusalem, God has Anew Made Himself Known there, as a Lion Dwelling in his Lair. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The Majesty of God and the Impotence of the Smitten Enemy contrasted. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, God, Terrible when Arising to Judgment. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, The Wrath of Mankind turning to Give Thanks and Keep Festival. Counsels to Worshippers.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph—Song.

- 1 God hath made himself known in Judah,  
in Israel great is his name:
- 2 And his covert hath come to be in Salem,  
and his lair in Zion hath been placed:<sup>1</sup>
- 3 He hath shivered the flames of the bow,<sup>2</sup>  
shield and sword and battle.<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Enveloped in light art thou majestic—from the mountains  
of prey:
- 5 They let themselves be spoiled did the valiant of heart—  
they slumbered their sleep,  
And none of the men of might could find<sup>4</sup> their hands:
- 6 At the rebuke O God of Jacob—stunned were the horsemen.<sup>5</sup>
- 7 As for thee fear-inspiring thou art:  
who then shall stand before thee because of the power<sup>6</sup> of  
thine anger?
- 8 Out of the heavens proclaimedst thou sentence:  
earth feared and was still

1. So Br. revocalises, *sh-m-h*, and brings back to end of this line.

2. A poetic description of arrows.

3. Comprehensively, for all other weapons of war.

4. Far less use them, to arise and grasp their weapons.

5. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

6. So G. Intro. 144, correcting orthography.

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- 9 When God arose to vindication,<sup>7</sup>  
to save all the humble of the land.<sup>8</sup>
- 10 Surely the wrath of mankind will thank<sup>9</sup> thee,  
the residue of intense<sup>10</sup> wrath will keep festival to thee<sup>11</sup>
- 11 Vow and pay to Jehovah your God,  
all ye around him bear along a gift to the inspirer of fear,
- 12 He taketh away<sup>12</sup> the spirit of nobles,  
is fear-inspiring to the kings of the earth.
- (Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) Jor Jeduthun.<sup>13</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 76

God's reputation is very great in Judah and in Israel!

2 His home is in Jerusalem! He lives upon Mount Zion.

3 There He breaks the weapons of our enemies.

4 The everlasting mountains cannot compare with You in glory!

5 The mightiest of our enemies are conquered; they lie before us in the sleep of death; not one can lift a hand against us.

6 When You rebuked them, God of Jacob, steeds and riders fell.

7 No wonder You are greatly feared! Who can stand before an angry God?

8 You pronounce sentence on them from heaven; the earth trembles and stands silent before You;

9 You stand up to punish the evil-doers and to defend the meek of the earth.

10 Man's futile wrath will bring You glory! You will use it as an ornament!

\* \* \* \* \*

11 Fulfill all your vows that you have made to Jehovah your God. Let everyone bring Him presents. He should be revered and feared,

12 For He cuts down princes and does awesome things to the kings of the earth.

7. Intro., Chap. III., "Righteousness."

8. Or "earth."

9. Cp. 6:5 n.

10. "The word WRATH is in the plural, denoting either wrath of every kind, or wrath in its intensity."—Per.

11. So Sep., implying a difference, in Heb. exemplar, of a single letter.

12. So O.G. ("cut off=take away"); and so Br. (w. Sep., Vul., Jerome).

13. Cp. 38 n.

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EXPOSITION

The reference of this psalm to the overthrow of Sennacherib is so obvious as to explain the unanimity with which expositors find in it that allusion. Doubtless there are some minor points in the psalm which invite discussion, and as to which a difference of final opinion may be expected. But these are of little moment as compared with the remarkable statement regarding *the wrath of man* which occupies the 10th verse, as to which a perplexing amount of diversity exists. This verse stands as follows in the A.V.:—

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee,  
The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

The assurance thus conveyed may be said to meet with general devout acceptance, as is evident from the frequent acquiescent use of the words in public worship. The only difficulty they present is that scholars are unable to find the word "restrain" in the original of the second line. Accordingly, in the R.V., the following innovation appears:—

The residue of wrath shalt thou gird upon thee;

and with this rendering Dr., Per., Del., and others in the main agree. But it is distinctly unacceptable, apparently far-fetched, and gives rise to endless diversities when exposition is attempted. Whose wrath does God gird about him, whether by way of ornament, or for use? If his own, then why with only a "residue"? to say nothing of the awkwardness of taking the wrath to be human in one line and divine in the next. In short, there can be little doubt that the Sep. has here preserved the true reading, by the use of a word differing only by one letter from the M.T. (*h-h-g-k*) instead of (*h-h-g-r*) *will keep festival to thee*. A renewed study of the passage—giving to it a more literal turn and bringing it into closer touch with the context—brings out the force and beauty of this ancient variation. Note then (1) that *mankind*, instead of "man" (for *a-d-m*) in the first line, widens the outlook, and prepares us to discover that it is the excusable wrath of the down-trodden nations directed against the down-treading world-power, represented by Assyria, which, when Divine interposition effects deliverance, turns to give God *thanks*—"thanks" itself being more literal than "praise"—willing thanks rather than unwilling and merely enforced and constructive praise. (2) That *keep festival* in line 2, makes a good

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parallel with *thank* in line 1. (3) That the *intense wrath* of line 2 prepares for the strong verb *keep festival* which follows it; so that the stronger motive power produces the stronger result, implying that there are some among the lately down-trodden nations whose "wrath" was so intense that mere "thanks" will not serve for its outlet—it moves to nothing less than the keeping of a *holy festival of praise*. Note (4) how strongly this construction works out of the foregoing context and into the succeeding: *Earth feared and was still when God arose to vindication* (vers. 8, 9)—so deep was its emotion, and so potent to turn its wrath of resentment into thanksgiving for deliverance. Will ye, then, *keep festival*? Then, mind ye *pay your vows* (ver. 11). *All ye around him* (*ibid*)—ye smaller neighboring nations, who, having shared in Israel's peril, now share in her deliverance, *bear along*, in procession, *a gift to the Inspirer of fear*, even Israel's God who has just smitten the Assyrians. It is distinctly pleasant thus to get a glimpse of *mankind* lying outside the dominant world-power, sharing in Israel's deliverance, and fulfilling a more hopeful part than merely contributing unwitting and unwilling praise to the God of all the earth. Moreover, the student of unfulfilled prophecy will not fail to observe how, by exchanging *earth* for *land* in ver. 9, he obtains a most significant adumbration of time yet to come when God will arise to the vindication of the humble through all the earth.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The historical circumstances of this psalm is the destruction of Sennacherib's army in the reign of Hezekiah. Read Isaiah, chapters 36 and 37. Why is there such a unanimity of opinion as to what incident is here described?
2. Refer again to the three psalms of 74, 75 and 76 and show how they fit together.
3. The poet has so well described the destruction of Sennacherib's host—  
"Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown."  
What encouragement is this to us?
4. Rotherham sees a real exegetical problem with verse 10—how is it solved? Does Taylor agree with him in the paraphrase? Do you agree? Discuss.

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5. When and where and how will God defend "the meek of the earth"? (vs. 9)

## PSALM 77

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Comfort in Distress Obtained by the Study of a Song.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Introductory—shewing, by quotation of Language and Statement of Fact, that the Psalmist has been Inconsolable. Stanza II., 4-9, In like manner, the Psalmist pursues his Study, rising to an Intense Spirit-Search (indented). Stanza III., vers. 10-15, A second study, conducting to a Satisfying Conclusion (indented): God is Holy, Incomparable, Redeeming. Stanza IV., vers. 16-19, The "String-Song" itself, on which the "Study" has been based (divisible into four sub-stanzas—tristichs). Stanza V., ver. 20, Conclusion: The Flock is under the Care of a Divine Shepherd (implied).

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(Lm.) By Asaph—Psalm.

- 1 "With my voice unto God let me cry:  
with my voice unto God, and he will give ear to me."
- 2 In my day of distress after Adonai I sought,  
mine eye poured out and became not slack:<sup>1</sup>  
my soul refused to be consoled:—
- 3 "Let me remember God though I moan,  
let me soliloquise though my spirit swoon."
- 4 I anticipated the night-watches with mine eyes,<sup>2</sup>  
I was disturbed and could not speak:
- 5 I pondered on days out of aforetime:—  
"The years of by-gone ages let me recall,—
- 6 My string-song in the night is near my heart,—<sup>3</sup>  
let me soliloquise that my spirit may make diligent search.<sup>4</sup>
- 7 To the ages will Adonai reject?  
and not again grant acceptance any more?

1. As in Lam. 3:49; and so Dr. deems probable. M.T.: "my hand by night was outstretched, and grew not numb."

2. So, nearly, Br. (w. Vul. and some cod, of Sep.).

3. Or: "mind"—so that I can easily recall it.

4 N.B.: this "spirit-search" begins with the next line.

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- 8 Hath his kindness perpetually ceased?  
is speech ended to generation and generation?
- 9 Hath GOD forgotten to be gracious?  
or shut up in anger his compassions?"
- 10 And I said<sup>5</sup>—"Now have I made a beginning:—  
this changing of the right-hand of the Most High!<sup>6</sup>
- 11 I will commemorate the doings of Yah,—  
yea let me recall out of aforetime thy wonders;"
- 12 And talk to myself of all thy works,  
and of thy deeds let me soliloquise:—
- 13 O God! in holiness is thy way<sup>8</sup>  
who is a great GOD like unto Elohim?
- 14 Thou art the GOD that did a wonderful thing,  
thou madest known among the peoples thy might:
- 15 Thou redeemedst with thine own arm<sup>9</sup> thy people;  
the sons of Jacob and Joseph."<sup>10</sup>
- 16 Waters saw thee<sup>11</sup> O God!  
waters saw thee they were in birth-throes,<sup>12</sup>  
yea perturbed were the deeps.
- 17 Clouds poured down waters,  
skies uttered a voice;  
yea thine arrows flew hither and thither.
- 18 The voice of thy thunder was in the whirlwind,  
thy<sup>13</sup> lightnings illumined the world,  
perturbed and in commotion was the earth.
- 19 In the sea was thy way,<sup>14</sup>  
and thy path<sup>15</sup> in the mighty waters;  
and thy footprints could not be known.

(Nm.)

5. Renewing his "soliloquy."

6. So after Sep. Other renderings: "This is my sickness"—"sorrow"—  
"cross." Also: "The years of thy r-h," instead of "changing."

7. So (pl.) (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

8. Anticipating ver. 19 a.

9. So Sep. M.T.: "w, an arm."

10. So far, appar., the "spirit-searching soliloquy." Now comes the  
"string-song"—confident, joyous: in tristichs which mark it off as a song in  
itself. "The whole stanza [vers. 10-15] is an overture to the following hymn  
of praise of God the Redeemer out of Egypt"—Del.

11. In the cloud, as thou camest up to the sea.

12. About to bring forth a nation of freed-men.

13. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

14. "In the sea thou didst tread with thy horses"—Br., after Hab. 3:15.

15. So to be read. Some cod. (w. 5 ear, pr. edns.) both write and read:  
"path" (Sing.)—Gn.

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20 Thou didst lead like a flock thy people,  
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 77

I cry to the Lord; I call and call on Him. Oh, that He would listen.

2 I am in deep trouble and I need His help so badly. All night long I pray, lifting my hands to heaven, pleading. There can be no joy for me until He acts.

3 I think of God and moan, overwhelmed with longing for His help.

4 I cannot sleep until You act. I am too distressed even to pray!

5 I keep thinking of the good old days of the past, long since ended.

6 Then my nights were filled with joyous songs. I search my soul and meditate upon the difference now.

7 Has the Lord rejected me forever? Will He never again be favorable?

8 Is His lovingkindness gone forever? Has His promise failed?

9 Has He forgotten to be kind to one so undeserving? Has He slammed the door in anger on His love?

10 And I said: This is my fate; that the blessings of God have changed to hate.<sup>1</sup>

11 I recall the many miracles He did for me so long ago.

12 Those wonderful deeds are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about them.

\* \* \* \* \*

13 O God, Your ways are holy. Where is there any other as mighty as You?

14 You are the God of miracles and wonders? You still demonstrate Your awesome power.

\* \* \* \* \*

15 You have redeemed us who are the sons of Jacob and of Joseph by Your might.

16 When the Red Sea saw You, how it feared! It trembled to its depths!

17 The clouds poured down their rain, the thunder rolled and crackled in the sky. Your lightning flashed.

1. Literally, "that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

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18 There was thunder in the whirlwind; the lightning lighted up the world! The earth trembled and shook.

19 Your road led by a pathway through the sea—a pathway no one knew was there.

20 You led Your people along that road like a flock of sheep, with Moses and Aaron as their shepherds.

### EXPOSITION

This is emphatically a psalm of moods and tenses, so delicately expressed in the Hebrew that only clumsily and by the aid of quotation-marks can they be represented in English, and then not without risk of overdoing. The key to the psalm lies in this: That memories which ultimately yield consolation, when first recalled aggravate present sorrow. *The right hand of the Most High*: this is what, after *diligent search*, stays and consoles the psalmist's mind—a hand put forth with redeeming efficacy in the doings that gave the nation birth. But the first apprehension concerning it is, the contrast between its former activity and its present supineness: a contrast so painful that the psalmist, though resolved on the contemplation, anticipates that it will cause him to *moan* in anguish, even to the extent of causing his spirit to *swoon*—to be enshrouded in mental darkness, to be able to think no more.

A day of anguish seems to have culminated in a night of agony. The outspoken petitions with which his prayers had been begun, not without hope of being heard, falter on his lips, and he can no longer pray—he can only *ponder*; but those apparently long-lost *days culled out of aforesaid* are his theme, and he is determined, at whatever cost, to *recall* them. Fortunately, there comes back to his mind a *string-song* of his, embalming memories of those ancient redeeming days. He does not start *singing* that song forthwith. No! he is too gloomily critical for that; but he will recall it—he will study it—he will soliloquise on that as a text, talking aloud to himself as the manner of study then was. He can at least ask questions—his *spirit* shall make *diligent search*. And then the questions follow. They are so framed as to indicate that the psalmist's mind is in process of recovering its balance. The answer suggested, without being expressed, is—"Surely not!" He cannot have *rejected* for ever! His *kindness* cannot have *perpetually ceased*! He may have changed his dealings; but surely He himself remains unchanged! He takes breath. He feels he has made a *beginning*. En-



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couraged, he follows it up. He looks in the face the conception which like a spectre had projected itself before him. "*This changing of the right hand of the Most High!*" he seems to say, "let me examine it more closely!" And this he does, by thinking of its *doings*, its *wonders*, its *works*, its *deeds*. He is fortified to think out these topics, because he already sees that a change of *dealings* by God, does not necessitate the admission of a *changed God!* It is true (we may admit in passing) that the Hebrew word *sh'noth* may be rendered by the word "years" as well as by the word *changing*; but since the recalling of the "*years* of the right hand of the Most High" seems to bring with it, as an undertone, the change made between those ancient days of activity and the present days of inactivity, we may continue to let our thoughts run on the thread of the Septuagint rendering.

To resume, then. The study of the *string-song* is renewed to such good effect, that, whereas the previous stanza culminated in questions, this one rises to conclusions, confidently addressed to God himself, conclusions indicating a rest of spirit in them on the part of the psalmist. The very first word set after the Divine name in these conclusions is reassuring: *O God in holiness is thy way*—whether in manifest mercy or not. Again, it is what *God is* which leads on to what he has *done*; and what he *is* remains for renewed manifestation. Moreover, what *was* it that *God did*? Was it not to reveal himself to the nations around, and that, as redeeming for Himself a people—the people for whom the present petitioner is pleading? Clearly, this is logically the conclusion of the soliloquy—of the study! It is all reflective thus far. And it is a great gain to recognise this conclusiveness here, inasmuch as the apparent abruptness of the formal conclusion is thereby explained.

In fact, the four tristichs which now follow, so far from being out of place or a mere afterthought, are the very forethought of the whole psalm: at least from the moment when the favourite old *string-song* came up to the surface of the poet's memory. Happy is it for men in a storm, to recall the charm of the still sunlit waters through which they have passed; who have something better than "dead selves" to help them to survive the stress of present trouble. This psalmist Asaph had improved an earlier and more auspicious time for song-making and song-singing and song-memorising; and now his song comes back to him in his night of agony, and he knows it well enough to hold

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it before his mind's eye while he ponders and reasons and questions and summarises and concludes. And then he gives the string-song itself—altogether and compact, and of a sufficiently peculiar formal structure, as—without the aid of quotation marks or altered type, of which, of course, he was innocent—to make it recognisable by us after a long lapse of ages.

The *Song* speaks for itself. It is too boldly and elementally poetical to need detailed comment. Only in its final triplet (ver. 19) does it betray as much subjectivity as to amount to a symbolical undertone. *In the sea was thy way*—as how often it is! *And thy path in the mighty waters*—too mighty for us to control! *And thy footprints could not be known*—and so it ever is, something withheld, something unknown. The work remains: the Worker disappears. When—where—how will he next reveal his right-hand! O Asaph! wait: wait until the Assyrian draws nearer, and thou shalt see!

After the four triplets of the *string-song*, comes a couplet—only—in conclusion. How little it says, and yet how much: it seems to say everything needing to be added. Under the Divine Shepherd's care, it starts the flock on its journey to its home. That flock is in itself a moving appeal to its Divine Redeemer.

With respect to the origin of this psalm, it may be added: That while, so far as direct evidence is concerned—"it remains obscure what kind of national affliction it is which impels him [the singer] to betake himself in flight from the God who is at present hidden to the God who was made manifest in olden times" (Del.); yet the earlier period of the Assyrian invasion probably afforded more than one conjuncture during which prophecy was silent, and it appeared to the strained hearts of the faithful that *an end* had come to prophetic *speech*, and *God had forgotten to show favour*. It is certainly "shown by the comfort sought in the revelations of power and grace made in connection with the earlier history of his people," that it was "an affliction shared in common with the whole of the nation." The place of this psalm, and the indications afforded by several of its companions, point in this direction.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It is always a help to attempt to understand the historical circumstances of the psalm—what is it here?

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2. In the many prayers for help, do you feel the petitioner had a specific type of help in mind? Was it physical or spiritual?
3. Where is this man's faith? Read verses 3 and 4. Isn't this an admission of defeat?—Discuss.
4. Discuss the best use of past pleasant memories.
5. Should we ever think—feel—believe—that God has rejected us? Discuss.
6. Under two or three circumstances we can almost expect a negative, discouraged, exaggerated response. Name at least two and discuss.
7. What possible miracles were in the mind of the psalmist?
8. The holiness of God is such a basic belief—why?
9. The deliverance from bondage is an oft recurring theme. Should not this be also true of us? Discuss.
10. God leads through men. Read verse 20. Is this true now? Discuss.

## PSALM 78

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Didactic Poem, Counselling the Re-union of the Tribes.

### ANALYSIS

#### Part I.—THE PRELUDE

(1) An Invitation to Attend to a Series of Problems Drawn from Antiquity—vers. 1, 2.

(2) An Appeal to the history-reciting instinct: sustained by the claim that Jehovah's Might and Wonders are to be Seen in This History—vers. 3, 4.

(3) Divine Authority pleaded for such Historical Recitations—ver. 5.

(4) Their Utility for the purposes of Knowing, Believing, Observing and Avoiding: Grave Ancestral Faults Implied—vers. 6-8.

#### Part II.—THE COMPLAINT

Specially lodged against Ephraim, first named with Honour, but charged with Disappointing Expectation—with being Unfaithful, Disobedient, and Forgetful—vers. 9-11.

#### Part III.—SUGGESTIVE HISTORICAL REMINISCENCES

(1) Divine Wonder-Working in Egypt: Deliverance—the Exodus: Guidance: Provision of Water—vers. 12-16.

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- (2) Sinful Doubts about Food, Provokingly Expressed—vers. 17-20.
- (3) Divine Displeasure, yet Provision of Manna—vers. 21-25.
- (4) Provision of Flesh, followed by Outburst of Divine Anger—vers. 26-31.
- (5) Further Sin brings Further Punishment, with Speedy but Superficial Reformation—vers. 32-37.
- (6) Divine Compassion and Forbearance; followed by People's Sin, causing Divine Pain—vers. 38-41.
- (7) Forgetfulness, writ large: concerning the Plagues of Egypt, and the Exodus (probably extracted from an older document)—vers. 42-53.
- (8) The Home-bringing into Canaan: followed by Provoking Disobedience in the form of Idolatry (? suggesting without naming the Ephraimites as Chief-Offenders)—vers. 54-58.
- (9) In Divine Anger, Israel is Largely Rejected, the Tent of Shiloh Abandoned, the Ark Suffered to go into Captivity, and Priests and People are Slain—vers. 59-64.

Summary of above details as suggesting "problems": *Time*—from Moses to the Judges; *Place*—Egypt, the desert, Canaan; *Freedom of Divine Action*—alternations of Anger, Punishment, Mercy, Deliverance.

### Part IV.—CLOSING INDIRECT APPEALS

New Divine Activity as to Enemies—vers. 65, 66; Tribe—vers. 67-68a; Sanctuary—vers. 68b, 69; and King—vers. 70-72.

### (Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By Asaph.

#### (PART I.—THE PRELUDE)

- 1 Oh give ear my people to mine instruction,<sup>1</sup>  
incline your ear to the sayings of my mouth:
- 2 Let me open in a poem<sup>2</sup> my mouth,  
let me pour forth problems<sup>3</sup> out of antiquity.
- 3 What we have heard and come to know,  
and our fathers have told us
- 4 We will not hide from their sons,  
to an after generation telling the praises of Jehovah,  
both his might and his wondrous works which he wrought;

1. U.: "law."

2. "After the manner of an epic. The individual historical statements have a gnome-like finish, and a gem-like elegance"—Del.

3. So Sep. "Riddles"—Del., Dr., Leaser. "Similitudes"—Carter. "Weighty lessons"—P.B.

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- 5 So he raised up a testimony<sup>4</sup> in Jacob,  
and an instruction<sup>5</sup> set he in Israel;  
Which he commanded our fathers,  
to make them known to their children.
- 6 To the end an after generation might know,  
children who should be born might raise up and tell their  
children;
- 7 That they might set in Elohim their confidence,  
and not forget the doings of El;  
but his commandments might observe;
- 8 And not become like their fathers  
a generation rebellious and insulting,<sup>6</sup>  
a generation that set not aright its heart,  
nor faithful with God was its spirit.

(PART II.—THE COMPLAINT.)

- 9 The sons of Ephraim armed and shooting with the bow  
turned in the day of battle:
- 10 Kept not the covenant of God,  
and in his instruction refused to walk;
- 11 But forgot his doings,  
and his wondrous works which he caused them to see.

(PART III.—HISTORICAL PARALLELS.)

- 12 Before their fathers<sup>7</sup> wrought he wonderfully<sup>8</sup>  
in the land of Egypt the country of Zoan<sup>9</sup>:
- 13 He clave open the sea and let them pass through  
and reared up the waters as a mound;
- 14 And led them with a cloud by day,  
and all the night with a light of fire.
- 15 He used to cleave open rocks<sup>10</sup> in the desert,  
and let them drink as of the deeps abundantly;
- 16 And brought forth streams out of a cliff,  
and caused waters to flow down like rivers.

4. Cp. 81:5, 122:4.

5. U.: "law."

6. Cp. Deu. 21:20.

7. A compliment to Ephraim.

8. Or: "he did wonders."

9. "The district of which Zoan, ancient name for *Tanis* was the capital, situated on the east bank of the Tanitic arm of the Nile"—Br.

10. Exo. 17:6. Tense (cp. ver. 29) and number (pl.) prob. a poetic generalisation.

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- 17 Yet went they on still to sin against him,  
to disobey<sup>11</sup> the Most High in a thirsty land;
- 18 And put GOD to the proof in their heart,  
by asking food to their liking<sup>12</sup>
- 19 And they spake against God they said,—  
“Will God be able to lay out a table in a desert?”
- 20 lo! he hath smitten a rock  
and there have gushed out waters,  
and torrents roll along,—  
Bread also will he be able to give?  
or provide flesh for his people?”
- 21 Therefore Jehovah heard and was indignant,  
and a fire<sup>13</sup> was kindled against Jacob,—  
yea even anger mounted up against Israel:
- 22 Because they believed not in God,  
nor trusted in his salvation.
- 23 Yet commanded he the skies above,  
and the doors of the heavens he opened;
- 24 And rained on them manna to eat,  
and the grain of the heavens gave he unto them;
- 25 And the bread of the mighty<sup>14</sup> did they eat every one,  
a supply of food<sup>15</sup> sent he them to the full.
- 26 He put forth<sup>16</sup> an east-wind in the heavens,  
and drave on<sup>16</sup> by his might a south-wind;
- 27 And rained on them flesh like dust,  
and like the sand of the sea winged fowl;
- 28 Which he let fall in the midst of his camp,  
round about his habitations;
- 29 So they did eat and were filled to abundance,  
since their desire he would bring to them:<sup>17</sup>
- 30 They were not estranged from their desire,  
yet was their food in their mouth

11. “Defy”—Dr.

12. Dr.: “appetite.” U.: “soul.” Cp. Intro., Chap. III., “Soul.”

13. Cp. Num. 11:1ff.

14. “Angels’ food (Sep., Vul., Syr.) is probably a right paraphrase of the words *the bread of the mighty*, though the term is nowhere applied to the angels. But cp. 103:20”—Kp.

15. Cp. Exo. 12:39.

16. As though the elements were flocks under Divine direction.

17. Or: “he brought to them.” But, strictly, the Heb. verb is so used here as to denote either *repetition* or *modality*, that is, to express the feeling of those concerned; as if to imply that the expected the supply of quails would be repeated.

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- 31 When the anger of God mounted up against them  
and he slew of their vigorous ones,  
yea the young men of Israel bowed he down.
- 32 For all this they sinned still,  
and did not believe in his wondrous works:
- 33 So he ended with a breath their days,  
and their years in dismay.<sup>18</sup>
- 34 If he slew them then they inquired after him,  
yea they turned and early sought GOD;
- 35 And remembered that Elohim was their Rock,  
yea El Most High their Redeemer:
- 36 So they spake him fair with their mouth,  
and with their tongue were ready to lie unto him;<sup>19</sup>
- 37 But their heart was not steadfast with him,  
nor were they trusty in his covenant.
- 38 But he *full of compassion*<sup>20</sup>  
would<sup>21</sup> cover<sup>22</sup> iniquity and not destroy;  
Yea many a time turned he back his anger,  
and would not stir up all his wrath;
- 39 But remembered that flesh they were,  
breath<sup>23</sup> departing which could not return.
- 40 How often used they to disobey<sup>24</sup> him in the desert,  
to grieve him in the wilderness!
- 41 Yea they again put GOD to the proof,  
and to the Holy One of Israel caused pain.<sup>25</sup>
- 42 They remembered not his hand,  
the day when he ransomed them from the adversary:
- 43 When he set forth in Egypt his signs,  
and his wonders in the country of Zoan:—<sup>26</sup>
- 44 When he turned into blood their Nile-streams,  
and their own rivers could they not drink:

18. So Dr. "Made to haste away in suddenness"—Br. "in sudden haste"  
—Del. Cp. Num. 14.

19. See note on ver. 29.

20. Cp. Exo. 34:6, 7.

21. Again see note on ver. 29. Driver and others prefer to regard the verb as expressing a standing truth: "cancelleth." The context, however, rather favours conception of *habit at that period*.

22. See 65:3 (note).

23. Or: "wind."

24. "Defy"—Dr.

25. So O.G., w. Sep. A.V.: "limited." Tregelles (in T.G.): "to set marks or limits gives a good sense in the passage." Thrupp: "crossed."

26. Cp. ver. 12.

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- 45 He would send<sup>27</sup> among them the gad-fly and it devoured  
them,  
and the frog and it despoiled them ;
- 46 And he gave to the corn-locust their produce,  
and their toil to the swarming-locust :
- 47 He would kill<sup>27</sup> with hail their vine,  
and their sycamores with frost.
- 48 And delivered up to hailstones their beasts,  
and their cattle to pointed flames :
- 49 He would send among them the glow of his anger,—  
wrath and indignation and distress,  
a mission of messengers of misfortune !
- 50 He would level a path for his anger,  
withheld not from death their soul,  
but their life to the pestilence delivered ;
- 51 And smote every first-born in Egypt,  
the beginning of their strength in the tents of Ham.
- 52 And he put forth<sup>28</sup> like sheep his own people,  
and led them on like a flock in the desert ;
- 53 Yea he guided them securely and they dreaded not,  
and their enemies the sea covered.
- 54 So he brought them into his own holy bounds,  
the mountain-range which his right-hand acquired ;
- 55 And drave out from before them nations,  
and allotted them by line an inheritance,  
and caused to dwell in their homes<sup>29</sup> the tribes of Israel.
- 56 But they put to the proof and disobeyed<sup>30</sup> God Most High,  
and his testimonies did not observe ;
- 57 But drew back and proved treacherous like their fathers,  
they turned aside like a deceitful bow ;
- 58 And provoked him to anger with their high-places,  
and with their images used to move him to jealousy.<sup>31</sup>
- 59 God heard and was indignant,  
and largely<sup>32</sup> rejected Israel ;
- 60 And abandoned the habitation of Shiloh,  
the tent he had set up among men ;

27. See note on ver. 29.

28. "Moved forth by stages"—Dr.

29. *ML.*: "tents."

30. "Defied"—Dr.

31. *Cp.* note on ver. 29.

32. *ML.*: "with muchness," *gen.*—"greatly."



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- 61 And gave to captivity his strength,<sup>33</sup>  
yea his glory<sup>34</sup> into the hand of the foe;  
62 And delivered up to the sword his people,  
and with his own inheritance was indignant:  
63 A fire devoured his young men,  
and his virgins were not praised in song:  
64 His priests by the sword did fall,  
and his widows could<sup>35</sup> not bewail.

### (PART IV.—CLOSING INDIRECT APPEALS.)

- 65 Then awoke as one sleeping the Sovereign Lord,  
as a hero that shouteth from wine;  
66 And smote his adversaries behind,<sup>36</sup>  
the reproach of ages laid on them;  
67 But rejected the tent of Joseph,  
and of the tribe of Ephraim made not choice;  
68 But chose the tribe of Judah,  
the mountain of Zion which he loved;  
69 And built like the heights his sanctuary,  
in<sup>37</sup> the earth founded it to the ages:—  
70 And made choice of David his servant,  
and took him from the folds of the sheep;  
71 From after suckling ewes brought him in,  
to be shepherd over Jacob his people,  
and over Israel his inheritance;  
72 And he tended them according to the blamelessness<sup>38</sup> of his  
heart,  
and with the discernment of his hands he guided them.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

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O my people, listen to my teaching. Open your ears to what I am saying.

33. Cp. 132:8.

34. Or: "beauty." Cp. 89:17, 96:6.

35. Cp. note on ver. 29.

36. "Backward"—Dr. "God smote the Philistines most literally *in posteriora* (LXX., Vulg., Luther). Still ver. 66 embraces all the victories gained by Israel in the time of Samuel, Saul and David, from I Sam. 5 onwards and still later"—Del.

37. So some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "Like."

38. Or: "devotion." "singleness," (ml.) "wholeness."

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2, 3 For I will show you lessons from our history, stories handed down to us from former generations.

4 I will reveal these truths to you so that you can describe these glorious deeds of Jehovah to your children, and tell them about the mighty miracles He did.

5 For He gave His laws to Israel, and commanded our fathers to teach them to their children.

6 So that they in turn could teach their children too. Thus His laws pass down from generation to generation.

7 In this way each generation has been able to obey His laws and to set its hope anew on God and not forget His glorious miracles.

8 Thus they did not need to be as their fathers were—stubborn, rebellious, unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God.

9 The people of Ephraim, though fully armed, were defeated in battle.

10 Because they didn't obey His laws. They refused to follow His ways.

11, 12 And they forgot about the wonderful miracles God had done for them, and for their fathers back in Egypt.

13 For He divided the sea before them and led them through! The water stood banked up along both sides of them!

14 In the daytime He led them by a cloud, and at night by a pillar of fire.

15 He split open the rocks in the wilderness to give them plenty of water, as though gushing from a spring.

16 Streams poured from the rock, flowing like a river!

17 Yet they kept on with their rebellion, sinning against God who is above all gods.

18 They murmured and complained, demanding other food than God was giving them.

19, 20 They even spoke against God Himself. "Why can't He give us decent food as well as water?" they grumbled.

21 Jehovah heard them and was angry; the fire of His wrath burned against Israel,

22 Because they didn't believe in God or trust in Him to care for them.

23 Even though He commanded the skies to open—He opened the windows of heaven—

24 And rained down manna for their food. He gave them bread from heaven!

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25 They ate angels food! He gave them all that they could hold.

26 And He led forth the east wind and guided the south wind by His mighty power.

27 He rained down birds as thick as dust, clouds of them like sands along the shore!

28 He caused the birds to fall to the ground among the tents!

29 The people ate their fill. He gave them what they asked for.

30 But they had hardly finished eating, and the meat was yet in their mouths,

31 When the anger of the Lord rose against them and killed the finest of Israel's young men.

32 Yet even so the people kept on sinning and refused to believe in miracles.

33 So He cut their lives short and gave them years of terror and disaster.

34 Then at last, when He had ruined them, they walked awhile behind Him; how earnestly they turned around and followed Him!

35 Then they remembered that God was their Rock—that their Savior was the God above all gods.

36 But it was only with their words they followed Him, not with their hearts;

37 Their hearts were far away. They did not keep their promises.

38 Yet He was merciful and forgave their sins and didn't destroy them all. Many and many a time He held back His anger.

39 For He remembered that they were merely mortal men, gone in a moment like a breath of wind.

40 Oh, how often they rebelled against Him in those desert years and grieved His heart.

41 Again and again they turned away and tempted God to kill them, and limited the Holy One of Israel from giving them His blessings.

42 They forgot His power and love, and how He had rescued them from their enemies;

43 They forgot the plagues He sent upon the Egyptians in Tanis<sup>1</sup>—

1. Literally, "the plains of Zoan."

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44 How He turned their rivers into blood, so that no one could drink;

45 And how He sent vast swarms of flies to fill the land, and how the frogs had covered all of Egypt!

46 He gave their crops to caterpillars. Their harvest was consumed by locusts.

47 He destroyed their grapevines and their sycamores with hail.

48 Their cattle died in the fields, mortally wounded by ice-balls from heaven. Their sheep were killed by lightning.

49 He loosed on them the fierceness of His anger, sending sorrow and trouble. He dispatched against them a band of destroying angels.

50 He gave free course to His anger and did not spare the Egyptians' lives, but handed them over to plagues and sickness.

51 Then He killed the eldest son<sup>2</sup> in each Egyptian family—he who was the beginning of its strength and joy.

52 But He led forth His own people like a flock, guiding them safely through the wilderness.

53 He kept them safe, so they were not afraid. But the Sea closed in upon their enemies and overwhelmed them.

54 He brought them to the border of His land of blessing, to this land of hills He made for them.

55 He drove out the nations occupying the land, and gave each tribe of Israel its apportioned place as its home.

56 Yet though He did all this for them, they still rebelled against the God above all gods, and refused to follow His commands.

57 They turned back from entering the Promised Land and disobeyed as their fathers had. Like a crooked arrow, they missed the target of God's will.

58 They made Him angry by erecting idols and altars to other gods.

59 When God saw their deeds, His wrath was strong and He despised His people.

60 Then He abandoned His tabernacle at Shiloh, where He had lived among mankind,

61 And allowed His ark to be captured; He surrendered His glory into enemy hands.

62 He caused His people to be butchered because His anger was intense.

2. Literally, "all the first-born."

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63 Their young men were killed by fire and their girls died before they were old enough to sing their wedding songs.

64 The priests were slaughtered and their widows died before they could even begin their lament.

65 Then the Lord rose up as though awakening from sleep, and like a mighty man aroused by wine

66 He routed His enemies and drove them back and sent them to eternal shame.

67 But He rejected Joseph's family, the tribe of Ephraim,

68 And chose the tribe of Judah—and Mount Zion which He loved.

69 There He built His towering temple, solid and enduring as the heavens and the earth.

70 He chose His servant David, taking him from feeding sheep,

71, 72 And from following the ewes and lambs; God presented David to His people as their shepherd and he cared for them with a true heart and skillful hands.

## EXPOSITION

To judge aright of the design of this psalm, it is important to notice both what it includes and what it omits; as well as to observe the special adaptation of its several parts to secure its main purpose. The psalm was most probably composed to promote the efforts of the Good King Hezekiah to secure the reunion of the Twelve Tribes. As Thrupp has well said, the king himself sought to bring the Northerners to worship at Jerusalem, modestly saying nothing of himself as their rightful monarch (2 Ch. 30:6, 9). The psalmist goes further: claiming not only the Divine preference of Judah over Ephraim (the leading tribe of the north), and of Jerusalem over Shiloh (the first resting-place of the ark); but of David as the appointed Shepherd-King over all Israel.

It is observable that, though the psalmist goes back to the time of Moses, he comes no further forward than to the time of the Judges: an excellent stroke of policy, since the period thus spanned was abundantly sufficient to afford the historical parallels of which he desired to make use, while he could nevertheless avoid irritating references to later events, of which the Northerners had no need to be reminded. Again, the omission of Saul and Solomon on either side of David—to whom so much prominence is given at the close of the psalm—justifies itself

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in each case as a wise omission: of Saul, because the kingship was taken from him and his heirs, and because the opposition which had for a time lingered in the tribe of Benjamin (the tribe of Saul) against the Davidic Royalty had now died away; and of Solomon, because any allusion to him might have revived inconvenient memories of those oppressions of his which clearly paved the way for the great disruption. It was enough, for the end in view, to set David high on the pedestal of Divine approval and appointment: all hearers of the psalm could in a moment pass from David to David's loyal and worthy son, Hezekiah—and that was enough. But though Solomon is not named, yet the Temple he built is brought into prominence: thus supporting the invitation to renewed worship there—in a shrine so magnificent and to all appearance so abiding.

Then if we pass on to notice the manner in which the assumed design of the psalm is sought to be obtained, we shall be able to detect many tokens of exquisite adaptation. Not only is there, in the psalm, all the winsomeness of poetic form and beauty; but a skilful appeal is at once made to the patriotic sentiment which loves to hear the story of one's ancestors, especially as entwined around the formation of a unique nationality; which appeal is made the more telling when the poet avows that he is about to bring forth from the venerated past *problems* of present-day application.

It is true that the psalmist's serious purpose compels him to lodge a grave complaint against one of the most powerful of the Northern Tribes—that of *Ephraim*; but both the way in which he leads up to this complaint and the terms in which he expresses it, are well fitted to secure for it attention. He breathes not a word against any single tribe, until he has first made against the nation's ancestors as a body an indictment expressed in the startling terms in which parents were authorized by Moses to bring their refractory sons as *rebellious and insulting* before the elders of their city for condign punishment in the event of continued obstinacy. Then, although he does level his charge against the tribe of *Ephraim* thus early in the psalm (vers. 9-11),—without which specification it is not easy to see how he could have quickened the apprehension of the Ephraimites to see their own likeness in the mirror which he was about to hold up to their gaze,—yet it is not difficult to detect in his allusion to their proficiency with the *bow*, a compliment, and a reminiscence of their father Joseph which were not likely

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to be lost upon them (Gen. 49:23, 24). If their *bow* was no longer "abiding in strength," was that not due to moral defection? If they had *turned in the day of battle* (which, in the absence of specification, one may perhaps refer broadly to the day of entrance into the land under Joshua, followed by sinful compromise with idolatry), were they not the more chargeable with blame by reason of their high national aspirations?

There is no need here to dwell in detail on the historical reminiscences to which attention has been called by our "Analysis." The one obvious thing to do, if we would use the "mirror" of history to profit, or at least perceive how the Northerners might be expected so to use it,—is to go back to the "prelude" and fetch up therefrom the significant term *problems* (ver. 2) as applied to the history here in Part III. recited. In what way does this application of the word *problems* to the history furnish a suitable appeal to the Ten Tribes? This has already been suggested by the aforesaid Analysis. High above the limitations of "Time" and "Place" there sufficiently alluded to, stands the great question of the "Freedom of Divine Action." Let us assume—as we reasonably may—that, at the time this psalm is composed and sent forth on its mission, the North has been overrun by Assyria, and that Samaria is already in siege, or if we would make the picture still blacker, that that city has already capitulated,—how and where do the *problems* find application? Look back over those historical details with this especial feature in view: How did God *act* in those sinful and perilous times of old? and note especially this: That the Divine action is various: always doubtless holy, always right; yet, in its springs, far above, out of our sight; in its activities and modifications, many a time taking us by surprise. Sometimes he is angry, and yet grants the blessing; sometimes his rising displeasure is checked—he will not *stir up all his wrath*; sometimes, pent-up wrath suddenly breaks forth as if to bring up arrears of displeasure, and make a clean sweep of the rebels whose insults can no longer be endured. Behind all these adjustments and adaptations, lies the great primal fact of Divine Redemption out of Egypt; and high above all is descried the Divine fountain-head of *compassion* and the Divine remembrance of human frailty. This, God never forgets. So that, as applied to Ephraim, the lesson briefly is this: It is yet *problematical* how Jehovah may deal with you: he may smite and yet spare; may carry away and yet bring back. Do not *despair*: Jehovah of old brought out of Egypt; and even now he

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can deliver from Assyria. Do not *presume*: beware of pent-up wrath; do not provoke once too often. Humble yourselves AND RETURN (2 Ch. 30:6, 9). And, in your thoughts of return, forget not, that some forfeited honours may never be restored, some past provisions may never be renewed. Your leadership in Israel has been forfeited for ever. Shiloh has been abandoned for ever. You have lost the ark, and to you it may never return. The Shepherd of Israel may be now leading his flock to fresh pastures." But this brings us up to Part IV., on which a few words will suffice.

If we wisely avoid resenting the anthropomorphism which likens Jehovah to a waking hero, and honestly endeavour to enter into the spirit of the teaching thereby conveyed, we shall not fail to perceive the new tone which now makes itself manifest. We have done with *problems*, so far as the poetic development of them is concerned; and are now brought face to face with facts—facts calculated to urge on a settlement of the great practical problem of the then immediate future: *to return or not to return*. It was time that the old enemies, the Philistines, were decisively dealt with; and so *reproach* was cast upon them when they were ignominiously smitten before the very ark they had taken captive; and later on (as we may supply) when they were finally subjugated at the hands of a shepherd stripling that *reproach* has been made notorious and *age-abiding*. But it was also time that the historic claims of Joseph and his son Ephraim were disposed of for ever by the choice of Judah, by the erection of the temple in Jerusalem, and by the selection of David as King for all Israel; and so the psalm comes to a powerful conclusion. It was left to silence, and other psalms, and other agencies, to do the rest.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Graham Scroggie has well observed: "Some think it was written in David's reign, or early in Solomon's, because the record does not go further than David (70-72). Others think it was written after the disruption of the Tribes, because of the references to Ephraim and Shiloh. (9, 67, 60). Others, again, place the Psalm in the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah". What is Rotherham's preference? Why? How supported?
2. Why not go any further forward in the history than the time of the Judges?



## PSALM 78 AND 79

3. Why is Saul and Solomon omitted?
4. How is "patriotic sentiment" appealed to? For what purpose?
5. Ephraim is both rebuked and complimented at the same time—explain.
6. This psalm teaches "that the action of God is conditioned on the conduct of men; that the divine promises were not, and are not, inalienable gifts to either Israel or the church, but that His blessings are granted to those who willingly cooperate with God in His moral government of the world". (Scroggie) Give examples of this truth and discuss.
7. Notice the words describing Israel's reaction to God's law: (1) stubborn, (2) rebellious, (3) forgetful, (4) not steadfast, (5) rebelled, (6) tempted, (7) spoke against. Give the seven responses of God to these seven attitudes of Israel.
8. Discuss this provocative thought: "There is an immorality of forgetfulness".

## PSALM 79

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Invasion, Desecration, Demolition, Massacre and Derision call forth Lamentation, Expostulation, Petition and Pleading; and the Hope of Deliverance evokes a Promise of Perpetual Praise.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Lamentation; Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Expostulation and Petition; Stanza III., vers. 9-12, Pleading; Stanza IV., ver. 13, Promise of Perpetual Praise.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 O God! nations<sup>1</sup> have entered into thine inheritance, have made unclean thy holy temple;<sup>2</sup> have made Jerusalem heaps of ruins:<sup>3</sup>
- 2 have given the dead bodies of thy servants<sup>4</sup> as food to the bird of the heavens,

1. Or: "Gentiles."

2. Cp. 74:4-8, Lam. 1:10.

3. Mi. 3:12, Jer. 26:18.

4. Deu. 28:26, Jer. 7:33, 16:4, 19:7, 34:20.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- the flesh of thy men of kindness<sup>5</sup> to the wild beast of the earth;
- 3 have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem with none to bury.<sup>6</sup>
  - 4 We have become a reproach to our neighbors, a mockery and derision to them who are round about us.<sup>7</sup>
  - 5 How long Jehovah wilt thou be angry utterly? how long shall thy jealousy burn like fire?
  - 6 Pour out thy wrath on the nations that have not known thee, and on the kingdoms which on thy name have not called;<sup>8</sup>
  - 7 For they have<sup>9</sup> devoured Jacob, and his homestead<sup>10</sup> have laid waste.
  - 8 Do not remember against us the iniquity of former times!<sup>11</sup> haste thee! let thine acts of compassion come to meet us; for we have been brought very low.
  - 9 Help us O God of our salvation, on account of the honour<sup>12</sup> of thy name and rescue us and put a propitiatory covering over<sup>13</sup> our sins, for the sake of thy name.
  - 10 Why should the nations<sup>14</sup> say—"Where is their God?" let the avenging of the blood of thy servants which hath been poured out be made known among the nations before our eyes.<sup>15</sup>
  - 11 Let the groaning of the prisoner come in before thee,

5. Heb. *hasidim*. "In the age of the Macabees (B.C. 168 and following years) the term was adopted as the title of the patriotic party in Israel, who were faithful to the national religion, and resisted the attempts that were made to overthrow it—see 1 Macc. 2:12, 7:13, 2 Macc. 14:6 (where '*Hasidaeans*' is the Heb. *hasidim*, the plural of this word. It is possible that 'godly' is already used in this sense in Ps. 149:1, 5, 9, if not in 116:18 as well"—Dr.

6. Jer. 14:16, 16:4.

7. Ps. 44:13, 137:7.

8. Cp. Jer. 10:25.

9. M.T. ml.: "he hath." But some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "they have." Cp. Jer. 10:25—Gn.

10. So Dr.; "cp. Jer. 10:25."

11. So O.G. But Dr.: "(our) forefathers."

12. Or: "glory."

13. (Simply) "cover"—Per.; "expiate"—Del.; "pardon"—Carter; "atone for"—Leeser; "purge away"—Kp.; "cancel"—Dr., cp. 65:3 (note).

14. Or: "the Gentiles," cp. ver. 1.

15. Deu. 32:43.

## PSALM 79

according to the greatness of thine arm set thou free<sup>16</sup> the sons of death.<sup>17</sup>

- 12 And return to our neighbors—sevenfold into their bosom—their reproach wherewith they have reproached thee  
Sovereign Lord!
- 13 So we, thy people and the flock of thy shepherding<sup>18</sup> will give thanks<sup>19</sup> unto thee to the ages,  
to generation after generation will tell of thy praise.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For "Lilies of Testimony" = the Feast of Weeks.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 79

O God, Your land has been conquered by the heathen nations. Your Temple is defiled and Jerusalem is a heap of ruins.

2 The bodies of Your people lie exposed—food for birds and animals.

3 The enemy has butchered the entire population of Jerusalem; blood has flowed like water; no one is left even to bury them.

4 The nations all around us scoff. They heap contempt on us.

5 O Jehovah, how long will You be angry with us? Forever? Will Your jealousy burn till every hope is gone?

6 Pour out Your wrath upon the godless nations, not on us! And on kingdoms that refuse to pray, that will not call upon Your name!

7 For they have destroyed Your people Israel, invading every home.

8 Oh, do not hold us guilty for our former sins! Let Your tenderhearted mercies meet our needs, for we are brought low to the dust.

9 Help us, God of our salvation! Help us for the honor of Your name! Oh, save us and forgive our sins.

10 Why should the heathen nations be allowed to scoff,

16. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Syr.). Cp. 105:20, 146:7.—Gn. M.T.: "leave remaining." "Reprieve"—Dr.

17. Cp. 102:20 (2 Sam. 12:5).

18. As in 74:1; cp. 77:20, 78:52, 70. "The favourite Asaphic way of looking at Israel as a flock"—Del.

19. Cp. 6:5 n.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

"Where is their God?" Publicly avenge this slaughter of Your people!

11 Listen to the sighing of the prisoners and those condemned to die. Demonstrate the greatness of Your power by saving them.

12 O Lord, take sevenfold vengeance on these nations scorning You.

13 Then we Your people the sheep of Your pasture, will thank You forever and forever, praising Your greatness from generation to generation.

## EXPOSITION

If this psalm now appears as it was first composed, its date must be assigned to the time of the Maccabees; since the time of the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar does not suit all its leading features, whereas the persecutions and profanations of Antiochus Epiphanes, against which the Maccabean resistance was directed, serve to supply in counterpart the finishing-touches to this picture of Israel's troubles. Such a late time of origin does, indeed, leave little space for translation into the Septuagint; but, as the date usually assigned to the execution of this Greek Bible does not necessarily apply to all the sacred books, and some of them, including the Psalms, may well have been added at a somewhat later time, candour must admit the practical possibility of a Maccabean origin of this psalm consistently with its appearance, in the Septuagint where it now stands, in close conformity with its Hebrew original. The alternative theory—that it was originally composed soon after the Chaldean invasion and subsequently freely adapted to the later time—is not wildly improbable, as the known free action of the Sopherim on the Sacred Text sufficiently shews; but, on the other hand, the unity and symmetry of the psalm as we have it, make strongly for one spirit working at one time in its production. In either case, an extract or two from the first book of Maccabees will be acceptable to the general reader. "And there came forth out of [‘them the servants of Alexander the Great, who bare rule in his place’] a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king, who had been a hostage in Rome, and he reigned in the hundred and thirty and seventh year of the kingdom of [the Greeks, *circa* B.C. 176] . . . And Antiochus, after that he had smitten Egypt, returned in the hundred and forty and third year [*circa* B.C. 170] and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great

## PSALM 79

multitude, and entered presumptuously into the sanctuary, and took the golden altar, and the candlestick of the light, and all that pertained thereto, and the table of the shew-bread, and the cups to pour withal, and the bowls, and the golden censers, and the veil, and the crowns, and the adorning of gold which was on the face of the temple, and he scaled it all off. And he took the silver and the gold and the precious vessels; and he took the hidden treasures which he found. And when he had taken all, he went away into his own land, and he made a great slaughter and spake very presumptuously . . . And the land was moved for the inhabitants thereof, and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame . . . And after two full years the king sent a chief collector of tribute unto the cities of Judah, and he came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude. And he spake words of peace unto them in subtilty, and they gave him credence; and he fell upon the city suddenly, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people out of Israel. And he took the spoils of the city, and set it on fire, and pulled down the houses thereof and the walls thereof on every side . . . And they shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defiled the sanctuary. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them . . . And on the fifteenth day of Chislew, in the hundred and forty and fifth year [circa B.C. 168], they builded an abomination of desolation upon the altar, and in the cities of Judah on every side they builded idol altars. And at the doors of the houses and in the streets they burnt incense. And they rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, and set them on fire . . . On the five and twentieth day of the month they sacrificed on the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God" (1 Mac. 1:10, 20-24, 29-31, 37, 38, 54-56) . . . "And Jerusalem was without inhabitant as a wilderness, there was none of her offspring that went in or went out; and the sanctuary was trodden down, and the sons of strangers were in the citadel, the Gentiles lodged therein; and joy was taken away from Jacob, and the pipe and the harp ceased" (3:45).

The structure of the psalm, according to Del., followed above, is interesting; as revealing three stanzas of nine lines each, closed by a stimple tristich.

The course of thought running through the whole is natural and easy to follow.

The first stanza is filled with lamentation, which takes the obvious course of describing, step by step, Israel's deep humilia-

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

tion; the invasion of the *land*, the defiling of the *temple*, the demolition of *city*, the massacre of *inhabitants*—especially of the *godly*, the contemptuous treatment of the *slain*, the disregard of the heavy responsibility of shedding *blood*. This last might have seemed the fitting climax; but, as in Ps. 40 there was to be added "Many shall see, &c." though in a totally different strain to that found here; so here there fell to be added a couplet describing the effect of Jerusalem's humiliation upon the onlooking neighbouring nationalities, as to the renewed reference to whom in ver. 12, Delitzsch well says: "That the prayer comes back in ver. 12 to the neighboring peoples, is explained by the fact that these, seeing they might the soonest have attained to the knowledge of the God of Israel as the one true and living God, bear the greatest guilt on account of their reviling of Him."

Naturally, a stanza follows, taken up with expostulation (*How long?* ver. 5), and petitions (*Pour out—Do not remember—Haste thee*, vers. 6-8), sustained, no doubt, by *reasons*, expressed and implied; among which may be singled out the prayer against heathen nations, for the purpose of interposing the caution to be careful not to exaggerate these imprecations, seeing that the simplicity of poetically expressed Eastern thought clearly allows us to understand *positives* as amounting to *comparatives*: "If thy wrath must be outpoured, let it be rather on the nations," &c.

But these reasoned petitions, are, in the third stanza, followed by yet more urgent pleadings; which may usefully remind us how much of this element is to be found in the prayers of the faithful throughout the Holy Scriptures; as witness, especially, the prayers of Abraham (Gen. 18), (Daniel 9) and the writer of Ps. 119; and though, at first sight, it might appear to have been discountenanced by our Lord (Mt. 6:7-13), yet both his own teaching (Lu. 11:8, 18:1) and example (Jn. 17, Mk. 14:22-39) caution us to bear in mind that all repetition need not be "vain." Indeed it may safely be said: That he who has not learned to plead in prayer, has not yet learned to pray at all—especially by way of intercession (1 Tim. 2:1-8). It will not be lost labour, if the devout reader look through this third stanza afresh, in order to note in how many directions there is an outgoing of sympathy to his suffering brethren, on the part of the psalmist, prompting to a holy boldness in drawing near to his God.

## PSALM 79 AND 80

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you accept the late date for the composition of this psalm—i.e., during the period of the Maccabees?
2. We *must* associate this psalm with a desecration and destruction of the Temple—which one? Discuss the reasons for your choice.
3. War has not changed. We could use the description given here to describe a thousand wars. Who has won by wars?
4. The writer of the psalm feels that jealousy is the cause for the calamity. Discuss.
5. Are we to assume that God acts on nations—tribes and families as well as individuals? i.e. the sins of nations—tribes and families accumulate over a period of time until God brings punishment? If not this, what?
6. The personal pronoun appears very prominently: (a) *your* land, (b) *your* Temple, (c) *your* people, (d) *your* name—why? Did it help?
7. There is both strength and weakness in the promises of the afflicted. Discuss.

## PSALM 80

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer for the Flock and Vine of Israel.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, By Three Significant Titles, Jehovah is besought to interpose for Salvation, before Three Significantly Selected Tribes. Stanza II., vers. 4-7, Remonstrance with God for the length of His Manifestation of Displeasure. Stanza III., vers. 8-11, The Vine—Transplanted out of Egypt and Prosperous in Canaan. Stanza IV., vers. 12-15, The Vine—Endangered and Damaged: Prayer that it be Inspected and Protected. Stanza V., vers. 16-18, In order that the Destruction of the Vine may be Averted, Representation and Restoration are Besought.

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(Lm.) By Asaph—Psalm.

- 1 Shepherd of Israel oh give ear!  
leader of Joseph as a flock,  
throned on the cherubim oh shine forth!

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh  
oh stir up thy heroic strength,  
and oh come to our salvation!
- 3 *Oh God! restore us,  
And light up thy face,  
And we shall be saved.*
- 4 Jehovah God of hosts!  
how long hast thou been angry<sup>1</sup> in spite of<sup>2</sup> the prayer of  
thy people?
- 5 [How long] hast thou fed them with the bread of tears,  
given them to drink of tears in large measure?<sup>3</sup>
- 6 [How long] wilt thou make us a strife to our neighbours,  
or shall our foes laugh at us?<sup>4</sup>
- 7 *O God of hosts! restore us,  
And light up thy face,—  
And we shall be saved.*
- 8 A vine out of Egypt thou didst lift,  
didst drive out nations and plant it:
- 9 Didst clear a space before it,  
so it rooted its roots and filled the land:
- 10 Covered were the mountains with its shade,  
and with its boughs the cedars of GOD:
- 11 It thrust forth its branches as far as the sea,  
and unto the River its shoots.<sup>5</sup>
- 12 Wherefore hast thou broken down its fences,<sup>6</sup>  
so that all who pass along the way have plucked of its fruit?
- 13 The boar out of the forest<sup>7</sup> gnaweth it,  
and the roaming beast of the field browseth on it.
- 14 O God of hosts! return we pray thee,  
look around out of the heavens and see,—  
and inspect this vine;

1. *MI.*: "snorted" or "fumed."

2. *Or.*: "during."

3. *MI.*: "by the tierce." "The third part of some larger measure, perhaps the bath (*Ez.* 45:11), and if so equivalent to nearly three gallons,—a large measure for tears, though a small one for the earth, *Is.* 40:12 ('measure')—*Dr.*

4. So some *cod.* (*w. Sep., Syr., Vul.*)—*Gn. M.T.*: "laugh to themselves" ("mock as they please"—*Dr.*).

5. *Or.*: "suckers."

6. *Or.*: "walls."

7. That is=symbol of Rome. *Or.*: "river: (=symbol of Egypt). See *G. Intro.*, 338-340.



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- 15 And be thou the protection<sup>8</sup> of that which thy right-hand  
hath planted,  
and over the bough<sup>9</sup> thou hast secured for thyself.
- 16 It is to be burned with fire it is to be cut down,  
at the rebuke of thy face<sup>10</sup> they will perish!
- 17 Let thy hand be over the man of thy right hand,  
over the son of mankind<sup>11</sup> thou hast secured for thyself:
- 18 So shall we not draw back from thee,  
thou wilt restore us to life<sup>12</sup> and on thy name will we call.
- 19 *Jehovah God of hosts restore us,  
Light up thy face,—  
And we shall be saved.*

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the Wine-presses = Feast of Tabernacles.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 80

O Shepherd of Israel who leads Israel like a flock; O God enthroned above the cherubim, bend down Your ear and listen as I plead. Display Your power and radiant glory.

2 Let Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh see You rouse Yourself and use Your mighty power to rescue us.

3 Turn us again to Yourself, O God. Look down on us in joy and love;<sup>1</sup> only then shall we be saved.

4 O Jehovah, God of heaven's armies, how long will You be angry and reject our prayers?

5 You have fed us with sorrow and tears,

6 And have made us the scorn of the neighboring nations. They laugh among themselves.

7 Turn us again to Yourself, O God of Hosts. Look down on us in joy and love;<sup>1</sup> only then shall we be saved.

8 You brought us from Egypt as though we were a tender vine and drove away the heathen from Your land and planted us.

9 You cleared the ground and tilled the soil and we took root and filled the land.

8. So Del. and others.

9. Ml.: "son." Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.) "son of man (*adam*)"—Gn.

10. Gt.: "mouth"—Gn.

11. Heb.: *Adam*.

12. Or: "quicken us."

1. Literally, "cause Your face to shine upon us."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

10 The mountains were covered with our shadow; we were like the mighty cedar trees,<sup>2</sup>

11 Covering the entire land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River.

12 But now You have broken down our walls leaving us without protection.

13 The boar from the forest roots around us, and the wild animals feed on us.

14 Come back, we beg of You, O God of the armies of heaven, and bless us. Look down from heaven and see our plight and care for this Your vine!

15 Protect what You Yourself have planted, this son You have raised for Yourself.

16 For we are chopped and burned by our enemies. May they perish at Your frown.

17 Strengthen the man You love,<sup>3</sup> the son of Your choice,<sup>4</sup>

18 And we will never forsake You again. Revive us to trust in You.

19 Turn us again to Yourself, O God of the armies of heaven. Look down on us, Your face aglow with joy and love—only then shall we be saved.

## EXPOSITION

The exceeding beauty of this psalm is obvious at a glance,—with its striking invocation, its threefold refrain, and its exquisite allegory of the Vine. Its power, however, cannot be felt to the full until its scope is observed and its spirit perceived. Its scope is, to reconcile all the tribes of Israel to each other and to their God: its spirit is, on the one hand, one of absolute loyalty to Jehovah, in his preference for Judah as the leading tribe, and to the house of David as the divinely appointed reigning dynasty; and, on the other hand, one of tender regard for the susceptibilities of the northern tribes. Whether *Asaph*, the author of this psalm, be *Asaph the Second* or *Asaph the Seventh* matters little, so long as we take him to have been the prophet compeer of King Hezekiah. While the King was *inviting* the tribes to come to Jerusalem, the psalmist was *singing* them in to Jehovah's royal seat.

Viewed from this standpoint, what address is discovered in

2. Literally, "the cedars of God."

3. Literally, "the man of Your right hand."

4. Literally, "the son of man You made strong for Yourself."

PSALM 80

the opening invocation. When the term "Israel" did not mean the whole nation, it specially meant the Ten Tribes; and of "Joseph" the same may be said, with the especial consideration added, that as both Ephraim and Manasseh were integral members of the northern kingdom, "Joseph" would more emphatically point "North." So far, then, the invocation counts two for the "North"; but when the third Divine Title is added, "Throned on the cherubim," then, as the holy cherubic Throne was now located in Jerusalem, that was emphatically one for the South. So that, while this invocation, in the order of mention, yields the leading place to the North, and then weightily gravitates to the South, it may be truthfully described as a tribe-uniting Invocation.

In the same spirit the psalm proceeds, with the tact of a Divine winsomeness: "Thou who art throned in the South, before the North shew forth thy glorious presence!" "Before the North": more in detail, *Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh*,—Ephraim and Manasseh being, of course, the two sons of Joseph; with little Benjamin placed between them, with exquisite good taste and with striking historical reminiscences clustering about the arrangement; first, as all being the descendants of the two sons of Rachel; and second, as having been placed in the rear of the Ark in the appointed order of march through the wilderness: "Thou who are throned in the Ark before them, before them shine forth, as thou leadest them on to victory and glory." Nor was this association of Benjamin with Ephraim and Manasseh without historical propriety or hortatory necessity. "At first sight," says Kirkpatrick, "it may seem strange that Benjamin is reckoned among the northern tribes, for partially at any rate it sided with Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:21, 2 Chr. 11:3, 23, 15:8, 9); but the one tribe remaining to David was Judah (1 Kings 11:13, 32, 36), and Benjamin must be reckoned to the Northern Kingdom to make up Ten tribes, for Simeon had become merged in Judah and is not counted. The principal Benjamite towns of Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho belonged to the Northern Kingdom." To which we may add a sentence from Delitzsch as to these three cities: "But, like Ramah (1 Kings 15:21f), not without being contested (cf. 2 Chr. 13:19); the boundaries were therefore fluctuating."

Thus wooed into united supplication, the twelve-tribed nation is led forward in impassioned pleading, as the repeated use of the "*h*-paragoric" shews: *Oh give ear! Oh shine forth! Oh stir up! "O come!"*

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The refrain too is worthy of its place as the triple crown of the psalm. *O God! restore us: or, bring us back*—which would especially suit those who were in banishment;—or, *bring us back* to our former estate, *Restore us*—which would suit all who lamented their degeneracy and disunion. *And light up thy face*—with that smile which so gladdens all such as love thee. *And, thus gladdened—united—guided, we shall be saved* from foes and dangers and sins.

To this stanza of invocation and petition, succeeds a stanza of invocation and remonstrance. Only, now, the invocation is shorter: *Jehovah*—the Becoming One; *God of Hosts*, with saints and angels and elements at thy command, waiting to do thy will.—Invocations are useful, as the natural outcome of earnestness; as apt reminders, to the petitioner and his fellow-worshippers, of the nature of the weighty business in hand—that we are neither dreaming nor soliloquising, nor aimlessly wandering: we are in the court of the Divine Presence, speaking to the Almighty—*that* is our one present business. Moreover, Invocations are turned into pleadings by the choice of epithets to suit our need, and by the accumulation of them as so many avenues of approach to him whom we worship.—*How long?* is the key-note of the remonstrance, the spirit of which should undoubtedly be carried through the remainder of the stanza: up to and preparing for the supplicatory refrain. *How long* hast thou been thus angry and wilt thou continue to be? *How long* hast thou fed us with the bread of tears—so that our hungry lips open in vain for food, only to taste the salt tears that fall upon them? *How long* art thou going still further to make us a strife to our smaller neighbours, who are quarreling among themselves as to who first and who most shall insult us in our humiliation? *How long* are our more formidable foes to be permitted to turn on us with a scornful laugh when we groan under their unchecked atrocities?—Thus are we permitted to interweave the element of time with our prayers: *How long?* The longest may seem but “a small moment” to Him who sees the end from the beginning; but, to us, creatures of a day, it is a serious aggravation to our troubles that they are so long continued. And what we are here taught by Asaph is, that we may dare to remonstrate with God over the almost unbearable protraction of our trials. Thus, as least, shall we find an intensified refrain of petition welcome, as a relief to the burden which weighs down our spirits: *O God of Hosts, restore us, And light up thy face, And we shall be saved.*

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And now comes the Vine—the parable, the allegory of the Vine—and let us remember that we are still, in prayer, speaking to Him whose vine it is: its Owner, its Planter and Transplanter, its Waterer and Fencer, its Devastator, its seeming Neglecter, its severe Inspector, its true and only Protector, its Redeemer and Restorer.

It is thus that this Vine comes before us;—1. Transplanted and Prosperous, 2. Endangered and Damaged, 3. Inspected and Protected, 4. Represented and Restored. Although these headings are not exactly conformed to the stanzical divisions of the psalm, they may be helpful as a basis of study. While paying a passing regard to the framework of the Allegory, let us chiefly endeavour to get at its true meaning.

1. The Vine—Israel: *Transplanted and Prosperous*. It began its growth in Egypt. But in Egypt there was neither room for its growth, nor an atmosphere to make it fruitful. Egypt was peopled by an oppressing nationality, unfavourable to the growth within it of a free nation; and Egypt was poisoned with idolatry, unfitted for the development of a pure nation. Jehovah desired a nation both free and pure: fitted to be a channel of blessing to all the other nations of the earth. Therefore he transplanted his Vine—*lifted it*, as a vine is lifted with its roots, or a vine-layer is lifted, and laid in its ample bed.

But it must have a *cleared space* to receive it. The Owner of this Vine foresaw this need and provided for it. Hence the psalmist says: *Didst clear a space before it*. And the Divine directions were, that the space should be cleared. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full; and therefore, being mindful that the space they occupied should be filled to better purpose, the Disposer of Nations commanded them to be extirpated—a severe but needful mandate; “severe,” because it involved the destruction of the innocent with the guilty; “needful,” because the seven nations of Canaan had become a pest and a peril to the world. Unmerciful? Verily: it would have been more merciful, if the terrible Divine Behest of Destruction had been sternly executed. It would have saved the lives as well as the morals of generations yet unborn.

Nevertheless, space was made; so that this Vine, transplanted from Egypt, grew rapidly: in the picturesque language of the psalm, *it rooted its roots, and filled the land*. As if on purpose to recall and amplify the blessings on Joseph which fell from his father Jacob’s lips (Gen. 49), the psalmist proceeds:

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*Covered were the mountains with its shade*—the mountains of the South, *And with its boughs the cedars of God*—on the Lebanon to the North, a feat which the Vine, as a climbing plant, is able to accomplish; *It thrust forth its branches*, with the true thrusting power of growth, *as far as the sea*—the Mediterranean, to the West; *and unto the River (Nahar=the Euphrates) its shoots (or suckers)*. Great (outward) prosperity, nearly if not quite realised in the days of Solomon. Is it strange that such prosperity should not have endured? Alas! there was a worm at the root of this Vine. Idolatry—the very thing that the God of Israel would not tolerate—had entered and was making rapid advances even in the days of Solomon.

2. *Endangered and Damaged*.—Inwardly, the danger was Sin—flagrant national Sin. The outward danger followed. The Owner of the Vine himself *broke down its fences*. His own character was involved: his purposes were being thwarted: there was a needs-be that he should interpose. Self-consistency and truth demanded it; all this had been threatened by Moses, and it must come. *All who passed along the way*—Egypt to meet Assyria, Assyria to meet Egypt—*plucked of its fruit*; and verily the fruit of this Vine was luscious and tempting; as, for example, the golden treasures of the Temple! Pity the defenceless Vine! when the *boar out of the forest*—the wild-boar of Assyria, Babylon, Greece or Rome, came that way (the Boar was anciently the symbol of Rome). The Vine, that is the Nation, more frequently pitied itself, than turned in true repentance to its offended God. True to the life it is, that Jewish scholars have punned on the very word which describes their punishment. The essential letters of the Hebrew word for *forest* are Y, R: if pronounced *jaar*, then it means *forest*; but if pronounced *ye-or* then it signifies *river*, and particularly the Nile. Now, they did not fear the Boar of the Nile so much as they stood in awe of the Boar of the forest east or west. The roaming beast of *the field*, in the next line, may mean—either any marauding power, or the smaller neighboring monarchs ever ready to browse on Israel's most tender and promising *shoots*.

3. *Inspected and Protected*.—No wonder that the psalmist should again and more earnestly than ever betake himself to prayer. And, first, he prays for inspection: *O God of hosts! return, we pray thee look around out of the heavens*—on the

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various nations; *and see*—whether there is any other nation that interests and concerns thee like this; *and inspect this vine*—look narrowly into its condition, and see what, in thy clemency and wisdom, can be done in its behalf. So far, we Gentiles hearken with complacency: it is doubtless right, we are ready to say, that *this vine*, on which so much culture has been lavished should be *inspected!* But are we equally prepared to follow Asaph in the next step which he takes? *And be thou the protection of that which thy right-hand hath planted.* Perhaps we are utterly and genuinely unable to say “what more” the Divine Husbandman “could have done for his vineyard which he has not done for it” (Isa. 5). But how can he protect a nation which cannot and will not protect itself—cannot and will not come under his protection? And so we are straitened, not in God, but in ourselves, and in our own poverty of conception. We think we have reached the end of HIS ways which are “past finding out”! Is there never a *bough* in this Vine, which as a fresh layer can again be transplanted; and so a New Vine be produced therefrom? Perhaps, even to this length, the utmost stretch of our Gentile imaginations may extend. “Yes!” we say; “even that may be. ‘Salvation is of the Jews.’ The Messiah ‘comes of the seed of David.’ And, only give to the Messiah a new people; then he and his new people shall form a new Vine; and in that new Vine the old shall live again and so be perpetuated.” Good as far as it goes; only it does not go so far as the Apostle Paul would conduct us; for he exclaims, in a passage wherein Israel cannot mean the Church, “And so all Israel shall be saved.” Therefore we must yet stand firm to the text of this Asaphic Psalm.

4. *Represented and Restored.*—It was something that at the close of the previous stanza (ver. 15) we saw a *bough* that was not likely to be destroyed, seeing that Jehovah had *secured it for himself*. The Psalmist sets the peril of Israel’s national destruction clearly before him. The natural doom of such a Vine is *to be burned with fire*; and, with a view to such a burning, *to be cut down*: there is reason, in Israel’s persistent sin, for Divine Rebuke stern enough to leave Israel to *perish*. But this apprehension on the part of the psalmist prompts to renewed and more explicit prayer. *Let thy hand be protectingly over the man of thy right hand.* Is this man an individual or a nation? There is something to be said for the opinion of some that it may be the whole nation of Israel; even as, in ver. 15,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

*that which thy right hand hath planted* is clearly the nation. Still, we have already had brought before us the separating conception of a single *bough*, or *son*, of the Vine; and Jehovah's first care is clearly to protect and preserve that *bough*; and this is the idea which is now, in supplication, brought forward anew—brought forward anew and amplified,—and, in the process of repetition and amplification, more fully described and more accurately defined. Even the phrase, *the man of thy right hand* seems irresistibly to carry us forward to the Messiah. But when the duplicate phrase follows, *The son of Mankind—the Son of Adam*; and the striking description is repeated, *whom thou hast secured for thyself* that conclusion is undoubtedly confirmed; so that we are relieved to find that even the Aramaean Targum giving scholarly Jewish opinion in the early Christian centuries is borne along in the same direction with its paraphrase: "And upon Messiah the king, whom thou hast made strong for thyself." Still the question recurs—Does this gravitation of the psalm to the Messiah include or exclude the Nation? If we still follow the psalmist's lead,—to say nothing more now of concurrent Scripture,—we shall undoubtedly answer in the affirmative—It will include and not exclude the Nation. For who are these who now join in the pleading—*So shall we not draw back from thee*, fully and finally. On the contrary, however dead we are at present, yea even generations of our people in Hades (Eze. 37), *Thou wilt restore us to life*, and as the priestly nation we were originally intended to be (Exo. 19) and which prophecy clearly foretells we yet shall be (Isa. 61:6, 66:20) *And on thy name will we call. Jehovah, God of hosts, restore us*—us, the nation, inheriting the name and honour of the Vine thou didst lift out of Egypt, *Light up thy face, and we, the Vine, the Nation, shall be saved.*

Recurring to the opening of the psalm, a weighty lesson may be drawn therefrom for the guidance of such as would seek the reunion of Christendom. There is in this realm also the unfaithfulness which fears to tell Ephraim his sin. For these the 78th psalm furnishes instruction: showing the possibility of faithfully admonishing Ephraim, that he has "turned back in the day of battle," and yet so administering the lesson as to commend it to his attention. The present psalm furnishes the hint that, besides warning Ephraim, efforts to win him may be alternated with sterner remonstrances. Set the Ark of the Divine Presence before him, and entreat him to follow its lead;



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at the same time endeavouring to convince him that there are privileges to be enjoyed in Judah which Ephraim has forfeited. Let us hold fast the honour of having first denounced Divisionalism in Christendom: at the same time wooing back wanderers in a generous and winsome spirit.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There are some very meaningful figures of speech in this psalm. List them and make application.
2. There seems to be a national purpose in the structure of the psalm. Discuss.
3. Is it ever proper to argue with God? Is this being done in verse 1 through 7? Discuss.
4. The comparison of Israel to a vine is fully and beautifully described. List the divisions of the text as given by Rotherham.
5. God accomplished two purposes in defeating the Amorites and giving their land to Israel. What were they?
6. Note the extent of the conquered land. Were not the promises of God fulfilled as to giving Israel the land? Discuss.
7. Who is "the boar of the forest"?; or is it "the boar of the river"?
8. Did God ever answer the prayer of verses 14, 15?
9. Perhaps when we fulfill the promise of verse 18, God will answer the prayers of verses 14, 15, 17, 19.
10. An English poet named Mant has done such a beautiful job poetically we wish to share his poem with you.  
Thy hands from Egypt brought a goodly vine,  
And planted fair in fertile Palestine;  
Clear'd for its grasping roots th'unpeopled land,  
And gave it high to rise, and firm to stand.  
Far o'er the eternal hills her shadow spread,  
Her tendrils wreath'd the cedar's towering head;  
And, as the centre of the land she stood,  
Her branches reach'd the sea, her boughs the eastern flood.  
Why hast Thou now her hedges rent away,  
And left her bare, the passing traveler's prey?  
The field-fed beast devours each tender shoot,  
Fierce from the wood the boar assails her root.  
Return, O God; from heaven Thine eyes incline;  
Behold, and visit this neglected vine:

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Regard the plant, Thou once didst love so well,  
And chief Thy pleasant branch, the hope of Israel.  
Burnt though she be and rent, her haughty foe  
The deathful terrors of Thy wrath shall know.  
But on the man, by Thee with strength array'd,  
The Son of Man by Thee for conquest made,  
Thy hand shall rest; till we Thy triumphs see,  
Resound Thy praise, and still remember Thee.  
Turn us again, Thou God of heav'n's high powers,  
Beam with Thy radiance forth, and peace shall still be ours.

## PSALM 81

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Mission-Song, to be Sung to the Northern Tribes.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, A Festive Celebration Invoked; in which People, Levites, and Priests can Recall the Early History of the Nation. Stanza II., vers. 6-10, The Voice of the Divine Redeemer of the Nation is Heard; Recounting the Deeds by which He made the Nation His Own, and Summarising the Covenant into which He Entered with it. Stanza III., vers. 11-16, Divine Lamentation over the Nation's Past Failures, with Renewed Invitations and Promises designed to Win the People back to their Allegiance.

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(Lm.) By Asaph.

- 1 Ring out your joy unto God our strength,  
give a sacred shout to the God of Jacob:
- 2 Raise ye a melody and hold forth<sup>1</sup> the timbrel,  
the lyre so sweet with the lute:
- 3 Blow at the new moon the horn,  
at the full moon for the day of our feast.
- 4 Because a statute for Israel it is,  
a regulation by the God of Jacob:
- 5 A testimony in Joseph he appointed it,  
when he went forth over the land of Egypt:

1. Or: "bring hither"—Leeser, Dr., Per.; "strike"—Carter; "sound"—Del., Kp.

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- the language<sup>2</sup> of One I have not known I now hear:—<sup>3</sup>
- 6 "I have removed from the burden his shoulder,  
his hands<sup>4</sup> from the basket<sup>5</sup> are set free:°
- 7 In distress thou didst cry and I rescued thee,  
I answered thee in the hiding-place of thunder,<sup>7</sup>  
I tried thee at the waters of Meribah
- 8 'Hear O my people and I will adjure thee,  
O Israel If thou wilt hearken to me
- 9 There must not be within thee a strange GOD,  
nor mayest thou bow down to the GOD of an alien:
- 10 I Jehovah am thy God,  
who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt:  
Open wide thy mouth and I will fill<sup>6</sup> it.' "
- 11 But my people hearkened not to my voice,  
and Israel consented not unto me:
- 12 So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart,  
they might walk in their own counsels;
- 13 Oh that my people were hearkening unto me,  
that Israel in my ways would walk.
- 14 Right soon their foes would I subdue,  
and against their adversaries would I turn my hand:
- 15 The haters of Jehovah would come cringing unto him,<sup>9</sup>  
so let their own time be to the ages:
- 16 I would feed thee with the choicest<sup>10</sup> of the wheat,  
and out of the rock with honey would I satisfy thee.<sup>11</sup>

(Nm.)

2. Ml.: "lip."

3. "The Psalmist, speaking in the name of the nation, says that at the Exodus Israel first learnt to know the voice of its Deliverer"—Dr.

4. Ml.: "palms."

5. "Hod"—Thrupp.

6. Ml.: "passed."

7. "That is, in the pillar of cloud; cp. 18:11, Exo. 14:19, 24"—Dr. "The thunder-cloud, in which he at once revealed and concealed Himself, thundering down Israel's foes (which is to be understood more especially of the passage through the Red Sea; *vid.* 77:19)"—Del.

8. "A believing yearning, which is hungering for grace and eager for salvation (119:131)!"—Del.

9. "Should offer flattery unto him"—Leeser; "crouch to him"—Carter; "Their haters would have to fawn on them"—P.B.

10. Ml.: "marrow-fat."

11. Cp. Deu. 32:13.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 81

The Lord makes us strong! Sing praises! Sing to Israel's God!

2 Sing, accompanied by drums; pluck the sweet lyre and harp.

3 Sound the trumpet! Come to the joyous celebrations at full moon, new moon and all the other holidays!

4 For God has given us these times of joy; they are scheduled in the laws of Israel.

5 He gave them as reminders of His war against Egypt where we were slaves on foreign soil. I heard an unknown voice that said,

6 "Now I will relieve your shoulder of its burden; I will free your hands from their heavy tasks."

7 He said, "You cried to Me in trouble and I saved you; I answered from Mount Sinai<sup>1</sup> where the thunder hides. I tested your faith at Meribah, when you complained there was no water.

8 Listen to Me, O My people, while I give you stern warnings. O Israel, if you will only listen!

9 *You must never worship any other god, nor ever have an idol in your home.*<sup>2</sup>

10 For it was I, Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Only test Me!<sup>3</sup> Open your mouth wide and see if I won't fill it! You will receive every blessing you can use!

11 But no, My people won't listen. Israel doesn't want Me around.

12 So I am letting them go their blind and stubborn way, living according to their own desires.

13 But oh, that My people would listen to Me! Oh, that Israel would follow Me, walking in My paths!

14 How quickly then I would subdue her enemies! How soon My hands would be upon her foes!

15 Those who hate the Lord would cringe before Him; their desolation would last forever.

16 But He would feed you with the choicest foods. He would satisfy you with honey for the taking.<sup>4</sup>

1. Implied. Literally, "in the hiding place of thunder."

2. Literally, "There shall no foreign god be in you."

3. Implied.

4. Literally, "honey out of the rock."

PSALM 81  
EXPOSITION

The best introduction to this psalm is the series of Asaphic psalms which leads up to it; yet, when thus reached, this psalm will be found to have features all its own, which immensely add to its interest and to its instructiveness for other times. Its adaptation to the Northern tribes is seen, in part, in the Divine and National titles which it employs—*God of Jacob* (vers. 1, 4); *Israel* (vers. 4, 8, 11, 13), *Joseph* (ver. 5), *My people* (vers. 8, 11, 13): in part also in its omission of any direct allusions to Judah, Jerusalem or the Temple: perhaps, moreover, in the probability that the Feast of Trumpets would be the last to fall out of observance among any of the tribes. It has often been remarked how lively an interest in the Northern tribes Asaph everywhere displays; nor is it difficult to account for this, when we call to mind the non-localisation of the tribe of Levi, and the distribution of the Levitical cities throughout all the land—North as well as South. It may thus quite easily have happened that this Asaph of Hezekiah's days was, by domicile, a Northerner, while yet loyal to the Divine preference for the South. There needs but one touch further to make the picture live before us; and that is, the conception of a missionary Levite traversing the North, harp in hand, and trying to win back the wanderers by singing to them this song. Other songs of the series there were which he may have sung at other times, or in alternation with this. His was a harp of many strings. At one time he would gently remind Ephraim how he had "turned in the day of battle," and how Joseph had irrevocably lost the honour of having the Sacred Tent within his bounds (78). At another time he would boldly claim for Judah the supreme honour of having the Cherubic Throne in his midst (80). But, even before he could win attention to those messages, here was one which would strike a winsome herald note, impinging on no susceptibilities save of aspostates wholly given to idolatry: containing no allusion to the South, no mention of David. Radical reform, it is true, would demand the declaration of fuller truth in these regards; but all cannot be done at once—it is worth an effort, costing self-restraint, to win the ear of the rebellious, even for a moment, provided some essential thing can be successfully lodged therein. And truly the most essential thing of all, for Israelites wandering away into idolatry, is here: their covenant-relation to Jehovah, and his inexorable claim that their obligations under that covenant be fulfilled. From this point of view, how

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

skilfully the story is told: with all the charms of music, introduced; with all the fascinations of ancient history, the famous and irreversible past, commenced; barbed with pointed reminiscences of old-time refractoriness; merged into the pathos of direct appeal; ascending to the height of positive mandate; coming down again to the attraction of bountiful and all-comprehensive promise; sobered by tones of Divine lament; invigorated by rapid transition from the irredeemable past to present lingering possibilities—*Oh that my people were even now hearkening!* hearkening to *counsels* which must still be maintained, *walking in ways* of obedience that must still be trodden: oh that they were! oh that they would! *Right soon would I subdue their foes*: these Syrians those Assyrians, yonder Greeks and Romans. Is there nothing here to give point to appeal and make it victorious? Only let Israel RETURN (2 Ch. 30:6-9), and all shall yet be well. No real blessing should then be too rich, too good to be bestowed on obedient Israel: *fattest wheat, freshest honey*—nothing too good!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does Rotherham feel this psalm is addressed to the northern tribes?
2. Who is Asaph? Discuss.
3. There seems to be a large number of musical instruments used in Israel's worship—why?
4. What feast is here celebrated?
5. The very worst thing that can happen to a man is described in verse 12. What is it? Discuss.
6. God has promised "honey in the rock" for His people—but upon what conditions?

## PSALM 82

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Judgment of Unjust Judges.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, Introductory Vision. Stanza II., vers. 2-7, Reprimand of the Judges by the Judge of Judges. Stanza III., ver. 8, Closing Prayer.

## PSALM 82

(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Elohim hath stationed himself in the congregation of GOD,<sup>1</sup> in the midst of Divine messengers<sup>2</sup> he judgeth.—
- 2 “How long will ye judge perversely, and the countenances of lawless ones uplift?”
- 3 “Vindicate ye the weak and the fatherless, the humbled and the poor see ye righted:”
- 4 “Deliver the weak and the needy, out of the hand of lawless ones make ye rescue!”
- 5 “They know not neither can they understand, in darkness they wander,— all the foundations of the earth do shake.
- 6 “I myself have said ‘Divine messengers are ye<sup>3</sup>! yea sons of the most high are ye all’!
- 7 But indeed as mankind shall ye die, and as one of the princes shall ye fall.”
- 8 Oh arise Elohim! oh judge the earth! surely thou thyself wilt inherit all nations.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 82

God stands up to open heaven's court. He pronounces judgment on the judges.<sup>1</sup>

2 How long will you judges refuse to listen to the evidence? How long will you shower special favors on the wicked?

3 Give fair judgment to the poor man, the afflicted, the fatherless, the destitute.

4 Rescue the poor and needy from the grasp of evil men.

5 But you are so foolish and so ignorant! Because you are in darkness, all the foundations of society<sup>2</sup> are shaken to the core.

6 I have called you all “gods” and “sons of the Most High.”

7 But in death you are mere men. You will fall as any prince—for all must die.

8 Stand up, O God, and judge the earth. For all of it belongs to You. All nations are in Your hands.

1. Heb.: 'El.

2. Heb.: 'elohim—as in 8:5, 97:7.

3. Cp. Jn. 10:34.

1. Implied from verses 2-4 and 6. Literally, “He judges among the gods.”

2. Literally, “of the earth.”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### EXPOSITION

The introductory vision of this psalm serves the important practical purpose of teaching the Divine authority and heavy responsibility of the office of Judge among men. Judges are here (vers. 1, 6) designated by one of the names of Deity (*elohim*) in accordance with Exo. 21:6, 22:9, for the purpose of teaching—that it is from God their authority is derived; that it is his justice they are appointed to maintain; and that the wrongs of men, in being referred to them to be righted, are supposed to be referred to Divine arbitrament, and therefore should be adjusted with inflexible impartiality (Cp. Deu. 1:16, 17, 16:18-20, 1 S. 8:3, 2 Ch. 19:5-7, Amos 5:12, 15, Mi. 7:3, Isa. 1:17, 3:13-15, Jer. 21:12). At the same time, Judges are hereby reminded, that they themselves are under law, and are liable to be called to an account for the manner in which they discharge the duties of their high office. Hence the Supreme Judge here, in state, appears in their midst, and arraigns them at his bar.

The psalm, being designed for a time of corruption, deals exclusively with Judges who have long been negligent in their office. The words placed in the Divine mouth are weighty in the extreme, and worthy of being prophetically attributed to the Most High. After two lines of expostulation, asking these corrupt Judges how long their perversion of justice is to continue (ver. 2), the Divine Speech, in four strong mandatory lines, charges them to do their duty; which is made to consist in caring for such as are unable to care for themselves (vers. 3, 4). The intention of the next three lines, forming ver. 5, has been variously deciphered; able expositors being of opinion that they form a kind of Divine "aside," in which the corrupt Judges are given up as hopeless, and, with aversion, spoken of in the third person. *They know not*, &c.; nor can it be denied, that to some extent the language applies to them. Nevertheless, a divergent opinion of this verse may perhaps with good reason be maintained; since, on the one hand, it is not certain that these corrupt Judges are quite unaware of the suffering they are inflicting or of the wickedness of their partial and iniquitous decisions; and, on the other hand, an appeal to their compassion, rather than a giving them up as hopeless, seems to constitute a more telling climax to the Divine Expostulation. And when ver. 5 is looked at in this light, it will be seen that every word enhances the weight and pathos of it as a portrayal of the wrong done and the suffering caused by unjust judicial sentences. *They* (the



## PSALM 82

sufferers) *know not, neither can they understand*—how it is that justice has failed them, who it is that is their enemy in court, what are the bribes that have been tendered and accepted to rob them of their rights. *They wander* from the Gate of Justice *in the darkness* of despair, not knowing whither to turn for redress. In fact, *all the foundations of the earth*—of civilised society—seem to be *trembling beneath their feet*:—a circumstance of which their flippant judges, though causing it, may be almost wholly oblivious, and about which, if they have knowledge, they certainly have no solicitude. This exposition of the verse has the further merit, that, without any such break as must otherwise be admitted to occur between the fifth and the sixth verse, this crowning touch of Divine Pity for the wronged and suffering, most naturally leads on, without any change of persons addressed, to the indignant protest which closes the Divine Judge's charge: "*I myself said*—by the mouth of my psalmist—*Divine messengers are ye, Yea sons of the Most High all of you;* nor do I withdraw the distinction which I designed to confer upon you; save as I now denounce you as utterly unworthy of it. *As common mortals shall ye die, yea as princes whom I have overthrown in their rebellion shall ye ignominiously fall.*" Some think that the very next psalm supplies the needed examples.

We seem to be carried forward on the wave of a Messianic flood as we read in the concluding couplet: As if to say, *Oh arise, Elohim, oh judge the earth*—thyself, in a clearer and nearer Divine Manifestation than at present; no longer permitting Justice to be perverted as now; and do this the rather that *all nations* are thine by right, thine by the claim of thy birth as earth's King, into the full possession of which wilt thou be pleased soon to enter.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is indeed a strange court—why?
2. Who is holding the court, i.e. who is the judge? What is the charge?
3. Why should the advice here given be heeded?
4. When justice is perverted a serious problem is faced. Read verse 5 and tell what it is.
5. The position of judge is one of great honor and responsibility, but also one that will not last forever. What should be their attitude?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 83

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Appeal to God for Deliverance from an Impending Invasion.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Israel's Enemies described as the Enemies of God—their Destructive Designs. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, The Parties to the Conspiracy Enumerated. Stanza III., vers. 9-12, Examples of the Overthrow desired, taken from the Book of Judges. Stanza IV., vers. 13-16, Petitions urged for a Complete Overthrow, for High Religious Ends. Stanza V., vers. 17, 18, Re-urged for the Sake of Revealing the Supremacy of Jehovah over all the Earth.

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(Lm.) Song—Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Oh God! let there be no quiet to thee,  
do not be silent neither be still O GOD!
- 2 For lo! thy foes are tumultuous,  
and they who hate thee have lifted up the head.
- 3 Against thy people make they crafty their counsel,  
and conspire together against thy treasured ones.
- 4 They have said—"Come! and let us wipe them out from  
being a nation,  
and let not the name of Israel be remembered any more."
- 5 They have taken counsel with one heart,  
Against thee a covenant would they solemnise;
- 6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites<sup>1</sup>  
[the land] of Moab and the Hagrites,<sup>2</sup>
- 7 [the lords] of Ammon and Amalek,  
the Philistines with the dwellers in Tyre:
- 8 even Assyria hath joined herself with them,  
they have become an arm to the sons of Lot.<sup>3</sup>
- 9 Do to them as to Sisera,<sup>4</sup>  
as to Jabin<sup>4</sup> at the brook Kishon:

1. Gen. 25:12-16.

2. 1 Ch. 5:10.

3. "The Moabites and Ammonites, who seem to be singled out as the leaders of the confederacy. Cp. 2 Ch. 20:1."—Kp.

4. Jdg. 4:22, 23.

## PSALM 83

- 10 Let them be destroyed as Midian at En (Harod),<sup>5</sup>  
let them become as manure for the soil:
- 11 Make them [even] their nobles as Oreb and as Zeeb,<sup>6</sup>  
and as Zebah and Zalmunna<sup>7</sup> all their princes:
- 12 Who said—"Let us take it to ourselves for a possession,  
let us enjoy the pastures of God!"
- 13 O my God! make them as whirling dust,  
as chaff before the wind;
- 14 As fire that burneth up a forest,  
and as a flame that setteth ablaze mountains:
- 15 So mayest thou pursue them with thy tempest,  
and with thy storm-wind<sup>8</sup> dismay them:
- 16 Fill thou their faces with dishonour  
that men may seek thy name O Jehovah.
- 17 Let them be put to shame and dismayed unto futurity,  
and let them be abashed and perish:
- 18 That men may know that thou whose name is Jehovah—  
thou—alone,—  
art Most High<sup>9</sup> over all the earth.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the Wine-presses=The Feast of Tabernacles.  
For the sons of korah.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 83

O God, don't sit idly by, silent and inactive when we pray.  
Answer us! Deliver us!

2 Don't You hear the tumult and commotion of Your  
enemies? Don't You see what they are doing, these proud men  
who hate the Lord?

3 They are full of craftiness and plot against Your people,  
laying plans to slay Your precious ones.

4 Come, they say, and let us wipe out Israel as a nation—  
we will destroy the very memory of her existence.

5 This was their unanimous decision at their summit con-

5. Thus the text shd. be re-constructed in accordance w. Jdg. 7. M.T.:  
"En-dor"—Josh. 17:11.

6. Jdg. 7:25.

7. Jdg. 8:21.

8. Amos 1:14.

9. So, in effect: R.V. (text), Kp., Dr., Carter, Leeser.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

ference—they signed a treaty to ally themselves against Almighty God—

6 These Ishmaelites and Edomites and Moabites and Hagrites;

7 People from the lands of Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia and Tyre;

8 Assyria has joined them too, and is allied with the descendants of Lot.<sup>1</sup>

9 Do to them as once You did to Midian, or as You did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon.

10 And as You did to Your enemies at Endor, whose decaying corpses fertilized the soil.

11 Make their mighty nobles die as Oreb did,<sup>2</sup> and Zeeb;<sup>2</sup> let all their princes die like Zebah<sup>3</sup> and Zalmunna,<sup>3</sup>

12 Who said, "Let us seize for our own use these pasturelands of God!"

13 O my God, blow them away like dust; like chaff before the wind—

14 As a forest fire that roars across a mountain.

15 Chase them with Your fiery storms, tempests and tornados.

16 Utterly disgrace them until they recognize Your power and name, O Lord.

17 Make them failures in everything they do; let them be ashamed and terrified

18 Until they learn that You alone, Jehovah, are the God above all gods in supreme charge of all the earth.

## EXPOSITION

Of the various dates proposed as suiting the origin of this psalm, the two more probable are the time of Jehoshaphat, and that of Jeroboam II.: the former as represented by the narrative in 2 Ch. 20, the latter not being formally recorded at all, but probably conjectured from various data when brought into historical combination. Delitzsch inclines to the days of Jehoshaphat, in preference to those of the Maccabees. But Thrupp, with considerable plausibility, suggests rather the time of Jeroboam II.: arguing that the *Assyrians* could not yet have reached the zenith of their power under Pul and Tiglathpileser; that

1. The Moabites and Ammonites were among Lot's descendants.

2. Judges 7:25.

3. Judges 8:21.

## PSALM 83

*Amalek* could not yet have been destroyed by the Simeonites in the days of Hezekiah (1 Ch. 4:39-43); and that "only at this one period have we any indication of the Phoenicians of Tyre being in league with the eastern enemies of the Israelites." He further thinks that "it was probably the contemporaneous victories of Uzziah and Jeroboam that the confederacy against which the psalmist prayed was finally broken up." The especial feature in Thrupp's view which interests us is his conclusion "that the psalm was composed in reference to a danger which especially threatened the kingdom of the ten tribes," and which he bases on the appeal in prayer being made to events in which the northern tribes were specially interested, coupled with the absence of any allusion to the successes of David. It is true, of course, that Jehoshaphat's prophetic helper was one of the sons of Asaph (2 Ch. 20:14), and *he* may have been the author of this psalm; but, at all events, the more interested in the Northern Tribes the composer of this psalm was, the more this song is thrown into line with several which have preceded it, particularly the 78th and 81st.

There is little that needs to be said with reference to the general course and spirit of this psalm. It is obviously the barest justice to those who thus prayed for the destruction of their enemies to remember: That they were a miraculously redeemed and constituted nation; that they were the people of Jehovah, the appointed witnesses of his holiness, power and grace; that his honour was bound up with his people's preservation and well-being; that the haters of Israel were the haters of Jehovah; and that the effacement of this nation meant the silencing of the only national testimony to Monotheism, and the extinction of the race through whom the World's Redeemer was to come. More than this, the psalm contemplates the seeking of Jehovah's face on the part of other nations, as a chief result of the overthrow of those now in conspiracy. Besides all which, there is the ever-present possibility,—mostly unspoken, but always involved in Jehovah's readiness to shew mercy to the penitent,—that even these rebels on whom vengeance is invoked may by prompt repentance turn away Jehovah's wrath.

It may be added, as a matter of translating interest, that the close of this psalm is one of the few instanced in which both A.V. and R.V. have felt constrained to unveil for the English reader the occurrence in the original of the oft recurring but mostly suppressed sacred name JEHOVAH.

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Of the various dates proposed as suiting the origin of this psalm which two are the more probable?
2. Read II Chron. 20:1-14 and find possible connections to this psalm.
3. Was there any good reason or reasons for God to answer the prayers of this psalm? If so discuss.
4. Someone suggested the thought of the defense of honor is different than the seeking of vengeance. Which is it here? Discuss.

PSALM 84

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Longing of a Levite for the Habitations of Jehovah in Zion,  
with Inspiring Memories of a Past Pilgrimage  
and Exultant Joy in Renewed Service.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, In the Intense Longing of his soul, the Psalmist Draws a Picture from Memory of the Joyous Scene in the Temple Courts, where Birds and Men Evermore Offer Praise. Stanza II., vers. 5-9, He traces a Pilgrim Journey Zionwards; recalling the Cheer by the Way, the Growing Enthusiasm, the Final Hope, and the Impassioned Prayer for the King. Stanza III., vers. 10-12, Renewed Experience of his Levitical Duties, leads him to Contrast his Present Privileges with his Past Detention in the Tents of the Lawless; and moves him to Admire the Character and Gifts of the God whom he Serves. A Three-fold *Refrain* Adapts the psalm to the Levites, to the King, and to Every Believer in Israel.

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(Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 How greatly to be loved are thy habitations Jehovah of hosts!
- 2 My soul longeth yea even languisheth for the courts of  
Jehovah,  
my heart and my flesh ring out their joy unto the God of  
my life.
- 3 Even the bird hath found her a house,  
and the swallow a nest for herself where she hath laid her  
young:

PSALM 84

- 4 At thine altars is praise evermore offered thee<sup>1</sup> my King  
and my God.  
*Jehovah of hosts! how happy are they who abide in thy  
courts!*<sup>2</sup>
- 5 Highways are in their hearts as they pass through the valley  
of Baca:<sup>3</sup>
- 6 A place of springs they make it<sup>4</sup> yea with blessings the early  
rain doth enrobe it.
- 7 They go from strength to strength<sup>5</sup>—"The God of gods will  
be seen in Zion!"<sup>6</sup>
- 8 Jehovah God of hosts! oh hear my prayer,  
oh give ear thou God of Jacob!
- 9 Our shield behold thou O God, and look well on the face of  
thine Anointed!  
*Jehovah of hosts! how happy the man whose stronghold is  
in thee!*<sup>7</sup>
- 10 Surely better is one<sup>8</sup> day in thy courts than a thousand,  
I choose to be on guard at the threshold in the house of my  
God,<sup>9</sup>  
rather than to be dwelling in the tents of the lawless.<sup>10</sup>
- 11 For a sun and shield is Jehovah my God,  
kindness and faithfulness he loveth,<sup>11</sup>  
grace<sup>12</sup> and glory he giveth;  
Jehovah withholdeth no good thing from them who walk  
without blame.
- 12 *Jehovah of hosts, how happy the man who trusteth in thee!*

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the sons of korah = The venerables of song.<sup>13</sup>

1. Two words transposed from next verse: thus avoiding too close an association of the birds with the altars.

2. As it is the happiness of a Levite to abide.

3. Or: "balsam-tree"; or, "weeping."

4. Or (by changing a vowel): "he maketh it."

5. Or: "from battlement to battlement."

6. So in Sep. Cp. G. Intro. 457-459; and Ps. 17:15, 42:2.

7. Transposed, w. Br., from beginning of stanza; so yielding a three-fold refrain to the psalm.

8. Found in Sep.

9. Eminently suited to a Levite.

10. Sometimes = "foreigner."

11. Found in Sep.: apparently original.

12. "Graciousness"—Dr.

13. See Intro., Chapter II., 3.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 84

How lovely is Your Temple, O Lord of the armies of heaven.

2 I long, yes, pant with longing to be able to enter Your courtyard and come near to the Living God.

3 Even the sparrows and swallows are welcome to come and nest among Your altars and there have their young, O Lord of heaven's armies, my King and my God!

4 How happy are Your priests who can always be in Your Temple, singing Your praises.

5 Happy are those who are strong in the Lord, who want above all else to follow Your steps.

6 When they walk through the Valley of Weeping it will become a place of springs where pools of blessing and refreshment collect after rains!

7 They will grow constantly in strength and each of them is invited to meet with the Lord in Zion!

8 O Jehovah, God of the heavenly armies, hear my prayer! Listen, God of Israel!

9 O God, our Defender and our Shield, have mercy on the one You have anointed as Your king.<sup>1</sup>

10 A single day spent in Your Temple is better than a thousand anywhere else! I would rather be a doorman of the Temple of my God than live in palaces<sup>2</sup> of wickedness.

11 For Jehovah God is our Light and our Protector. He gives us grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from those who walk along His paths.<sup>3</sup>

12 O Lord of the armies of heaven, blessed are those who trust in You.

### EXPOSITION

Probably no circumstances better suit the origin of this psalm than those with which the Asaphic psalms have already made us familiar. Given—a time when the Assyrians, after long devastating the North, are in abeyance, and pilgrim-bands are again frequenting the ways to Zion; and given—a Levite singer and door-keeper who has for weary years been prevented from going up to Jerusalem to discharge his duties, but is now fondly

1. Literally, "Your anointed."

2. Literally, "tents."

3. Literally, "walk uprightly."



## PSALM 84

counting on a return to his place in the Temple courts; and conditions are provided well fitted to the composition of this beautiful pilgrim-song.

After an outburst of intense love and desire for the holy place where he has aforetime experienced so much blessing (vers. 1, 2), the writer shows his near intimacy with the courts of Jehovah, by one of those touches of memory which only a resident in the Temple-chambers would have had at his command. He had many a time of old watched the little birds building their nests in the nooks and crannies of the Temple courts; and perchance had little by little come to observe that the music of the choirs and congregation was accustomed to provoke the feathered songsters in their own way to join in the strains. Memory brings back the whole scene: Birds, nestling close by—and singing; priests and Levites, officiating—and singing; visiting worshippers, bringing their offerings—and singing: all in delightful unison. His reminiscence includes in it no awkward juxtaposition of the birds, rather than of the men, with the altar; but simply and naturally reproduces the harmonious whole; and excites his intense desire to share in such joy once more (vers. 3, 4).

But he is not there yet, and his mind is drawn to incidents likely to occur in the journey thither. Many a time has he traversed the roads leading to Zion; and he is able to clothe the ascent with probable incidents, such as he had aforetime known, or such as recent events would easily suggest. The *highways* are in the *minds* of pilgrims long before they start, as they think of the re-unions oft occurring as they go along; or, it may be, they wonder whether the *highways* will now be safe, or whether prudence may not suggest the preference of by-ways through secluded valleys, one such coming to his mind as his song is evolved—the memorable *Valley of Baca*, or *Balsam-vale*, or *Vale of Weeping*, entered with misgiving overnight in weariness and thirst, only to find that by morning the *early rain* has filled the pools and covered the sterile valley with a carpet of blessing. And, whereas, commonly, travellers become the more wearied the farther they go, he has often noticed that as they near their goal on *this* journey, enthusiasm rises, and *at every step their strength increases*. The alternative rendering of this clause is suggestive: *they go from battlement to battlement*—from one entrenched halting-place to another; which might be very prudent if any of the enemy were still lurking in the land.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

But the all-animating thought is: *The God of gods will be seen in Zion!*—some reflection of his shekinah glory; and therewith, it may be, some new prophetic discovery of his ways with Israel, and of his gracious purpose for the future (vers. 5-7).

But this Levite thinks of his earthly king as well as of his heavenly; and calling to mind how much all Israel in general and the Levites in particular are indebted to the good King Hezekiah who is shielding them from foreign foes and home neglect, the psalmist waxes importunate in his prayers for him: *Jehovah God of hosts! oh hear my prayer, Oh give ear, thou God of Jacob; and do this for us—Our shield behold thou, and shield him in mercy to us, O God, And look well, look intently, and with love as thou lookest, on the face of thine Anointed. Jehovah of hosts! how happy the man—*who is like the good king whom thou hast now given to us—who, in presence of Sennacherib and all his hosts, has found that his *stronghold is in thee.*

But events move on. Our Levite has been once more in his office, and spent a happy day in Jehovah's service. And he seems to say: "How much better this than the life I have lived of late!" Prevented from going up to Jerusalem, owning no possessions among the tribes, and compelled, it may be, to do menial work for a piece of bread in the *tents* of the invading *foreigners*, he has felt all the humiliation of it, all the bitterness. Better this—better thus—a *thousand times* better! And then in the ecstasy of his joy, his soul rises up to his God, and dwells upon the fruitful theme of his perfections. *For a sun—*giving heat and light, knowledge and love; *and shield—*affording protection from foes without and foes within, is *Jehovah my God. Kindness and faithfulness he loveth*, because they exist in himself, and he would have them exist also in me; *kindness*, first, without which he would not have created and redeemed, *faithfulness* also, by virtue of which he fulfils his promises and keeps his covenant. *Grace and glory he giveth: grace*, now, to enable me to resist the enticements of sinners and the clamourings of selfishness, and so become *kind and faithful* like himself; and *glory*, hereafter, when he has completed and perfected my character. For, truly, character he seeks, and hence would teach me to *walk uprightly, perfectly, wholeheartedly, without blame;* and from such he *withholdeth no good thing:* least of all the *glory* of a perpetual, perfected, personal existence. And this is Biblical Immortality. To produce this, is the end of Divine

## PSALM 84 AND 85

Revelation; and the subjective instrument of its production being faith in a Perfect God, therefore, *O Jehovah of hosts,—thyself that Perfect One—how happy the man who trusteth in thee!*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham describes the circumstances behind this psalm in a most effective way. Retell them in your own words.
2. What particular desire of the heart is satisfied in the worship of God?
3. The sparrows were no distraction to the psalmist. Would they be to others? Should they be?
4. How could we apply verse 4 to our situation?
5. Who do you know who has claimed the promise of verse 11?

## PSALM 85

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Praise, Prayer and Prophecy lead up to the  
Reconciliation of Earth and Heaven.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Praise to Jehovah for what he has Already Done.  
Stanza II., vers. 4-7, Prayer for what Remains to be Done. Stanza III., vers. 8, 9, A Divine Word Sought by the Prophet. Stanza IV., vers. 10-13, The Final Reconciliation Announced.

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#### (Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 Thou hast shewn favour Jehovah to thy land,  
thou hast restored the fortunes<sup>1</sup> of Jacob,
- 2 Thou hast forgiven<sup>2</sup> the iniquity of thy people,  
thou hast covered all their sin,
- 3 Thou hast withdrawn all thine indignation,  
thou hast turned thee from the glow of thine anger.
- 4 Restore us O God of our salvation,  
and break off thy vexation with us:
- 5 To the ages wilt thou be angry with us?  
wilt thou prolong thine anger to generation and generation?

1. Or: "turned the captivity."

2. Or: "taken away."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 6 Wilt not thou thyself again give us life,  
that thy people may rejoice in thee?
- 7 Shew us Jehovah thy kindness,  
and thy salvation wilt thou give to us?
- 8 Let me hear what the Mighty One<sup>3</sup> Jehovah will speak:  
surely he will speak peace  
unto his people  
and unto his men of kindness  
and unto such as turn their hearts unto him.<sup>4</sup>
- 9 Assuredly near unto such as revere him is his salvation,  
so shall glory abide in our land.
- 10 Kindness and truth have met together,  
Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other:
- 11 Truth out of the earth doth spring forth,  
and Righteousness out of the heavens hath looked down:
- 12 Yea Jehovah giveth that which is good,  
and our land yieldeth her increase:
- 13 Righteousness before him marcheth along,  
and Peace hath made a path of his steps.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 85

Lord, You have poured out amazing blessings on this land!  
You have restored the fortunes<sup>1</sup> of Israel,

2 And forgiven the sins of Your people—yes, covered over  
each one,

3 So that all Your wrath, Your blazing anger, is now ended.

4 Now bring us back to loving You,<sup>2</sup> O Lord, so that Your  
anger will never need rise against us again.

5 (Or will You be always angry—on and on to distant  
generations?)

6 Oh, revive us! Then Your people can rejoice in You  
again.

7 Pour out Your love and kindness on us, Lord, and grant  
us Your salvation.

8 I am listening carefully to all the Lord is saying—for He

3. Heb: *ha el*.

4. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Vul.)—Gn.

1. Literally, "brought back the captivity."

2. Or, "Turn to us."

## PSALM 85

speaks peace to His people, His saints, if they will only stop their sinning.

9 Surely His salvation is near to those who reverence Him; our land will be filled with His glory!

10 Mercy and truth have met together. Grim justice<sup>3</sup> and peace have kissed!

11 Truth rises from the earth and righteousness smiles down from heaven.

12 Yes, the Lord pours down His blessings on the land and it yields its bountiful crops.

13 Justice goes before Him to make a pathway for His steps.<sup>4</sup>

### EXPOSITION

There is a marked difference between the Praise with which this psalm opens and the Prayer which follows thereon. The Praise says—*Thou hast withdrawn all thine indignation*: the Prayer says—*How long shall thine anger continue?* How is this apparent contradiction to be removed? Some critics have proposed a *time* solution, by rendering—*Thou hadst withdrawn it*; but (as it has returned again)—*How long shall it continue?* And this is a possible reconciliation; since a season of Divine favour may be followed by one of Divine displeasure, and under the displeasure the former favour may be pleaded as a reason for its restoration. But perhaps a *dramatic* solution may be more commended, by supposing two parties to be successively represented: first those who are elated with what has already been done by restoring mercy, and who simply give thanks; and, second, those who are oppressed with the burden of what yet remains to be done, and who, in view of that, can scarcely believe that Jehovah's displeasure has yet been turned away. To the successive representation of these two classes—the optimists and the pessimists—the well-known antiphonal character of the Temple-worship would easily lend itself; and, after one Choir had offered the Praise, another might give expression to the Prayer, and thus both classes be assisted to address Jehovah in the language which lay nearest their hearts. Perhaps what chiefly commends this *dramatic* solution of the difficulty is, that it thus gives occasion for a prophetic soloist to intervene with a proposal to seek a new Divine word which shall meet the whole present situation—*Let me hear what the Mighty One, Jehovah,*

3. Literally, "righteousness."

4. Or, "set us in the way of His steps."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

*will speak*; and then, in turn, this solo, in form as well as effect, furnishes a strong lead up to what in any case must be regarded as the climax of the psalm. The soloist says in effect—“*Let me hear a new Divine word to meet our present need, about which we so greatly differ*”; and then, in ver. 10, the Divine Pronouncement begins—perhaps voiced by the united choirs—*Kindness and Faithfulness have met together*.

It is submitted that such a setting as this sends us back to what we have called the *prophetic solo* with new zest, to admire its comprehensive fulness: *Surely he will speak peace, well-being, prosperity, (shalom)*; and that, with a graciously manifold inclusiveness, *unto his people, Israel, as a whole; And unto his men of kindness*, the Levites, in particular, in the centre of his people, to whom many promises await fulfilment (cp. Intro., Chap III., “Kindness”); *And*—thanks to Dr. Ginsburg for the regrouping of the Hebrew letters whereby we are enriched with this new clause—*unto such as turn their hearts unto him*; including, not only the Ten Tribes, but all in any nation who seek him, especially as the concluding description, *such as revere him*, is in the New Testament the favourite phrase for denoting the reverers of Israel’s God lying on the outside of Israel. There is still another hint included in this significant solo which mightily helps us upwards to the high level of the coming climax; and it is found in the words—*So shall Glory abide in our land*; as to which, we could imagine how it would quiver on the lips of Hezekiah, Asaph, Micah and Isaiah in those days of intense excitement, when as yet the *Glory* of the Divine Presence had not departed! Right clearly then follows the climax at last, which assuredly lacks nothing of sublime beauty to render it worthy of being so regarded; namely, as the Divine Response to the Soloist’s appeal. We seem to have reached a land of Beulah, in which Angels are hovering around. *Kindness and Faithfulness have met together*—as if after fulfilling divergent missions, or serving opposing interests—have met for friendly parlance at last. *Yea righteousness*—if anything, sterner than “Faithfulness,” and *Peace* if anything more serene and practical than “Kindness,” have fallen into each other’s embrace, *and kissed each other*. The harmony of divergencies, the reconciling of opposites, is the clear note struck, and far resounding. Full many a time when *Kindness* has cried, “Forgive!” *Faithfulness* has had to protest, “Punish! Thou hast threatened!” When *Righteousness* reminds that there can be no peace

## PSALM 85

while wrongs continue, *Peace* meekly pleads that the wrongs be stayed, that evil be overcome of good. And here, see, these heavenly messengers embracing and kissing each other! There can be no mistaking the significance of the representation. But it may be thought: "Yea, as Divine Attributes these are all harmonisable in God." As if to check such a relinquishment of the human and practical, the figure is broken, and the personification of *Faithfulness* is dropped, for the express purpose of conveying the conception of the impartation of the Divine Quality of faithfulness to the hearts and lives of men. Divine faithfulness therefore now becomes a seed for earthly sowing and human growth—rapid, vigorous growth: *Faithfulness out of the earth doth spring forth*. No wonder that when this point is reached *Righteousness*, the sterner brother of Faithfulness, retaining his personality, the better to suit his intelligent survey of the fruitful earth, *looks down from heaven*, with satisfied and delighted gaze on the fair prospect. Nor is all this mere poetic sentimentality: it is spoken to a nation which for the sins of their souls were being punished by the overthrow of their houses and the trampling down of their soil by the hands and feet of invading hosts. And therefore, not to mock such a nation, in whose history the heavenly and the earthly have ever gone hand-in-hand, the advancing promise condescends upon temporalities, first in general terms, seeing that the words *that which is good* will include earthly blessings as well as heavenly, political as well as social; and seeing further that this inclusion of temporalities is further made certain by the specific promise. *And our land shall yield her increase*. The great Reconciling Promise then runs onward in the further proviso, *Righteousness before him*—our heavenly King—*marcheth along*, seeing that nothing less can please him, nothing less durst meet his face; *And Peace*—if so, with Briggs, we should respell the words—*And Peace hath made a path of his steps*: so that as in this inspection of his inheritance he shews himself to be, so all his servants must be also: they must become imitators of Him.

A splendid climax—a worthy ideal—a practical standard—an inspiring prophecy! Yet, alas! largely unfulfilled! "Glory" once essayed to dwell in the land; but there was no room for it: it was veiled, and by the majority it was mistaken for Shame! Such of us as have caught a glimpse of him, as the glory of the Father, feel that all holy Reconciliation lies embosomed in Him. His life and teaching, his Death and Resurrection, and

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Spirit-ministry from Heaven, have in them the potent charm of the embrace and kissing of Angels. And for the rest we are content to work and wait.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "There is a marked difference between the Praise with which this psalm opens and the Prayer which follows thereon." What is it? How can we reconcile the thoughts?
2. Discuss "the prophetic solo" as here used.
3. Graham Scroggie says of this psalm: "The psalm reflects the feelings of Judah shortly after the return from Babylonian captivity, and with it we should read *Haggai* and the early part of *Zechariah*. The people had expected much from their deliverance, but the harsh realities of their enterprise had stripped off its imaginative charm". Discuss this possibility.
4. Rotherham considers verses 8 through 13 as "the Divine Response to the Soloist's appeal"—is this reasonable? Discuss.
5. Verse six of this psalm is a request of perennial need: "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in Thee?" How can this prayer be answered today?

## PSALM 86

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer of a Tried and Faithful Servant of Jehovah.

### ANALYSIS

The Psalmist prays to be Heard and Answered and for his Life to be Preserved because of his Need (ver. 1), his Devotion and Trust (ver. 2), his Pleading (vers. 3, 4), Adonai's Goodness (vers. 5, 6), and Incomparable Character and Doings (ver. 8); which are So Great that All Nations will Come and Worship (vers. 9, 10). Pleading for Guidance, he Promises Praise (vers. 11, 12) and Bethinks him of a Past Rescue of His Life (ver. 13), which (life) seems to be Again in Danger from Insolent Foes (ver. 14): in view of whom he Pleads the Character of Jehovah as set forth in "THE REFRAIN of the Bible" (ver. 15). He prays for Favour, Strength and Salvation, in view of his own Devotion and that of his Mother (ver. 16); asking for Such a Token as shall Shame his Enemies (ver. 17).



PSALM 86

(Lm.) Prayer—By David.

- 1 Incline Jehovah thine ear, answer me;  
for humbled and needy am I.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Oh guard thou my life,<sup>2</sup> for a man of kindness<sup>3</sup> am I,  
save thy servant thou my God—who turneth his trust unto  
thee.
- 3 Shew me favour Sovereign Lord,<sup>4</sup>  
for unto thee do I cry all the day:
- 4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant,  
for unto thee Sovereign Lord my soul do I lift.
- 5 For thou Sovereign Lord<sup>5</sup> art good and ready to pardon,  
and *abundant in kindness* to all who cry unto thee.
- 6 O give ear Jehovah unto my prayer,  
and oh attend unto the voice of my supplications.
- 7 In my day of distress I cry unto thee,  
surely thou wilt answer me.
- 8 There is none like unto thee among messengers divine<sup>6</sup>  
Sovereign Lord,  
and there are none like thy works.<sup>7</sup>
- 9 All nations which thou hast made  
will come in and bow down before thee Sovereign Lord,<sup>8</sup>  
and give glory to thy name;
- 10 For great art thou and a doer of wondrous things,  
thou art God alone.
- 11 Shew me Jehovah thy way, I would walk in thy truth:  
let my heart rejoice<sup>9</sup> to revere thy name:
- 12 I would thank thee Sovereign Lord my God with all my heart,  
and would fain glorify thy name to the ages.

1. Cp. 40:17, 70:5, 109:22: all ascribed, "To David."

2. U.: "soul."

3. Heb. *hasidh*=receiving and reflecting kindness. "One whom thou lovest"—Kp., Per.; "Godly"—Dr., Del.; "Pious"—Br., Leeser, P.B.; "Devoted to thee"—Carter. N.B., no psalmist elsewhere makes this claim. Cp. Intro, Chap. III., "Kindness."

4. Heb. *adonai*; and so—rendered "Sovereign Lord"—seven times in this psalm; "Jehovah" occurs four times. But here some cod. (w. 5 ear. pr. edns.): "thee Jehovah"—Gn.

5. Some cod.: "thou Jehovah"—Gn.

6. Or: "gods." But see Ps. 8:5. Heb. *'elohim*.

7. Or: "doings."

8. Cp. 22:27.

9. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. Cp. O.G. 402. M.T.: "Unite my heart": i.e., concentrate its energies. But Sep., Syr., with other vowels, have, "Let my heart rejoice"—Dr.

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- 13 For thy kindness is great over me,  
and thou hast rescued my soul from the lower hades.<sup>10</sup>
- 14 O God, insolent men have risen up against me,  
and a congregation of ruthless men<sup>11</sup> have sought my soul,<sup>12</sup>  
and have not set thee before them.
- 15 But thou Sovereign Lord art a *God compassionate and  
gracious,*  
*slow to anger and abundant in kindness and truth.*<sup>13</sup>
- 16 Turn thou unto me and be gracious unto me:  
oh give thy strength unto thy servant,  
and oh bring salvation to the son of thy handmaid.<sup>14</sup>
- 17 Work with me a token<sup>15</sup> for good,  
that they who hate me may see and be put to shame,—  
in that thou Jehovah hast helped me and consoled me.
- (CMm.) For the sons of korah.<sup>16</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 86

Bend down and hear my prayer, O Lord, and answer me,  
for I am deep in trouble.

2 Protect me from death, for I try to follow all Your laws.  
Save me, for I am serving You and trusting You.

3 Be merciful, O Lord; for I am looking up to You in  
constant hope.

4 Give me happiness, O Lord, for I worship only You.

5 O Lord, You are so good and kind, so ready to forgive;  
so full of mercy for all who ask Your aid.

6 Listen closely to my prayer, O God. Hear my urgent cry.

7 I will call to You whenever trouble strikes, and You will  
help me.

8 Where among the heathen gods is there a God like You?  
Where are their miracles?

9 All the nations—and You made each one—will come and  
bow before You, Lord, and praise Your great and holy name.

10. "The lowest part of the interior of the earth"—Del. "The nether Sheol"—Dr. "The nethermost Sheol"—Kp.

11. Cp. 54:3.

12. Or: "life"; but the word is *nephesh*, as in ver. 13.

13. Cp. Exo. 34:6, 7. "The Refrain of the Bible"—Emp. Bible.

14. Cp. 116:16.

15. Or: "sign."

16. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

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10 For You are great, and do great miracles. You alone are God.

11 Tell me where You want me to go and I will go there. May every fiber of my being unite in reverence to Your name.

12 With all my heart I will praise You. I will give glory to Your name forever,

13 For You love me so much! And You are constantly so kind! And You have rescued me from deepest hell.

14 O God, proud and insolent men defy me; violent, godless men are trying to kill me.

15 But You are merciful and gentle, Lord, slow in getting angry, full of constant lovingkindness and of truth;

16 So look down in pity and grant strength to Your servant and save me.

17 Send me a sign of Your favor. When those who hate me see it they will lose face because You help and comfort me.

### EXPOSITION

By the general consent of critics, this psalm is composite to such a degree as nearly to resolve itself into a mosaic, consisting of extracts from other scriptures; yet "even this psalm is not without a significance and beauty of its own"—Del. The psalmist is in a situation bearing considerable resemblance to that of David when persecuted by Saul. In other respects his position is like that of Hezekiah. The psalm is peculiar in having in it no fewer than seven occurrences of the Divine name *Adonai*, here rendered "Sovereign Lord" (as in 8:1, 9). It is notably distinguished by containing a prophecy of the gathering of all nations to worship. Although it takes note of mortal perils past and to come, there is a complete absence from it of pleadings for vengeance: the worst thing this wronged saint desires for his enemies is that they may be put to shame.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please notice the number of references to other psalms: twenty psalms "are laid under contribution" in the formation of this psalm—also references from Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. This is a prayer. What does it teach us as to the wording of our prayers?
2. Consider this prayer as divided into four parts; (1) 1-5; (2) 6-10; (3) 11-13; (4) 15-17. Each is a petition: fol-

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lowing the petition is a reason for answer based on a tribute of God. Find them and incorporate them into life and prayer.

3. This prayer is "full of the Lord"; He is mentioned 16 times. It is also full of the psalmist or David—he mentions himself 35 times. How shall we reconcile this thought?
4. "Unite my heart to fear thy name"—(vs. 116). What a tragic loss is a divided heart. The heart is: will, conscience, emotions and intellect.

## PSALM 87

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Glorious Destiny of Zion as the Metropolis of the Nations.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Jehovah's Preferential Love for Zion Declared.  
Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The Glorious Things Spoken of Zion. A Chorus of Exultation.

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#### (Lm.) Psalm—Song.

- 1 (2) His foundation, on the Holy Mountains 2 Jehovah loveth,—<sup>1</sup>  
the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
- 3 Glorious things are spoken of thee O city of God!
- 4 "I will mention Rahab<sup>2</sup> and Babylon as of them who know<sup>3</sup> me,  
lo! Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia—"This one was born there!" "
- 5 And of Zion it shall be said—"One after another was born in her!"  
and he himself will establish her as highest.<sup>4</sup>
- 6 Jehovah will record when enrolling peoples "This one was born there."

1. Or: (taking previous words as an abrupt heading) carry forward "Jehovah loveth" to next line.

2. That is "Egypt," as in 89:11, Isa. 30:7, 51:9.

3. Or: "acknowledge," as in 1:6 and elsewhere.

4. Cp. Deu. 26:19, 28:1.

## PSALM 87

7 As well singing as dancing—"All my fountains are in thee!"

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For dancings to responsive songs.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 87

High on His holy mountain stands Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> the city of God, the city He loves more than any other!

3 O City of God, what wondrous tales are told of you!

4 Nowadays when I mention among my friends the names of Egypt and Babylonia, Philistia and Tyre, or even distant Ethiopia, someone boasts that he was born in one or another of those countries.

5 But someday the highest honor will be to be a native of Jerusalem! For the God above all gods will personally bless this city.

6 When He registers her citizens He will place a checkmark beside the names of those who were born here!

7 And in the festivals they'll sing, "All my heart is in Jerusalem."

## EXPOSITION

Two chief questions here present themselves: First, *what city* is this of which *glorious things* are said to be spoken? And, second, what is the *sum* of the glorious things affirmed of her?

I. The answer to the first question is easy, to the candid mind: The historical Jerusalem is the city meant,—whether regard be had to the name she bears, to the description given of her, to the countries with which she is here associated, or to the book in which the psalm is found. She is called *Zion*—one of the most familiar names of Jerusalem; she sits on *holy mountains*—a description of the hills of Palestine on which Jerusalem was built, and to no others; she is called *the city of God*, because Jehovah there took up his symbolical abode, and made her the seat of his Messianic King; she is brought into comparison with *the dwellings of Jacob*, as more loved than they,—*Jacob* being a favourite name borne by the nation of Israel; she is related here in the psalm to *Rahab* (Egypt), *Babylon*, *Philistia*, *Tyre*,

1. Literally, "Zion."

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and *Ethiopia*: nations known to have existed in the day of Jerusalem's ancient story and to have had dealings with the Hebrew nation. Add the fact, that this psalm is found in a collection of Israelitish songs, and the evidence is as complete as the most exacting could wish: That Jerusalem is the city engemmed in this psalm.—No objection can be raised against this conclusion, by merely alleging that the *glorious things* spoken of this *city of God* are *too glorious* ever to be made good of the earthly Jerusalem, unless we are quite sure that the glorious things are altogether beyond Jehovah's power and will to make her own. In fine, this psalm, if never yet fulfilled, itself implies that Jerusalem *has a future*;—and why should she not? Numerous concurrent prophecies plainly teach the same thing: implies that Jerusalem will be made *more glorious* in the future than in the past,—and why should she not? again, many prophecies point to the same conclusion.

II. What then is the *sum* of the *glorious things* spoken of Jerusalem?

1. Let us remember that we have here a word for Jehovah, the Living God, the God of all the earth: of whom we have lately read: "All nations which thou hast made will come in and bow down before thee O Lord, and give glory to thy name; for great art thou, and a doer of wonders, Thou art God alone." It may be, then, that here we have an intimation of some of the "wonders" which he purposes to do for and with the nations of the earth.

2. A hint is here given, at the outset of this psalm, to expect something *fundamental* in Jehovah's dealings with Israel and the earth: *His foundation on the holy mountains Jehovah loveth*. "Foundation"—of *what*? Not of his Church; for that has no earthly foundation, and is not an earthly structure—its home is in the heavens. But of his *Kingdom*—yes; seeing that "the kingdom of the world" is to become "the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15). The *foundation*—of his kingdom—*Jehovah loveth*; and that foundation is *Zion, the city of God*.

3. It is clear that pre-eminence of some kind is here reserved for *Zion*. Other places are mentioned as well as "Zion"; but there is a manifest intention to place "Zion" higher than the rest. *Egypt and Babylon* are described as *knowing* or even *acknowledging* Jehovah, and that is much. Nevertheless, it is not regarded as a special privilege to have been *born* in *Egypt, Baby-*

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lon, Philistia, Tyre or Ethiopia. It is quite the contrary with Zion. For, although Jehovah is represented as taking a census of the *peoples* in general, and thereby shewing an interest in them all, yet it is only when he comes to the names of certain individuals among the rest, that he exclaims—as if with the joy of a proprietor discovering his own property, or of a father detecting the names of his own children—*This one was born there*. That is, not “here” in Egypt (or, as the case may be); but *there*—in Zion. When, however, Zion herself is passed in review, the language is intentionally different: it is no longer “This one”; but, more sweepingly, (lit.) *Man and man=man after man=one after another—was born in her*. The multiplication of Zion’s children is the least that can be intended: their *indefinite* multiplication, as in a series ever running on, may very well be meant, as many critics suppose. In this concrete and dramatic way the preference of “Zion” to all other cities is plainly shewn.

4. But we are not left to inference in concluding this intention to be dominant: the second half of ver. 5 appears to have been expressly intended to put this beyond doubt. If, with most critics, we render that clause, *He himself, the Most High, will establish her*,—it is still obvious that this is said of no other city or nation. Even then—taking the clause at its minimum value—it seems expressly designed to guard against the fear of Zion’s supremacy being endangered by her very prosperity, by the very multiplication of her children: a natural fear, surely,—if such children are *adopted* children, that is, Gentile converts counted as citizens of Zion; in which case, it might be feared that, with so *many* adopted children scattered throughout the nations of the earth, Zion herself would be de-Zionised, and made nearly as much Gentile as any avowed Gentile city. No! says this clause: *the Most High himself* will guard against that danger—will see to it that she does not lose the pre-eminence he designs her to have: He will *establish her* in it. So much, *at the least*, this clause means. But it is now submitted with confidence that, rightly rendered, it says more: it says—*And he himself will set her up (or establish her) as highest*. This point could scarcely have been missed if it had been observed that the same word (*‘elyon*) is not only employed of the Messianic King in David’s line “Highest (*‘elyon*) of (or to) the kings of the earth” (89:27) but is actually twice used of Israel *as a nation* in Deu. 26:19, 28:1—“Jehovah (hath avowed) that he will set thee (*‘elyon*) on

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

high, above all the nations of the earth." There can therefore be no reasonable doubt, especially if the order of the words here in the psalm is considered—that this clause should be rendered: *And he himself will establish her as highest*: namely, he will do that which the psalm as a whole attests to be his purpose; and so he will guard against the danger of Zion's being lowered by the very multiplication of her citizen-converts. Jehovah intends her to be *highest*; and will take care that his intention in this respect is not frustrated.

5. But the more clearly this leading point in the psalm is discriminated, the more urgent does it become to grasp with firmness and tenacity a position already taken in passing: namely, that this psalm fully and directly, in its length and breadth, relates, not to the Church of Jesus, but more broadly to the Kingdom of God. For, let it be well observed, there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the Church; and, in the Church, certainly no such pre-eminence can be assigned to the *literal Zion* as is here assigned to her. Let us make up our minds. Does membership in the Church of Christ constitute us citizens of the earthly Jerusalem? So few will dare to say "Yes" to this question, that they may safely be disregarded. Practically, all Christians, with one voice, admit and proclaim that *our* "new birth" makes us citizens, not of the earthly Jerusalem, but of the heavenly. To abide by that conclusion, is no doubt to cut ourselves logically free from this psalm, since, as we have seen, *IT* unmistakably refers to the earthly Jerusalem. To be firm here, is to lose nothing of value, forasmuch as we can still use the psalm *by analogy* as a suggestion of things in the heavens. But, while we shall lose nothing of value, we shall lose much that is an encumbrance, apt to lead us continually into contradicting our heavenly standing and privileges. On the other hand, our gain will be immense: the Church of Christ being safe in her own New Testament rights, as based upon her peculiar promises, we can look beyond the completion of the present Church into the Kingdom which is to follow; and see a large territory of blessing in those regions beyond; and humbly claim a general right to those blessings in the name of our Heavenly Lord, who owns earth as well as heaven; and is the Redeemer of Israel and Jerusalem's King-elect, as well as Head of his Ecclesia.

6. With the ground thus cleared of misconception, we can rejoice exceedingly in the prospect of blessings, in the coming Kingdom, which thus opens out before us. Jerusalem, restored—



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to her God, to her Messiah, to her Land—thus becomes the spiritual Metropolis of the peoples that are spared to enter into this latter-day comity of nations. Citizens of the honoured city Jerusalem will be found scattered through the nations. Jerusalem will be their spiritual home: frequently will these citizen converts go up to Jerusalem to worship: the mountain of the Lord's House—the Temple restored—will be lifted up above the hills, and all nations will flow unto it. The Messiah will reign there: his will—his law—his instructions for the guidance of the nations—will be made known there, and propagated from thence. To fill out the picture would require the transcription of the prophecies in Isaiah and elsewhere. See especially Isa. 2:2-4, 4:2-6, 19:21-24, 25:6-9, 54, 60, 66:7-22, Zeph. 3:14-20: with respect to which it should be observed—that they have only to be taken in their natural and obvious sense to suit them for being set in the frame-work which this psalm affords:—"their natural and obvious sense"—as opposed on the one hand to the purely allegorical and prematurely spiritualised interpretation, from which nothing comes out as it goes in, nothing really means what it appears to mean; and, on the other hand, as opposed to the *slavishly* literal, which, for example, insists that this enumeration of nations (in Ps. 87) must be pressed just as it stands, although it had of necessity to be fitted to the time when the psalm was composed, and be intelligible then, and that it may not be taken as indicating generally the larger and smaller nations by whom Zion is surrounded in the latter day. Holding thus to "the natural and obvious sense" of this psalm, and of the prophecies which properly go with it and explain it,—we can enter with appreciation into the concluding verse of the psalm.

7. Though other interpretations have been put upon ver. 7, the following appears to be its meaning. We are allowed to catch a glimpse of a procession of Zion's citizens—if of such as ordinarily dwell in foreign lands so much the better—drawing near to enter into her *gates*. They are full of joy: they *sing* and *play* and *dance* as they move along. And, looking to the city before them, they exclaim in their song, each speaking for himself: "All my fountains are in thee"—"all my sources of privilege, all my springs of delight *are in thee, O city of God.*" "Better than *the dwellings of Jacob*, better than our homes in *Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia*, where we commonly

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live and labour,—better far than all these, art thou, *O Zion*, object of Jehovah's especial love!"

Logically, we thus close the psalm: analogically we still, for a moment, linger over it. This earthly Jerusalem reminds us of the heavenly; and it is the heavenly that is "our mother" (Gal. 4:26). Just as the earthly Jerusalem is constituted the Metropolis of the earth, so the heavenly Jerusalem is constituted the Metropolis of earth and heaven, brought into a higher unity, including angels and men. We who are now being born from above, are enrolled in Heaven (Heb. 12:23); we are called to become the Bride of the Lamb: all the rights and possessions of our espoused Lord are to be made our own. He is the Son of God as well as the Son of David; and therefore *we* are to "inherit all things." The earthly enrolment lingers: the heavenly is proceeding. Earth, for the present, has refused her King; but Heaven has given him welcome (Acts 3:21); and now, for the present, the heavenly advance has taken the precedence of the earthly. Instead of looking forward into the future to discover *our* Mother-city, *we* look straight up into the skies, and there by faith we behold her, with open arms waiting to receive us. And, as we look up, we exclaim with ecstasy—*All my fountains*—God, Christ, the Spirit, angels, the heirship of the Universe—*all my fountains are in thee.*

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is the reference to Jerusalem to be understood only as it means the physical city. Discuss.
2. There seems to be some strong objections to relating the name Jerusalem (as here used) to the church—why? Discuss.
3. Read Isa. 2:2-4; 4:2-6; 19:21-24; 25:6-9; Chapters 54; 60:66:7-22; Zeph. 3:14-20 and discuss their meaning for us and the future.
4. Is there some "Commonwealth of nations" suggested in verses 4 through 7? Discuss.
5. Do you agree with Rotherham's interpretation? Discuss.

PSALM 88

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Anguished Cry of one Smitten and Forsaken.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Urgent Prayer to be Heard. Stanzas II., III., IV., V., vers. 3, 4; 5; 6, 7; 8, 9, The Sufferer Pleads his Pitiabie Case. Stanza VI., vers. 10-12, The Incapacity of the Dead to know God's Mercies and Praise Him. Stanzas VII., VIII., vers. 13-15; 16-18, Prayer Renewed and Continued, with Further Pleadings urged.

(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By Herman the Ezrahite.

- 1 Jehovah God of my salvation!  
by day<sup>1</sup> I make outcry—[yea] in the night in thy presence<sup>2</sup>
- 2 Let my prayer come in before thee,  
Incline thine ear to my piercing<sup>3</sup> cry.
- 3 For sated with misfortune is my soul,  
and my life at hades hath arrived:
- 4 I am reckoned with them who are going down to the pit,  
I have become like a man without help.<sup>4</sup>
- 5 Among the dead am I free,<sup>5</sup>  
like the slain who are lying in the grave,—  
whom thou rememberest no longer,  
since they away from thy hand are cut off.
- 6 Thou hast laid me in the lower pit,  
in dark places in the gulfs:<sup>6</sup>
- 7 Upon me hath pressed down thy wrath,  
and with all thy breakers hast thou caused humiliation.
- 8 Thou hast far removed my familiar friends from me,  
thou hast made me an abomination unto them,—  
shut up and I cannot come forth.

1. M.T. (prob. by losing a letter): "When."

2. "Read proably with very slight changes,—'Jehovah, my God, I cry for help by day, (and) in the night my calling is before thee'"—Dr.

3. Ml.: "ringing." "Yell"—Br.

4. "Without God"—Br.

5. "That is, adrift, cut off from Jehovah's remembrance"—O.G. Some read: "is my soul."

6. Or: "deeps." "Dense darkness" (transp. letters)—Br.

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- 9 Mine eye hath languished by reason of humiliation,  
I have cried unto thee through every day;  
I have spread out unto thee my palms:—
- 10 "For the dead wilt thou do a wonder,  
or shall the shades arise give thee thanks?"
- 11 Shall thy kindness be told in the grave,  
thy faithfulness in destruction!<sup>8</sup>
- 12 Shall a wonder of thine be made known in the dark,  
and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"
- 13 But I unto thee Jehovah have cried for help,  
and in the morning my prayer cometh to meet thee.
- 14 Why Jehovah rejectest thou my soul,  
hidest thy face from me?
- 15 Humbled have I been and ready to breathe my last from my  
youth up,  
I have borne the terror of thee and am benumbed.<sup>9</sup>
- 16 Over me have passed thy bursts of burning anger,<sup>10</sup>  
Thine alarms have exterminated me:
- 17 They have surrounded me like waters all the day,  
they have come circling against me together.
- 18 Thou hast put far from me lover and companion,  
my familiar friends are—darkness!<sup>11</sup>

(CMM.) For the sons of korah.<sup>12</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 88

O Jehovah, God of my salvation, I have wept before You  
day and night.

2 Now hear my prayers; oh, listen to my cry,

3 For my life is full of troubles, and death draws near.

4 They say my life is ebbing out—a hopeless case.

5 They have left me here to die, like those slain on battle-  
fields, from whom Your mercies are removed.

6 You have thrust me down to the darkest depths.

7. Cp. 6:5 n.

8. Heb. *'abaddon*; only in Job 26:6, 28:22, 31:12; Ps. 88:11; Prov. 15:11, 27:20; "Place of ruin in Sheol for lost or ruined dead"—O.G.

9. "I must be distracted"—Del. "I endure, I am brought low, I am turned backward"—Br.

10. "Thy fires of wrath"—Del.

11. Some Cod. (w. Syr.): "restraint"—Gn.

12. See Intro, Chapter II., 3.

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7 Your wrath lies heavy on me; wave after wave engulfs me.

8 You have made my friends to loathe me, and they have gone away. I am in a trap with no way out.

9 My eyes grow dim with weeping. Each day I beg Your help; O Lord, I reach my pleading hands to You for mercy.

10 Soon it will be too late! Of what use are Your miracles when I am in the grave? How can I praise You then?

11 Can those in the grave declare Your lovingkindness? Can they proclaim Your faithfulness?

12 Can the darkness speak of Your miracles? Can anyone in the Land of Forgetfulness talk about Your help?

13 O Lord, I plead for my life and shall keep on pleading day by day.

14 O Jehovah, why have You thrown my life away? Why are You turning Your face from me, and looking the other way?

15 From my youth I have been sickly and ready to die. I stand helpless before Your terrors.

16 Your fierce wrath has overwhelmed me. Your terrors have cut me off.

17 They flow around me all day long.

18 Lover, friend, acquaintance—all are gone. There is only darkness everywhere.

## EXPOSITION

This is the gloomiest psalm in the book, and one of the most touching; if not, also, one of the most encouraging—when all things are considered. It is an elaborate description of almost hopeless sorrow; but its spirit is peculiarly gentle and patient. It contains no reproaches of men, and no upbraidings of God. The sufferings portrayed are not traced to man's infliction, but exclusively to the Divine hand; and yet the psalmist does not speak against God, far less does he turn away from him. He still clings to him,—it may be with a slender hope, but with evident tenacity. His hope is inarticulate; for he does not once say what it is he hopes for. Evidently he wishes not to die; and yet the life he has been living appears, from his own description of it, to have been little better than a living death—from which he might not unnaturally have desired to be freed once for all. But no! he unmistakably clings to life; and,—on the principle that, while there is life there is hope, we may

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fairly infer that restoration to health is tacitly included in his longing.

What is his affliction? Almost certainly, it is leprosy. With this agrees his separation from his *friends*, which he most bitterly feels; and his assertion that he has become to them an *abomination*. His separation from his friends involves confinement: he is *shut up*, and *cannot, must not, go forth*. This separation moreover is complete. They treat him *as dead*—are every day expecting to hear of his decease. They hold no communication with him. His leprosy is of long standing: it has plagued him *from his youth up*. Yet it seems to have fluctuated in intensity; coming back on him like surging *fire*, like returning *breakers*, by their violence ready to dash him in pieces. Connecting—as he does and as was commonly done in his day, especially in this disease—his affliction with the punitive hand of God, he terms the renewed onsets of his trouble *bursts of Divine anger*. They are alarming, from them there is no escape. Full many a time he has given himself up for lost—has, to his feeling, been *exterminated*. He is at *death's door* now: he has anticipated being dead—being in *hades*—nay being in the *lower hades*: among those cast off and down into the *lower pit of hades*, among the especial objects of Divine *indignation*.

And yet he prays. He has been accustomed to pray every day; and especially of a morning: *in the morning my prayer regularly cometh to meet thee*—on thine approach in the daylight. And though, as regularly as he prays, he is rejected, still he prays.

And truly he has prayed to some purpose—to better purpose than he knows. This we have already seen in his restraining himself from reproaching either man or God; but we have yet to see it in the tenor of his prayer as he stands before Jehovah with uplifted palms (vers. 10-12). He prays against Death: but why? What is the predominating motive pervading these six sustained interrogatories? *Why* does he pray against death? Self may run through all—this was inevitable; but self never once comes to the surface: it is Jehovah, his perfections and works; the fear that Jehovah should lack his due praise; these are the sentiments which animate these questions. They take for granted that such grounds for praise exist: that Jehovah is a *doer of wonders*, one who deserves *thanks*; a God of *kindness* and *faithfulness* and *righteousness*, manifested in such acts as can be enumerated and remembered. The psalmist clearly craves to take part in such thanks and praise. He may even

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be credited with a hope of adding to the sum of reasons for such praise by his own improved and brightened history. At all events, this is the sustained feeling which inspires this series of interrogations. He may be right, or he may be wrong, in assuming that such praise cannot be given by *the dead*—by *the shades*—*in the grave, in destruction, in the dark, in the land of forgetfulness*. At least, that is the view he entertains,—the groundwork of his conclusions; and he is anxious that his God should not be robbed of the praise due to him. And, therefore, on all grounds—because he incriminates neither man nor God for his lifelong sufferings, and also because he desires God to be praised—we conclude that he has not prayed in vain.

Probably he was not wholly wrong in assuming that God can gather no harvest of praise from the dead; that is, from the dead so long as they continue dead. What he needed was, to have "life and incorruption brought to light"—to have the prospect of Resurrection introduced into his thoughts, and therewith the conception of a revival of memory and a resumption of praise. Whether, to us who live after "life and incorruption" have been disclosed in Christ, there comes a double relief,—not only the prospect of an end to the hades state and light at the end, but a decided lessening of the intermediate gloom, is an interesting question. It is hard to think that those ancient saints, so favourably commended to our respect as this great sufferer, were wholly wrong. They may have been nearly right as far as they were able to go. Right: if they thought of death only as a suspense of active memory and of public praise; the which, combined, do not amount to a final cessation of being,—an extreme view which few if any saints of old entertained, certainly as regards such as revered God. But always deficient: so long as they failed to grasp the prospect of a complete restoration to life, and therewith the revival of active memory and the resumption of the delightful duty of public praise. It is suggested that, along lines such as these, a complete harmonisation of Old Testament and New may, after the vacillation and oscillation of centuries, be reasonably expected to come. Meantime it is permitted us to hope, that this ancient psalmist, who suffered so much and knew so little, has already become conscious of Messiah's triumph over death, and has the prospect—if not yet the realisation—of sharing therein. So chastened a sufferer as Heman the Ezrahite will assuredly "stand in his lot at the end of the days."

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "This is one of the gloomiest psalms in the book, and one of the most touching; if not, also, one of the most encouraging"—how can this be?
2. Why is it thought the affliction of the writer is leprosy?
3. *Why* does the psalmist pray against death?
4. Is it not true that the dead cannot or do not praise God? How is it that such is stated here?
5. What hope was there for this sufferer?

PSALM 89

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Covenant with David Contrasted with the  
Present Dishonour of David's Heir.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Keynotes of the psalm—Jehovah's Kindness and Faithfulness. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Brief Summary of Jehovah's Covenant with David. Stanzas III.-VII., vers. 5-14, The Character, Court Works and Dominion of the Covenant God. Stanza VIII., IX., vers. 15-18, The Happy Estate of the Covenant People. Stanzas X.-XIX., vers. 19-37, The Provisions of the Covenant, Poetically and Prophetically Amplified. Stanzas XX.-XXIII., vers. 38-45, The Dishonour Permitted to David's Heir Pathetically Described. Stanzas XXIV., XXV., vers. 46-51, Remonstrance against the Continuance of this Dishonour, urged by the Shortness and Vanity of Life, the Certainty of Death, the Memory of Former Kindnesses, and the Unanswerable Insults heaped on David's Heir—Jehovah's Anointed.

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(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By Ethan the Ezrahite.

- 1 The kindness of Jehovah to the ages let me sing,  
to generation after generation let me make known thy  
faithfulness with my mouth.
- 2 For I have said<sup>1</sup> "To the ages shall kindness be built up,  
the heavens—thou wilt establish thy faithfulness therein."
- 3 "I have solemnised a covenant for my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant:

1. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "thou saidst"—Gn. Following this reading, some begin the Divine speech here, with the necessary changes.



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- 4 'Unto the ages will I establish thy seed,  
and will build up to generation after generation thy throne.'"  
5 And the heavens will confess<sup>2</sup> thy wonder O Jehovah,  
yea thy faithfulness in the assembly of thy holy ones.  
6 For whom in the skies can one compare to Jehovah?  
can liken to Jehovah among the sons of the mighty?<sup>3</sup>  
7 A GOD inspiring awe<sup>4</sup> in the great circle of the holy ones,  
and to be feared above all who are round about him.  
8 Jehovah God of hosts! who like thee is potent O Yah?  
with thy tokens of faithfulness surrounding thee?  
9 Thou rulest the proud swelling of the sea,<sup>5</sup>  
when its waves rise high thou stillest them.  
10 Thou didst crush—as one deadly wounded—Rahab,  
with thy strong arm thou didst scatter thy foes.  
11 Thine are the heavens yea thine the earth,  
the world and its fulness thou didst found them:  
12 North and south thou didst create them,  
Tabor and Hermon in<sup>6</sup> thy name ring out their joy.  
13 Thine is an arm [endued] with might,  
thou strengthenest thy hand exaltest thy right hand:  
14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne,  
kindness and truth come to meet thy face.  
15 How happy the people who know the sacred shout!  
Jehovah! in the light of thy face they firmly march along,<sup>7</sup>  
16 In thy name they exult all the day,  
and in thy righteousness are they exalted.<sup>8</sup>  
17 For the beauty of their strength<sup>9</sup> art thou,  
and by thy favour thou exaltest our horns;<sup>10</sup>  
18 For to Jehovah belongeth our shield,  
and to the Holy One of Israel our king.  
19 Then spakest thou in vision to thy men<sup>11</sup> of kindness and  
didst say:—

2. Or: "celebrate" (so Dr.).

3. Or: "God." Heb.: 'elim.

4. Or: "fear-inspiring."

5. "It is Thou that tamest the insolence of the sea"—Del.

6. "At"—Dr., Del.

7. "Said of walking along in a self-assured, solemn manner"—Del.

8. Gt.: "they ring out their joy."

9. "Their strength, which turns out, proves, to be their ornament"—Del.

10. So (pl.) in many MSS., and in 4 ear. pr. edns.; but "horn"  
(sing.) in 7 ear. pr. edns.—Gn.

11. So (pl.) in many MSS., 3 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Vul.; but "man"  
(sing.) in some cod., w. 7 ear. pr. edns.—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- "I have laid help<sup>12</sup> on a hero,  
 I have exalted one chosen from the people.  
 20 "I have found David my servant,  
 with my holy oil have I anointed him:  
 21 With whom my hand shall be established,  
 yea mine own arm shall strengthen him.  
 22 "An enemy shall not make exactions of him,  
 nor a son of perversity humiliate him:  
 23 But I will shatter from before him his adversaries,  
 and them who hate him will I smite.  
 24 "And my faithfulness and my kindness shall be with him,  
 and through my name shall his horn be exalted;  
 25 And I will set on the sea his hand,  
 and on the rivers<sup>13</sup> his right-hand.  
 26 "He shall cry out to me—"My father art thou,  
 my GOD and my rock of salvation,"  
 27 I also will grant him to be first-born,  
 most high<sup>14</sup> to the kings of the earth.  
 28 "To the ages will I keep for him my kindness,  
 and my covenant is made sure to him;  
 29 And I will appoint to futurity his seed,  
 and his throne as the days of the heavens.  
 30 "If his sons forsake my law,  
 and in my regulations do not walk:  
 31 If my statutes they profane,  
 and my commandments do not keep  
 32 "Then will I visit with a rod their transgression,  
 and with strokes<sup>15</sup> their iniquity;  
 33 But my kindness will I not break off<sup>16</sup> from him,  
 nor falsify my faithfulness.  
 34 "I will not violate my covenant,  
 nor that which hath issued out of my lips will I change.  
 35 One thing have I sworn by my holiness,  
 surely unto David will I not be false:—  
 36 "His seed to the ages shall remain,  
 and his throne be as the sun before me:

12. *Gt.*: "a crown" (cp. 132:18); or "strength"—Gn.

13. "A poetic generalisation of the 'River' (i.e., the Euphrates); cp. Exo. 33:31 and Ps. 72:8"—Dr.

14. Cp. 87:5.

15. "Scourges"—Del. N.B., the word associated with leprosy: Lev. 13, 14; 2 Sam. 7:14, Pss. 38:11 (note), 39:10.

16. Some cod. (w. Aram., Syr.): "take away." Cp. 2 Sam. 7:15—Gn.

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- 37 As the moon be established to the ages,  
and the witness in the skies is faithful.”
- 38 Yet thou thyself hast cast off and rejected,  
thou has been indignant with thine Anointed :
- 39 Thou hast spurned the covenant of thy servant,  
thou hast profaned to the ground his crown.
- 40 Thou hast broken down all his fences,  
thou hast laid all his fortresses in ruins :
- 41 All the passers by the way have plundered him,  
he hath become a reproach to his neighbours.
- 42 Thou hast exalted the right hand of his adversaries,  
hast gladdened all his enemies :
- 43 Yea thou turnest back the edge of his sword,  
and hast not made him stand in the battle.
- 44 Thou hast made him lose his lustre,<sup>17</sup>  
and his throne to the ground hast thou hurled :
- 45 Thou hast shortened the days of his youth,  
thou hast wrapped him about with shame.
- 46 How long Jehovah wilt thou hide thyself utterly?  
[how long] shall thy wrath burn like fire?
- 47 Remember Sovereign Lord<sup>18</sup> what duration is,  
for what unreality hast thou created all the sons of men!<sup>19</sup>
- 48 Who is the man that shall live and not see death,  
that shall deliver his soul from the hand of hades?
- 49 Where are thy former kindnesses Sovereign Lord,  
which thou didst swear to David in thy faithfulness?
- 50 Remember Sovereign Lord the reproach of thy servants,<sup>20</sup>  
I have put in my bosom the insult<sup>21</sup> of the peoples :
- 51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached O Jehovah,  
wherewith they have reproached the footsteps<sup>22</sup> of thine  
Anointed!

17. By emendation: “Thou hast taken away the sceptre of majesty”—  
Br.

18. So several critics, by supplying a letter. “O remember how short my  
time is”—Dr. “Remember I—how short my time is!”—Del. “Of what  
duration I am”—O.G.

19. Or: “Adam.”

20. Some cod. (w. Syr.): “servant” (sing.)—Gn.

21. So it shd. be (w. Aram.). Cp. Eze. 36:15—Gn.

22. “Pursue and persecute him, wherever he goes and whatever he  
does”—Del.

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Blessed be Jehovah to the ages!<sup>23</sup>  
Amen and Amen!

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 89

Forever and ever I will sing about the tender kindness of the Lord! Young and old shall hear about Your blessings.

2 Your love and kindness are forever; Your truth is as enduring as the heavens.

3, 4 The Lord God says,<sup>1</sup> "I have made a solemn agreement with My chosen servant David. I have taken an oath to establish his descendants as kings forever on his throne, from now until eternity!"

5 All heavens shall praise Your miracles, O Lord; myriads of angels<sup>2</sup> will praise You for Your faithfulness.

6 For who in all of heaven can be compared with God? What mightiest angel<sup>3</sup> is anything like Him?

7 The highest of angelic powers<sup>2</sup> stand in dread and awe of Him. Who is as revered as He by those surrounding Him?

8 O Jehovah, commander of the heavenly armies, where is there any other Mighty One like You? Faithfulness is Your very character.

9 You rule the oceans when their waves arise in fearful storms; You speak, and they lie still.

10 You have cut haughty Egypt<sup>4</sup> to pieces. Your enemies are scattered by Your awesome power.

11 The heavens are Yours, the world, everything—for You created them all.

12 You created north and south! Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon rejoice to be signed by Your name as their maker!

13 Strong is Your arm! Strong is Your hand! Your right hand is lifted high in glorious strength.

14, 15 Your throne is founded on two strong pillars—the one is Justice and the other Righteousness. Mercy and Truth walk before You as Your attendants. Blessed are those who

23. *Ml.*: "to concealed duration."

1. *Implied.*

2. *Literally,* "the assembly of the holy ones."

3. *Literally,* "the sons of the mighty."

4. *Literally,* "Rahab."

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hear the joyful blast of the trumpet, for they shall walk in the light of Your presence.

16 They rejoice all day long in Your wonderful reputation and in Your perfect righteousness.

17 You are their strength! What glory! Our power is based on Your favor!

18 Yes, our protection is from the Lord Himself and He, the Holy One of Israel has given us our king.

19 In a vision You spoke to Your prophet<sup>5</sup> and said, "I have chosen a splendid young man from the common people to be the king—

20 He is My servant David! I have anointed him with My holy oil.

21 I will steady him and make him strong.

22 His enemies shall not outwit him, nor shall the wicked overpower him.

23 I will beat down his adversaries before him, and destroy those who hate him.

24 I will protect and bless him constantly and surround him with my love; he will be great because of Me.

25 He will hold sway from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea.

26 And he will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, my God, and my Rock of Salvation.'

27 I will treat him as My firstborn son, and make him the mightiest king in all the earth.

28 I will love him forever, and be kind to him always; My covenant with him will never end.

29 He will always have an heir; his throne will be as endless as the days of heaven.

30, 31, 32 If his children forsake My laws and don't obey them, then I will punish them.

33 But I will never completely take away My lovingkindness from them, nor let My promise fail.

34 No, I will not break My covenant; I will not take back one word of what I said.

35, 36 For I have sworn to David, (and a holy God can never lie), that his dynasty will go on forever, and his throne will continue to the end of time.<sup>6</sup>

5. Literally, "Your saint;" apparently a reference to Samuel, who was sent to anoint David as king.

6. Literally, "his throne as the sun before me."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

37 It shall be eternal as the moon, My faithful witness in the sky!"

\* \* \* \* \*

38 Then why cast me off, rejected? Why be so angry with the one You chose as king?

39 Have You renounced Your covenant with him? For You have thrown his crown in the dust.

40 You have broken down the walls protecting him and laid to ruins every fort defending him.

41 Everyone who comes along has robbed him while his neighbors mock.

42 You have strengthened his enemies against him and made them rejoice.

43 You have struck down his sword and refused to help him in battle.

44 You have ended his splendor and overturned his throne.

45 You have made him old before his time and publicly disgraced him.

\* \* \* \* \*

46 O Jehovah, how long will this go on? Will You hide Yourself from me forever? How long will Your wrath burn like fire?

47 Oh, remember how short You have made man's lifespan. Is it an empty, futile life You give the sons of men?

48 No man can live forever. All will die. Who can rescue his life from the power of the grave?

49 Lord, where is the love You used to have for me? Where is Your kindness that You promised to David with a faithful pledge?

50 Lord, see how all the people are despising me.

51 Your enemies joke about me, the one You anointed as their king.

52 And yet—blessed be the Lord forever! Amen and Amen!

## EXPOSITION

It is not difficult for the patient and thorough reader to grasp the scope of this psalm; but very easy for anyone perusing it in haste to miss its great argument, owing to the length of the psalm, and to the extraordinary development given to the Covenant made with David—a development so enthusiastic and long sustained as scarcely to suggest that a companion picture is to follow towards the close of the psalm, one of deep gloom,

## PSALM 89

to which all the previous dazzling brightness is intended to serve as a mere foil. At the lowest estimate, this long delay to reveal the true object of the poem, springs from the consummate art of the poet: at the higher estimate of Divine intention, it suggests that there is more of the Plan of Redemption wrapped up in the Davidic Covenant than Gentile Christians are apt to suppose. Be that as it may, under patient observation this psalm discloses not only its high poetic merit, but the power of its pleading viewed as an Intercession, in behalf of the now Dishonored Heir of David's Throne.

After striking the Keynotes of the psalm—Jehovah's Kindness and Faithfulness (vers. 1, 2)—around which all the psalmist's pleadings revolve, and to the express mention of which a return is made as far on as ver. 49; and after, in vers. 3, 4, briefly summing up the Davidic covenant as made known through Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 7),—the psalmist then (vers. 5-14) eloquently enlarges on the incomparable excellences of the Covenant God, as known in heaven and on earth, as shewn in Israel's history and displayed in Palestine, bringing this description to a climax by presenting as a bright constellation the four fundamental Divine attributes of *righteousness, justice, kindness and faithfulness*. He then (vers. 15-18) by a natural transition passes to the enviable *happiness* of a people having such a God as their God; inferring their joy in worship, the strength of their national movements, and their sense of security under their *king*, who is to them Jehovah's *shield*. From this second climax, the poet moves forward into an elaborate amplification of the Davidic Covenant (vers. 19-37), taking especial care to emphasise its perpetual and unalterable character, by detailing the Divine provision made for punishing unworthy heirs to the Davidic Throne without abrogating the Covenant which secures it to David's seed in perpetuity. From the past and the normal, the psalmist now (vers. 38-45) passes to the abnormal and perplexing present. It is true he does not charge God with folly, nor at any point assert that Jehovah was shewing himself unfaithful to his covenant; but he goes as far in this direction as reverence permitted leaving no feature of the pitiable condition of David's present son unnamed. Indeed the picture given of the existing heir is very pathetic: especially if, with many, we think of him as being the young king Jehoiakim, who, after reigning only three months in Jerusalem, was carried away to Babylon. And if, in addition to his youth, he was apparently

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

virtuous and promising, and had already drawn forth the affections of his people, the pathos of this description becomes unspeakably touching.

It is natural enough that such a description of present calamity should issue in expostulation and entreaty that such an anomalous state of things should be ended; but we are scarcely prepared to find the shortness and vanity of life and the inevitableness of death brought into the pleading. In truth, there seems something flickering and uncertain in many O.T. references to this subject, as we realised when studying Pss. 39, 49, and others; and we can never be thankful enough for the clearer light which we now enjoy. We have forgotten, or have never realised, what it is to be shut up, as these ancient saints seem to have been, to the apprehension that *now or never* must the great promises of God be fulfilled.

A final word as to the extraordinary importance which this psalm attaches to the Covenant made with David. How best can we bring ourselves into sympathy with the undeniable fact, that such importance is attached to it? Is it enough to say that Jesus of Nazareth, whom we recognize as Son and Heir of David, has redeemed these lapsed promises? Or must we not go a step further, and discover in the Davidic Covenant provisions which, though now in abeyance, are awaiting a plenary fulfilment in the very region to which they appear to belong;—in a kingdom not of this world but nevertheless *in it and for it*, in which the Messiah shall in undeniable fact be *Most High to the kings of the earth?*

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the predominate purpose of this psalm?
2. What is meant by Rotherham's statement: ". . . there is more of the Plan of Redemption wrapped up in the Davidic Covenant than Gentile Christians are apt to suppose". Discuss.
3. We have a great deal in this psalm of the following attributes of God: (1) Kindness; (2) Faithfulness; (3) Righteousness; (4) Justice;—To what purpose?
4. God's agreement with David is here plainly said to be eternal—what shall we say to its present fulfillment?
5. The psalmist goes as near to "charging God with folly" as he can go—why? Was it true?



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6. To whom does this psalm specifically apply?
7. The brevity of life and the certainty of death are here used. The psalmist would make good present-day humanists. Discuss.

# THE PSALMS

## BOOK THE FOURTH<sup>1</sup>

### PSALM 90

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Prayer Against the Dominion of Death.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, A Foundation for Prayer, sought in the Proved Kindness and Abiding Might of the Sovereign Lord. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, The Theme of the Psalm: a Two-fold Return. Stanza III., vers. 5-12, The Dominion of Death; described mainly in its Divine Appointment, and its Origin in Human Sin and Divine Displeasure; and calling forth a Transitional Prayer for Divine Guidance, How to Number our Days. Stanza IV., vers. 13-17, A Plea for the Overthrow of Death's Dominion.

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(Lm.) Prayer—By Moses, the Man of God.

- 1 Sovereign Lord!  
a dwelling place<sup>2</sup> hast thou thyself become to us  
in generation after generation.
- 2 Before mountains were born,  
or ever were brought forth the earth and the world—  
yea, from age even unto age  
Thou art the MIGHTY ONE.
- 3 Thou causest man to return even unto atoms,<sup>3</sup>  
and (then) sayest—"Return! ye sons of men."<sup>4</sup>

1. See Table II., *ante*.

2. So M.T. (*ma'on*), as in 91:9. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "refuge" (*ma'oz*), as in 27:1, 28:8, 31:3, 4, Isa. 25:4, Joel 3:16, Na. 1:7.

3. So Driver. "Dust (as pulverised)"—O.G.

4. "Again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men."—P.B.V.

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- 4 For a thousand years in thine eyes  
are like yesterday when about to pass away,  
or a watch in the night.
- 5 Thou didst flood them away with a rain-storm—a sleep they  
become,  
In the morning they are like grass which sprouteth again,—
- 6 In the morning it blossometh—and hath sprouted again,  
by the evening it is cut down—and hath withered!
- 7 For we waste away in thine anger,  
and in thy wrath are we dismayed:
- 8 Thou dost set our iniquities before thee,  
our secret near the lamp<sup>5</sup> of thy face.
- 9 For all our days decline,  
in thy wrath we end our years;
- 10 Like a murmured meditation are the days of our years:<sup>6</sup>  
in them are seventy years,  
or if in full strength eighty years;  
Yet their extent<sup>7</sup> is travail and trouble,—  
for it passeth quickly and we have flown away.
- 11 Who can know the strength of thine anger,  
or whether like the fear of thee is thy wrath?
- 12 How to number our days so make thou known,  
that we may get<sup>8</sup> a mind that hath wisdom.
- 13 Oh return thou Jehovah!—how long?  
and have compassion concerning thy servants:
- 14 Satisfy us in the morning<sup>9</sup> with thy kindness,  
that we may ring out our joy and be glad all our days.
- 15 Make us glad according to the days thou hast humbled us,  
the years we have seen misfortune:
- 16 Shew unto thy servants thy work,<sup>10</sup>  
and thy majesty<sup>11</sup> upon their children.<sup>12</sup>
- 17 And let the delightfulness of the Sovereign Lord our God  
be upon us,

5. Or: "luminary."

6. The words of these three lines are redistributed for better balance.

7. M.T.: "pride." More probably (reading *rhb* instead *rhb*): "width, extent"—O.G.

8. Ml.: "bring in" (i.e. from the field of our study).

9. Or: "early."

10. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "works"—Gn.

11. Or: "state."

12. Cp. Isa. 4:4-6.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and the work of our hands oh establish thou upon us,—  
yea the work of our hands establish thou it.

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 90

*A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God*

Lord, through all the generations you have been our home!

2 Before the mountains were created, before the earth was formed, You are God without beginning or end.

3 You speak, and man turns back to dust.

4 A thousand years are but as yesterday to You! They are like a single hour!<sup>1</sup>

5, 6 We glide along the tides of time as swiftly as a racing river, and vanish as quickly as a dream. We are like grass that is green in the morning but mowed down and withered before the evening shadows fall.

7 We die beneath Your anger; we are overwhelmed by Your wrath.

8 You spread out our sins before You—our secret sins—and see them all.

9 No wonder the years are long and heavy here beneath Your wrath. All our days are filled with sighing.

10 Seventy years are given us! And some may even live to 80. But even the best of these years are often emptiness and pain; soon they disappear, and we are gone.

11 Who can realize the terrors of Your anger? Which of us can fear You as he should?

12 Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.

13 O Jehovah, come and bless us! How long will You delay? Turn away Your anger from us.

14. Satisfy us in our earliest youth<sup>2</sup> with Your lovingkindness, giving us constant joy to the end of our lives.

15 Give us gladness in proportion to our former misery! Replace the evil years with good.

16 Let us see Your miracles again; let our children see glorious things, the kind You used to do.

17 And let the Lord our God favor us and give us success.

1. Literally, "as a watch in the night."

2. Literally, "early."

PSALM 90  
EXPOSITION

That *Moses the Man of God*, the Leader of Israel out of Egypt, did write this psalm according to the inscriptional headline, is strongly confirmed by internal evidence, especially by the lonely sublimity and strong originality of the psalm; and nearly all the objections against such authorship are met by carrying back the time of its composition to the close of Moses' sojourn in Midian, instead of assuming that he wrote it at the end of the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. This modification of the opinion which adheres to the Mosaic authorship, not only removes the difficulty of supposing that Moses wrote of *seventy* or *eighty years* as the common length of human life when he himself was *nearly a hundred and twenty*, but fully accounts for the absence of any allusion to the Exodus and the marvellous incidents of the journey through the desert. Not only so, but this slight shifting back of the presumed time of authorship intensifies the cry of the writer, *How long?* (ver. 13), by placing behind it, not merely *forty years'* seeming delay, but nearly *four hundred*. It is not likely that, in sight of Canaan, Moses would have said, "How long?" when he very well knew that the crossing of the Jordan could not be much longer delayed; whereas, at the close of nearly forty years' waiting in Midian, and still no commission received *to go and deliver Israel*,—nothing could have been more natural than so to express himself respecting the threatening flight of years. *Let thy work appear!* would come with a hundred-fold more force from his pen when the first step in that "work" had not as yet been taken by the Divine Deliverer, than it would when a substantial and irreversible portion of that "work" like that of the Exodus had already been accomplished.

A FOUNDATION LAID FOR PRAYER (Stanza I., vers. 1, 2).—Most appropriately does the Divine governmental name "*Adonai, Sovereign Lord*," stand as the first word in a psalm which touches some of the weightiest problems in the Divine government of mankind. A *dwelling-place* comes with peculiar pathos from a homeless sojourner belonging to a homeless race. A sense of being at home with God, impresses the writer with the Divine kindness in drawing so near to him; and at the same time brings him into conscious fellowship with the men of the past to whom the Sovereign Lord had in like manner drawn near: hence, most comprehensively, he says: *A dwelling-place hast thou thyself become to us in generation after generation*. This is

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indeed a broad stepping-stone to prayer, which plants Moses, the Exile, beside Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and other men spiritually akin, and comprehended under the uniting pronoun *our*: *our dwelling-place*. A sojourner among the *mountains* of Arabia, who, guided by the sacred books in his possession, had many times pondered on the birth of the world, finds it natural to go back—behind the race of believing servants of the Sovereign Lord to which he belongs—to the contemplation of the *Mighty One* Himself whose existence antedates both men and mountains: *Before Mountains were born, Or ever were brought forth the earth and the world* (THEN Thou wast, as Thou art still) *the Mighty One*. But, instead of taking two sentences to say the two things (*wast—art*), the writer,—taking advantage of the Hebrew custom of merely implying the verb “to be”,—crowds into one sentence what might have made two: *Thou wast—Thou art*. Before the mountains were born, &c., thou wast 'El, the Mighty One. Yea, from 'olam to 'olam—from æon to æon—from concealed time in the past to concealed time in the future—or (more simply) from age to age, thou art 'El, the Mighty One: the father of all existing things, yea also the father of all coming times. Thus broad and firm is a foundation here laid for prayer.

THE THEME OF THE PSALM (Stanza II., vers. 3, 4.)—*Thou causest man to return even unto atoms, And (then) sayest—“Return ye sons of men”* (ver. 3). Are there here two *returns*, or is there only one? Is there first a “return” to dust, and then a “return” from dust? In other words, are the two clauses of which the verse is composed to be regarded as synonymous, both saying substantially the same thing; or as consecutive? With some confidence we reply, “consecutive.” There are two “returns.” The first clause expresses a “return” to dust; and the second, a “return” from dust. But the difference in result is so great as to lead us to ask how we may be sure which construction to prefer. Now there are two leading indications to guide us: first, the relation of these two clauses to each other, and then the connection between this verse and the next. First, as to the relation between the two clauses to each other: notice that the former clause expresses a fact, or states a Divine act, simply something done—*Thou causest*, &c.; whereas the latter tells, not of something done, but of something said, a Divine word or decree: *Thou sayest—Return*. Mark this well: first a Divine act, then a Divine decree. Now, is it likely that they would

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stand in this order, if they both referred to the same thing? Is it not more probable that they would have stood in the reverse order,—first the decree, and then the act carrying out the decree? Would it not seem very awkward to represent God as first doing the act—inflicting death, and then passing the decree calling for the infliction. The very order of the clauses, therefore, already makes for the conclusion that there are two “returns” in the verse—one return executed, and then another decreed. But there is a second indication to help us; and that is, the connection between this third verse and the one which immediately follows it—the fourth. Evidently, there is a connection between the two, and that a logical connection; seeing that ver. 4 opens with the important logical link *For*, thus shewing that the fourth verse gives a *reason* for the third. Hence, if we can seize upon the nature of this connection, we may hope to obtain further guidance as to how the point before us should be decided: namely, whether ver. 3 speaks of two “returns” or of only one. What then, let us ask, is the general sense of ver. 4 when put into simple language? That general sense is plainly this: *That a long time in God’s sight is like a very short time in ours.* Such being the case, Does that sense of ver. 4 make for two “returns,” or for only one, in ver. 3? Let us try these issues one by one. Assume that there is but one “return” in ver. 3—that it speaks of the return to dust and nothing more; and then how does our “For” carry us forward: “Thou hast inflicted death on man, Because ‘a long time in thy sight is as a short time in ours’”? What reason is there in that? There is none, that we can discover. What has length of time—longer or shorter—to do with the one fact or process of inflicting death? It has no relation, that we can see. The infliction of death is going steadily on, occasioning no such sense of *delay* as to call for any explanation. Therefore, if *only* the infliction of death is comprehended in ver. 3, ver. 4 is wholly irrelevant. Now let us try the second issue, by asking: If there are two “returns” intended in ver. 3, will that create a sufficient sense of delay, as to make welcome the soothing consideration supplied by ver. 4? Obviously it will; seeing that, by including two great Divine processes, the second of which has scarcely if at all been begun, it instinctively calls forth the reflection: “Yes! but *what a long time* such a double process bids fair to demand: a first process of causing man to return to dust is itself filling ages; but the second process—bringing mankind back from the dust—

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why, it has not yet commenced. *How long* will it be ere it is begun? How much longer, before it is finished? Just the very feeling to which the consideration in ver. 4 is fitted to be addressed; because its purport is: "A long time—perhaps thousands of years. Yea; but no length of time involved affects the Divine Worker: no amount of delay can either disable him or cause him to forget!" On these sure grounds may we regard as settled the grave point at issue: concluding with confidence, both from the order and nature of the clauses in ver. 3, and from the logical connection between vers. 3 and 4, That it is even so; that the worthy theme of Moses' mighty prayer is nothing less than a pleading protest against the prolonged and unbroken dominion of death. We have thus discovered the poles on which the whole psalm turns, and are prepared to see all the remainder of the psalm naturally resolve itself, as it does, into—The Dominion of Death described; and, A Plea for the Overthrow of that dominion.

THE DOMINION OF DEATH DESCRIBED (Stanza III., vers. 5-12).—And, first, it is *Divinely caused*. The "theme" itself has already stated this: *Thou causest man to return to atoms*. And now, at the very entrance on this description of death's dominion, the same thing is reasserted: *Thou didst flood them away with a rain-storm*. It matters not at all whether this is an allusion to the Flood: the point is, that this "flooding away" is executed by the Sovereign Lord addressed, even by him to whom a thousand years are as yesterday. It will not do to try to break the force of these statements by reminding us that "every creature of God is good." True? but death is not a CREATURE: it is neither person, place nor thing—it is essentially a negation, a negation in the sense of a withdrawal of life. It is therefore unwarranted, and indeed reckless, to assert that God cannot withdraw life when once he had bestowed it. It may be good for him to give it; and yet be both good and wise for him to withdraw it, after a time, longer or shorter. It may be good to withdraw it; either because it has served its purpose, or because it has been abused and forfeited. It may be just and wise and merciful, yea even necessary, to withdraw life as a Divine protest against sin already committed, and as a Divine prevention of further sin. It is, therefore, as unwise as it is unwarranted to allege that *God cannot inflict death*. It is taught here, and in endless other places of Holy Writ, that, in point of fact, God *does* inflict death.

Still, not without reason does he inflict it. In the case of



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other creatures, God may have other reasons for withdrawing life—that is, inflicting death; but, in the case of *man*, there is a revealed reason, and that reason is—SIN: *Thou dost set our iniquities before thee, Our secret near the lamp of thy face.* The “iniquities” here intended are the iniquities of the race; since individual iniquities do not count, as witness the death of infants and of the forgiven. In like manner, in all probability, “our secret” is the secret of our race; which, when “Genesis” was barely written and certainly not published, was in all likelihood in the keeping of Moses alone. This may seem a great and indeed startling thing to say; but let any man, with some strength of historical imagination, give a more likely application to this remarkable phrase, of which, be it observed, the plural word “sins” forms no part. This psalm, then, itself guides us to find the special reason for man’s death in man’s sin.

Nor is this all. Man’s sin is the occasion of God’s displeasure. With surprising strength is this taught in the present psalm. Five times is this explicitly asserted during the course of this single stanza dealing with Death’s Dominion: *anger, wrath; wrath, anger; wrath* (vers. 7, 9, 11). It really appears as though the writer gave up all attempts to measure the intensity of God’s anger against man’s sin—the sin of the race—by taking refuge in a question: *Who can know the strength of thine anger?* And, if we rightly decipher the force of the duplicate question, it abundantly confirms the first member of the interrogatory: *Or whether like (—or according—to) the fear of thee is thy wrath.* Of “the fear” which unlimited power revealing itself by the infliction of death inspires, we all have some knowledge; and we can easily increase our apprehension thereof, either by studying ordinary histories of mankind or by noting this feature as seen for instance in such a classic as the Book of Job. Suffice it to claim that, according to this psalm, it is very unlikely that any of us can over-estimate the intensity of the Divine Displeasure with the sin of our race. We may make a one-sided study of it; we may omit to pass on to view the other side of the great complex question; we may amiably, but quite needlessly, plead man’s frailty—which assuredly God never forgets;—but we cannot be too deeply penetrated with the impressively taught truth that *the reason for man’s death as a race, is man’s sin as a race.* The more vividly you portray the ravages of death, the more cogently do you demonstrate God’s anger against our racial sin: comprehending, as that racial sin

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does, alike the *secret* offence of our first father and the resulting *iniquities* of his descendants.

We might here look back, for the purpose of observing what a peculiar flickering of lights and shadows is cast over vers. 5-11 by what we might call the variations seen in the incidence of Death: the sweeping away of masses of men, as in the flood; the silent falling asleep of individuals who unobservedly fall out of the living race of men; and especially the remarkable way in which generations succeed each other. Also: we might point out how the *travail* and *trouble* of life enhance the impressiveness of its brevity. Life is slow and bright in coming, but swift in departing, and shadowed in retrospect. *Seventy or eighty years* seem long to the young; but to the aged they appear but as a few days. Many besides Jacob when brought before Pharaoh (Gen. 47:9) have, in the time of retrospect, been ready to exclaim: "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life!"

But, instead of lingering over these details of the Stanza before us, it is more important to give good heed to the pivot prayer which forms the transition to the great prayer of the psalm. This pivot prayer is the outcry of the careful scholar, that he be not suffered to miss the main lesson for which he came into the Divine school: *How to number our days, so make thou known, That we may get a mind that hath wisdom.* The first point to note here is that there is an apprehended *difficulty* in making the desired calculation; and the next is, that Divine *illumination* is sought in order to overcome the difficulty. Let us carefully consider these two points in succession.

The words of this transitional little prayer do properly suppose a difficulty; nor does it seem legitimate to tone down and modify its point. The psalmist does not ask to be guided to apply his mind to a wise object: in other words, he does not say: "Having numbered my days, and easily discovered how frail and shortlived I am, teach me to regulate my life accordingly." It is the wise mind itself which he covets; and he seeks it in a definite way, namely by numbering, and not by means of reflection. It is the *numbering itself* which occasions his difficulty. He wishes to know how to make the successful calculation—how to do the necessary sum. What is it? Is it to find out what is the average duration of human life? But he knows that already. Is it to discover what point he has reached in the scale of possibility? But he can find that out, if he has lost count, by domestic repute or an appeal to the family register. Is it to know, whether he

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personally shall reach the average outside limit? But no amount of *counting* can inform him of that. No man, starting from the known average, can say: "Therefore I have ten or twenty more years to live." And though God could reveal it to him, that is not at all the point of the prayer.

And yet it is true, that it is a revelation—or at least instruction or information—which the psalmist seeks; for he says *Make known*. He clearly, then, wishes to know how to do the successful *numbering*. For this he feels he needs Divine guidance, and hopes for such guidance to be vouchsafed by way of *making known* to him something which at present he does not know, or as to which he feels uncertain.

Put these simple things together, and then see whether the solution will not appear. The psalmist desires a *wise mind*: he hopes to gain it by a process of *numbering*: he humbly seeks *information* that he may do the numbering aright. *What, then, is the information he seeks? What does he need to know?*

The whole psalm is eloquent with the answer. And, first, it is very plain that the psalmist gets his answer: the way in which his tone at once changes and deepens, and he forthwith opens up and boldly carries forward his great prayer against the continued dominion of Death, shews this. The informal way in which the result discloses itself, naturally suggests, that he obtains his answer by immediate—though perhaps unconscious—revelation. The materials for his answer already lie within the area of his mind. He is guided to put them together correctly; and the result is—a REVELATION: the thing he wished to *know* has been made *clear*!

Yes! he may and should take both "returns" into account: the little figures of this life and the large figures of the life to come. His survey must take in, not only the possible *seventy or eighty years*, with the uncertainties and humiliations and sorrows attendant on them, which are occupied in returning to dust, but the *thousands*, the thousands upon thousands, the illimitable *ages of ages* to be entered upon after returning from dust. *Then* and so he will indeed get a *wise mind*. The man who gets no further than the *seventy or eighty years* of this life, may, by thinking and moralising, discover a few stars of prudence twinkling in his midnight sky; but the man who by faith leaps forward into the *renewed life* that is to be, is greeted at once with the effulgence of a sun of Divine Wisdom which illumines all the heaven of his soul, and which will never set.

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A PLEA FOR THE OVERTHROW OF DEATH'S DOMINION (Stanza IV., vers. 13-17). *Oh return thou, Jehovah! how long?* It only needs that this outcry should be interpreted in the light of the context, to perceive its amazing breadth and boldness. It is then seen to mean no less than this: "Return from the anger with which, during generation after generation, thou hast been inflicting death: Reverse thy procedure. Thou hast long been turning frail man to atoms: wilt thou not now, with effect, say—*Come again, ye sons of men?* Thou hast been *flooding them away*: wilt thou not bring them back as a great army? Thou hast been putting them to *sleep*: wilt thou not awaken them? Shall the *iniquities* of our race never be adequately covered? Shall its *secret* shame and wrong never be expiated, by the morning of glory enough to redound to thy praise?"

"*And have compassion on thy servants*, who have all along through these dark ages been serving thee. Pity them for their ill requital—for their unfinished tasks—for the obloquy they have endured. *Satisfy us*: we are hungry for fulfilment. We are longing for the turn of *the morning*. We are looking for the morning of a new day. We are expecting a day in which *thy kindness* shall be as publicly demonstrated as thy *wrath* has been during the long reign of death. Infants have been taken captive by premature removal: shall they never come back from the land of the enemy? Thy servants have been publicly dishonoured: they have fallen asleep unrewarded: shall they never be owned and crowned: We are looking for the morning that shall usher in that new day that shall make us feel we are *but beginning our existence*; being ushered into which, we shall give one long *ringing shout for joy*, and then go forward with *gladness unto length of days*."

Granted, that this is, to some extent, necessarily, imaginary paraphrase: the only serious question is whether, in a form we can understand, it gives embodiment to the *spirit* of this prayer. But let us humbly endeavour to be more logical.

*Make us glad, according to the days thou hast humbled us, The years we have seen misfortune*. There is here a principle involved, as the ground of petition: it is the principle of proportion. Lest we should lose ourselves if we go so far afield as to keep the ancients in view, such as Noah and Abraham, although we ought to do that,—let us confine ourselves to the outlook of Moses himself. When *he* uses this language, what does he naturally mean? *The days thou hast humbled us*: how

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many have they been? *The years we have seen misfortune:* how long have they now lasted? Let us say, in round numbers: Four hundred years. Well, then, his petition cannot signify less than this: "Make us glad, for four hundred years, in the good land into which thou dost intend to bring us according to the promises made to our fathers." But, after all, is this the rule of proportion between the gracious Jehovah and his loyal servants? Is it simply so much reward for so much suffering? Who can think it, of Him who in the natural world gives to some kernels, cast into the earth, thirty, to some sixty, and to some a hundred fold. Will he who takes four hundred years to form the sons of Israel into an organized nation, be content to give them a four hundred years' run of national prosperity? No such conclusion can commend itself.

*Show unto thy servants thy work.* What work has Jehovah in hand in forming this people? Is it not to make of them "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation"? (Exo. 19). And is this work never to be finished? *And thy majesty upon their children.* And will the promised cloud of glory (Isa. 4) never rest upon them? And when it does, will the fathers and founders of the nation not be given to behold the ravishing sight?

*And let the delightfulness*—surely not for ever, the *anger*, the *wrath*; not merely the *kindness*, though that is bounded only by righteousness and is age-abiding; not alone the *majesty*, though that is awe-inspiring; but the *delightfulness*, comprehending all the beauty of form that can please the eye, all the sweetness of taste that can suggest entire mental satisfaction. "The delightfulness" of the *Sovereign Lord*—whose governmental designs are receiving satisfying accomplishment: "the Sovereign Lord" *our God*—approving himself to the nations of the earth, as the God of Israel. Let this *be upon us*: not merely "on them." *And the work of our hands.* When the delightfully kind and gloriously majestic Jehovah shews *his work* unto his servants, his servants will be permitted to discover *their own* humble share therein—Moses his leadership and laws, Joshua his victories, David his songs and the like. This work of ours, which thou art pleased to accept as thine own: let it be *established upon us*, both on our children and on ourselves. This is the solidarity—this the fellowship—this the fruition in this abiding kingdom, for which we pray.

In submitting the foregoing as a fair exposition of the 90th psalm, it is deemed proper to guard against extravagant ex-

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pectations, which can only yield disappointment. It should be remembered: That this psalm is poetry, and not didactic teaching, and therefore must be handled with such lightness of touch as allows for figures of speech and dramatic changes of points of view; That this is but a single, very early psalm, which may naturally have left in doubt what subsequent psalms and prophecies have made clear; and especially That it was penned centuries before "light and incorruption were illumined by the Gospel," and hence cannot be expected to have formulated a consecutive account of that great process of Bringing Back from the dust of death the race of mankind which even now is only just begun. It is, however, claimed—and it is for the candid student to judge whether the claim has been made good—that here, thus early in the history of Divine Revelation, the theme of a General Resurrection is effectively broached; and that the Initial Stages of that Resurrection are clearly implied—if, at least, the recall of Jehovah's *Servants* from the dust of death bears any pledging and causal relation to the Bringing Back of the remainders of men. That the uplifting of the Nation of Israel to the high level of their national calling, is to issue in the Birth from the Grave of the nations of the world, is now seen by independent students to be really taught in Isaiah 26 (cp. Ps. 48 end). *Why* Israel has not yet been able to respond to her call; and *why*, therefore, she has not yet wrought such "deliverance in the earth" as awaits her accomplishment, are questions most vitally at issue between Jews and Christians. When Israel finds her Leader in *the Great Return—the Coming Again*—of this psalm, she will further find that He is not only by appointment a sufferer, but that He is also the First, the Chief, the Leader of an illuminating Resurrection from the dead, who proclaims Light to both the people of Israel and to the remaining Nations of the earth. So, at least, we have been taught by a Jew who was also a Christian (in Acts 26:23).

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The heading of this psalm attributes it to Moses—at what period in his life was it written?
2. Scroggie well says "The psalm falls naturally into three parts, and each of these into two: Part one—1-6; God's Eternity and Man's Frailty. Part two—7-12; Man's sin and God's wrath. Part three—13-17; Frail and Sinful Man's

## PSALM 90 AND 91

appeal to the Eternal God." Compare this with Rotherham's divisions. A great deal of discussion is given to the two uses of the term "return" in vs. 3. Scroggie says: "*Return ye*, may be a parallel thought, *return to dust*, or it may refer to the rise of a new generation, answering to *generations* in verse." How does this compare with Rotherham? Discuss.

3. Does God inflict death? If so why?
4. What is "our secret" which is set up near the lamp of God's face?
5. God hates sin—why?
6. What is "the pivotal prayer" of this psalm?
7. What is "the wisdom" obtained in numbering our day?
8. Read carefully verses 13-17 and relate them to Moses, i.e. as they were written. Discuss.
9. There are some tremendous lessons for living in this psalm. List two or three for discussion.

## PSALM 91

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Personal Application of the Foregoing Psalm.

### ANALYSIS

Prelude, Commending the Initial Sentiment of Moses' Prayer. Stanza I., vers. 2-8, Exhortation to Make this Sentiment One's Own: sustained by Expanding its Implied Promises. Stanza II., vers. 9-13, To One who has Obeyed the Exhortation, a Further Expansion of the Promises is made. Stanza III., vers. 14-16, Jehovah, in Love, Responds to the Love Set Upon Him.

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(Lm.—None.)<sup>1</sup>

- 1 *How happy<sup>s</sup> is he that abideth in the hiding-place of the Most High,  
in the shadow of the Almighty he tarrieth!—*
- 2 *Say thou<sup>s</sup> to Jehovah—"My refuge and my fastness,  
my God in whom I trust."*

1. N.B. according to rule this psalm should immediately follow the foregoing, without break.

2. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*

3. According to change of vowel points advised by Dr., thereby preparing for second person in ver. 3.

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- 3 For he will rescue thee from the trap of the fowler,  
from the pestilence that engulfeth:
- 4 With his pinion will he cover thee,  
and under his wings shalt thou take refuge,—  
a large shield and buckler is his truth.
- 5 Thou shalt not be afraid of the dread of the night,  
of the arrow that flieth by day.
- 6 Of the pestilence that in darkness doth walk,  
of the destruction that despoileth at noon.
- 7 There may fall at thy side a thousand,  
Yea a myriad at thy right hand,—  
Unto thee shall it not draw near:
- 8 Only with thine own eyes shalt thou look on,  
and the recompense of lawless ones shalt thou see.
- 9 Because thou hast said<sup>4</sup>—“Jehovah is my refuge,”  
hast made the Most High thy dwelling-place<sup>5</sup>
- 10 There shall not be suffered to meet thee misfortune,  
and plague<sup>6</sup> shall not draw near in thy tent.<sup>7</sup>
- 11 For his messengers will he charge concerning thee,  
to keep thee in all thy ways:
- 12 On their palms will they bear thee up,  
lest thou strike against a stone thy foot:
- 13 On reptile<sup>8</sup> and cobra shalt thou tread,  
shalt trample on young lion and serpent.<sup>9</sup>
- 14 “Because on me he hath set his love<sup>10</sup> I will deliver him,  
I will set him on high because he hath come to know my  
name:
- 15 He shall cry unto me and I will answer him,  
with him will I myself be in distress:  
I will rescue him and will glorify him.
- 16 With length of days will I satisfy him,  
and will content<sup>11</sup> him with my salvation.”

(Nm.)

4. So *Gt.*

5. As in 90:1.

6. Or: “stroke.” Heb. *nega'*. Cp. 38:11 note.

7. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. ed., and Aram.): “tents” (pl.)—Gn.

8. So Br., reading *z-h-l* for *sh-h-l*. M.T.: “lion.”

9. Or: “dragon (as devourer), or (sea)- or (river)-monster”—O.G.

10. Or: “to me hath become attached.” Cp. 18:1 and Expn.

11. Or (ml.) “saturate.” So (*r-w-h*) *Gt.* M.T.: “let him gaze upon  
my s.”



PSALM 91  
PARAPHRASE  
PSALM 91

We live within the shadow of the Almighty, sheltered by the God who is above all gods.

2 This I declare, that He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; He is my God, and I am trusting Him.

3 For He rescues you from every trap, and protects you from the fatal plague.

4 He will shield you with His wings! They will shelter you. His faithful promises are your armor.

5 Now you don't need to be afraid of the dark any more, nor fear the dangers of the day;

6 Nor dread the plagues of darkness, nor disasters in the morning.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

7 Though a thousand fall at my side, though ten thousand are dying around me, the evil will not touch me.

8 I will see how the wicked are punished but I will not share it.

9 For Jehovah is my refuge! I choose the God above all gods to shelter me.

10 How then can evil overtake me or any plague come near?

\* \* \* \* \*

11 For He orders His angels to protect you wherever you go.

12 They will steady you with their hands to keep you from stumbling against the rocks on the trail.

13 You can safely meet a lion or step on poisonous snakes; yes, even trample them beneath your feet!

14 For the Lord says, "Because he loves Me, I will rescue him; I will make him great because he trusts in My name."

15 When he calls on Me I will answer; I will be with him in trouble, and rescue him and honor him.

16 I will satisfy him with a full life<sup>2</sup> and give him My salvation."

EXPOSITION

Two things are clear. This psalm is no part of the Prayer of Moses; and yet it was occasioned thereby. All the evidence

1. Literally, "at noonday."
2. Literally, "with long life."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

that confirms the Mosaic authorship of Ps. 90, turns round and rebuts the assumption that Ps. 91 also was written by him. The lonely grandeur is gone. The large outlook has closed. The sweeping comprehensiveness is at an end. And yet a very close *relationship* is evident. The first verse of this psalm might have been written as a label on the previous one; and for a time left in that form; tautological,—probably because incomplete; a mere suggestion to be expanded at a more convenient season. It is as though Samuel, or David, or Hezekiah had just perused afresh his precious treasure, handed down from the great Law-giver; and, impressed with its sublime beauty and power and its fitness to be turned to practical use, had penned on it just the two lines which now open it: which lines, by himself or some other prophetic singer, were afterwards taken up, in *hortatory* mood, not improbably addressed to the fortunate royal possessor himself: Say thou (“O my master”; or, *Say thou, O my soul*)! We thus reach the idea that Ps. 91 is strictly an Appendix to Ps. 90: which hypothesis at once accounts for the fact that it has no inscription above or below. It is quite easy, and not altogether vain, to think—how aptly Nathan may have addressed Stanza I. (vers. 2-8) to his royal master David, or how readily David himself may thus have addressed his own soul—in either case naturally introducing *large shield and* (smaller) *buckler*. It is equally feasible to think of some such poet as Isaiah adding another stanza or two to this Appendix; and, if we could imagine *him* as striking in at ver. 9 with Hezekiah in view,—that would quite well account for the otherwise unaccountable emphasis on the pronoun *thou*! As much as to say: “My royal Master! thine ancestor David full well knew what it was to be preserved from *dread and arrow and pestilence and destruction*—to be saved alone while *thousands were falling by his side*; and he did indeed live to see *recompense falling upon lawless ones*. But *thou, too*, even as he did, hast said, ‘Jehovah is my refuge.’ Nor shalt THOU be disappointed.” Not necessarily vain, are such imaginings, if they hover over the realm of actuality, and rebuke the dry dogmatism that is so very sure that things hinted at could never have happened.

There is probably a further and deeper reason why it cannot be vain to seek to actualise such poetic writings as these; and that is, to check the easy assumption that there can be no fulfilment at all of such promises as these, unless, without break, fulfilment runs steadily on and up to the climax of complete ac-

## PSALM 91

accomplishment. A moment ago, we suddenly pulled up in sight of the word *plague*, remembering that, literally, and for the time, the *plague* did *draw near in the tent* of Hezekiah. Was this Appendix-writer—therefore—dishonored? Surely we have need to follow our Lord's own example, by saying "It is written again!" Yea, it is written again, *in this same Appendix, He shall cry unto me*; and truly Hezekiah *did cry* (2 K. 20:3, Isa. 38:2); *and I will answer him*; and truly Jehovah *did answer* (2 K. 20:5, 6, Isa. 38:4-8): in short, was *with him in distress*—*did rescue*—*did glorify*. Whether the restored monarch was actually *satisfied* with his fifteen additional years and *content* with the remainder of his life, history informeth us not. Possibly he was *not*; because nearly all such promises as these have in them an element of extension and expansion ever ready to require more than this life to fill to the full their accomplishment. In other words, *the length of days* of these ancient Hebrew songs is ever crying out—dumbly but really—for Resurrection and Incorruption!

In now taking a retrospect of this psalm, it is extremely important to remark—that its promises are essentially *conditional*: they all depend on actually making the Most High a *refuge*—a *habitation*. The opening inscription of ver. 1 calls for this. So does the injunction of ver. 2. So also does the emphatic and extended reason given in ver. 9. And this condition, be it carefully noted, consists of a living experience: of an intention, carried out; of a believing recognition of the all-encompassing and protecting *presence of the Most High*. And this goes far beyond the heathenish employment of this psalm, or any other formula of words, as a protection from evil. It is not: He that carries in his pocket a piece of paper or parchment containing these words, or any such words. It is not: He that carries these words in his memory: which may be nothing more than a clever feat of formalism. But: He that does the thing described; which cannot mean less than an habitual and believing walk with God. Moreover: He who is walking with God, can neither knowingly step aside from the path of duty; nor, uninvited, make experiments with God. If God really commands his servants to prove him, then doubtless they may obediently respond. Otherwise, they cannot go along that path; because, in the absence of any such Divine challenge, the *prohibition* comes in:—"Thou shalt not put the Lord thy God to the proof." Neither Satan nor the Scientific Doubter has authority to suspend this Divine Prohibition. The

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Almighty does not put his power into commission, to be used at any creature's pleasure. It is well he does not. This is not to deny that there is a charm in the promises of God, but it is to protest that their true charm comes from treating them not as mere charms, but as the living words of a living God.

But this psalm furnishes another lesson: it puts before us, with all the vividness of an object-lesson, the importance of setting the various commands and promises of Scripture side by side, that we may gather their true sense and make of them a legitimate application. The final stanza of this psalm comes before us with an especial appealing force, because it purports to give us Jehovah's own direct words, revealing the response of his love to his servant's love: *Because on me he hath set his love.* Being at the same time the close of the psalm, it is in every way fitting that this stanza should be invested with any explaining and harmonising power needed for practical guidance. From this point of view, note especially, that Jehovah himself prepares his loving servants for the possibility that—after all the promises which have gone before—they may yet come into *distress*. for such a temporary non-fulfilment of his promises, Jehovah holds himself responsible—*with him will I myself be, in distress.* He makes our distresses his own. He bears the burden of his unfulfilled promises. He says: "Wait! and I will more than fulfil them all." And then to Grace he adds *Glory!*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "Two things are clear". What are they?
2. Who is the possible author or writer?
3. Why say psalms 91 is an appendix to 90?
4. How was verse 7 made to apply to David? Who applied it?
5. The verses Satan applied to our Lord (Matthew 4:5-7) Rotherham applies to someone else. Who? Why?
6. Rotherham has some good words on the superstitious use of this psalm. What is said? Discuss.

## PSALMS 92 to 97

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Service of Song for a Sabbath Day.

## PSALMS 92 TO 97

### ANALYSIS

Psalm 92: Personal Song—Probably by a King.

Psalm 93: Jehovah Proclaimed King.

Psalm 94: Prayer for Vengeance on the Lawless.

Psalm 95: Invitation—"O Come!" "Come in!" Warning: "Harden not your Hearts!"

Psalm 96: The Land called upon to Sing to Jehovah, and to Proclaim his Kingship to the Nations.

Psalm 97: Third Proclamation—Decisive Results, by way of Joy, Fear, Conviction, Shame, Homage, Thanks, Exhortation and Triumph.

## PSALM 92

(Lm.) Psalm—Song—For the Sabbath-day.

- 1 It is good to give thanks to Jehovah,  
and to make melody<sup>1</sup> unto thy name O Most High!
- 2 To declare in the morning thy kindness,  
and thy faithfulness in the nights:<sup>2</sup>
- 3 With an instrument of ten strings and with a lute,<sup>3</sup>  
with murmuring music<sup>4</sup> on a lyre.
- 4 For thou hast made me glad Jehovah by thy doings,  
in the works of thy hands will I ring out my joy.
- 5 How great have grown thy works Jehovah!  
how very deep have been laid thy plans!
- 6 A man that is brutish cannot get to know,  
and a dullard cannot understand this:—
- 7 When the lawless bud like herbage,  
and all the workers of iniquity have blossomed  
It leadeth to their being destroyed for ever.
- 8 But thou art on high<sup>5</sup> to the ages O Jehovah!
- 9 For lo! thine enemies Jehovah,  
For lo! thine enemies shall perish,  
scattered abroad shall be all the workers of iniquity.<sup>6</sup>

1. Or: "to sweep the strings."

2. So Dr.; "night-seasons"—Del.; "dark night"—(plural of intensification)—Br.

3. Ml.: "with ten and with a lute."

4. "with murmuring sound"—Dr.; "with skilful music"—Del.

5. Ml.: "a height." "Exaltedness"—Del.

6. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.). Cp. 94:4, 16, 23.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 10 But thou wilt uplift like those of a wild ox my horn,  
I am anointed<sup>7</sup> with fresh oil;  
11 And mine eye shall gaze on my watchful foes,  
of them that rise up against me as evil-doers mine ears  
shall hear,  
12 The righteous like the palm-tree shall bud,  
like a cedar in Lebanon become great.  
13 Transplanted into the house of Jehovah  
in the courts of our God shall they shew buds.  
14 Still shall they bear fruit in old age,  
full of sap and of bloom shall they be:  
15 To declare that upright is Jehovah,  
my Rock with no injustice in him.  
(Nm.)

## PSALM 93

(Nm.)

- 1 *Jehovah hath become king<sup>8</sup>*—in majesty hath he clothed  
himself,  
Jehovah hath clothed himself—with strength hath he girded  
himself:  
surely he hath adjusted<sup>9</sup> the world—it shall not be shaken.  
2 Established is thy throne from of old,<sup>10</sup>  
from age-past time art thou.  
3 The streams have lifted up O Jehovah,  
the streams have lifted up their voice,  
the streams lift up their crashing:  
4 Beyond the voices of many waters,  
more majestic than the breakers of the sea<sup>11</sup>  
Majestic on high is Jehovah.  
5 Thy testimonies are confirmed with might,  
to thy house befitting is holiness,—  
O Jehovah! to length of days.

(Nm.)

7. "The passage is doubtful"—O.G.

8. "Is now king"—Del. "Hath proclaimed himself king"—Kp. The same  
1 Ch. 16:31; Pss. 47:8, 96:10, 97:1, 99:1; Isa. 24:23, 52:7.

9. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

10. Ml.: "from then."

11. So Gt.

PSALMS 92 TO 97

PSALM 94

(Nm.)

- 1 O GOD of avengings<sup>12</sup> Jehovah!  
O GOD of avengings<sup>12</sup> shine forth!
- 2 Lift up thyself thou judge of the earth:  
bring back a recompense on the proud.
- 3 How long shall lawless ones Jehovah,  
how long shall lawless ones exult?
- 4 They pour forth they speak arrogancy,  
vain-glorious are all the workers of iniquity.<sup>13</sup>
- 5 Thy people O Jehovah they crush,  
and thine inheritance they humble;
- 6 The widow and the sojourner they slay,  
and the fatherless they murder;
- 7 And say—"Yah seeth not,"  
and "The God of Jacob perceiveth not."
- 8 Understand ye brutish among the people,  
and ye dullards when will ye comprehend?
- 9 He that planteth the ear shall he not hear?  
or that fashioneth the eye not look on?<sup>14</sup>
- 10 He that correcteth nations not shew what is right,—  
he that teacheth men knowledge?
- 11 Jehovah knoweth the devices of men,  
for they themselves are a breath!<sup>15</sup>
- 12 How happy the man whom thou correctest O Yah,  
and out of thy law dost instruct:
- 13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of misfortune,  
till there be digged for the lawless one a pit.
- 14 For Jehovah abandoneth not his people,  
and his inheritance doth he not forsake;
- 15 For unto righteousness shall judgment<sup>16</sup> return,  
and be following it all the upright in heart.
- 16 Who will rise up for me against evil-doers?

12. Or: "dire vengeance."

13. Or: "mischief." ("Naughtiness"—Dr.), and cp. 92:9 and vers. 16, 23.

14. "Have power of sight"—O.G.

15. Or: "are vapour."

16. Or: "sentence."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

who will make a stand for me against the workers-of iniquity?<sup>17</sup>

- 17 Unless Jehovah had been a help to me soon had sunk into silence my soul!
- 18 If I say—"Slipped hath my foot!" thy kindness Jehovah! stayeth me.
- 19 In the multitude of my disquieting thoughts<sup>18</sup> within me thy consolations delight my soul.
- 20 Can the throne of engulfing ruin be allied to thee, which frameth mischief by statute?<sup>19</sup>
- 21 They make a raid on<sup>20</sup> the life<sup>21</sup> of the righteous one, and innocent blood they condemn.
- 22 Nay! Jehovah hath become for me a lofty retreat, and my God my rock of refuge.
- 23 Nay! he hath brought back on themselves their iniquity,<sup>22</sup> and through their own evil will he exterminate them,—exterminate them will Jehovah our God.

(Nm.)

## PSALM 95

(Nm.)

- 1 O Come! let us ring out our joy to Jehovah, let us shout to the rock of our salvation;<sup>23</sup>
- 2 Let us come to meet his face with thanksgiving, with psalms let us shout unto him.
- 3 For a great GOD is Jehovah, and a great king above all messengers divine:<sup>24</sup>
- 4 In whose hand are the recesses<sup>25</sup> of the earth, and the summits of the mountains belong to him:
- 5 Whose is the sea and he made it, and the dry land his hands formed.

17. Or: "mischief." ("Naughtiness"—Dr.). Cp. ver. 23.

18. As in 139:23.

19. "Under the pretext of right"—Del.

20. "They gather themselves in bands against"—Dr. "They rush in upon"—Del.

21. U.: "soul."

22. Or: "mischief." ("Naughtiness"—Dr.). Cp. ver. 16

23. Dr: "our rock of safety."

24. See 8:5. Heb.: 'elohim.

25. "Lit. places to be explored; cf. Job 38:16"—Dr. Gt.: "distant parts"—Gn.



PSALMS 92 TO 97

- 6 Come in! oh let us bow down and bend low,  
oh let us kneel before Jehovah our maker;
- 7 For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his hand and the flock of his  
shepherding.<sup>26</sup>
- Today if to his voice ye would but hearken!
- 8 "Do not harden your heart as at Meribah,  
as in the day of Massah in the desert:
- 9 When your fathers put me to the proof  
tested me although they had seen my work.
- 10 For forty years loathed I that<sup>27</sup> generation,  
and said—'A people going astray in heart are they,  
even they have not known my ways:'
- 11 So that I swear in mine anger,  
'Surely they shall not enter into my place of rest!'"
- (Nm.)

PSALM 96

(Nm.)

- 1 Sing ye to Jehovah a song that is new,  
sing to Jehovah all the land:
- 2 Sing to Jehovah bless ye his name,  
proclaim the glad-tidings from day to day of his victory:<sup>28</sup>
- 3 Tell among the nations his glory,  
among all the peoples his wondrous works.
- 4 For great is Jehovah and to be highly praised,  
Fear inspiring is he above all messengers divine;<sup>29</sup>
- 5 For all the gods<sup>30</sup> of the peoples are nothings,<sup>31</sup>  
But Jehovah made the heavens.
- 6 Majesty and state<sup>32</sup> are before him,

26. So *Gt. Cp.* 79:13, 100:3. *M.T.*: "people of his shepherding and flock of his hand."

27. So it shd. be (w. *Sep.* and *Vul.*)—*Gn.*

28. Or: "salvation."

29. *Heb.*: 'elohim. *Cp.* 8:5. Clearly some 'elohim are more than "nothings."

30. *Heb.*: 'elohim. The addition "of all the peoples" is deemed enough to turn the scale in translating.

31. "Nothingnesses"—*Dr.* "Idols"—*Del.* (who thus comments: "nothings and good-for-nothings, without being and of no use.")

32. "Glory and grandeur"—*Del.*

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- Strength and beauty<sup>33</sup> are in his sanctuary.
- 7 Ascribe unto Jehovah ye families of the peoples,  
ascribe unto Jehovah glory and strength :
- 8 Ascribe unto Jehovah the glory of his name,  
bring ye a present<sup>34</sup> and come into his courts :<sup>35</sup>
- 9 Bow down unto Jehovah in the adornment of holiness.<sup>36</sup>  
be in birth-throes<sup>37</sup> at his presence all the earth.
- 10 Say among the nations—"Jehovah hath become king :"<sup>38</sup>  
Surely he hath adjusted the world, it shall not be shaken,  
He will minister judgment unto the peoples with equity."
- 11 Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice,  
let the sea thunder and the fulness thereof :
- 12 Let the plain exult and all that is therein,  
Yea<sup>39</sup> let all the trees of the forest ring out their joy:—
- 13 Before Jehovah for he is coming,<sup>40</sup>  
for he is coming<sup>41</sup> to judge the earth :  
He will judge the world with righteousness,  
And peoples with his faithfulness.

(Nm.)

## P S A L M 97

(Nm.)

- 1 *Jehovah hath become king*<sup>42</sup>—let the earth exult,  
let the multitude of coastlands rejoice.
- 2 Clouds and darkness are round about him,  
righteousness and justice<sup>43</sup> are the foundations of his throne :
- 3 Fire before him proceedeth,  
and setteth ablaze round about his adversaries.
- 4 His lightings illumined the world,

33. "The word used here denotes glory which is also a decoration or ornament (Is. 60:7, 19)"—Dr.

34. Heb.: *minhak*. "Viz, to secure admission to His presence. Cf. 2 Sam. 8:2, 6, Judg. 3:18 end"—Dr.

35. Some cod. (w. Aram.) : "come in before him"—Gn.

36. Cp. 29:2.

37. Cp. 77:16.

38. See 93:1, 97:1, 99:1.

39. So *Gt*.

40. So (participle) Del. "Is come"—Dr. and others.

41. In some cod. this clause is not repeated. Cp. 1 Ch. 16:33—Gn.

42. As in 93:1, 96:10, 99:1.

43. Or: "judgment."

## PSALMS 92 TO 97

the earth saw and was in birth-throes:<sup>44</sup>

- 5 The mountains like wax melted at the presence of Jehovah,  
at the presence of the Lord<sup>45</sup> of the whole earth:
- 6 The heavens declared his righteousness,  
and all the peoples saw his glory.
- 7 Put to shame are all they who were serving an image,  
who were boasting themselves in nothings:<sup>46</sup>  
all messengers divine<sup>47</sup> bow ye down to him.
- 8 Zion heard and was glad,  
and the daughters of Judah exulted,—  
Because of thy righteous decisions<sup>48</sup> O Jehovah.
- 9 For thou Jehovah art Most High over all the earth,  
greatly hast thou exalted thyself above all messengers  
divine.<sup>47</sup>
- 10 Ye lovers of Jehovah! hate ye wrong.  
He preserveth the lives<sup>49</sup> of his men of kindness,  
from the hand of lawless ones he rescueth them.
- 11 Light hath arisen<sup>50</sup> for the righteous one,  
And for such as are upright of heart gladness.
- 12 Be glad O ye righteous in Jehovah,  
and give thanks unto his Holy Memorial.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 92

#### *A Song To Sing On The Lord's Day<sup>1</sup>*

It is good to say, "Thank You" to the Lord, to sing praises to the God who is above all gods.

2 Every morning tell Him, "Thank You for Your kindness," and every evening rejoice in all His faithfulness.

3 Sing His praises, accompanied by music from the harp and lute and lyre.

44. Cp. 96:9.

45. Heb.: 'adon.

46. "Nothingnesses"—Dr.

47. Or: "gods." Heb. 'elohim. But see 8:5, 96:4.

48. Or: "thy judgments."

49. Or, "persons"; Heb. *naphshoth*; U.: "souls." Intro., Chap. III. "Souls."

50. So in some MSS. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.). Cp. 112:14—Gn. M.T.: "is sown."

1. Literally, "for the Sabbath day."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

4 You have done so much for me, O Lord. No wonder I am glad! I sing for joy.

5 O Lord, what miracles you do! And how deep are Your thoughts!

6 Unthinking people do not understand them! No fool can comprehend this:

7 That although the wicked flourish like weeds, there is only eternal destruction ahead of them.

8 But the Lord continues forever, exalted in the heavens,

9 While His enemies—all evil-doers—shall be scattered.

10 But You have made me as strong as a wild bull. How refreshed I am by your blessings!<sup>2</sup>

11 I have heard the doom of my enemies announced and seen them destroyed.

12 But the godly shall flourish like palm trees, and grow tall as the cedars of Lebanon.

13 For they are transplanted into the Lord's own garden, and are under His personal care.

14 Even in old age they will still produce fruit and be vital and green.

15 This honors the Lord, and exhibits His faithful care. He is my shelter. There is nothing but goodness in Him!

### PSALM 93

Jehovah is King! He is robed in majesty and strength. The world is His throne.<sup>1</sup> O Lord, you have reigned from prehistoric times, from the everlasting past.

3 The mighty oceans thunder Your praise.

4 You are mightier than all the breakers pounding on the seashores of the world!

5 Your royal decrees cannot be changed. Holiness is forever the keynote of Your reign.

### PSALM 94

Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs, let Your glory shine out. Arise and judge the earth; sentence the proud to the penalties they deserve.

3 Lord, how long shall the wicked be allowed to triumph and exult?

2. Literally, "anointed with fresh oil."

1. Literally, "The world is established . . . Your throne is established."

## PSALMS 92 TO 97

4 Hear their insolence! See their arrogance! How these men of evil boast!

5 See them oppressing Your people, O Lord, afflicting those You love.

6, 7 They murder widows, immigrants, and orphans, for "The Lord isn't looking," they say, "and besides, He<sup>1</sup> doesn't care."

8 Fools!

9 Is God deaf and blind—He who makes ears and eyes?

10 He punishes the nations—won't He also punish you? He knows everything—doesn't He also know what you are doing?

11 The Lord is fully aware of how limited and futile the thoughts of mankind are,

12, 13 So He helps us by punishing us. This makes us follow His paths, and gives us respite from our enemies while God traps them and destroys them.

14 The Lord will not forsake His people, for they are His prize.

15 Judgment will again be just and all the upright will rejoice.

16 Who will protect me from the wicked? Who will be my shield?

17 I would have died unless the Lord had helped me.

18 I screamed, "I'm slipping Lord!" and He was kind and saved me.

19 Lord, when doubts fill my mind, when my heart is in turmoil, quiet me and give me renewed hope and cheer.

20 Will You permit a corrupt government to rule under Your protection—a government permitting wrong to defeat right?

21, 22 Do You approve of those who condemn the innocent to death? No! The Lord my God is my fortress—the mighty Rock where I can hide.

23 God has made the sins of evil men to boomerang upon them! He will destroy them by their own plans! Jehovah our God will cut them off.

## PSALM 95

Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord! Gave a joyous shout in honor of the Rock of our salvation!

2 Come before Him with thankful hearts. Let us sing Him psalms of praise.

1. Literally, "the God of Jacob."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

3 For the Lord is a great God, the great King of<sup>1</sup> all gods.

4 He controls the formation of the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains; all are His.

5 He made the sea and formed the land; they too are His.

6 Come, kneel before the Lord our Maker,

7 For He is our God. We are His sheep and He is our shepherd! Oh, that you would hear Him calling you today and come to Him!

8 Don't harden your hearts as Israel did in the wilderness<sup>2</sup> at Meribah and Massah.

9 For there your fathers doubted Me, though they had seen so many of My miracles before. My patience was severely tried by their complaints.

10 "For forty years I watched them in disgust," the Lord God says. "They were a nation whose thoughts and heart were far away from Me. They refused to accept My laws.

11 Therefore in mighty wrath I swore that they would never enter the Promised Land, the place of rest I planned for them."

### PSALM 96

Sing a new song to the Lord! Sing it everywhere around the world!

2 Sing out His praises! Bless His name. Each day tell someone that He saves.

3 Publish His glorious acts throughout the earth. Tell everyone about the amazing things He does.

4 For the Lord is great beyond description, and greatly to be praised. Worship only Him among the gods!

5 For the gods of other nations are merely idols, but our God made the heavens!

6 Honor and majesty surround Him; strength and beauty are in His Temple.

7 O nations of the world, confess that God alone is glorious and strong.

8 Give Him the glory He deserves! Bring your offering and come to worship Him.<sup>1</sup>

9 Worship the Lord with the beauty of holy lives.<sup>2</sup> Let the earth tremble before Him.

1. Literally, "above."

2. Exodus 17:7.

1. Literally, "enter His courts."

2. Or, "in the priestly robes."

## PSALMS 92 TO 97

10 Tell the nations that Jehovah reigns! He rules the world. His power can never be overthrown. He will judge all nations fairly.

11 Let the heavens be glad, the earth rejoice; let the vastness of the roaring seas demonstrate His glory.

12 Praise Him for the growing fields, for they display His greatness. Let the trees of the forest rustle with praise.

13 For the Lord is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the nations fairly and with truth!

### PSALM 97

Jehovah is King! Let all the earth rejoice! Tell the farthest island to be glad.

2 Clouds and darkness surround Him! Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

3 Fire goes forth before Him and burns up all His foes.

4 His lightning flashes out across the world. The earth sees and trembles.

5 The mountains melt like wax before the Lord of all the earth.

6 The heavens declare His perfect righteousness; every nation sees His glory.

7 Let those who worship idols be disgraced—all who brag about their worthless gods—for every god must bow to Him!

8, 9 Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah have heard of Your justice, Lord, and are glad that You reign in majesty over the entire earth and are far greater than these other gods.

10 The Lord loves those who hate evil; He protects the lives of His people, and rescues them from the wicked.

11 Light is sown for the godly and joy for the good.

12 May all who are godly be happy in the Lord and crown<sup>1</sup> Him, our holy God.

## EXPOSITION

It will be observed that there is but one original headline to Pss. 92 to 97; and therefore it will be no great strain on our credulity if, from this circumstance, we assume that these psalms, thus undivided from each other in the Hebrew text, at a very early period in their history formed one continuous Service of Song for a *Sabbath Day*. That the series was composed of

1. Literally, "give glory to His holy name."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

several distinct psalms, probably written by two or three psalmists, is clear from internal evidence.

Ps. 92 is intensely *personal*: as witness the phrases *hast made me glad—I will ring out my joy* (ver. 4)—*my horn—I am anointed—mine eyes—my lurking foes—my wicked assailants—mine ears* (vers. 10, 11). It is at the same time thoroughly *experimental*: which is evident, not only from the above expressions, but also from the writer's *thankfulness* (ver. 1), and from his persuasion that he has been blessed with some insight into Jehovah's *works and plans* (ver. 5), as well as from that sense of nearness to God which leads him to designate him *My Rock* (ver. 15). The writer of the psalm is probably a *king* in the line of David: which accounts for his expectation that his *horn* will be exalted, in spite of his unscrupulous *foes* (vers. 10, 11). He is not only a king, but an enthusiastic *musician*: understanding what it is to *sweep the strings* (ver. 1), and appreciating differences in musical instruments, as his selection of the deep-toned *lyre* to accompany his poetic soliloquy in his royal chambers sufficiently indicates. Out of these observations emerges the natural conclusion, that its writer was King Hezekiah.

Ps. 93 forms a striking contrast. It is by no means personal; but public, lofty, grand. It propounds a thesis worthy of the most far-seeing prophetic gift: for it tells of nothing less than an especial assumption of sovereignty by *Jehovah himself*, who on the basis of his *ancient rule and being* makes a new Divine advance to manifested kingship over the earth. The psalm is but brief, calling *sea-streams* to witness to the Divine Majesty, and claiming that the Divine *Testimonies* and *Temple-worship* are confirmed by Jehovah's Royal Proclamation. The two most remarkable things about this short psalm are: *first*, that it gives the key-note of the series; in which, be it noted, Jehovah is proclaimed King three times, which key-note is carried over to the abbreviated Sabbath Service of Song which we may assume to be formed by Pss. 98, 99; so that *four times* in the double series is this Proclamation made; *second*, another remarkable thing is that King Hezekiah—himself a king in the royal, covenant line of David—should have given so much prominence to such a theme, if he prepared this Service of Song, a theme to give currency to which looks greatly like an act of self-effacement on his part, *as though* neither he nor any of his descendants could be regarded as *The Coming King*. Not only, then, does this psalm demand a lofty prophetic gift for its production, but it requires a prophet



## PSALMS 92 TO 97

of unquestionable standing and commanding weight to secure its insertion in this Service of Song. These conditions are remarkably well fulfilled in ISAIAH; especially if we may safely come back—as it would appear we may—to the old-fashioned custom of regarding *him* as the author of the whole of the book which goes under his name. For, in that case, we have not only the vision of Isaiah, chapter 6, to give a commanding place to the conception of Jehovah's becoming King of all the earth, but we have patterned by Isaiah himself—of course under Divine guidance—in 52:7 almost the exact formula for proclaiming Divine Kingship which stands out so prominently in these psalms. Isaiah is the man who has had the vision, and who is possessed by the conception which the vision conveys. And he has the age, the standing, and the unquestionable spiritual authority to secure Hezekiah's ready acceptance of Jehovah's own Royal proclamation of Himself as suitable for a large place in this Sabbath Service of Song. From this point of view, the bringing together of the two men—Isaiah and Hezekiah—under the dominance of a great expectation, throws an unexpected but most welcome sidelight on that strange wail of disappointment issuing from Hezekiah's sick-room (Isaiah 38) that now—if he must at once die—he will “not see Yah in the land of the living,” as under Isaiah's tuition he had conceived that he might. So that any imagined unlikelihood that Hezekiah would make such a theme so prominent in his Sabbath Service of Song, is completely overborne by the evidence which shews how naturally he might have done this very thing.

Ps. 94 differs from both the preceding: from 92 by not being mainly joyous, and from 93 by rather lamenting that Jehovah has not become King, than by proclaiming that he has ascended his earthly Royal Seat. This psalm, again, has a rather strong personal note, and may very well have been written by Hezekiah himself or at his dictation. If so, however, its totally different tone would drive us to conclude that it must have been written at another and probably an earlier time, evidently a time of sore national trouble. Indeed, so predominant is the note of lamentation throughout this psalm, that some critics have concluded it to be wholly out of its place where it now stands. Perhaps they have been hasty in their judgment. But let us glance through the psalm. Three stanzas (vers. 1-7) suffice to make it clear that Israel's foes are dominant, relentless and persecuting. That they are foreigners is already made probable

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

by their being called *lawless* (ver. 3) and practically certain by the way they speak of *the God of Jacob* (ver. 7). Their doings are so wicked as to call for the *vengeance* of the Judge of all the earth, and so protracted as to lead the sufferers to cry out *How long, O Jehovah!* Their *pride* and *arrogance* strongly remind us of the haughty speeches of that "villain" Rabshakeh, the Assyrian general. Stanza IV. (vers. 8-11) induces the belief that even some Israelites were in danger of falling away to the foreigner, and needed to be severely reasoned with. Stanza V. (vers. 12-15) might have been a photograph for which Hezekiah himself sat; and goes far to persuade us that the actual writer of this psalm was one of Hezekiah's men, who could say of his master what his master would scarcely have said of himself. In Stanza V. (vers. 16-19) the voice of Hezekiah is again plainly heard: the drawing is true to the life—Hezekiah has confronted the *silence* of death—has *slipped*—has had *disquieting thoughts* and restorative *consolations*. Stanza VI. (vers. 20-23) reminds us that all the while, behind the arrogant menaces of Rabshakeh, stood the iniquitous *throne* of Assyria, which, as cruel and God-defying, could well be described by a godly Israelite as a throne of *engulfing ruin*. Suffice it to remind ourselves of the signal way in which these perfect tenses of prophetic certainty—*hath become a lofty retreat, hath brought back on themselves their trouble* were at least typically fulfilled in the overthrow of Sennacherib. Such is the psalm. Is there need any longer to ask, what it does here in this Sabbath-day Service of Song: as though the Jewish Sabbath were not, above all things, a day of hallowed memories? On what principle it appears so interlocked, as it does here, with Jehovah's Royal Advent, we may yet discover. After this, we need not concern ourselves further with the question of authorship in its bearing on this Sabbath-day Service of Song. With Hezekiah and Isaiah at work in its production, we are ready for any contingency which Hezekiah's Chief Musician could suggest; since we can conceive of no suggestion as to either words or music, which Hezekiah and his godly helpers could not easily supply. But let us rapidly push forward this survey to a conclusion.

Ps. 95 is remarkable for the facility with which, after a 4-line invitation to worship, it resolves itself into two 10-line stanzas, the former joyous, and the later admonitory. As to the fitness of the latter to find place here,—with such waverers in view as the previous psalm reveals (94:8-11), it cannot be

## PSALMS 92 TO 97

said that the solemn warning of this psalm (95:7-11) is in any wise out of place. It is, further, something to remember—that this Sabbath-day's Service of Song points onwards to a Divine Sabbath of Sabbaths, which undoubtedly will be inaugurated by the Coming Divine King.

Ps. 96 enriches us with fresh thoughts: by bringing us into sight of a *new* manifestation of Divine Kingship, calling for a *song that is new*; that it commissions a particular *land* to herald the gladdidings of the Coming Divine Reign to the other *nations* of the earth (vers. 2, 3, 10); that, while there are Divine *representatives* (Elohim) who are real beings (ver. 4), there are other so-called Elohim ("gods") who have no existence (ver. 5); that even in the Coming Divine Reign, there will be a *sanctuary* (ver. 6) into which the *families of the peoples* (ver. 7) can enter with their presents (ver. 8) and there *worship* (ver. 9); and that such a changed state of things will amount to a *New Birth* for or a *Readjustment of the world* (vers. 9, 10), whereat all Nature—including the *heavens, the earth, the sea, the plain, the forest*—may well go into ecstasies; for the good reason that Jehovah is *coming to reign* over all the *peoples of the world in righteousness and faithfulness* (vers. 10, 13).

Ps. 97, the last of this longer Sabbath-day series, is notable in that, whatever cause for fear and trembling any of the individuals and nations of the world may have, in prospect of this *new* and immediate Divine Rule, the great event itself is mainly an occasion for joy: *Let the earth exult*. Probably not without peculiar interest to Europeans (and it may be Americans also) the West—under the significant Biblical name of *Coastlands*—is particularly called upon to *rejoice*:—a glimpse into the future which was, as we know, vouchsafed to Isaiah, independently of this psalm (Isaiah 24:15, 41:1, 42:4, 49:1, 59:18, 60:9, 66:19). Other things observable in this closing psalm of the first series are: that the promised Divine Advent is to be, in some way, open and palpable to *the whole earth*; conveying its testimony of Divine *righteousness* to all men's minds (vers. 4-6); that it will be sufficiently sudden to put some *boastful* idolaters to *shame* (ver. 7); sufficiently demonstrative to cause *all true messengers divine* to prostrate themselves before the world's Divine King (ver. 7); and yet sufficiently local in some phases of its manifestation to give occasion to carry the joyful tidings thereof to *Zion* and the *daughters of Judah* (ver. 8). Real *divine messengers*, such as kings and judges, will be permitted

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

to govern longer, only on condition of being manifestly in subjection to *Jehovah* as *Most High over all the earth* (ver. 9). No wonder that such good news as this should be finally employed by way of admonition: *Ye lovers of Jehovah! hate ye wrong* (ver. 10). They who persist in wrong will be punished. The wronged—the imperilled—are to be *preserved*, to be *rescued* (ver. 10). Truly we may say, *light* has *arisen* for the *righteous* king Hezekiah (ver. 11), and for myriads besides who will open their eyes. And, ye *righteous*, who are made *glad* in *Jehovah*, forget not to *give thanks to his Holy Memorial*; with the understanding that “his Holy Memorial” is “his Holy Name,” *Jehovah* (Exod. 3:15, Ps. 135:1-3); that is, *Yahweh*; that is, *the Becoming One*; and that here, in this beautiful Sabbath Service of Song, He hath prophetically *BECOME the King of all the earth*, as unveiled to your believing and rejoicing eyes.

For further “General Reflections,” see at the close of Ps. 99.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### PSALM 92

1. Why are these psalms (i.e. 92 through 97) placed under one heading?
2. What is meant by the thought that this psalm is both intensely *personal* and also thoroughly *experimental*?
3. The writer of the psalm is a king and a musician. How do we know this?

### PSALM 93

1. What is the theme of this psalm?
2. How is the theme developed?
3. What are the two most remarkable things about this psalm?
4. Why does Rotherham feel Isaiah is probably the author of this psalm?

### PSALM 94

1. This psalm differs from 92 or 93. In what way?
2. What is the general tenure of this psalm?
3. Rotherham seems to have a definite set of circumstances for the writing of this psalm. What are they? Who is “Rabshekeh”?
4. In what way is this psalm appropriate as a part of the sabbath day service in the Temple?

## PSALMS 92 TO 97 AND 98 AND 99

### PSALM 95

1. We should sing and be thankful to God—i.e., according to verses 1 and 2. Give at least two reasons for doing so according to verses 3-5.
2. Show how the solemn warning of this psalm was appropriate when written and also today.

### PSALM 96

1. What are the *new* thoughts introduced by this psalm?
2. This is called "a missionary song". Why?
3. The material reign of Christ on earth in Jerusalem in a restored Temple seems to be the suggestion of the comments on this psalm. Discuss.

### PSALM 97

1. Someone seems to think America and Europeans should take a particular interest in this psalm. Why?
2. Read and interpret Isa. 24:15; 41:1; 42:4; 49:1; 59:18. Discuss.
3. Rotherham has a marvelous ability of seeing a literal earthly fulfillment of vs. 4-11. Discuss.

## PSALMS 98 and 99

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Shorter Service of Song (for a Sabbath Day).

### ANALYSIS

Psalm 98: An Invitation to Sing the New Song of Jehovah's Victory in behalf of the House of Israel.

Psalm 99: Jehovah's Assumption of Kingship Proclaimed: with a Renewed Call to Worship.

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## PSALM 98

(Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 Sing ye to Jehovah a song that is new,  
for wondrous things hath he done,—

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

his own right hand and his holy arm have gotten him  
victory!<sup>1</sup>

- 2 Jehovah hath made known his victory,  
to the eyes of the nations hath he unveiled his righteousness:
- 3 He hath remembered his kindness and his faithfulness to the  
house of Israel,  
all the ends of the earth have seen the victory<sup>1</sup> of our God.
- 4 Shout ye to Jehovah all the earth,  
break forth and ring out your joy and make ye melody:
- 5 Make ye melody to Jehovah with the lyre,—  
with the lyre and the voice of psalmody;
- 6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
shout ye before the King—Jehovah!
- 7 Let the sea thunder and the fulness thereof,  
the world and they who dwell therein:
- 8 The streams—let them clap their hands,  
together the mountains—let them ring out their joy:—
- 9 Before Jehovah for he is coming to judge the earth:  
he will judge the world with righteousness,  
and the peoples with equity.

(Nm.)

## PSALM 99

(Nm.)

- 1 *Jehovah hath become king*<sup>2</sup>—let the peoples tremble,  
enthroned on cherubim—let the earth quiver.
- 2 Jehovah in Zion is great,  
and high is he above all the peoples.
- 3 Let them thank thy name great and fearful:
- (4) "*Holy is he.*—4 and strong,  
a king who loveth justice."  
Thou hast established equity,  
justice and righteousness in Jacob hast thou thyself wrought.
- 5 *Exalt ye Jehovah our God,*  
*and bow down at his footstool:*  
*"Holy<sup>3</sup> is he!*

1. Or: "salvation."

2. As in 93:1, 96:10, 97:1.

3. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "For holy"—Gn.

## PSALM 98 AND 99

- 6 Moses and Aaron among his priests,  
and Samuel among the callers on his name,—  
callers [were they] unto Jehovah and he used to answer  
them;
- 7 In a pillar of cloud used he to speak unto them:  
they kept his testimonies,  
and a statute he gave to them.
- 8 Jehovah our God! thou thyself didst answer them,  
a forgiving GOD becamest thou unto them;  
but one taking vengeance on the evil deeds of them.
- 9 *Exalt ye Jehovah our God,  
and bow down at his holy mountain;  
For holy is Jehovah our God.*

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 98

Sing a new song to the Lord telling about His mighty deeds!  
For He has won a mighty victory by His power and holiness.

2, 3 He has announced this victory and revealed it to every  
nation by fulfilling His promise to be kind to Israel. The whole  
earth has seen God's salvation of His people.

4 That is why the earth breaks out in praise to God, and  
sings for utter joy!

5 Sing your praise accompanied by music from the harp.

6 Let the cornets and trumpets shout! Make a joyful  
symphony before the Lord, the King!

7 Let the sea in all its vastness roar with praise! Let the  
earth and all those living on it shout, "Glory to the Lord."

8, 9 Let the waves clap their hands in glee, and the hills  
sing out their songs of joy before the Lord, for He is coming to  
judge the world with perfect justice.

### PSALM 99

Jehovah is King! Let the nations tremble! He is enthroned  
upon the cherubim. Let the whole earth shake.

2 Jehovah sits in majesty in Zion, supreme above all rulers  
of the earth.

3 Let them reverence Your great and holy name.

4 This mighty King is determined to give justice. Fairness  
is the touchstone of everything He does. He gives justice  
throughout Israel.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

5 Exalt the Lord our holy God! Bow low before His feet.

6 When Moses and Aaron and Samuel, His prophet, cried to Him for help, He answered them.

7 He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud and they followed his instructions.

8 O Jehovah our God! You answered them and forgave their sins, yet punished them when they went wrong.

9 Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy mountain in Jerusalem, for He is holy.

## EXPOSITION

The warrant for regarding Pss. 98 and 99 as a Shorter Service of Song for Sabbath Worship is informal, but probably sufficient. The comparative brevity of this "Service" is obvious. Its distinctness from what has gone before is marked by the superscribed word *Psalm* over 98. Its substantial identity of theme with Pss. 92-97 is easily perceived; and chiefly appears in the recurrence of the Proclamation of Jehovah's Kingship, sustained by similar invitations to worship, and a repetition, in 98:9, of the heard note of 96:13.

Ps. 98 opens like 96, only with a clearer statement of the precise nature of Jehovah's *victory*: that it amounts to an *unveiling* of his *righteousness*, by fulfilling his promises to *the house of Israel*.

Ps. 99 contains a considerable amount of new matter: as, for example, Jehovah's occupancy of his *cherubic throne*; Zion being the especial place where his *greatness* is displayed; with a tolerable clear reminder of the "trisagion" or "thrice holy" cry of the Seraphim in Isa. 6. Again, it is very pointedly said that Jehovah *himself* has wrought *justice and righteousness in Jacob*—the use of which name, for "Israel," offers a further assurance that it is to the historic nation of the Twelve Tribes that the psalm refers. It is perhaps a little difficult to determine the motive for referring by name to *Moses, Aaron and Samuel*: probably not so much to generalise, by intimating that even now they have among them *a Moses, an Aaron, and a Samuel* to intercede for them (as Kp. suggests) as to connect, in a more general way the old history with the new, and to enjoin the lesson of holy fear as not out of place in the coming glorious time.

The foregoing rapid survey of the two Sabbath Services of



## PSALM 98 AND 99

Song has been submitted for the purpose of preparing the reader for the following.

### GENERAL REFLECTIONS

on the entire twofold series of psalms whose Keynote is *Jehovah hath become King*.

The *first* reflection is: That here we have intimated some **NEW DIVINE ACTION** based upon the abiding and unalterable Sovereignty of God, but in advance of it; coming into effect at a special time and place and under special circumstances; and furthermore leading to results so stupendous as naturally to raise the question how far they have even yet been fulfilled. It is satisfactory to observe with what practical unanimity Expositors agree that such "New Divine Action" is affirmed by the great words of proclamation four times over used in these psalms: *Yahweh malak* = *Jehovah hath become King*. Thus the "Speakers' Commentary" says: "The verb rendered 'is (now) king' is here used in reference to the inauguration of the Theocracy in its final and complete manifestation." Similarly Perowne: "IS KING. More exactly, 'hath become King,' as if by a solemn coronation (comp. the same expression of a new monarch ascending the throne, 2 Sam. 15:10, 1 Kings 1:11, 2 Kings, 9:13). He has been King from everlasting, but now His kingdom is visibly set up, His power and His majesty fully displayed and acknowledged." More fully Delitzsch: "Heretofore Jahve's rule, seeing He has waived the use of His omnipotence, has been self-abasement and self-renunciation; now, however, He manifests Himself in all His majesty, which soars above everything; He has put this on as a garment; He is King and now shows himself to the world in His royal robe." In like manner Thrupp: "There is in the words themselves, as Hengstenberg just remarks, an allusion to the form used at the proclamation of the commencement of the reign of an earthly sovereign; and hence it follows that the language does not apply to the constant government of God, but to a new glorious manifestation of his dominion." With equal explicitness, Briggs: "Not the assertion of his everlasting royal prerogative, but the joyous celebration of the fact that He has now shown Himself to be King by a royal advent, taking His place on His throne to govern the world Himself, and no longer through inefficient or wicked servants." (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kingdom.")

The *second* reflection is: That these psalms are JEHOVISTIC

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

RATHER THAN MESSIANIC, as a glance through them will at once shew. No Messiah, no Son of David, is once named in them. At first this is startling: ultimately it seems less strange. For, let us consider: Since "No man can see God and live" (Exo. 33:20), since "No man hath seen God himself at any time" (John 1:18), it follows that whenever men have been held to have seen him, it can only have been through a veil. It is well known that there are incidents and suggestions even in the Old Testament looking in this direction, particularly with regard to the Messenger in whom is the name Jehovah (Gen. 16:10-13, 19:24, Exo. 23:20, 21, 33:14, 15). Then, too, Christians, holding Jesus of Nazareth to have been the Messiah, consistently conceive of him as the veiled manifestation of Deity—veiled "in self-renunciation and self-abasement"; and therefore no man was compelled to see his glory; which glory, now, for the present, is "hid in God" (Col. 3:3) and ready at any time to burst forth *as in these Theocratic psalms*.

A *third* reflection naturally follows: That these psalms, for their fulfilment, await THE MESSIAH'S SECOND ADVENT. The psalms are highly poetic, and even dramatic, as all sober interpreters admit. Still, it by no means follows that they have no clear burden to deliver; and therefore the dictate of sanctified common sense would appear to be to say, Will the burden of these psalms, when due allowance has been made for figures of speech, be well met when the Messiah returns, according to the plain sense of his own and his apostles' sayings about his Second Coming?

We may here strengthen these reflections by quoting the weighty words of Delitzsch: "In addition to such psalms as behold in anticipation the Messianic future, whether it be prophetically or only typically, or typically and prophetically at once, as the world-overcoming and world-blessing kingship of the Anointed of Jahve, there are others, in which the perfected theocracy as such is seen beforehand, not as the parousia of a human king, but as the parousia of Jahve himself, as the kingdom of God manifest in all its glory. These theocratic psalms form along with the Christocratic two series of prophecies, referring to the last time, which run parallel with one another. The one has for its goal the Anointed of Jahve, who from out of Zion rules over all peoples; while the other has Jahve, seated above the cherubim, to whom the whole world pays homage. Although these two series converge in the Old Testament, they

## PSALM 98 AND 99

do not come together; it is the historical fulfilment that first of all makes it clear that the parousia of the Anointed One and the parousia of Jahve are one and the same. It is only at a few climaxes of prophecy that this thought flashes forth in the Old Testament"—Intro. to Ps. 98.

A *fourth* reflection is: That as soon as the ultimate blending of the Theocratic and the Christocratic prophecies is accepted, and information is accordingly sought in the New Testament regarding the Messiah's Second Coming as destined to fulfil these psalms, particularly as to the Destruction of the Lawless One by that Second Coming, according to 2 Thes. 2,—so soon is THE POSITION OF PSALM 94 IN THIS SABBATH SERVICE OF SONG TRIUMPHANTLY VINDICATED. It cannot be denied that its position here is extraordinary; nor can it be doubted that the psalm itself—both in its description of so gigantic a development of *Lawlessness*, as is portrayed therein, and in its outcries for *Divine Vengeance* there-upon—readily carries us beyond Hezekiah and beyond Sennacherib. It would surpass the wit of man to coin a more apt phrase for describing the COMING LAWLESS ONE, in the awful doings to be permitted him, than as *the Throne of Engulfing Ruin framing Mischief by Statute*. Given, then, the conclusions that this Throne of Iniquity will yet prove specially disastrous to Hezekiah's nation; and that Jehovah's overthrow of that Throne will constitute the great *Victory* by which the Theocracy will be visibly set up on earth, and Jehovah's final reign inaugurated,—then nothing could be more appropriate than the insertion of this psalm just here in Hezekiah's larger Sabbath-day's Service of Song. Indeed, only to see this, is nothing short of discovering a new, unexpected and most welcome proof of Jehovah's wondrous overruling ways; and it may be forgiven any Christian if, under such an impulse, with bowed head he here sends up to heaven his welcome to YAHWEH-CHRIST as EARTH'S COMING KING.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the reasons for considering psalms 98 & 99 as a shorter service of song for a sabbath day?
2. What is the purpose of referring to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel by name?
3. Rotherham makes *four reflections* on these two psalms—shall we state and discuss the thought of each: (a) On the basic pre-supposition that *Jehovah hath become king*,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

What is the "new divine action"? Evidently the rule or kingship of God has taken on a new aspect. (b) What is meant by saying "these psalms are Jehovistic rather than Messianic"? What is the ultimate conclusion? (c) The fulfillment of these psalms await the return of the Messiah. Are we to believe there is to be a literal rule of God through Christ in Jerusalem? Discuss. (d) Psalms 94 is vindicated—how? What does II Thess. 2 say about this? Is the "lawless one described in Psalm 99? Discuss.

## PSALM 100

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Invitation to All the Earth to Come In before  
Jehovah and Worship.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Invitation to Worship, based on Jehovah's Claims as Creator and Shepherd. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, Renewed Invitation, based on Jehovah's Own Perfections.

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(Lm.) Psalm—For a Thank-offering (or For Thanksgiving.)

- 1 Shout ye unto Jehovah all the earth!
- 2 serve Jehovah with gladness,  
come in before him with a ringing cry.
- 3 Know that Jehovah he is God,  
he made us and his are we,<sup>1</sup>—  
his people and the flock of his shepherding.<sup>2</sup>
- 4 Come into his gates with thanksgiving,<sup>3</sup>  
into his courts with praise,<sup>4</sup>—  
give thanks to him, bless his name;
- 5 For good is Jehovah  
to the ages his kindness,—  
and unto generation after generation his faithfulness.

(Nm.)

1. So Heb. marg. (*kri=read* preferred by Del., Per., Kp., Br., Dr.).  
Heb. text (M.T.): "and not we ourselves."

2. Cp. 79:13, 95:7, (Isa. 63:11).

3. Or: "a thank-offering."

4. Or: "a song of praise."

PSALM 100  
PARAPHRASE

PSALM 100

Shout with joy before the Lord, O earth!

2 Obey Him gladly; come before Him singing with joy,

3 Try to realize what this means—the Lord is God! He made us—we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

4 Go through His open gates with great thanksgiving; enter His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and bless His name.

5 For the Lord is always good. He is always loving and kind, and His faithfulness goes on and on to each succeeding generation.

EXPOSITION

The close connection between this psalm and those immediately preceding it is evident, and at once supplies guidance as to the breadth of the outlook which should be given to the first line as an appeal to *all the earth* rather than to "all the land." It is true that the Hebrew word *'erez* means "land" as well as "earth," and further true that once in the foregoing series (96:1) it has here been rendered "land." But that was for a special passing reason; namely, because of an apparent distinction between a particular "land" and the remaining nations of the earth. Hence, as it cannot be denied that in most of the 15 occurrences of the word in Pss. 94-100, "earth" has far stronger claims to stand in English than the more limited word "land," it is submitted that "earth" is the right word here. The dominant thought of the psalms now closing is that Jehovah is lord of the whole earth and has now entered upon the manifest kingship of all the world; and that no sufficient reason comes in here, at the opening of this new and final psalm, to limit the appeal to a smaller sphere than the whole world. We are not just here following Asaph pleading for the reunion of the tribes, as we were some twenty psalms back; but rather are we under the guidance of Isaiah, who is familiar with the conception that Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem is to be "a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isa. 56:7) and that Jehovah purposes to "gather together all nations and tongues to come and see his glory," yea and that "all flesh shall come in and bow down before me, Saith Jehovah" (Isa. 66:18, 23). Hence we may with reasonable confidence give the fullest possible breadth to the opening invitation: *Shout ye unto Jehovah all the earth.*

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

The more firmly we take up this position, the more frankly it becomes us now to submit that the language of the psalm points to the gathering, periodic or otherwise, of all the earth to a local centre: *Come in before Jehovah—Come into his gates, into his courts* (ver. 4). And this too is in the spirit of the psalms which have gone before, in which are many local indications: such as *the house of Jehovah, the courts of our God* (92:13)—*Come to meet his face, Come in, let us kneel* (95:2, 6)—*Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary* (96:6)—*Bring ye a present and come into his courts* (96:8)—*Jehovah in Zion is great* (99:2)—*Bow down at his footstool* (99:5)—*Bow down at his holy mountain* (99:9). So that it is entirely in the vein of these Sabbath-day Services of Song to abide by the local indications in the psalm now before us. These psalms deal with Israel and the Nations. They have already carried us beyond the present intermediate dispensation, having transported us beyond Messiah's Second Advent into the Coming final Theocracy. The Church, indeed, has no local centre, unless it is in heaven. But here we are in touch with the final, earthly Jerusalem; and clearly it does not follow that because the Church has no local, earthly centre, therefore there will be no such centre of worship in the Coming Kingdom. Unless we are prepared to turn the whole Old Testament into allegory, a hundred texts are at hand to shew that there will be such a centre in the Final Theocracy. Still (speaking here to Christians), on the principle that "all things are ours" we can rejoice in all that here unveils itself to our admiring eyes; and even in the Ecclesia, we can, in the spirit of trustful anticipation, sing the Songs of the Kingdom. (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kingdom.")

Note, then, what it is which is here set before us: it is nothing less than a worshipping world—a world worshipping with unspeakable gladness, because of what at first sight appear as two primordial truths, which however ultimately resolve themselves into one; namely the relationship to the world as both Creator and Shepherd sustained by Jehovah. This is the inspiration: this the gladness: this the motive and theme of praise. "Ye men of *all the earth*, know this: that *Jehovah*, God of the Hebrew nation, of grace and revelation and redemption is *God of all the earth*; *He made us, and His we are—His people, and the flock of his shepherding.*" If *all the earth* is appealed to, to *shout with gladness* and give a *ringing cry*,—this of necessity is to be the burden of that "ringing cry": which prophetically

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implies that when this song is sung according to its main intention, all the earth will have come into line with all who know God and rejoice in him as their Shepherding Creator. As Delitzsch has well said: In this announcement, *He made us, and His we are*, "lies a rich store of comfort and warning; for the Creator is also the Owner; His heart clings to his creature; while the latter owes himself entirely to Him, without whom he would neither have had being nor continue to exist." It is worth while to ensure perfect correctness by observing that the Divine relationships to all the earth here celebrated are essentially one. It does not say, "He created us all, and some of us are his people and the flock of his shepherding." That may be the exact truth now; yea, and may have been the exact truth in all past ages. But it is not the whole truth as it is to be realised and rung out with joy in the Final Theocracy; for it is not the whole truth as here set forth by prophetic anticipation. The "various reading" here preferred itself carries us further: *He made us, and His are we—His people*. Not merely "his creatures"; which of itself turns the broader word *made* to excellent account. He made us—what we are, *His people*; He made us—what we are, *His flock*. This opens our eyes to see that *to make* here means more than to create: it includes tending, training, forming our characters. What he makes us to be is not mere men; but good men, communing with him, like him; otherwise we could not be *His people, the flock of his shepherding*.

Does this lofty conception, when applied to *all the earth*, introduce confusion? It may: if we make of the past an iron-mould for the stereotyping of our thoughts; otherwise, there is no necessity for confusion. God has already had more than one people on the earth: the Jewish nation—now alas in a great measure in abeyance; the Christian Church—sometimes too wise in her own conceits, as for instance when she so far forgets herself as to affirm that "the Church Catholic has been manifestly revealed as that 'mountain of the Lord' unto which, according to prophecy, all nations were to flow."<sup>1</sup> We have only to let in the thought that as God has had more "peoples" than one in succession to each other, so he may yet have many peoples simultaneously whom he may graciously acknowledge as his own. Of this prospect we have distinct intimations both in Old Testament and New: In the former, in such remarkable words as these—"In that day shall Israel be a third with Egypt

1. Thrupp, Vol. II., 147.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and with Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the earth: whom Jehovah of hosts hath blessed saying,—Blessed be my people—the Egyptians, and the work of my hands—the Assyrians, and mine own inheritance—Israel” (Isa. 19:24). And in the latter, in such ravishing words as these—“Lo! the tent of God is with men, And he will tabernacle with them, And they shall be his peoples [mark the plural!], And he shall be God with them, And he will wipe away every tear out of their eyes” (Rev. 21:3, 4). Confusion disappears when the right perspective is obtained. The glorious prospect therefore is: That in the Final Theocracy all the earth will be able to shout—*Jehovah made us and his we are,—his people and the flock of his shepherding.*

We may perhaps revert to Israel as again singing to all the earth in the words of the second stanza of this delightful psalm: *Come into his gates.* But, in any case, we are prepared for the final observation, that here we have “renewed invitation based on Jehovah’s own perfections”: *For good is Jehovah, Age-abiding his kindness, And unto generation after generation his faithfulness;* and can weld the essential thoughts of the psalm into a unity by observing that even Divine Creatorship so involves Divine Promise as to give scope to Divine faithfulness; and thus can, with a sense of triumph, point to the harmony of scripture with scripture, by reminding ourselves of the fact that to the Christian Apostle Peter (I. Eph. 4:19) we are indebted for the blended noun and adjective which yield the much forgotten but most welcome appellation “FAITHFUL CREATOR.”

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There is some connection between this psalm and those which precede it. What is it?
2. Rotherham is quite set on the opinion that here we have a prophetic psalm of the time when “all the earth” will come to a center (Jerusalem) and worship the Lord. How is this opinion obtained? Is it valid? Discuss.
3. This is a psalm of Thanksgiving. In the two stanzas there is a call to praise and worship the Lord and then a reason for doing it. Let us share this worship and discover the reasons.



PSALM 101

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A King's Resolve to have a pure House and Court and Royal City.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-2a, The Theme of Song Announced and Applied to the Conduct becoming, and based upon Jehovah's Presence. Stanza II., vers. 2b-4, Personal Blamelessness Outlined. Stanzas III. and IV., vers. 5-8, The Blamelessness Demanded of Others to secure a City Worthy of Jehovah.

(Lm.) By David—Psalm.

- 1 *Of kindness and justice fain would I sing  
to thee O Jehovah would I sweep the strings.*<sup>1</sup>
- 2 *I would act circumspectly in a blameless way—  
When comest thou unto me?  
I will behave in the blamelessness<sup>2</sup> of my heart—  
in the midst of my house:*
- 3 *I will not set before mine eyes—  
a thing that is vile:<sup>3</sup>  
The doing of swerving deeds I hate—  
it shall not cleave to me;*
- 4 *A crooked heart shall depart from me—  
wrong will I not approve.*
- 5 *He that slandereth in secret his friend—  
him will I exterminate:  
The lofty of eyes and arrogant of heart—  
him will I not suffer.*
- 6 *Mine eyes are on the faithful of the land—  
to dwell<sup>4</sup> with me,  
He that walketh in a blameless way—  
he shall minister unto me.*
- 7 *There shall not dwell<sup>5</sup> in the midst of my house—  
a doer of deceit:*

1. Or: "harp," or "play."

2. Or: "singleness," "devotion," (ml.) "wholeness."

3. Ml.: "an affair of Belial (The abandoned one)."

4. Or: "to sit" (as assessors in judging).

5. Or: "sit down" (as a guest).

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A speaker of falsehoods shall not be established—  
before mine eyes,

- 8 Morning by morning will I exterminate—  
all the lawless of the land,  
To cut off out of the city of Jehovah—  
all the workers of iniquity.<sup>6</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 101

I will sing about Your lovingkindness and Your justice,  
Lord. I will sing Your praises!

2 I will try to walk a blameless path, but how I need Your  
help; especially in my own home, where I long to act as I should.

3 Help me to refuse the low and vulgar things; help me to  
abhor all crooked deals of every kind, to have no part in them.

4 I will reject all selfishness and stay away from every evil.

5 I will not tolerate any slander of my neighbors; I will not  
permit conceit and pride.

6 I will make the godly of the land my heroes, and invite  
them to my home. Those who are truly good shall be my  
examples.

7 But I will not allow those who deceive and lie to stay in  
my house.

8 My daily task will be to ferret out criminals and free the  
city of God from their grip.

## EXPOSITION

This psalm, it will be noticed, is attributed *To David*; and there seems to be no good reason why this assignment should not be trusted. The lofty moral tone which breathes through it, is in every way worthy of the Son of Jesse in his young and noble days, when he came to the throne of Israel, and particularly when he brought the Sacred Ark up to Jerusalem. The *kindness* and *justice* of Jehovah's own character, when reflected by a King and his Court, would call forth just such resolute purity and nobleness of conduct as are sketched through the psalm. We can almost feel the hand of Jehovah upon his servant David; and can easily believe that by this time the trembling fear

6. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.).

## PSALM 101

caused by the visitation upon Uzza is being mellowed by patience into a longing desire that Jehovah would without further delay come and dwell in the city of his choice. He thinks of the scrupulous conduct which would become himself in welcoming so Holy a Guest; and then suddenly prays for that supporting Presence which could alone enable him to reach his ideal: *When comest thou unto me?* The language vibrates between fear and hope. Hope becoming the stronger feeling, the psalmist arises to the occasion and promises the personal conduct which he knows will alone please: *I will behave in the blamelessness of my heart.* And first in his *house*—his home! in himself. His ideals should be lofty; his deeds unswerving; his mind straight; his approbation reserved for that only which was right. From himself he passes to those he must have about him. He had suffered enough from *slanderers* in the court of Saul to think of trusting them now, even though they might fawn upon him. The *conceited*, the *assuming*—these he knew he could not endure. He would keep his eyes open and draw to himself the right men from among *the faithful of the land*. Whether as *assessors* on the seats of justice or as *guests* in his home he would call to himself the men who would create the desirable atmosphere, guard him from his weaknesses, gladly help on his plans: especially the men who would tell him the truth. Probably with the early morning tribunals in mind, and in the full consciousness of his autocratic power, he almost alarms us by declaring that *morning by morning he will exterminate all the lawless of the land*. We may sufficiently reassure ourselves, not to draw hasty inferences in favour of indiscriminate autocracy, by noting well that the sphere of this King's action is *the city of Jehovah*: Jehovah's own representative, acting in Jehovah's presence in Jehovah's city. These are not conditions that can be reproduced anywhere, any day, by any one. In point of fact: If we have here speaking, either David personally, or any of David's Sons, then we have speaking a type of the Messiah: who shall one day autocratically govern in that Final Theocracy of which we have been recently reading. At the same time we do well to remind ourselves that Government, when most Divine, is least arbitrary; and that this whole psalm, forcible as it truly is against evil-doers, is dominated by the word with which it begins; and that the Theocracy which Divine *justice* regulates Divine *Kindness* founds.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. We are again considering that "man after God's own heart." What period in David's life does this cover?
2. This little outline will help:
  - I The King 1-4
    1. His personal desire 1, 2;
    2. His relative determination 3, 4
  - II The Kingdom 5-8
    1. The citizens must be worthy 5, 6
    2. The center must be clean 7, 8 (Scroggie)Relate this to David and then to yourself.
3. When God is God in our own home we will be able to make Him God in every other place. Read verses 3, 4 and relate to your own home as David did to his home.

PSALM 102

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Prayer of a Humbled One brings a  
Threefold Answer of Peace.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-11, A Humbled One's Complaint. Stanza II., vers. 12-17, The FIRST CONCLUSION, Adapting the psalm to the Close of the Captivity in Babylon. Stanza III., vers. 18-22, The SECOND CONCLUSION, Adapting the psalm to a Future Generation. Stanza IV., vers. 23-28, The Original Conclusion now placed at the Close of the Composite Psalm.

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(Lm.) Prayer—By the Humbled One when he fainteth and  
before Jehovah poureth out his Soliloquy.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Jehovah! oh hear my prayer,  
and let my cry for help unto thee come in.
- 2 Do not hide thy face from me,  
in the day of my distress incline thine ear unto me;  
in the day I keep calling haste thee answer me;
- 3 For vanished in<sup>2</sup> smoke are my days,  
and my bones like a hearth are burned through.<sup>3</sup>

1. Or: "murmuring," "complaint."

2. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.): "like"—Gn.

3. So Dr., Del.

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- 4 Smitten like herbage and withered is my heart,  
for I have forgotten to eat my bread.
- 5 By reason of the noise of my groaning  
cleaveth my bone to my flesh.
- 6 I am like a pelican of the desert,  
I am become like an owl of the ruins :
- 7 I have watched and moaned<sup>4</sup> like a solitary bird on a roof.
- 8 All the day have mine enemies reproached me,  
they who are mad against me by me have sworn.<sup>5</sup>
- 9 For ashes like bread have I eaten,  
and my drink with my tears have I mingled,—
- 10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath;  
for thou hast lifted me up and flung me away.
- 11 My days are like a shadow that is stretched-out,  
and I myself like herbage shall dry up.
- 12 But thou Jehovah to the ages sittest (enthroned),  
and thy memorial<sup>6</sup> is to generation after generation.
- 13 Thou wilt arise and have compassion upon Zion.  
for it is time to shew her favour<sup>7</sup> for the set time hath come :
- 14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,  
and on her dust look with favour.
- 15 So will the nations revere the name of Jehovah,  
and all the kings of the earth thy glory :
- 16 Because Jehovah hath built up Zion—  
hath appeared in his glory,
- 17 Hath turned unto the prayer of the destitute—  
and hath not despised their prayer.
- 18 Let this be written for a generation to come,  
and let a people to be created offer praise unto Yah :
- 19 That he hath looked forth from his holy height,<sup>8</sup>  
Jehovah from the heavens unto the earth hath directed his  
gaze :
- 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner,<sup>9</sup>  
to loose such as are appointed to die:<sup>10</sup>

4. So *Gt.* Cp. Ps. 55:17—*Gn.*

5. Cp. Isa. 65:15, Jer. 29:22, "He who swears by one in misfortune says 'May I bear the like if I break my faith.'"—T.G. 802.

6. Cp. Exo. 3:15. Some cod. "thy throne"—*Gn.*

7. Or: "to be gracious unto her."

8. Cp. Isa. 63:15.

9. Isa. 42:7, 61:1, Ps. 79:11.

10. *ML.*: "the sons of death."

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- 21 That they may tell in Zion of the name of Jehovah,  
and his praise in Jerusalem:
- 22 When the peoples are gathered together,<sup>11</sup>  
and the kingdoms to serve Jehovah.
- 23 He hath humbled<sup>12</sup> in the way my<sup>13</sup> strength,<sup>14</sup>  
he hath shortened my days.
- 24 I say—"My GOD! do not take me away in the midst of my  
days,  
through the generation of generations are thy years:
- 25 Of old the earth thou didst found,  
and the work of thy hands are in the heavens:<sup>15</sup>
- 26 They shall perish but thou shalt endure,  
and they all like a garment shall wear out,—  
as a vesture shalt thou change them and they shall vanish;
- 27 But thou art the Same,<sup>16</sup>  
and thy years shall have no end:
- 28 The sons of thy servants shall abide,  
and their seed before thee shall be established."

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 102

*A prayer when overwhelmed with trouble.*

Lord, hear my prayer! Listen to my plea!

2 Don't turn away from me in this time of my distress.  
Bend down Your ear and give me speedy answers,

3, 4 For my days disappear like smoke. My health is  
broken and my heart is sick; it is trampled like grass and is  
withered. My food is tasteless, and I have lost my appetite.

5 I am reduced to skin and bones because of all my groan-  
ing and despair.

6 I am like a vulture in a far-off wilderness, or like an owl  
alone in the desert.

7 I lie awake, lonely as a solitary sparrow on the roof.

8 My enemies taunt me day after day and curse at me.

11. Isa. 60:4.

12. The Heb. word here may be either "humbled" or "answered."

13. Ancient authorities are divided between "my" and "his."

14. For the effect of these variations see Exposition.

15. Cp. Isa. 48:13, 44:24.

16. Ml.: "he" "That is He who is (as opposed to the transitory fabric  
of the world)"—Dr. Cp. Deu. 32:39, Isa. 41:4, 43:10, 46:4, 48:12.

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9, 10 I eat ashes instead of bread. My tears run down into my drink because of Your anger against me, because of Your wrath. For You have rejected me and thrown me out.

11 My life is passing swiftly as the evening shadows. I am withering like grass.

12 While you, Lord, are a famous King forever. Your face will endure to every generation.

13 I know that You will come and have mercy on Jerusalem—and now is the time to pity her—the time You promised help.

14 For Your people love every stone in her walls and feel sympathy for every grain of dust in her streets.

15 Now let the nations and their rulers tremble before the Lord, before His glory.

16 For Jehovah will rebuild Jerusalem! He will appear in His glory!

17 He will listen to the prayers of the destitute, for He is never too busy to heed their requests.

18 I am recording this so that future generations will also praise the Lord for all that He has done. And a people that shall be created shall praise the Lord.

19 Tell them that God looked down from His Temple in heaven,

20 And heard the groans of His people in slavery—they were children of death—and released them,

21, 22 So that multitudes would stream to the Temple to praise Him, and His praises were sung throughout the city of Jerusalem; and many rulers throughout the earth came to worship Him.

\* \* \* \* \*

23 He has cut me down in middle life, shortening my days.

24 But I cried to Him, "O God, You live forever and forever! Don't let me die half through my years!

25 In ages past You laid the foundations of the earth, and made the heavens with Your hands!

26 They shall perish, but You go on forever. They will grow old, like worn-out clothing, and You will change them as a man putting on a new shirt and throwing away the old one!

27 But You Yourself never grow old. You are forever, and Your years never end.

\* \* \* \* \*

28 But our families will continue; generation after generation will be preserved by Your protection.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS EXPOSITION

The marked structural peculiarities of this psalm are probably best explained by the supposition that it was at first the soliloquy of an individual, and was afterwards adapted for national use on two successive occasions. The first and last stanzas (vers. 1-11 and 23-28) in all likelihood constituted the original psalm. The former of these is mainly a prolonged *complaint*, which may well have been written by or for King Hezekiah, since it strikingly meets his case, and runs closely parallel with his prayer as preserved in Isaiah 38. Throughout this stanza the personal note predominates—it is *I* and *me* all the way through; and the observable thing is, that there is no return to this personal note until verse 23 is reached, on the recurrence of which, however, we are again reminded of Hezekiah,—for, who so likely as he to have said—*Take me not away in the midst of my days!* and although, even then, the psalm does not close exactly as we might have expected Hezekiah to close it, yet nothing inconsistent comes in: the personal note still prevails, though only in the lofty strain which sets the abiding personality of Jehovah over against the frail and fleeting personality of the suppliant. Precisely how this contrast could have seemed to be a pertinent Divine response to the long drawn-out wail of the personal sufferer, it may be that a sacrificed line or phrase would have clearly shewn. As a working hypothesis, however, we can easily assume that these two personally dominated stanzas formed the original Hezekian psalm.

Time rolls on. The great exile to Babylon for seventy years takes place. Towards the close of this period, some gifted scribe observes the striking *parallel* between the afflicted *king* and the afflicted *nation*; and, to adapt the old psalm to new conditions, especially to hearten and prepare his people for a return to the Fatherland to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, he introduces the present Second Stanza (vers. 12-17). It would seem to be prejudiced and arbitrary *not* to suppose some such occasion for the touching allusions to Jerusalem's *stones* and *dust*, and especially the inspiring belief that the *set time to compassionate Zion* had now arrived, which this stanza includes. Looking again through this second stanza with these thoughts in mind, we are, on the one hand, no longer surprised to find in it no further reference to the original suppliant King; but, on the other hand, we easily realise how perfectly in keeping it is with the national intention suggested that the psalmist should indulge



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in a purely national outlook; a sort of glorified forecast of the grand things now to be expected by the redeemed and renewed Chosen People. The poet rises to a prophetic anticipation of those coming good things, when not only should Zion have been *re-built*, but *Jehovah* have *appeared in his glory*, and in every way have signally *turned to and not despised* the prayer of the as yet *destitute* nation.

But as time passes, it is realised that the *Return itself* is only feebly and by instalments accomplished; and especially that, as yet, there are no signs of the friendly *gathering of nations* to witness *Jehovah's glory* and to *serve him* which the prophets—especially Isaiah—had led them to expect. Hence a further addition is made to this now national psalm, by a significant intimation that the main fulfilment of it awaits a *coming generation*: even if a new Israel has to be *created* to witness its complete accomplishment, the promises of *Jehovah* shall be ultimately fulfilled. *Jehovah*, meanwhile, is not indifferent; but wherever, under the whole heavens, there are prisoners belonging to Israel crying to him in their misery, there his eye rests, thence the cry comes into his ears. The prisoners are to be released—to come to Zion—to rehearse in Jerusalem *Jehovah's* praise under circumstances most auspicious: *When the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms to serve Jehovah*. No doubt the picture is an *ideal* one: only to be made *real* after unforeseen delays. For, as Kirkpatrick well says, in abatement of our surprise that, “As a matter of fact the return was an insignificant event, and no startling results immediately followed it”:—“*Prophecy constantly combines in one view the nearer and the remoter future, depicting the eventual result, without indicating the steps by which it is to be reached.*”

Another easy movement, and the structure of the whole psalm is accounted for. After the two additions contained in Stanzas II. and III. had been made, it may then have been observed by a final editor that the original close of the personal psalm still held good, furnishing a most fitting conclusion for the whole composite psalm; which was therefore added,—quite possibly by Ezra, with or without a finishing touch to complete the unification of the whole as one of the Songs of Zion.

Probably there are but few present-day readers of the psalms who cannot find assistance in some such modest theory of origin of this psalm as the foregoing. Better far so to apprehend how the psalm *may* have assumed its present form, than to

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be driven to the unwelcome conclusion that it is radically and irremediably incoherent; seeing especially that such a conclusion is likely to foster the deplorable habit of regarding Holy Scripture as a mere fetish, whose chief value lies in a meaningless repetition of sounds in which sense is at a discount.

The reasons for regarding ver. 23 as originally continuous with ver. 11 will become more and more evident on examination. Not only does the personal element then reappear after being so long in abeyance, but it reappears with the same theme uppermost: ver. 11 is speaking of *my days*, and it is to *my days* that ver. 23 returns.

It is no doubt a little disconcerting to observe that, just where this junction reveals itself, there some difficulty should appear as to both "rendering" and "reading." As to "rendering," attention may be called to the undoubted fact that the very first word in verse 23 (*'anah*) may be rendered either "humbled," as in this translation, or "answered," as in the ancient Greek version, the Septuagint. As to "reading," it is not to be denied that on the length of a single down-stroke it depends whether the affixed pronoun to the noun "strength" be "my" or "his"—"my strength" or "his strength." If the latter were clearly ruled out by the context, we might serenely disregard it; and, as a fact, it is declined in this translation on the ground of a smaller amount of probability in its favour. Yet by no means so decisively declined as to make it unworthy of further notice. Not only is there the circumstance to be reckoned with that in some Hebrew copies and in the Sep. and Vul. versions the pronoun "his" is preferred; but there is the further stubborn fact to be admitted that the Septuagint has woven out of the two doubtful elements an entirely different result from that which appears above and in our public versions (A.V., R.V., and P.B.V.); the Septuagint rendering being as follows: "He answered him in the way of his strength: tell me the shortness of my days. Do not take me away," &c. It is perhaps impossible to be quite sure that there is nothing of importance in this ancient result; although, of course, it *may* be merely an ancient mistake in construing the original Hebrew text: hence it is here passed on for the respectful consideration of candid critics; and the more readily, because of a slight misgiving that something further than now appears originally stood here—something *possibly* tending to set forth Hezekiah as a type of the Messiah in respect of *the shortening* of his *days*. Suffice it to have called

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attention to this remarkable variation; in order now to resume a working assurance, sincerely felt, that in the "rendering" and "reading" followed in the text of this translation, as near an approach to absolute truth is made as our present means admit. It may be reassuring to observe that nothing further is here at stake than simply the precise terms in which verse 23 should appear as the original continuation of verse 11. Even the Septuagint rendering could still be said to resume the *personal* strain of the psalm in respect of the *days* of the individual sufferer. These nice points being thus disposed of, we are fairly entitled to review the psalm as a whole in regard to its larger outstanding features.

The one thing which nothing can hide is the grandeur of the psalm: the way in which it sets over against the afflictions of the man and the afflictions of the nation, the eternity and elevation of Jehovah. Because of the stability of his throne and the inexhaustible resources of his being, there is hope for the nation; and because of the eternity of his years, there is solace for the individual—though *this* is implied rather than expressed in the present psalm. It seems to be implied in the sudden transition made by the suppliant (in ver. 24) from his own *days* to the eternal *years*: as much as to say—"Why needest thou, whose *years* run on from generation to generation, cut down by one half my allotted *days*, few as they are at most?" That, after all, the hope of the individual should be left thus, rather implied than expressed, may be attributed to the fact that as yet "life and incorruption have not been illumined by the Gospel."

No such feebleness of expression can be affirmed of this psalm as regards the *national* hope. It is marvellous how strongly these holy men of old assert and reassert this. Zion is to be so favoured as to cause *the nations to revere the name of Jehovah, and all the kings of the earth his glory*. Not only will Jehovah *build up Zion*, but he himself *will appear in his glory*. When the imprisoned Israelites are released, they will come to Zion and rehearse their story. Concurrently with this—so the psalmist intimates—there will be *a gathering of peoples of kingdoms—to serve Jehovah*. The significance of these assurances ought on the face of them to be beyond dispute or doubt; especially when viewed in the light of Isaiah's predictions and of the Theocratic psalms (92-99) which we have lately studied. To allege that these foretellings are now being fulfilled in the Church,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

is not only to rob Israel, but it is to degrade the Church from her heavenly calling and to throw all scripture into confusion. It is respectfully submitted that Christian theologians ought to know the Pauline Epistles better than thus to teach.

The above allusion to the "Theocratic Psalms" suffices to remind us that, here as well as there, what is affirmed of Jehovah in the psalm is in the Epistle to the Hebrews alleged to have been spoken "of the Son." Some expositors of the Psalms have shewn solicitude to discover this reference to the Son in this psalm as clearly as by the statement in the Epistle it might seem it ought to be discoverable; and it was partly from sympathy with that expectation, that care was taken to admit that all doubt could not at present be said to have been conclusively set at rest as to the exact terms of the original resumption of Hezekiah's psalm at verse 23. One able critic, at any rate, sees in the circumstance that the Divine name in verse 24 is *El* rather than *Elohim*, a probable note of transition to "the Son." However this may be, it will probably be a relief to plain Christians to rest in the apparently well-warranted conclusion, that the radical significance of the *Memorial* name *Jehovah*—as "Yahweh," "the Becoming One," renders the transition easy, when context and circumstance require it, to Him who in the fulness of time "*became* flesh and tabernacled among us." As already suggested when expounding the Theocratic psalms, whenever visible Divine Manifestation is implied, then some veiling of Absolute Deity must also be understood; and this veil Christians already possess in Jesus on whom our Apostle Paul explicitly teaches "was graciously bestowed The Name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please try to appreciate the historical circumstances of this psalm. Discuss possibilities.
2. Evidently at least three persons had a part in writing this psalm and three periods in the history of Israel are contemplated. Discuss.
3. "One thing which nothing can hide is the grandeur of the psalm: ". . . just what is involved in this grandeur and how is it expressed?"
4. Just what is (or was) the national hope of Israel? Discuss Rotherham's view point and others.

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5. What is said of God here is said of the Son in Hebrews. What is the significance of this?

PSALM 103

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Bless Jehovah; for He is Worthy.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Bless Jehovah: For his Personal Dealings. Stanza II., vers. 6-10, For his Revealed Character. Stanza III., vers. 11-14, For his Kindness, Forgiveness, Compassion, and Considerateness. Stanza IV., vers. 15-18, For the Continuity of his Dealings, in Contrast with Man's Frailty. Stanza V., vers. 19-22, For the Permanence and Universality of his Kingdom, let All his Creatures Bless Him.

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(Lm.) By David

- 1 *Bless Jehovah O my soul,*  
and all within me his holy name:
- 2 *Bless Jehovah O my soul,*  
and forget not any of his dealings:—
- 3 who pardoneth all thine iniquities,<sup>1</sup>  
who healeth all thy diseases,
- 4 who redeemeth from the pit thy life,  
who crowneth thee with kindness and compassions,
- 5 who satisfieth with good thy desire,<sup>2</sup>  
thy youth reneweth itself like an eagle.<sup>3</sup>
- 6 A doer of acts of righteousness is Jehovah,  
and acts of vindication for all who are oppressed:
- 7 Who made known his ways to Moses.  
to the sons of Israel his doings:—
- 8 *Compassionate and gracious is Jehovah,*  
*slow to anger and abundant in kindness.*<sup>4</sup>

1. So (pl.) some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Sep., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "iniquity" (sing.)

2. So Sep. "Supplication"—Del. "Age"—Carter. "Spirit"—Leeser.

3. Or: "vulture." So Dr.

4. Cp. Exo. 34:6, 7. The Refrain of the Bible (see "The Emphasised Bible").

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 9 Not perpetually will he contend,  
nor to the ages retain [anger]:
- 10 Not according to our sins hath he done to us,  
nor according to our iniquities hath he dealt with us.
- 11 For as the heavens are exalted over the earth  
exalted<sup>5</sup> is his kindness over such as revere him:
- 12 As far as the east is from the west  
hath he put far from us our transgressions:
- 13 Like the compassion of a father on sons  
is the compassion of Jehovah on such as revere him;
- 14 For he knoweth how we are formed,<sup>6</sup>  
putteth himself in mind that dust are we.
- 15 Weak man—like grass are his days,  
Like the blossom of the field so doth he blossom:
- 16 When a wind hath passed over it then it is not,  
nor acquainted with it any more is its place.
- 17 But the kindness of Jehovah is from age to age  
on such as revere him,  
And his righteousness is unto children's children
- 18 unto such as keep his covenant  
and unto such as remember his precepts to do them.
- 19 Jehovah—in the heavens hath he established his throne,  
and his kingdom over all hath dominion.
- 20 *Bless Jehovah* ye<sup>7</sup> his messengers,  
heroes of vigour doers of his word,—  
hearkening to the voice of his word:
- 21 *Bless Jehovah* all ye his hosts,  
his attendants doers of his pleasure:
- 22 *Bless Jehovah* all ye his works,  
in all places of his dominion:  
*Bless Jehovah O my soul.*

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 103

I bless the holy name of God with all my heart.

2 Yes, I will bless the Lord and not forget the glorious things He does for me.

3 He forgives all my sins! He heals me!

5. So *Gt.*—*Gn.* M.T.: "Mighty."

6. *Ml.* "our formation."

7. Some *cod.* (w. *Sep.* and *Vul.*): "all ye"—*Gn.*

## PSALM 103

4 He ransoms me from hell! He surrounds me with loving-kindness and tender mercies!

5 He fills my life with good things! My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

6 He gives justice to all who are treated unfairly.

7 He revealed His will and nature to Moses and the people of Israel.

8 He is merciful and tender toward those who don't deserve it; He is slow to get angry and full of kindness and love!

9 He never bears a grudge, nor remains angry forever.

10 He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins,

11 For His mercy towards those who fear and honor Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.

12 He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west.

13 He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence Him.

14 For He knows we are but dust,

15 And that our days are few and brief, like grass, like flowers,

16 Blown by the wind and gone forever.

17, 18 But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, to those who reverence Him; His salvation is to children's children of those who are faithful to His covenant and remember to obey Him!

19 The Lord has made the heavens His throne; from there He rules over everything there is.

20 Bless the Lord, you mighty angels of His who carry out His orders, listening for each of His commands.

21 Yes, bless the Lord, you armies of His angels who serve Him constantly.

22 Let everything everywhere bless the Lord. And how I bless Him too!

## EXPOSITION

The superscription of this psalm is *By David*, and the few grammatical peculiarities found in the psalm itself are probably insufficient to discredit this ancient literary tradition; since, according to Chwolson, quoted by Thirtle (O.T.P. 29), those peculiarities may be merely "genuine ancient Hebrew grammatical forms accidentally retained." By whomsoever written, this sacred song breathes a deeply devotional and tenderly trustful spirit:

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whoever has sins to mourn or sorrows to carry may find therein solace or instruction.

### I. BLESS JEHOVAH, FOR HIS PERSONAL DEALINGS.

Ver. 1. *Bless*, as on bended knee, *Jehovah* (*Yahweh*) "the Becoming One," who, out of his own Divine resources, can supply all creature-need: *O my soul*, my true inner self, realising thy complete personality in and through all the parts and powers wherewith thou art endowed. *And all within me*, especially my "heart" or *mind*, and my "reins" or *impulses*; (bless) *his holy name*, as the summarised expression of his revealed person and character.

Ver. 2. *Bless Jehovah, O my soul*; for thus again I address thee, that is myself; "I" being subject and object, inspector and inspected, teacher and taught in one; about to project myself from myself, to look at and examine myself, to encourage and admonish myself; and, therefore, by reason of the mysterious complexity of my being, responsible for my state and conduct before God. Thou, *O my soul*, thus gifted, use the ready instrument of self-discipline, thy memory: *Forget not any of his dealings*: his *benefits*, if thou wilt,—but have not all his "dealings" been "benefits," though sometimes in disguise? forget not *any* of his dealings, for whereas it would be difficult to forget them "all," be it thy care, as far as may be, that thou forget *none*, since the forgotten mercy or chastisement may be that which thou dost now most need to recall. (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Soul.")

Vers. 3-5. *Who*—that is *Jehovah* (five times repeated!). By the help of these pronouns, catechise thyself, *O my soul*! How many of these appeal to thee? Knowest thou nothing of *the pardon of thine iniquities*—thus searchingly put first, as most concerning thee? Even of *the healing of thy diseases* art thou unmindful? Has *thy life* never been *redeemed from the pit of Hades*? Have no garlands of Divine *kindness* and *compassions* ever decked thy brow? On what numberless occasions have not thy lawful *desires* been *satisfied*—desires for food, sleep, rest and countless other mercies; and canst thou forget *Who* it is that, through all channels, has been the bountiful satisfier of thy craving? Dost thou arise each morning a *new man*, still in thy *youth* right down to old age, and canst thou forget whose recreative energy it is that thus worketh within thee?



## PSALM 103

### II. FOR HIS REVEALED CHARACTER.

Vers. 6-10. Nor is this all, O my soul. He who has become all this to thee, has revealed and made public his character; by *acts of righteousness* fulfilling his promises, by *acts of vindication for all who are oppressed*, chiefly by bringing Israel out of Egypt, approving himself of old to the confidence of his people, *making known his ways unto Moses, and his doings to the sons of Israel*; especially proclaiming himself to the former as *Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger and Abundant in Kindness*; thereby giving occasion to "The Refrain of the Bible" (see Emphasised Bible on Exo. 34:6, 7)—of which hast thou not heard, O my soul?—a Refrain running through the Holy Scriptures, and shewing how holy men remembered and pleaded it in times of national trouble? In harmony with which Refrain, thou mayest confidently reckon, O my soul, that although Jehovah may long complain, yet will he *Not perpetually contend*; although he "leave not altogether unpunished, but visiteth the iniquity of fathers on sons and upon son's sons unto a third and unto a fourth generation," yet *Not age-abidingly, Not age-without end*, will he *retain* the sinner in being, and his *anger* against the sinner; seeing that he himself has declared that before his perpetual wrath no spirit could abide (Isa. 57:16). Therefore, be thou sure, O my soul, that even in his most awful visitations he never ceases to deserve thy praise; while, as to thyself and thy brethren, thou canst still say, *Not according to our sins hath he done to us, Nor according to our iniquities hath he dealt with us*. For his revealed character, then,—*Bless Jehovah, O my soul*.

### III. FOR HIS KINDNESS, FORGIVENESS, AND CONSIDERATENESS

Ver. 11. Lift up thine eyes on high, O my soul, and see how *lofty* are those overarching *heavens*: in like manner, *lofty* beyond all thought and hope is Jehovah's *kindness* over *these who revere him*.

Ver. 12. Canst thou measure from *east to west*, when each recedes as thou approachest? So neither canst thou mete the distance to which he removes from thee the transgressions which he forgives. "The wages of sin is death"; but "in his favour is life"; and these can never meet and mingle.

Ver. 13. Thou knowest *the compassion of a father on his sons*, how like it is to the compassion (from *r-ch-m*—"womb")

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of a mother for her babe. Thou, then, only *revere him* and such tender Divine compassion shall rest on thee.

Ver. 14. Do thy source in *dust*, and thy continued kinship therewith, ever enfeeble and hamper thee, in the service thou wouldst fain render him; doth thy temper fail because thy nerves are unstrung; hast thou to cease from work, even for him, because thou art weary, hungry, cold? Be of good cheer; he knows it all, he made thee thus. *He puts himself in mind* that, even where the spirit is willing, the flesh may be weak.

### IV. FOR THE CONTINUITY OF HIS DEALINGS IN CONTRAST WITH MAN'S FRAILTY.

Vers. 15 and 16. Art thou discouraged, O my soul, because of the frailty of thy being and the brevity of thy *days*, so like the withering *grass* and the fading *blossom*? Shrinkest thou from the nipping *wind* that shall cut thee off, and from the thought that the vacancy thou leavest will soon be filled and thou shalt be missed no more? Yet hear thou again.

Vers. 17, 18. Not so is *the kindness of Jehovah*, even with regard to thee. It has perpetuating ways of its own. It descendeth from generation to generation. Thy progenitors are gone? Yea, but leaving behind for thee a legacy of blessing, in so far as they revered Jehovah in their day. Thou, therefore, in like manner, mayest leave a blessing behind thee: only teach thou thy children how to inherit it. And of this be sure: that in the end *righteousness* and *faithfulness* and *obedience* shall prove stronger than sin. Therefore still "Bless Jehovah."

### V. FOR THE PERMANENCE AND UNIVERSALITY OF HIS KINGDOM

Ver. 19. The object of thine adoration is supreme, for it is *Jehovah* himself whom thou wouldst bless. Beyond him is there none; outside his *dominion* is there none: *in the heavens*, high above this earth, *hath he established his throne*; just to the degree, therefore, to which he comes to reign on earth, he must needs bring heaven with him. *And his kingdom over all hath dominion*; therefore are there no beings unaccountable to him, therefore is there no creature-freedom uncircumscribed by him, therefore can there never be any events not subservient to his rule. Moral evil can only enter and stay in his dominions as long as he permits. This, O my soul, is thy safety and stay. My soul, thou art the richer, that there are heavens, within the compass of which are gathered subjects of thy King; for,

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although the Creator might be above all locality, yet not so the creature; and therefore it is a joy to thee to think of inhabited heavens, especially if and so far as they are peopled by loyal fellow-subjects of thine. Thine emotions must needs go forth to them. They may not hear thine appeal to them, save through their Sovereign and thine; yet wouldst thou fain emulate or even provoke their devotions, and feel the ecstasy of fellowship as they bless Jehovah.

Ver. 20. *Bless Jehovah, ye his messengers* whose privilege it is, when ye have entered his presence and listened to his commanding *word*, to depart on your several errands of state, thus making good your official name, in which alone ye appear to delight: with swiftness ye fly, with *heroic vigour* ye execute, with loyal promptness ye return to *hearken again* to your Sovereign Lord.

Ver. 21. *Bless Jehovah, all ye his waiting hosts, his attendants*, abiding more continually in his presence, *doers of his pleasure*, howsoever made known, by look, by hint, by perceived need and fitness, by inward impulse—*his pleasure*, not your own.

Ver. 22. *Bless Jehovah, all ye his works, in all places of his dominion*: whether with reason, or with instinct; or with neither, leaving it to more favoured ones to perceive your use and beauty and render praise for the same, becoming interpreters of your parts and powers, and employing you to rise the higher towards the Divine Throne. And, both first and last, chiefly thou, finding thyself in such large and glorious fellowship as thou humbly tenderest thine adorations,—*Bless Jehovah, O my soul*.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the expression: "Bless Jehovah"?
2. How is the word "soul" used?
3. What a beautiful penetrating analysis of man is given in the comment on verse 2. Read it again.
4. What is "the ready instrument of self-discipline"?
5. There are five areas of God's personal dealings with us. Please list them (as in vs. 1-5) and make personal application.
6. In what sense is our strength renewed like an eagle?
7. In what two or three acts has Jehovah revealed His character?

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8. There are four personal characteristics of Jehovah. Name them and discuss their application to Israel and to you.
9. In what way does our Lord deal with us like sons?
10. Is our frailty ever an excuse for sin?
11. The brevity of life is a great source of discouragement. How is it overcome?
12. The heavens are peopled or populated. Of what comfort is this to us?
13. Who are the messengers of our God? What is their ministry? How does it relate to us?

## PSALM 104

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Creation Hymn.

### ANALYSIS

It is difficult to frame an Analysis of this psalm. The course of thought and observation followed therein bears Some Resemblance to the Method Pursued in Gen. 1:1—2:3; but the Differences are Considerable. So far as the psalm submits itself to external measurement, it may be said that 10-line stanzas prevail; but two out of the six run up to 20 and 17 lines respectively. The chief *refrain* of the previous psalm is repeated here. There is here no Superscribed Line, as to the previous psalm there was no Subscribed Line: probably furnishing evidence that the Two Psalms at an early time became Practically One.

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(Lm. None)

- 1 *Bless Jehovah O my soul!*  
Jehovah my God thou art exceeding great,  
Majesty and state hast thou put on:
- 2 Wrapping thyself in light as a mantle,  
stretching out the heavens as a tent-curtain:
- 3 who layeth in the waters the beams of his upper-chambers,  
who maketh the clouds his chariot,  
who walketh on the wings of the wind:
- 4 Making his messengers winds,<sup>1</sup>  
his attendants fire and flame.<sup>1</sup>

1. Or: "Making his messengers of winds His attendants of fire and flame."

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- 5 He hath founded the earth on its bases,  
it shall not be shaken to the ages and beyond :
- 6 With the deep as a garment hast thou covered it,  
above the mountains the waters take their stand :
- 7 At thy rebuke they flee,  
at the voice of thy thunder they hurry away—
- 8 Mountains rise valleys between them sink—  
into the place which thou hast founded for them :
- 9 A boundary hast thou set they shall not overpass,  
they shall not again cover the earth.
- 10 Who sendeth forth springs into the torrent-beds,  
Between the mountains they flow along :
- 11 They give drink to all the wild beasts of the plain,  
the wild asses break their thirst :
- 12 Above<sup>2</sup> them the bird of the heaven settleth down  
from amidst the foliage they utter a voice.
- 13 He watereth<sup>3</sup> the mountains out of his upper chambers,  
of the fruit of thy works the earth taketh her fill.
- 14 He causeth<sup>4</sup> grass to spring up for the cattle,  
and herb for the service of man,<sup>5</sup>  
that he may bring forth<sup>6</sup> bread out of the earth ;
- 15 And wine rejoiceth man's heart,  
that he may cause<sup>7</sup> [his] face to shine with oil;  
and bread sustaineth man's heart.
- 16 The trees of Jehovah take their fill,  
the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted :
- 17 Where the birds build their nests,  
as for the stork fir trees<sup>8</sup> are her house :
- 18 Mountains that are high are for the wild-goats,  
the crags are a refuge for the rock-badger.<sup>9</sup>
- 19 He hath made the moon for stated seasons,  
the sun knoweth his place for going in :
- 20 Cause thou darkness and it becometh night,  
in it creepeth forth every wild beast of the forest :

2. Or: "Beside."

3. Ml.: "Watering."

4. Ml.: "Causing."

5. Or: "mankind."

6. Or simply: "To bring forth."

7. Or Simply: "To cause."

8. Or: "cypresseses."

9. So Del. (adding "rather *Hyrax syriacus*") "Rock-rabbit"—Dr.

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- 21 The young lions are roaring for prey,  
and seeking from GOD their food:
- 22 Let the sun arise they withdraw,  
and in their lairs they lay them down:
- 23 Forth goeth man to his work,  
and to his labour until evening.
- 24 How many are thy works O Jehovah!  
all of them in wisdom hast thou made;  
the earth is full of thy possessions.<sup>10</sup>
- 25 Yonder is the sea great and broad on both hands,  
There are gliding things innumerable;  
Living things small with great:
- 26 There ships sail along,  
leviathan<sup>11</sup> which thou hast formed to play therein:<sup>12</sup>
- 27 All of them for thee do wait,  
that thou mayest give [them] their food in its season:
- 28 Thou givest unto them they gather,  
thou openest thy hand, they are satisfied with good:
- 29 Thou hidest thy face they are dismayed,  
thou withdrawest their spirit<sup>13</sup> they cease to breathe,  
and unto their dust do they return:
- 30 Thou sendest forth thy Spirit<sup>13</sup> they are created,  
and thou renewest the face of the ground.
- 31 Let the glory of Jehovah be age-abiding,  
let Jehovah rejoice in his works:
- 32 Who looketh on the earth and it trembleth,  
he toucheth the mountains and they smoke.
- 33 I would fain sing to Jehovah while I live,  
I would harp to my God while I continue:
- 34 Pleasing unto him be my soliloquy,  
I myself will rejoice in Jehovah.
- 35 Let sinners come to an end<sup>14</sup> out of the earth,  
and lawless ones no longer exist.  
*Bless Jehovah O my soul!*

(Nm.)<sup>15</sup>

10. Or: "acquisitions." Or (Dr.) "productions." Some authorities have the word in the sing.

11. "Whale"—O.G. "A general term for all 'sea-monsters'"—Per.

12. Or: "with him."

13. Or: "breath"—so Dr. and Per. twice. Shd. be both alike.

14. "Be consumed"—Per., Dr. "Vanish"—Del.

15. See 105 (beginning).

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PARAPHRASE  
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I bless the Lord: O Lord my God, how great You are! You are robed with honor and with majesty and light! You stretched out the starry curtain of the heavens,

3 And hollowed out the surface of the earth to form the seas. The clouds are His chariots! He rides upon the wings of the wind!

4 The angels<sup>1</sup> are His messengers—His servants of fire!

\* \* \* \* \*

5 You bound the world together so that it would never fall apart.

6 You clothed the earth with floods of waters covering up the mountains.

7, 8 You spoke, and at the sound of Your shout the water collected into its vast ocean beds, and mountains rose and valleys sank to the levels You decreed.

9 And then You set a boundary for the seas, so that they would never again cover the earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

10 He placed springs in the valleys, and streams that gush from the mountains.

11 They gave water for all the animals to drink. There the wild donkeys quench their thirst,

12 And the birds nest beside the streams and sing among the branches of the trees.

13 He sends rain upon the mountains and fills the earth with fruit.

14 The tender grass grows up at His command to feed the cattle, and there are fruit trees, vegetables and grain for man to cultivate,

15 And wine to make him glad, and olive oil as lotion for his skin, and bread to give him strength.

16 The Lord planted the cedars of Lebanon. They are tall and flourishing.

17 There the birds make their nests, the storks in the firs.

18 High in the mountains are pastures for the wild goats; and rock-badgers burrow in among the rocks and find protection there.

1. Literally, "spirits."

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19 He assigned the moon to mark the months, and the sun to mark the days.

20 He sends the night and darkness, when all the forest folk come out.

21 Then the young lions roar for their food; but they are dependent on the Lord.

22 At dawn they slink back into their dens to rest,

23 And men go off to work until the evening shadows fall again.

24 O Lord, what a variety You have made! And in wisdom You have made them all! The earth is full of Your riches.

25 There before me lies the mighty ocean, teeming with life of every kind, both great and small.

26 And look! See the ships! And over there, the whale You made to play in the sea!

27 Every one of these depends on You to give them daily food.

28 You supply it, and they gather it! You open wide Your hand to feed them and they are satisfied with all Your bountiful provision.

29 But if You turn away from them, then all is lost. And when You gather up their breath, they die and turn again to dust.

30 Then You send Your Spirit, and new life is born<sup>2</sup> to replenish all the living of the earth.

31 Praise God forever! How He must rejoice in all His work!

32 The earth trembles at His glance; the mountains burst into flame at His touch.

33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live! I will praise God to my last breath!

34 May He be pleased by all these thoughts about Him, for He is the source of all my joy.

35 Let all sinners perish—all who refuse to praise Him. But I will praise Him. Hallelujah!

## EXPOSITION

In the words of Perowne, "here we have a picture which for truth and depth of colouring, for animation, tenderness, beauty, has never been surpassed." Leaving the reader to mark and admire the poetic features of the psalm for himself, atten-

2. Literally, "created."



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tion may be called to the weighty theological lessons here taught.

1. In the *first* place: Jehovah is here represented as BEFORE, ABOVE AND BEYOND his works. The *honour and majesty* in which he reveals himself are external to himself—he *puts* them on; *light* is the *mantle* in which he *enwraps himself*. Yet there are means by which he makes himself known; and they suggest the idea of eyes needed to observe them, minds susceptible of being impressed by them—they are relative terms.

2. In the *next* place: Jehovah is revealed as PRESENT in the midst of his works. The space curtained in by the outspread heavens is his tent, wherein he dwells; for no other Presence is suggested in that connection. Yet he is himself unseen. The wind itself we see not, save in its effects: how much less can we behold him who *walks* on its *wings*. Even this tent, indeed, cannot contain him: he has *upper chambers* into which our eyes cannot penetrate.

3. Nevertheless, it is HERE that the interest of the psalm is CONCENTRATED. This sun and moon, these stars, these mountains, yonder sea, together with the living creatures large and small thus brought under our notice: these are sufficient to impress the psalmist with their *number*, with the *wisdom* displayed in their formation, with the *richness* of their Creator in possessing them, and with the *pleasure* he takes in them. It would be rash to infer, alone from this concentration of interest, that this world is eternal; but assuredly we are led to expect that it is destined to become the theatre of important Divine dealings.

4. Noting, in passing, that the position assigned to MAN in this psalm is—if not exactly a subordinate one—certainly one less exalted than that assigned him in the Genesis account—it becomes the more observable how prominent a place is given to the ANIMAL WORLD. It is not simply that animals are here seen lovingly gathered around their Creator, feeding as it were out of *his hand*; but that, in them, the alternations of life and death are illustrated in a remarkably suggestive manner. Animals are sentient beings; they are breathing creatures, whose breath is in their nostrils; and in these respects they are akin to man. It would almost appear as though their kinship with man were utilised to furnish object-lessons for man himself. Animals live as long as they breathe: so do men. The breathing power of animals is a divine gift; and, when it is *withdrawn*, they *cease to breathe*: so it is with men. Man's breath or spirit, answers to, or is correlated with God's breath or spirit. The same word

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*ruah* expresses either "breath" or "spirit" or both. The consecutive use of the term in this psalm is profoundly suggestive; because the law of continuity strongly operates to bring the breath of the creature into line with the breath of the Creator; and the breath of the Creator is itself creative. *Thou withdrawest their ruah they cease to breathe: thou sendest forth thy ruah they are created*. It does not matter which English word is used, provided the continuity is kept up. Say—"their breath . . . thy breath," then the phrase "thy breath" is uplifted into the significance of "thy life-giving spirit," for it cannot be less than that. Say—"their spirit" . . . thy spirit," then "spirit" in the former member of the sentence must be lowered sufficiently to allow animals to partake of it, *at least as a loan from God*. To deny "spirit" to animals is to deny them life. To assert that, because man has "spirit," therefore he is deathless, is by consequence to assert far too much of animals, unless we are prepared to affirm that they too are immortal. Beyond all this lies the weighty question—How far "spirit" enters into the individuality of animals—the personality of men: as to which, Biblical evidence must be elsewhere sought. But just here, in this and similar texts, the alphabet of the subject is to be found—at least if it is Biblical psychology we seek.

5. Of like interest and value is the side-light here thrown on the essential meaning of the word "CREATION": *Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; Thou renewest the face of the ground*. This is startling: it is nothing less than subversive of certain popular but very superficial views on the subject of creation. If creation is essentially *the making of something out of nothing*, then creation denies procreation; and assumes that every new generation of animals comes direct from God, without parentage after its kind; inasmuch as we have here presented, not the original stocking of the earth with animal life, but the *renewal* which is continually supplying the vacancies caused by death. The fact is, that God holds all life in his own hand: all living things "live and move and have their being in him." If this is true of animals, much more is it true of men. God is "the God of the spirits of *all flesh*": in every living thing save the first, concur both procreation and creation, the parental contribution and the divine. God is the father of our spirits. I am God's creature, as well as my parent's child. If to create is to make a new thing—to embody an original idea—then there is something new and distinctive in every creature which

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Jehovah has made. Probably no two animals were ever perfectly alike: one may feel certain that no two men ever were. The differentia of men should amplify as well as radiate the glory of God.

6. There is something singularly IMPRESSIVE in the last stanza of this magnificent psalm. Therein the personality of the psalmist starts forth afresh into bold relief. The psalm started with emotion, brought over from the previous psalm. Then for a moment it flashed forth (in 1b and following lines) with a direct address to Jehovah, so supplying an element remarkably wanting in the foregoing psalm. But, having offered this personal greeting to his God, the psalmist's own personality quietly falls into the background; and, though you follow the pointing of his finger as he directs you to look at object after object, and do just perceive the vibration of his voice as he bursts out in adoration at ver. 24, he gives you no time to turn round and look him in the face. Now, however, at ver. 31, pent-up feeling rises to the poet's lips, seeking an utterance which it scarce can find. As if apprehensive that Jehovah might lose some of the glory which is his due and in some way be grieved with his own handiwork, he adopts the language of *desire*: *Let the glory of Jehovah be age-abiding, Let Jehovah rejoice in his works.* As if admonished of the lowering possibility of Divine displeasure, he introduces a couplet which sounds like a dark hint: *who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke.* It is like the muttering of distant thunder, while as yet the sky is all blue. Then, as if unable to endure the thought of a hiding of Jehovah's face, he moves himself, by the significant "cohortative" mood, to keep voice and harp attuned to high praise: *I would fain sing to Jehovah while I live, I would harp to my God while I continue. Pleasing unto him be my soliloquy, I myself will rejoice in Jehovah,*—drinking in my joy at the fount of his joy—only let *him* rejoice: but are there, then, works in which he cannot rejoice? *I myself*, he says with formal emphasis, *I myself* will rejoice—whatever *others* may do. So then, alas! there *may be*—there *are*—others not likeminded! Out of the blue, the bolt falls: *Let sinners come to an end out of the earth, And lawless ones no longer exist.* It was remarked above that the trend of this whole psalm seemed to betoken that this earth is designed to be the theatre of important Divine dealings. This ominous couplet confirms that impression: unless, indeed, we are war-

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

ranted in thinking of sinners as merely banished to some other place, as if there were some such place not included in Jehovah's dominions (cp. 103:19). Still, that is not what is either said or suggested in this psalm; and it would seem dutiful to accept the natural interpretation of the solemn words before us. Suffice it that "there is a future for the righteous" (Ps. 37, 73); and that the overthrow of moral evil will so be accomplished as to call forth the self-incited refrain—*Bless Jehovah, O my soul!*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the theme of this psalm?
2. What purpose is seen in creation?
3. What is meant by saying "Jehovah is here represented as *before, above, and beyond* his works"?
4. What figures of speech are used to show God is present in His creation? Why suggested?
5. This earth is made very important in this psalm. If it is all to be burned up, why so much emphasis?
6. Do animals have a spirit? Are they the same as man? Discuss.
7. This psalm could give a new meaning to the word "creation". Discuss.
8. What is impressive about the last stanza of the psalm?
9. There is "a dark hint" of what?
10. Are we to unavoidably conclude that this earth will be the theatre of God's activities for all future time?

## PSALM 105

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Hymn of Praise to Jehovah for Giving Israel a  
Covenant Land in which to Observe His Law.

### ANALYSIS

The Main Design of this Psalm is clearly to Endear the Land to the People for whom it was designed, that therein they should Observe Jehovah's Law. To attain this end the History of their First Fathers is traced as Circling Round this Land, and then the Steps are Traced by which the Nation was Brought Into the Land to Dwell There.

PSALM 105

(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Give ye thanks to Jehovah proclaim his name,<sup>2</sup>  
make known among the peoples his doings:
- 2 Sing to him harp to him,  
soliloquise<sup>3</sup> of all his wondrous works:
- 3 Make your boast in his holy name,  
joyful be the heart of such as seek Jehovah
- 4 Search out Jehovah and his strength,  
seek diligently his face at all times:
- 5 Commemorate his wondrous works which he hath done,  
his tokens and the just decisions<sup>4</sup> of his mouth.
- 6 Ye seed of Abraham<sup>5</sup> his servants,<sup>6</sup>  
ye sons of Jacob his chosen ones:
- 7 He Jehovah is our God,  
through all the land<sup>7</sup> are his regulations.<sup>8</sup>
- 8 He remembereth to the ages his covenant,  
the word he commanded to a thousand generations:
- 9 Which he solemnised with Abraham,  
and his oath unto Isaac;
- 10 And he confirmed it to Jacob as a statute,  
unto Israel a covenant to the ages,—
- 11 Saying "To thee will I give the land of Canaan,  
the lot of your inheritance."
- 12 While as yet they<sup>9</sup> were men easily counted,  
indeed few<sup>10</sup> and strangers therein:
- 13 And they wandered<sup>11</sup> from nation unto nation,  
from a kingdom unto another people:

1. That is, "Public Reader's Invitation." "There can hardly be a doubt," says Ginsburg, "that this [a sentence and not a mere single word] exhibits the primitive reading." Ginsburg further expresses the confident conclusion that the phrase was originally the prelector's [the public reader's] invitation to the worshipers to join in the public responses.—Gn. Intro., pp. 375-81. Hence the omission of the phrase at end of this psalm, as there acknowledged.

2. So Dr. Cp. Isa. 12:4.

3. "Compose a song"—Br. "Discourse"—Del. "Muse ye"—Dr.

4. Or: "judgments."

5. Some cod.: "Israel." Cp. I Ch. 16:13—Gn.

6. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr.)—Gn.

7. Or: "earth."

8. That is, "by-laws," "code of laws"—as in Exo. 21—23. Or: "just decisions"—as in ver. 5 above.

9. Some cod. (w. Aram., Syr.): "ye." Cp. I Ch. 16:19—Gn.

10. "Caph veritatis"—O.G. 454.

11. "went to and fro"—Per.

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- 14 He suffered no son of earth to oppress them,  
and rebuked for their sakes kings: [saying]
- 15 "Ye may not touch mine anointed ones,<sup>12</sup>  
nor to my prophets do harm."
- 16 And he called a famine on the land,  
all the staff of bread he brake:
- 17 He sent before them a Man,<sup>13</sup>  
as a slave was he sold—[even] Joseph:
- 18 They humbled with fetters his feet,<sup>14</sup>  
into iron entered his soul:<sup>15</sup>
- 19 Until the time when came in his word,  
speech of Jehovah had tested him:
- 20 A king sent and released him,  
a ruler of peoples and unloosed him:
- 21 He made him lord of his house,  
and ruler over all his possessions:
- 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure,<sup>16</sup>  
and unto his elders to impart wisdom.
- 23 So Israel came into Egypt,  
and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
- 24 When he made his people very fruitful,  
and made them stronger than their adversaries<sup>17</sup>
- 25 Their heart turned to hate his people,  
to deal treacherously with his servants.
- 26 He sent Moses his servant,  
Araon whom he had chosen:
- 27 He<sup>18</sup> among them the threat of his signs,<sup>19</sup>  
and his tokens in the land of Ham.
- 28 He sent darkness and made it dark,  
but they rebelled<sup>20</sup> against his threats.<sup>21</sup>

12. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Anointed."

13. Almost—"great man."

14. Written "feet": read "foot." Some cod. both read and write "foot"  
—Gn.

15. "Pathetic circumlocution for personal pronoun"—Dr. Prob. not merely his "person" physically; but all his sense of humiliation: "Joseph's whole sensitive personality"—Kp.

16. Ml.: "according to his soul"="liking."

17. Cp. Exo. 1:7.

18. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): Cp. 78:43.

19. N.B. that the signs were threatened before they came.

20. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Syr.)—Gn.

21. Same word as in ver. 27.

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- 29 He turned their waters into blood,  
and caused their fish to die.
- 30 Their land swarmed with frogs,  
in the chambers of their kings:
- 31 He spake and there came in the gadfly,<sup>22</sup>  
gnats,<sup>23</sup> in all their bounds.
- 32 He made their showers to be hail,  
a fire of flames throughout their land;
- 33 And smote down their vine and their figtree,  
and brake in pieces the trees of their bound.
- 34 He spake and there came in locusts,  
and young locusts without number;
- 35 And devoured all the herbage in their land,  
And devoured the fruit of their ground.
- 36 And he smote all the firstborn in their land,  
the beginning of all their strength:
- 37 And brought them out with silver and gold,  
and there was none among his tribes that faltered.
- 38 Glad was Egypt when they went forth,  
because fallen was the dread of them upon them,
- 39 He spread out a cloud for screen,  
and fire to give light by night.
- 40 They asked<sup>24</sup> and he brought in the quail,  
and with the bread of heaven he used to satisfy them:
- 41 He opened a rock and there gushed forth waters,  
they flowed aolng through parched places [as] a river.
- 42 For he remembered his holy word  
with Abraham his servant;
- 43 And brought forth his people with gladness,  
with a cry of joy his chosen ones;
- 44 And gave unto them the lands of the nations,  
and of the toil of the peoples they took possession:
- 45 In order that they might observe his statutes,  
and over his laws might keep watch.<sup>25</sup>

(Nm.)<sup>26</sup>

22. "Dog-fly"—Dr.

23. Meaning dubious—O.G. Prob. "gnats" as Exo. 8:12, 13, 14.

24. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "he asked."

25. Here follows, in M.T., "Praise ye Yah"—prob. by erroneous anticipation of the following at the beginning of Ps. 106. See note at the beginning of this psalm.

26. See 106 (beginning).

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### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 105

Thank the Lord for all the glorious things He does; proclaim them to the nations.

2 Sing His praises and tell everyone about His miracles.

3 Glory in the Lord; O worshipers of God, rejoice.

4 Search for Him and for His strength, and keep on searching!

5, 6 Think of the mighty deeds He did for us, His chosen ones—descendants of God's servant Abraham, and of Jacob. Remember how He destroyed our enemies.

7 He is the Lord our God. His goodness<sup>1</sup> is seen everywhere throughout the land.

8 Though a thousand generations pass He never forgets His promise, His covenant with Abraham and Isaac,

10, 11 And confirmed with Jacob. This is His never-ending treaty with the people of Israel:

*"I will give you the land of Canaan as your inheritance."*

12 He said this when they were but few in number, very few, and were only visitors in Canaan.

13 Later they were dispersed among the nations, and were driven from one kingdom to another;

14 But through it all He would not let one thing be done to them apart from His decision.<sup>2</sup> He destroyed many a king who tried!

15 "Touch not these chosen ones of Mine," he warned, "and do not hurt My prophets."

16 He called for a famine on the land of Canaan, cutting off its food supply.

17 Then He sent Joseph as a slave to Egypt to save His people from starvation.

18 There in prison they hurt his feet with fetters, and placed his neck in an iron collar,

19 Until God's time finally came—how God tested his patience!

20 Then the king sent for him and set him free.

21 He was put in charge of all the king's possessions.

22 At his pleasure he could imprison the king's aides and teach the king's advisors.

1. Literally, "His judgments."

2. Literally, "He suffered no man to do them wrong."



## PSALM 105

23 Then Jacob (Israel) arrived in Egypt and lived there with his sons.

24 In the years that followed, the people of Israel multiplied explosively, until they were a greater nation than their rulers.

25 At that point God turned the Egyptians against the Israeli; they hated and enslaved them.

26 But God sent Moses as His representative, and Aaron with him,

27 To call down miracles of terror upon the land of Egypt.

28 They<sup>s</sup> followed His instructions and He sent thick darkness through the land,

29 And turned the nation's water into blood, poisoning the fish.

30 Then frogs invaded in enormous numbers; they were found even in the king's private rooms.

31 When Moses spoke, the flies and other insects swarmed in vast clouds from one end of Egypt to the other.

32 Instead of rain He sent down murderous hail, and lightning flashes overwhelmed the nation.

33 Their grape vines and fig trees were ruined; all the trees lay broken on the ground.

34 He spoke, and hordes of locusts came,

35 And ate up everything green, destroying all the crops.

36 Then He killed the oldest child in each Egyptian home, their pride and joy—

37 And brought His people safely out from Egypt, loaded with silver and gold; there were no sick and feeble folk among them then.

38 Egypt was glad when they were gone, for the dread of them was great.

39 He spread out a cloud above them to shield them from the burning sun, and gave them a pillar of flame at night to give them light.

40 They asked for meat and He sent them quail, and gave them manna—bread from heaven.

41 He opened up a rock, and water gushed out to form a river through the dry and barren land;

42 For He remembered His sacred promises to Abraham His servant.

3. Implied.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

43 So He brought His chosen ones singing into the Promised Land.<sup>4</sup>

44 He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, complete with their growing crops; they ate what others planted.

45 This was done to make them faithful and obedient to His laws. Hallelujah!

## EXPOSITION

A sense of the value of these historical psalms grows upon us as we proceed with their study. Books were few, and comparatively inaccessible: hence, if history had to live for practical ends, it must be lodged in the memories of the people; and poetry was well adapted to effect that lodgment—especially poetry such as we here find, with its sententious brevity of expression, its happy use of parallelism, its abounding figures of speech, its picturesque brightness, its easy and rapid flow. Such poetry puts history “into the mouths” of the people (Deu. 31:19) by fixing it in their memories, enabling them readily to repeat it, and encouraging them to sing and harp its strains. It was a history worth repeating, not only because it was *their* history and was unique, but because there ran through it the golden thread of Divine interposition. If God is revealed in all history, he is pre-eminently revealed in Israel’s, since He was ever and anon giving them new epochs, new starting points of development; as well as constant watchful care. But it was so full and significant a history as to abound with lessons of a most varied description—fitted to warn, to encourage, to move to devotion in prayer and praise. Hence it was a task worthy of gifted psalmists, so to select and epitomise, so to bring to the front and leave in the background, as to point the moral as well as adorn the tale. These historical psalms thus became national stories told with a purpose. This becomes clear when the three leading historical songs (78, 105, 106) are laid side by side as to their main scope and design. Thus the 78th gains immensely in interest when viewed as an Asaphic appeal put forth in the time of Hezekiah for the purpose of encouraging and cementing the Reunion of the Tribes. The present psalm, the 105th, is mainly devotional, it is true; but it clearly has, as its didactic purpose, so to foster confidence in the covenant faithfulness of Jehovah, as to encourage the spirit of obedience, and the desire on the

4. Implied.

## PSALM 105

part of the people to dwell in their own land for the very purpose of having perfect freedom to observe all Divine ordinances. The psalm which immediately succeeds this, the 106th, while equally devotional in its setting with its predecessor, is wholly different in its chief aim. It is, as we shall see, above all things, an admonitory psalm: its warnings are loud and long, and that they should ever have been turned into measure for psalm-singing, redounds to the everlasting praise for honesty of the psalmist that durst compose it and of the people who were willing to sing it.

Settling down for a little on the particular psalm now before us, it is observable (vers. 1-5) with what fulness of appeal the psalmist seeks to kindle the devotional spirit: *give thanks—proclaim — make known — sing — harp — soliloquise — boast — be joyful—search—seek diligently—commemorate,*—note after note of invitation is struck till every ear is attent, and every mind is fixed on Jehovah as the one object of worship.

Then observe, with what force of appeal (vers. 6-11), the fathers of the nation are introduced; and how these worshippers now addressed are reminded of the fact that they are the children of those patriarchs, and are themselves chosen to be the people of their father's God—that they are a covenant people, inheritors of the covenant *land*.

It is needless to recapitulate the psalm. But note how attention is for awhile held on the story of their first fathers (vers. 12-15); then (vers. 16-23) on the providentially over-ruled famine in Canaan, on the touching story of Joseph—whose name, it will be observed, is quite dramatically introduced, and to whom are devoted no less than twelve most effective lines. The remarkable providences are thus displayed by which the man *Jacob—Israel*, whose names become those of the nation, is brought down into Egypt: and so at length (vers. 24, 25) the familiar story is begun of the dangerous increase of Israel, the mission of Moses and Aaron (ver. 26), the threatening of the plagues (too often overlooked) as well as the infliction of them (ver. 27) of which a selection is then given (vers. 28ff.),—a selection only, it is true, but sufficiently full and detailed to raise the whole question of historicity to the high level of perpetual national celebration; and to challenge the modern sceptical mind to say whether such a story—so detailed, so significantly dovetailed into the history, so celebrated down to the present day—had, after all, no solid foundation in fact. And finally observe

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how the land-covenant, introduced as early in the psalm as the eighth verse, is reintroduced as far on as at the forty-second verse, so leading up to the unifying theme and climax of the psalm—the LAND as the Divinely ordained sphere of the full and unmolested observance of the LAW.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What particular value are these historical psalms?
2. Why was there a need to repeat the events of the past?
3. There seems to be several purposes in the historical psalms: (78, 105, 106). Give the purpose of each.
4. An intense devotional attitude can be developed by following the appeals here made: there are eleven of them. Try two or three and see.
5. A very strong nationalistic spirit is here generated—why?

## PSALM 106

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Humbled Israel Confessing Her Sins as a Nation.

### ANALYSIS

Enclosed within an Introduction of Praise and Prayer, vers. 1-5, and a Conclusion of Prayer and Doxology, vers. 47, 48, stands a National Confession of Sin, vers. 6-46, Relieved only by the Merciful Deliverances of Jehovah, the Intercession of Moses, ver. 23, the Interposition of Phinehas, ver. 30, and the Compassion of Israel's Captors, ver. 46. The Sins Confessed are chiefly the following:—Incredulity, ver. 7; Murmuring for Food and Drink, ver. 13; Rebellion against their Leaders, ver. 16; Worship of the Golden Calf, ver. 19; Refusal of the Land, ver. 24; Worship of the Moabitish Baal, ver. 28; Rebellion against Moses and Aaron, ver. 32; Non-Extermination of Idolatrous Peoples, and the Taking Part in their Licentious and Cruel Idolatry, vers. 34-40.

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Give ye thanks unto Jehovah *for he is good,  
for to the ages is his kindness.*<sup>2</sup>

1. Cp. 105 notes at beginning and end.

2. Cp. refrain of 136; also I Ch. 16:34, Ezra 3:11, Jr. 33:11.

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- 2 Who can express the mighty deeds of Jehovah?  
cause to be heard all his praise?
- 3 How happy they who observe justice,  
he that doeth<sup>8</sup> righteousness at all times!
- 4 Remember me<sup>4</sup> O Jehovah when thou favourest thy people,<sup>5</sup>  
visit me<sup>5</sup> with thy salvation:
- 5 That I<sup>6</sup> may gaze upon the good things of thy chosen ones,  
may rejoice in the rejoicing of thy nation,  
may glory with thine inheritance.
- 6 We have sinned<sup>7</sup> with our fathers,  
we have acted perversely have been lawless:
- 7 Our fathers in Egypt heeded not thy wondrous works,  
they remembered not the abundance of thy kindnesses,  
but rebelled against the Most High<sup>8</sup> at the Red-sea.<sup>9</sup>
- 8 Yet saved he them for the sake of his name,  
to make known his heroic might:
- 9 So he rebuked the Red-sea and it dried up,<sup>10</sup>  
and he led them in the deeps as a wilderness.<sup>11</sup>
- 10 Thus saved he them from the hand of a hater,  
and redeemed them from the hand of a foe;
- 11 And the waters covered their adversaries,  
not one from among them was left:
- 12 So they believed in his words,<sup>12</sup>  
they sang his praise.<sup>13</sup>
- 13 They soon forgat his works,<sup>14</sup>  
they tarried not for his counsel:
- 14 But longed a longing in the desert,  
and put GOD to the proof in the waste;<sup>15</sup>

3. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "they that do"—Gn.

4. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): "us"—Gn.

5. "When thou again (cp. ver. 47) showest thyself gracious unto them"  
—Del.

6. Or: "we" (according to the pronoun adopted above).

7. Here begins the confession of sin. Cp. I K. 8:46-53, Neh. 9

8. So *Gt.* Cp. 78:17, 56—Gn. So also Br.

9. Cp. Exo. 14:11, 12.

10. Exo. 14:21-29.

11. Isa. 63:13.

12. Exo. 14:30, 31.

13. Exo. 15.

14. Or: "doings."

15. Exo. 15, 16, 17; Num. 11.

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- 15 And he gave them their request,  
and sent them food<sup>16</sup> to their desire.<sup>17</sup>
- 16 And they were jealous of Moses in the camp,  
of Aaron the consecrated one of Jehovah:<sup>18</sup>
- 17 Earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,  
and covered the company<sup>19</sup> of Abiram;
- 18 And a fire consumed their company,<sup>19</sup>  
a flame licked up the lawless ones.
- 19 They made a calf in Horeb,<sup>20</sup>  
and bowed down to a molten image;
- 20 And changed my<sup>21</sup> glory  
for the similitude of an ox eating herbage.
- 21 They forgot GOD their saviour,  
though he had done<sup>22</sup> great things in Egypt,
- 22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham,  
fearful things at the Red-sea.
- 23 Then would he have commanded to destroy them,  
had not Moses his chosen  
stood forth in the breach before him,  
to turn back his wrath from inflicting ruin.
- 24 Moreover they refused the desired land,<sup>23</sup>  
they believed not his word;
- 25 And they murmured in their tents,  
they hearkened not unto the voice of Jehovah.
- 26 Then lifted he his hand unto them,—  
that he would let them fall<sup>24</sup> in the desert;
- 27 And would disperse<sup>25</sup> their seed among the nations,  
and would scatter them through the lands.

16. So Br. "The most probable reading of a difficult passage" [*mazon* for *razon*]. Maclaren, content with *razon* ["leanness," "wasting"] smartly says: "Full-fed flesh makes starved souls."

17. Ml.: "soul." Cp. 78:18.

18. Num. 16, 17.

19. U.: "congregation."

20. Exo. 32; Deu. 9:8-12.

21. So it was originally; but was changed by the Sopherim to "their glory." G. Intro., 360. Cp. *ante*, Intro., Chap. I., Obs. 1.

22. Ml.: "Doing."

23. Num. 13, 14.

24. The permissive *hiphil*. There is no need to introduce active causation here.

25. So it shd. be (w. Syr.; cp. Eze. 20:23)—Gn.

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- 28 And they joined<sup>26</sup> themselves to Baal-peor,<sup>27</sup>  
and did eat the sacrifices of the dead:
- 29 So they gave provocation by their doings,  
and a plague made a breach among them.
- 30 Then stood forth Phinehas<sup>28</sup> and interposed,  
and stayed was the plague;
- 31 And it was accounted to him as righteousness,  
to generation after generation unto the ages.
- 32 And they gave provocation at the waters of Meribah,  
and it fared ill with Moses for their sakes;
- 33 For they embittered his spirit,  
and he spake rashly with his lips.<sup>29</sup>
- 34 They did not destroy the peoples,  
of whom Jehovah had spoken to them;<sup>30</sup>
- 35 But had fellowship with the nations,  
and learnt their doings.
- 36 And they served their idols,  
and they<sup>31</sup> became to them a lure;
- 37 And they sacrificed their sons  
and their daughters unto demons.<sup>32</sup>
- 38 And they poured out innocent blood,  
the blood of their sons and their daughters,—  
whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan,  
and polluted was the land with bloodshed:
- 39 And they became unclean in their deeds,  
and unchaste in their practices;
- 40 And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against his people,  
and he abhorred his inheritance.
- 41 So he gave them over into the hand of the nations,  
and they who hated them ruled over them;
- 42 And their enemies oppressed them,  
and they had to bow down under their hand.
- 43 Many times he rescued them,

26. Points to the prostitution with which Baal Peor, this Moabitish Priapus, was worshipped"—Del.

27. "Baal of Peor"—Dr. Num. 25:2-5.

28. Num. 25:7-13.

29. Num. 20:11f, Deu. 1:37, 32:51.

30. Exo. 23:32, 34:12, Deu. 7:16, Judg. 1:36.

31. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "it"—Gn.

32. "Unto Shedim": Or: "*demi-gods*; mentioned besides only in Deu. 32:17"—Dr. Cp. Deu. 12:31.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- but they rebelled in their counsel,  
and sank low in their iniquity.
- 44 Then looked he on the strait they were in,  
when he heard their piercing<sup>33</sup> cry;
- 45 And he remembered for them his covenant,  
and was moved to pity according to the abundance of his  
kindnesses;<sup>34</sup>
- 46 And gave them to be objects of compassion  
before all their captors.
- 47 Save us Jehovah our God,  
and gather us from among the nations:  
to give thanks unto thy holy name,  
to make our boast of thy praise.
- 48 Blessed be Jehovah God of Israel,  
from antiquity even unto futurity!<sup>35</sup>  
and let all the people say—"Amen."<sup>36</sup>
- (Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 106

Hallelujah! Thank You, Lord! How good You are! Your love for us continues on forever.

2 Who can ever list the glorious miracles of God? Who can ever praise Him half enough?

3 Happiness comes to those who are fair to others and are always just and good.

4 Remember me too, O Lord, while You are blessing and saving Your people.

5 Let me share in Your chosen ones' prosperity and rejoice in all their joys, and receive the glory You gave to them.

6 Both we and our fathers have sinned so much.

7 They weren't impressed by the wonder of Your miracles in Egypt, and soon forgot Your many acts of kindness to them. Instead they rebelled against You at the Red Sea.

33. U.: "ringing." "As in I K. 8:28 . . . *rinnah* is a loud lamentation"—Del.

34. Authorities divided between singular and plural.

35. Ml. (as at the close of Book I, Ps. 41): "From the age (concealed duration in the past) even unto the age (concealed duration in the future)."

36. M.T.: "Praise ye Yah" (not found in Sep. or Syr.—Gn.) carried forward to head of next psalm. See notes at beginning and end of Ps. 105.



## PSALM 106

8 Even so You saved them—to defend the honor of Your name and demonstrate Your power to all the world.

9 You commanded the Red Sea to divide, forming a dry road across its bottom. Yes, as dry as any desert!

10 Thus You rescued them from their enemies.

11 Then the water returned and covered the road and drowned their foes; not one survived.

12 Then at last His people believed Him. Then they finally sang His praise.

13 Yet how quickly they forgot again! They wouldn't wait for Him to act,

14 But demanded better food,<sup>1</sup> testing God's patience to the breaking point.

15 So He gave them their demands, but sent them leanness in their souls.<sup>2</sup>

16 They were envious of Moses; yes, and Aaron, too, the man anointed<sup>3</sup> by God as His priest.

17 Because of this the earth opened and swallowed Dathan, Abiram and his friends;

18 And fire fell from heaven to consume these wicked men.

19, 20 For they preferred a statue of an ox that eats grass, to the glorious presence of God Himself.

21, 22 Thus they despised their Savior who had done such mighty miracles in Egypt and at the Sea.

23 So the Lord declared He would destroy them. But Moses, His chosen one, stepped into the breach between the people and their God and begged Him to turn from His wrath, and not destroy them.

24 They refused to enter the Promised Land, for they wouldn't believe His solemn oath to care for them.

25 Instead, they pouted in their tents and mourned and despised His command.

26 Therefore He swore that He would kill them in the wilderness

27 And send their children away to distant lands as exiles.

28 Then our fathers joined the worshipers of Baal at Peor and even offered sacrifices to the dead!<sup>4</sup>

29 With all these things they angered Him—and so a plague broke out upon them

1. Literally, "lusted exceedingly."

2. Or, "but sent a plague to punish them."

3. Literally, "the holy one of Jehovah."

4. Or, "to lifeless idols."

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30 And continued until Phineas executed those whose sins had caused the plague to start.

31 (For this good deed Phineas will be remembered forever.)

32 At Meribah, too, Israel angered God, causing Moses serious trouble,

33 For he became angry and spoke foolishly.

34 Nor did Israel destroy the nations in the land as God had told them to,

35 But mingled in among the heathen and learned their evil ways,

36 Sacrificing to their idols, and were led away from God.

37, 38 They even sacrificed their little children to the demons—the idols of Canaan—shedding innocent blood and polluting the land with murder.

39 Their evil deeds defiled them, for their love of idols was adultery in the sight of God.

40 That is why Jehovah's anger burned against His people, and He abhorred them.

41, 42 That is why He let the heathen nations crush them. They were ruled by those who hated them and oppressed by their enemies.

43 Again and again He delivered them from their slavery, but they continued to rebel against Him, and were finally destroyed by their sin.

44 Yet, even so, He listened to their cries and heeded their distress;

45 He remembered His promises to them and relented because of His great love,

46 And caused even their enemies who captured them to pity them.

47 O Lord God, save us! Regather us from the nations so we can thank Your holy name and rejoice and praise You.

\* \* \* \* \*

48 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, "Amen!" Hallelujah!

## EXPOSITION

Attention has already been called to this psalm (see Exposition of 105) as not only one of a series of historical psalms—and as such serving an important purpose in the training of the people,—but especially as a national confession of sin. This

## PSALM 106

characteristic is so marked, and morally so significant, as to be worthy of further thought. Not only are our minds arrested by the evident honesty of the nation, and especially its prophets, in thus recording their own shame; but we are made to pause and ponder in presence of this spiritual phenomenon. If we try to conceive of this psalm as being originated earlier than the Exile, we shall probably fail. We can easily imagine an Isaiah or a Jeremiah charging sin home upon the people; but we find the greatest difficulty in representing it to ourselves as possible that they could have led the way in a national confession such as this psalm supplies. The time was not ripe for this: the atmosphere of public confession did not yet exist. As we read the great national confession of sin preserved in Nehemiah 9, or that found in the early part of Daniel 9 which though not national in form is nevertheless intensely and intentionally national in spirit, we feel at home in the prayer and realise that the prayer is at home in its historical and literary surroundings. It fits in with the time: is the genuine product of the strange and startling events which have come to pass in Israelitish history. There had been earlier invasions of the holy land, and the lessons of Divine providence had sunk deep into the best and most thoughtful minds in Israel; but nothing like this had happened before: that Jerusalem itself should be overthrown, and the whole land permanently brought under the heel of the Foreigner. The effect on the minds of the people must have been profound. There was no denying the great, sad fact of Hebrew humiliation; and though many of the people may have shrewdly and stoically adapted themselves to this revolutionary change in their environment, yet the moral only needed to be pointedly drawn and strongly driven home by prophetic voices in and after the Babylonish Exile, to carry home conviction to the average Hebrew mind. This is not to say, that the spiritual sense of humiliation was equally deep in all minds; but it is to say, that when prophets declared—"Our sins as a nation have brought these evils upon us," the general conscience must have responded—"There is no denying it!" This acquiescence in the undeniable, it was, which created the atmosphere in which public confession of national sin could live; for it should be well noted that both these elements—that the confession is public and the sin national—are involved in the case now before us. Its being publicly made with general consent silences cavil; and the sins being national lifts them up to the level of undeniable notoriety. From this point of view, survey

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the long catalogue of sins, beginning with the first protests of incredulity in Egypt, down to the latest practices of licentious cruelty perpetrated in Palestine. Imagine the humiliation and severe spiritual discipline involved in reciting so many national sins in a single psalm. What spiritual authority in these Western Isles would dare to draw up such a catalogue of national offences against the laws of God and man? How can we picture to ourselves congregations throughout our land publicly humbling themselves under the piled-up iniquities of many centuries? The attempt to conceive these things may open our eyes to something of the startlingly unique spiritual phenomenon which the ancient temple-use of this psalm presents to our view. No man can study the Hebrew nation successfully who does not study its solidarity; and no man can appreciate its solidarity in the highest realm of the spirit, who does not bend his mind to the spectacle of a nation confessing the sins it had committed from the Exodus to the Exile. That is the spectacle we have here.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the major emphasis of this psalm?
2. How is the element of honesty of the nation and their prophets seen?
3. At about what time was this psalm originated?
4. What other texts seem to be like this psalm?
5. There seems to be the most profound of impressions involved in this psalm. Why?
6. When the prophets said: "Our sins as a nation have brought these evils upon us"—what was the response?
7. Catalogue the sins of Israel and relate them to America. What should be our attitude?
8. Rotherham cannot imagine the British Isles confessing their sins in 1909. What has happened since should teach us something. Discuss.

# THE PSALMS

## BOOK THE FIFTH<sup>1</sup>

### PSALM 107

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Examples of Men's Straits, leading to Prayer;  
and of Jehovah's Deliverance, calling for Praise.

#### ANALYSIS

After a Summons to Thanksgiving addressed to the Redeemed, vers. 1-3,  
Examples are given:—

1. Of Hungry Wanderers, vers. 4-9;
2. Of Guilty Prisoners, vers. 10-16;
3. Of Dying Transgressors, vers. 17-22;
4. Of Imperilled Sailors, vers. 23-32;

whose Straits move them to Prayer, and whose Prayer brings them from  
Jehovah Deliverance. Further Examples are suggested:—

5. Of a Fruitful Land, first Sterilised, then Blessed, vers. 33-38;
6. Of Nobles, first Diminished, then Multiplied, vers. 39-42

(These suggestions are without the *Refrains* with which the previous "Exam-  
ples" are "finished.") A Brief Admonition Closes the Psalm.

---

(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!<sup>2</sup>

- 1 *Give ye thanks to Jehovah for he is good,  
for to the ages is his kindness.*
- 2 Let the redeemed of Jehovah<sup>3</sup> say—  
whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the adversary;

1. See Table II., *ante*.

2. See notes to Ps. 105. Sep and Vul. have this "P.R.I." here.

3. Cp. Isa. 62:12 (also Isa. 63:4, 35:9).

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- 3 And out of countries hath gathered them,—  
 out of the east and out of the west,  
 out of the north and out of the south.<sup>4</sup>
- 4 Men have wandered about in a desert in a waste,  
 way to a city to dwell in have they not found:
- 5 Hungry yea thirsty  
 their soul within them fainteth.
- 6 *So they make outcry unto Jehovah in the strait they are in,  
 that out of their distresses he will rescue them.*
- 7 And he leadeth them in a way direct,  
 that they may come to a city to dwell in.
- 8 *Let them give thanks to Jehovah for his kindness,  
 and his wondrous doings for the sons of men:*
- 9 Because he hath satisfied the longing soul,  
 and the hungry soul hath filled with good.
- 10 Men are sitting in darkness and death-shade,  
 prisoners in humiliation and iron,—
- 11 Because they have rebelled against the sayings of GOD,  
 and the counsel of the Highest have spurned,<sup>5</sup>
- 12 And he humbleth with travail their heart,  
 they have staggered and there is no one to help.
- 13 *So they cry out unto Jehovah in the strait they are in,  
 that out of their distresses he will save them.*
- 14 And he leadeth them forth out of darkness and death-shade,  
 and their bands he bursteth asunder.<sup>6</sup>
- 15 *Let them give thanks to Jehovah for his kindness,  
 and his wondrous doings for the sons of men:*
- 16 Because he hath shattered the doors of bronze,  
 and the bars of iron hath hewn asunder.<sup>7</sup>
- 17 Foolish men because of their way of transgression,  
 and because of their iniquities bring on themselves  
 humiliation:
- 18 All food their soul abhorreth,  
 and they draw near unto the gates of death.
- 19 *So they cry out unto Jehovah in the strait they are in,  
 that out of their distresses he will save them.*

4. So *Gt.*—*Gn.* And so *Dr.* *M.T.*: "the sea."

5. Or: "despised."

6. Or: "he teareth open."

7. *Isa.* 45:2.

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- 20 He sendeth forth his word<sup>8</sup> and healeth them,  
and rescueth [them] out of their pits.<sup>9</sup>
- 21 *Let them give thanks to Jehovah for his kindness,  
and his wondrous doings for the sons of men;*
- 22 And let them sacrifice sacrifices of thanksgiving,  
and tell of his works<sup>10</sup> with jubilation.<sup>11</sup>
- 23 Men go down to the sea in ships,  
doing business through great waters :
- 24 They have seen the works of Jehovah,  
and his wondrous doings in the deep;
- 25 And he commandeth and there ariseth <sup>12</sup> a tempestuous wind,  
and it lifteth on high the waves thereof :
- 26 They mount the heavens they descend the deeps,  
their soul by trouble dissolveth :
- 27 They reel and stagger like a drunken man,  
and all their wisdom is engulfed.
- 28 *So they make outcry unto Jehovah in the strait they are in,  
that out of their distresses he will bring them forth.*
- 29 He stilleth the storm to a whisper,<sup>13</sup>  
and silent are their waves :
- 30 Then are they glad because they subside,  
and he guideth them to their desired haven.<sup>14</sup>
- 31 *Let them give thanks to Jehovah for his goodness,  
and his wondrous doings for the sons of men;*
- 32 And let them extol him in an assembly of people,  
and in a seated company of elders let them praise him.
- 33 He turneth rivers into a desert,  
and springs of water into thirsty ground :
- 34 A land of fruit into a waste of salt,—  
for the wickedness of them who dwell therein.
- 35 He turneth a desert into a pool of water,  
and a parched land into springs of water ;

8. Job 33:23, John 1:1.

9. "That is, *their graves*"—Dr. "Pitfalls"—Del. "From the pit their life"—Br. (conj.).

10. Or: "doings."

11. Or: "a ringing cry."

12. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn.

13. "He husheth the storm to a gentle air"—Per. "He turned the storm into a gentle breeze"—Del.

14. "Longed-for-haven"—Del. "Haven of their desire"—Dr. "City of their desire"—O.G.

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- 36 And causeth to dwell there the hungry,  
and they establish a city to dwell in;  
37 And sow fields and plant vineyards,  
and obtain fruits to be gathered in.  
38 So doth he bless them and they multiply greatly,  
and their cattle suffereth he not to be few.  
40 He poureth contempt upon nobles,<sup>15</sup>  
and letteth them wander in a pathless waste;<sup>16</sup>  
39 And they become few and are brought low—  
by the pressure of misfortune and sorrow.<sup>17</sup>  
41 And he setteth the needy on high out of humiliation,  
and maketh families like a flock.<sup>18</sup>  
42 The upright see and are glad,<sup>19</sup>  
and all perverseness hath shut her mouth.<sup>20</sup>  
43 Who is wise?—let him observe these things,<sup>21</sup>  
and diligently consider the kindness of Jehovah.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 107

Say "Thank You" to the Lord for being so good, for always being so loving and kind.

2. Has the Lord redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others He has saved you from your enemies.

3 He brought the exiles back from the farthest corners of the earth.

4 They were wandering homeless in the desert,

5 Hungry and thirsty and faint.

6 "Lord, help!" they cried, and He did!

7 He led them straight to safety and a place to live.

8 Oh, that these men would praise the Lord for His loving-kindness, and for all of His wonderful deeds!

9 For He satisfies the thirsty soul and fills the hungry soul with good.

15. Vers. 39 and 40 are transposed according to the judgment of Ginsburg on the inverted *nun* found here in the margin.

16. Heb. *tohu*: cp. Gen. 1:2. Cp. Job 12:21-24.

17. So Del. "Through coercion, adversity, and sorrow"—Dr.

18. Cp. Job 21:11.

19. Cp. Job. 5:16.

20. Cp. Job 22:19.

21. Cp. Ho. 14:9.



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10 Who are these who sit in darkness, in the shadow of death, crushed by misery and slavery?

11 They rebelled against the Lord, scorning Him, who is the God above all gods.

12 That is why he broke them with hard labor; they fell and none could help them rise again.

13 Then they cried to the Lord in their troubles, and He rescued them!

14 He led them from the darkness and shadow of death and snapped their chains!

15 Oh, that these men would praise the Lord for His loving-kindness and for all of His wonderful deeds!

16 For He broke down their prison gates of brass and cut apart their iron bars.

\* \* \* \* \*

17 Others, the fools, were ill because of their sinful ways.

18 Their appetites were gone and death was near.

19 Then they cried to the Lord in their troubles, and He helped them and delivered them.

20 He spoke, and they were healed—snatched from the door of death.

21 Oh, that these men would praise the Lord for His loving-kindness and for all of His wonderful deeds!

22 Let them tell Him "Thank You" as their sacrifice, and sing about His glorious deeds.

\* \* \* \* \*

23 And then there are the sailors sailing the seven seas, plying the trade routes of the world.

24 They, too observe the power of God in action.

25 He calls to the storm winds; the waves rise high.

26 Their ships are tossed to the heavens and sink again to the depths; the sailors cringe in terror.

27 They reel and stagger like drunkards and are at their wit's end.

28 Then they cry to the Lord in their trouble, and He saves them!

29 He calms the storm and stills the waves.

30 What a blessing is that stillness, as He brings them safely into harbor!

31 Oh, that these men would praise the Lord for His loving-kindness and all of His wonderful deeds!

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32 Let them praise Him publicly before the congregation,  
and before the leaders of the nation.

\* \* \* \* \*

33 He dries up rivers,

34 And turns the good land of the wicked into deserts of  
salt.

35 Again, He turns deserts into fertile, watered valleys!

36 He brings the hungry to settle there and build their cities,

37 To sow their fields and plant their vineyards, and reap  
their bumper crops!

38 How He blesses them! They raise big families there,  
and many cattle!

39 But others become poor through oppression, trouble and  
sorrow.

40 For God pours contempt upon the haughty and causes  
princes to wander among ruins;

41 But He rescues the poor who are godly and gives them  
many children and much prosperity.

42 Good men everywhere will see it and be glad, while evil  
men are stricken silent.

43 Listen, if you are wise, to what I am saying. Think  
about the lovingkindness of the Lord!

## EXPOSITION

This psalm stands high for its artistic beauty and for its broad applicability to the experiences of men, as well as for the same lofty devotion as that by which most of the psalms are distinguished. Its artistic beauty is greatly owing to the two refrains which adorn each of its four principal stanzas, one refrain shewing how trouble leads to prayer, and the other suggesting that answered prayer calls for praise; and, though this feature is missing from the concluding strains of the psalm (vers. 33-42), yet this absence ceases to appear as a blemish, when once it is apprehended that the lack was intentional, and that the super-numerary lines were merely intended to shew, by two further examples, in how many other ways than those above wrought out, the prayers of men might be called for and their praises evoked. Such an apprehension enriches us by revealing *psalmody in the making* as well as psalmody fully prepared for public use. We first think we can see whereabouts amidst the supplementary lines the refrains might have been inserted, and then reflect on the numberless other ways in which the ever-varying experiences

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of life may with equal fitness fan the flames of petition and adoration. Let *the redeemed* from every other conceivable *distress say* whether it is not still true of *Jehovah*, that *he is good, For to the ages is his kindness.*

By this very suggestiveness—of other like experiences—is the *breadth* of this psalm discovered; as also by the typical character of the instances actually given. In the first and fourth refrained stanzas, we have instances of men in distress through no apparent sin or fault of their own: in the second and third finished stanzas, are given examples in which it was sin that brought on the suffering. We can choose between them, according as we apprehend our own troubles to be punitive as well as disciplinary, or the latter only. We may be passing through trouble—not because we are bad, but that we may be better. Besides this, some troubles read like parables of others to which they bear a striking resemblance. Many a man seems to himself to be like a prisoner with no imaginable way of escape; and many another, like the mariner whose *soul by trouble dissolveth, And all his wisdom is engulfed.* Courage, brother! *HE* still liveth who can *still the storm to a whisper.* Sooner than thou thinkest, thou mayest have cast anchor in thy *desired haven!*

Among other manifestations of the devotional spirit which pervades the psalms in general, this psalm is delightfully conspicuous in that, instead of employing inferior deities, one to send a trouble and another to remove it, all the vicissitudes of life are traced ultimately to *Jehovah's* holy will. He mercifully overrules the troubles which he inscrutably permits: he raises the storm which he abates. In no case are we debarred from recognising his hand in the controlling and moulding of our lives. *Who is wise? let him observe these things, And diligently consider the kindness of Jehovah.*

There is not a word in the body of this psalm to suggest a late date for its composition; and though the Sopherim may very well have adapted it for a post-exilic time by the prelude which amplifies the gathering of scattered Israel, yet it should not be forgotten that Israel suffered extensive deportations even before Hezekiah's day. Those readers who will be at the trouble of looking up the numerous references to Job and Isaiah here supplied will of course be struck with the coincidences thereby brought to light. At the same time there are two weighty considerations to be borne in mind: the one is the brightening evidence that the latter part of Isaiah was after all mainly written

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by the man whose name it bears; and the other the much forgotten circumstance that the Great Return from Exile from the four quarters of the earth is manifestly an event which has yet to be fulfilled.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How is the artistic beauty of this psalm shown?
2. In what way can we see "psalmody in the making"?
3. There are lessons to learn from distress. Examples are given—how do these two examples fit all men?
4. These distresses can be read like parables—how?
5. Is it true that all natural phenomena is to be attributed to Jehovah? Can we make Him immediately and personally responsible for the millions who have died in famine and flood?
6. How is the problem of the late date of this psalm answered?

## PSALM 108

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Two Fragments of Earlier Psalms.

### ANALYSIS

Vers. 1-6 are taken from Ps. 57:7-11: and vers. 6-9 from Ps. 60:5-8. For Exposition, see those psalms. Probable Occasion for this Composite Psalm: Danger from Edom, Not so Accute as in Ps. 60.

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(Lm.)—Song—Psalm—By David.

- 1 Steadfast is my heart O God!<sup>1</sup>  
I would fain sing and would play,—yea my glory!<sup>2</sup>
- 2 Oh awake lute and lyre!  
I would fain waken the dawn:
- 3 I would thank thee among the peoples O Jehovah,  
I would celebrate thee in psalm<sup>3</sup> among the races of men.

1. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.) repeat the clause: "steadfast is my heart." Cp. 57:7—Gn.

2. See Ps. 16:9 note.

3. Or: "make melody unto thee."

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- 4 For great above the heavens is thy kindness,  
and as far as the skies<sup>4</sup> thy truth.
- 5 Be exalted above the heavens O god,  
and above all the earth be thy glory,
- 6 To the end thy beloved may be rescued  
oh save with thy right hand and answer me.<sup>5</sup>
- 7 God spake in his holiness:—  
“Let me exult let me apportion Shechem,  
And the Vale of Succoth will I measure out:
- 8 Mine is Gilead and mine Manasseh;  
But Ephraim is the defence of my head,  
Judah is my commander’s staff:
- 9 Moab is my wash-bowl,  
Unto Edom will I cast my sandal,  
Over Philistia raise a shout of triumph.”
- 10 Who will conduct me to the fortified city?<sup>6</sup>  
Who will lead me as far as Edom?
- 11 Hast not thou<sup>7</sup> O God rejected us?  
and thou wilt not O God go forth with our hosts?
- 12 O grant to us help out of distress,  
since unreal is a victory<sup>8</sup> by man:
- 13 In God we shall do valiantly,  
he himself therefore shall<sup>9</sup> tread down our adversaries!
- (Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 108

O God, my heart is ready to praise You! I will sing and rejoice before You.

2 Wake up, O harp and lyre! We will meet the dawn with song.

3 I will praise You everywhere around the world, in every nation.

4 For Your lovingkindness is great beyond measure, high as the heavens! Your faithfulness reaches the skies!

4. Or: “fleecy clouds.”

5. Written “us,” but read “me;” and so most authorities.

6. Some cod: “city entrenched,” exactly as Ps. 60:9.

7. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): “thou” emphatic as 60:10.

8 Or: “deliverance,” “salvation.”

9. Cp. on 60:12.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

5 His glory is far more vast than the heavens! It towers above the earth.

6 Hear the cry of Your beloved child—come with mighty power and rescue me.

7 God has given sacred promises; no wonder I exult! He has promised to give us all the land of Shechem, and also Succoth Valley!

8 "Gilead is Mine to give to you," He says, "and Manasseh as well; the land of Ephraim is the helmet on My head. Judah is My scepter.

9 But Moab and Edom are despised; and I will shout in triumph over the Philistines."

10 Who but God can give me strength to conquer these fortified cities? Who else can lead me into Edom?

11 Lord, have You thrown us away? Have You deserted our army?

12 Oh, help us fight against our enemies, for men are useless allies.

13 But with the help of God we shall do mighty acts of valor! For He treads down our foes.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is this psalm a composite of two earlier ones? i.e. what is the occasion for its composition?
2. Is there any danger here of "vain repetition"? Discuss. Read: Phil. 4:4; Gal. 1-9; Phil. 3:1.

## PSALM 109

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

David, Rehearsing how His Enemies have Cursed him,  
Refers his Cause to Jehovah.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, The Psalmist Entreats Jehovah to speak up for him against his Accusers, of whose Groundless Hatred he Complains. Stanzas II.-VI., vers. 6-15, He Records, at length, his Enemies' Imprecations; and, Stanza VII., vers. 16-19, Their False Accusations, regarding these as Permitted

1. Literally, "Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast My shoe."

## PSALM 109

by Jehovah. In Stanzas VIII-XII., vers. 21-31, the Psalmist prays for rescue from Troubles inflicted by Jehovah's Own Hand, for which he Promises to Render Public Thanks.

(Lm.) By David—Psalm.

- 1 O God of my praise do not be silent:
- 2 For the mouth of a lawless one and a mouth of deceit  
    against me are open,  
They have spoken with me with a tongue that is false;
- 3 And with words of hatred have they compassed me about,  
and have made war upon me without cause:
- 4 For my love they accuse me though I am all prayer,<sup>1</sup>
- 5 Yea they have returned<sup>2</sup> unto me evil for good, and hatred  
    for my love [saying:—]
- 6 “Set in charge over him a lawless one,  
and let an accuser take his stand at his right hand:
- 7 When he judged let him go forth condemned,  
and his prayer become sin.<sup>3</sup>
- 8 “Let his days become few,  
His oversight let another take:
- 9 Let his children become fatherless,  
and his wife a widow.
- 10 “And let his children wander and beg,  
and be driven out<sup>4</sup> of their desolate homes:
- 11 Let the creditor strike in at all that he hath,  
and strangers prey upon his toil.
- 12 “Let him have none to prolong kindness,  
and be there none to be gracious unto his fatherless children:
- 13 Let his posterity<sup>5</sup> be for cutting off,  
In a<sup>6</sup> generation let his<sup>7</sup> name be wiped out.
- 14 “Remembered be the iniquity of his fathers unto Jehovah,  
and the sin of his mother—let it not be wiped out:
- 15 Let them be in the sight of Jehovah continually,  
that he may cut off out of the earth their memory.
- 16 “Because he remembered not to do a kindness,

1. So Del. “But I am (given unto) prayer”—Dr. “But I (give myself unto) prayer”—Per. And cp. ver. 7.

2. So it shd. be (w. Syr.)—Gn.

3. “And let the decision of his case be his guilt.”—Br.

4. So it shd. be. (w. Sep. and Vul.)—Gn. And so O.G., Br.

5. Or: “latter end.”

6. M.T.: “another.” Sep. and Vul.: “one.”

7. Some cod. (w. Sep. and Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: “their.”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- but pursued the man who was humbled and needy,  
and the downhearted was ready to slay outright,—
- 17 And loved cursing and so it hath come upon him,  
and delighted not in blessing, and so it hath gone far from  
him,
- 18 And clothed himself with cursing as his outer garment  
and so it hath entered like water into his inward parts,  
and like oil into his bones
- 19 Be it his, as a garment he wrappeth around him,  
and for the girdle he at all times girdeth on.”
- 20 This is the recompense of mine accusers from Jehovah,  
and of them who are bespeaking calamity upon my soul.<sup>8</sup>
- 21 But thou Jehovah Sovereign Lord deal effectually with me  
for the sake of thy name;  
because good is thy kindness O rescue me;
- 22 For humbled and needy am I,  
and my heart is wounded within me.
- 23 As a shadow when it stretcheth out have I vanished,  
I am shaken out like a locust:<sup>9</sup>
- 24 My knees totter from fasting,  
and my flesh hath become lean after fatness;<sup>10</sup>
- 25 And I have become a reproach to them,  
they see me they shake their head.
- 26 Help me Jehovah my God,  
save me according to thy kindness:
- 27 That they may know that thine own hand is this,—  
Thou Jehovah hast done it.
- 28 They will curse but thou wilt bless,  
mine assailants will be put to shame but thy servant will  
rejoice:
- 29 Mine accusers will be clothed with confusion,  
and will wrap about them as a cloak their own shame.
- 30 I will give great thanks<sup>11</sup> unto Jehovah with my mouth,  
Yea amidst multitudes will I praise him;
- 31 Because he taketh his stand at the right hand of the needy,  
to save [him] from them who would judge his soul.

(Nm.)

8. Cp. 105:18 (note).

9. “I am shaken when the light grows stronger”—Br.

10. “And my flesh without oil is as one hastening away.”—Br.

11. So Dr., after P.B.V.



PSALM 109  
PARAPHRASE  
PSALM 109

0 God of my praise, don't stand silent and aloof  
2 While the wicked slander me and tell their lies.  
3 They have no reason to hate and fight me, yet they do!  
4 I love them, but even while I am praying for them, they  
are trying to destroy me.  
5 They return evil for good, and hatred for love!

\* \* \* \* \*

6 Show him how it feels!<sup>1</sup> Let lies be told about him, and  
bring him to court before an unfair judge.

7 When his case is called for judgment, let him be pro-  
nounced guilty! Count his prayers as sins!

8 Let his years be few and brief; let others step forward  
to replace him.

9, 10 May his children become fatherless and his wife a  
widow, and be evicted from the ruins of their home.

11 May creditors seize his entire estate and strangers take  
all he has earned.

12, 13 Let no one be kind to him; let no one pity his  
fatherless children. May they die. May his family name be  
blotted out in a single generation.

14 Punish the sins of his father and mother. Don't over-  
look them.

15 Think constantly about the evil things he has done, and  
cut off his name from the memory of man.

16 For he refused all kindness to others, and persecuted  
those in need, and hounded brokenhearted ones to death.

17 He loved to curse others; now You curse him. He never  
blessed others; now don't You bless him.

18 Cursing is as much a part of him as his clothing, or  
as the water he drinks, or the rich food he eats!

19 Now may those curses return and cling to him like his  
clothing or his belt.

20 This is the Lord's punishment upon my enemies who  
tell lies about me and threaten me with death.

\* \* \* \* \*

21 But as for me, O Lord, deal with me as Your child, as  
one who bears Your name! Because You are so kind, O Lord,  
deliver me.

1. Implied.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

22, 23 I am slipping down the hill to death; I am shaken off from life as easily as a man brushes a grasshopper from his arm.

24 My knees are weak from fasting and I am skin and bones.

25 I am a symbol of failure to all mankind; when they see me they shake their heads.

26 Help me, O Lord my God! Save me because You are loving and kind.

27 Do it publicly, so all will see that You Yourself have done it.

28 Then let them curse me if they like—I won't mind that if You are blessing me! For then all their efforts to destroy me will fail, and I shall go right on rejoicing!

29 Make them fail in everything they do. Clothe them with disgrace.

30 But I will give repeated thanks to the Lord, praising Him to everyone.

31 For He stands beside the poor and hungry to save them from their enemies.

## EXPOSITION

The key which opens this psalm to general edification is the perception that its long string of curses are those of David's enemies and not his own. The considerations which lead to this conclusion are the following:—(1) The sudden and sustained change from the plural of vers. 1-5 (*they*) to the singular of vers. 6-19 (*he, his, him*); the former referring to David's enemies, the latter referring to David himself on his accusers' *false tongue*. (2) The fierce and sweeping vindictiveness which piles up imprecations against father, mother, wife, children, possessions and memory in a manner unexampled in any other utterance attributable to David. (3) The similarity of tone between the verses which lead up to the cursing and those which follow after it — a tone of humble and prayerful trust in Jehovah, whose *effectual working* is not only strongly urged but patiently awaited: suggesting how unlikely it is that the cursing of the middle of the psalm proceeds from the same mind as the dignified predictions of its close. (4) The devotion to *prayer* claimed by the psalmist in ver. 4 as making his enemies' hatred without excuse, seems to be hurled back by his enemies in mockery in ver. 7. (5) The *recompense* of ver. 20 seems like a resumption of the *return of evil for good* mentioned in

## PSALMS 109 AND 110

ver. 5; as much as to say: *This—the long string of curses*—is how they *recompense* me for my past kindness; the allusion taking on a striking verisimilitude when the known kindness of David for the house of Saul is recalled, and when we think how easily Shimei the Benjamite might in his bitterness have exaggerated some oversight on David's part to shew his wonted kindness to some member of Saul's family: the addition *from Jehovah* in ver. 20, being a recognition such as we have in 2 Sam. 16:5-13, that David's enemies had been permitted by Jehovah to do him this wrong, leaving the wrong remaining as wrong, the cursing being still theirs and not his. (6) On the background of his enemies' cursing there is something peculiarly lifelike and pathetic in the unrestrained prayer which he pours out before Jehovah as to his whole position: his position, as he is driven from Jerusalem, is indeed desperate, and he may well pray for *rescue*; he is *poor and needy*, and will soon be glad to accept of hospitality from one of his subjects; his *heart* was *wounded within him*, as well it might, with memories of Uriah and Bathsheba recalled, the revolt of Absalom staring him in the face, and now the cursing of Shimei to add bitterness to his cup. These verses, 20-25, compel us to think of David's journey up the slope of Mt. Olivet. Then there is the distinct recognition of Divine chastisement, lying behind the cursing (ver. 27) and as we read on, *They will curse, but thou wilt bless*, we feel certain that the lips that utter these words of resignation are not the same as those which have just been cursing so very fiercely.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There is a "key which opens this psalm to general edification". What is it?
2. Give and discuss at least two of the reasons given for attributing the curses to David's enemies.
3. What circumstance in David's life best fits this psalm?

## PSALM 110

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Revelation, THROUGH DAVID TO his "lord," the Messiah.

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
ANALYSIS

(See the lines prefixed to the Stanzas of the Psalm.)

(Lm.) By David—Psalm.

(1. David records a Revelation concerning his lord.)

- 1 The revelation<sup>1</sup> of Jehovah to my lord<sup>2</sup>:—  
“Sit thou at my right hand  
until I make thy foes a stool for thy feet.”

(2. Foretells that a Commission will be given to his lord.)

- 2 Thy sceptre of strength<sup>3</sup> will Jehovah stretch forth out of  
Zion:—  
“Rule thou in the midst of thy foes.”

(3. Describes the Appearance of the Army of his lord.)

- 3 Thy people are most willing<sup>4</sup> in thy day of warfare:<sup>5</sup>  
in holy adorning<sup>6</sup> out of the womb of the dawn  
to thee [cometh forth] the dew of thy young men.

(4. Proclaims an Oath addressed by Jehovah to his lord.)

- 4 Sworn hath Jehovah and will not regret:—  
“Thou art a priest to the ages  
after the manner of Melchizedek.”

(5. Portrays the Overthrow of the Foes of his lord,  
and his lord's consequent Exaltation.)

- 5 The Sovereign Lord<sup>7</sup> at thy right hand  
hath crushed<sup>8</sup> in the day of his anger kings,  
6 He judgeth<sup>9</sup> among the nations—full of dead bodies!  
hath crushed the head over a wide land:

1. “Utterance, declaration, revelation”—O.G. “Oracle”—Del., Per. “Utterance”—Br. For use and misuse of the formula, cp. Jer. 23:31-33.

2. Heb.: *'adoni*.

3. = “Thy strong sceptre:” cp. Ps. 2:9.

4. Heb. pl. abstract of intensification: “willingnesses.”

5. “Of thy power. Or, of thy host; in either case the meaning being, on the day when thy forces muster for battle”—Dr. “Of thy host”—Br. “In the day that thou warrest”—Per. “In the day of thy warfare”—Del.

6. Ml.: “In stateliness of holiness.”

7. Heb. (M.T.): *'adonai*. In some cod. “Jehovah”—Gn.

8. Or: “shattered.”

9. Or: “will judge.”

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7 An inheritance on the way he maketh it,<sup>10</sup>  
therefore he exalteth the<sup>11</sup> Head.

(Nm.)<sup>12</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 110

Jehovah said to my Lord the Messiah,<sup>1</sup> "Rule as My regent—I will subdue Your enemies and make them bow low before You."

2 Jehovah has established Your throne<sup>2</sup> in Jerusalem<sup>3</sup> to rule over Your enemies.

3 In that day of Your power Your people shall come to You willingly, dressed in holy altar robes.<sup>4</sup> And Your strength shall be renewed day by day like morning dew.

4 Jehovah has taken oath, and will not rescind His vow, that You are a priest forever like<sup>5</sup> Melchizedek.

5 God stands beside You to protect You. He will strike down many kings in the day of His anger.

6 He will punish the nations, and fill them with their dead. He will crush many heads.

7 But He Himself shall be refreshed from springs along the way.

## EXPOSITION

This psalm being ascribed to *David*, we have a prescriptive right to endeavour to interpret it accordingly; and the measure of our success may be regarded as confirming or discrediting this superscription.

Ver. 1. *The Revelation of Jehovah to my lord.*—As a *revelation*, the psalm as a whole and its leading announcement in particular may be expected to make a disclosure unknown before. We already know of the choice of David in preference to Saul; of his anointing and ascension to the throne of Israel; of his prophetic gifts; of the covenant made with him, through

10. So Br. (with very slight emendations).

11. Or: "a."

12. See Ps. 111 (beginning).

1. Implied. In Matthew 22:41-45, Jesus applies the words to Himself.

2. Literally, "The Lord will send forth the rod of your strength out of Zion."

3. Literally, "from Zion."

4. Literally, "in holy array."

5. Literally, "after the manner of."

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Nathan the prophet, touching his sons as destined heirs to his kingship: which covenant, therefore, must have made him aware of the continuance of his kingdom under other rulers than himself. It was not to be his privilege to carry the Representative Kingship with which he was invested to its climax, by bearing it for ever, or by himself bringing all nations into perfect obedience to Jehovah. He would have to bequeath his throne to his sons, some of whom, Nathan suggested to him, would probably prove unworthy of that honour. He himself, in any case, was not the Messiah. So much we knew from previous Divine communications to David. But we did not know—however naturally we might have conjectured it—that David's royal line would at length be consummated in the person of one of his race to whom he himself would own allegiance and whom he would willingly call his "lord." But this is implied in the first line of the psalm. David shall have such an heir—an heir whom he can call his "lord"; and inasmuch as a living son can exercise no lordship over a dead father,—even as, on the other hand, a dead father cannot give allegiance to an as yet unborn son,—we are irresistibly carried forward to Resurrection days; unless, indeed, David is not to die until this his Greater Son appears. We find ourselves, therefore, to say the least, well within the scope of a revelation—a disclosure—a discovery.

But this discovery, though made *through* David, directly concerns David's *lord*—his Messianic Son. This, precisely, is what David here tells us. He does not say: *The revelation of Jehovah UNTO ME*, but *The Revelation of Jehovah to MY LORD*; that is, to MY SON, THE MESSIAH. In short, then, we have here a revelation *to* the Messiah; and being a revelation written down and preserved until the Messiah's days, will it not, in the event of his reading it, become at once a revelation *for* him and a revelation *to* him? Jesus of Nazareth believes himself to be David's Messianic Son: his nation are about to reject him, meantime this revelation comes to him—to his notice, to his reflection, to his need. All who truly believe in the *kenosis*—the self-emptying—of which the Apostle Paul (Phil. 2) speaks, cannot fail to become aware that already the atmosphere of the psalm has become charged with intense spiritual emotion. No wonder that, on receiving this revelation, Jesus is so profoundly moved that, to the Pharisees, he can only put questions!

So far we are assured that a revelation to the Messiah is coming, but are not told what it is. Of this the next words inform

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us: *Sit thou at my right hand until I make thy foes a stool for thy feet.* This informs us that the Messiah will have foes; but, that instead of at once contending with them and overcoming them, he is to be taken out of their midst; to be so taken, by being invited to a post of highest honour; in short, to be exalted to the right hand of Jehovah in heaven. We say, advisedly, "in heaven,"—first, because we know that heaven is the place of Jehovah's fixed abode (1 K. 8:30, etc.); and, secondly, because it is not easy to see how a mere elevation to the right hand of the sacred *ark in Jerusalem* could have the effect of removing the Messiah from the midst of his enemies. Here, again, it is not without emotion that we conceive of Jesus of Nazareth receiving such an invitation from Jehovah. For him to take in its purport, could fall nothing short of his discovering something of "the joy set before him," fitted to embolden him "to endure the cross, its shame despising."

But this elevation is not to be for ever: it is for a definite object; and, therefore, for such time as the accomplishment of that object shall require: *Until I make thy foes a stool for thy feet.* It is JEHOVAH who undertakes to reduce Messiah's foes to such a humiliating condition. The foes are spoken of collectively and as a complete class. And the subjugation is to be thorough. Jehovah promises that he will bring down the Messiah's enemies to *abject submission* to his, the Messiah's, will. They shall be publicly humiliated—totally crushed. They shall be able to rise in rebellion no more. Their being made *a stool for the Messiah's feet* cannot mean less than this.

Ver. 2. *Thy sceptre of strength will Jehovah stretch forth out of Zion.* It is Jehovah who will place the Messiah's enemies under his feet; but, not necessarily and to the end of the process, without the Messiah's participation. *Thy sceptre of strength* is, naturally, the Messiah's sceptre; although, still, it is Jehovah who stretches it forth out of Zion, the which continued activity of Jehovah is to be carefully borne in mind. *What* sceptre, then, is this? And *whence* is it to be wielded? The phrase *Thy sceptre of strength* is of the same meaning as "Thy strong sceptre;" for the Hebrew tongue delights in using abstract nouns of quality where we mostly use adjectives. Messiah, then, is to wield "a strong sceptre;" that is, to exercise a strong rule, to enforce obedience, to compel submission. We are entitled to say: Messiah's "strong sceptre" is the "iron sceptre" of Psalm the Second, otherwise the practice of comparing scripture with

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scripture might as well cease. Now, an "iron sceptre" is the fit emblem of PHYSICAL FORCE. This, therefore, the Messiah will have at command, and will employ. Yet will he do this strictly under Jehovah's direction, pushing his dominion through openings which Jehovah has made, and forcing submission by means which Jehovah will supply. It is Jehovah who is to *stretch forth* Messiah's "strong sceptre." Moreover, also, that sceptre is to be stretched forth *out of Zion*. And therefore its enforcing activity is to start from Zion. Its holder and wielder is to be located in Zion. But *what* "Zion" is this? It is the earthly Zion. And is this movement, by consequence, a descent of enforcing power from heaven, and its centralisation on earth? It can be nothing else;—for this sufficient reason, that never once in the Old Testament does "Zion" mean heaven, or is "Zion" located in heaven. No real or imaginary figurative use of "Zion" or "Jerusalem" in the New Testament can control us here. We are, in this psalm, on Old Testament ground, and must therefore keep to the Old Testament use of words. Hence the legitimate inference is, that, in the meantime, the centre of Messianic activity has been transferred from heaven to earth. The Messiah is now again "in the midst of his enemies;" which agrees with the commission here given him: *Rule thou in the midst of thy foes*. It would be more like a parody than a fair exegesis of these words to make them equivalent to—"From thy safe retreat in heaven, at the right hand of Jehovah, where thine enemies cannot reach thee, nor for a moment suppose they can reach thee, rule thou in the midst of thy foes." The *power* might be in the midst of the foes, but the *Presence* would not be—the *Manifested Presence*; without which—how are the unbelieving enemies,—who, as such, do not believe that there is a Messiah concealed in the skies,—to connect the power on the earth with the Presence in heaven? No: plainly, the Messiah's special *refuge-and-waiting* session at the right hand of Jehovah, in heaven, IS AT AN END, and he is once more "in the midst of his foes" on earth: in Zion, the historical Zion, the only Zion of which the Old Testament knows anything, the very Zion in which long ago the Father declared he would enthrone him (Ps. 2). Being in Zion, in the midst of his foes, he there wields his iron sceptre; and Jehovah will see to it that its enforcing activity shall be *extended*, at least over a *wide land*; and undoubtedly, ere its triumphs cease, be stretched forth "from the River unto the Ends of the earth" (Zech. 9:10).



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Ver. 3. But the Messiah, now seated in Zion, has a *people*, who are here described in strikingly beautiful and suggestive terms. They are *most willing*: they are *volunteers* in the service of Zion's king; for, by general consent, this is the force of the abstract plural of intensification (*willingness*), here employed. They are not mercenaries; they spring to their feet with alacrity when the time comes for them to offer their services. The seasonableness of their volunteering is expressly noted; for they thus come forth for service just when their services are needed, or when at least the offer of them seems fitting to the time: *in thy day of warfare*—"the meaning being, on the day when thy forces muster for battle" (Dr.). David's lord, the Messiah, therefore, *has* a "people," who with alacrity press into his service "on his day of warfare"; i.e., the day when his warfare breaks out "in the midst of his foes." How long they have been his "people" is not stated: they are his people now when his "forces muster for battle," and they act in character *as* his people by volunteering for service now that the time for warring has come.

Their appearance is next described: that is, if we follow the Massoretic text—they appear *in holy adorning*, as it were in priestly robes. If, however, with some able critics we prefer the various reading which (substituting an "r" for a "d," the difference in Hebrew being very small) yields the very dissimilar clause *On the holy mountains* instead of "In holy adorning," then we find in this phrase a notification of the *place where* these volunteers gather: they gather on the holy mountains—about Jerusalem, naturally—for we know of no other "holy mountains"; and this seems strikingly agreeable with the circumstance that the Messiah has now fixed his headquarters in Jerusalem, since it is *from thence* that his strong rule is to be "extended." Still, it is not certain that this various reading is to be preferred, for a reason to be given in a few moments. Hence, for the present, we leave that an open question, by saying: If the word is *harre*, then the rendering must be—*On the holy mountains*; but if *hadre*, then the proper English is—*in holy adorning*. We wish to find out precisely—if we may—who these "people," these Messianic "volunteers," are: does this clause say they are a priestly people; or does it indicate the place of their gathering? Let us follow on with the text, in the hope of coming near to an answer.

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*Out of the womb of the dawn, Thou hast (or to thee cometh forth) the dew of thy young men.* Sudden and striking, bright and beautiful, and wholly unexpected, as a revelation of innumerable dew-drops in the morning when the sun rises, is the appearance of this army of volunteers. They are born out of the foregoing night. They suddenly start forth as the Messiah's allies "on the day of his warfare," when his "strong sceptre" is about to be "stretched forth out of Zion" by Jehovah. So far our text leads us. Still it does not define, beyond doubt, who this "people" are.

But just here comes in a remarkable text from the prophet Micah (5:7) which looks as if it might have been written as a commentary on this verse of our psalm. The reference is to "the Shepherd of Israel." That this Shepherd should appear as a deliverer from ASSYRIA, will not hinder students of prophecy from associating him with the final deliverance of Israel from the Gentile world-power, first represented by Assyria. But here is the language in question:—"And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, As dew from Jehovah, As myriad drops on plants, Which tarrieth not for man, Nor waiteth for the sons of Adam." Even so far, the parallel is very striking; and already begins to make us question whether the "volunteers" of our psalm are not this very "remnant of Jacob in the midst of many peoples," quietly awaiting the auspicious morning of Messiah's manifestation in Jerusalem. How greatly the quiet deposit of them "among many peoples" seems to add to the formidableness of their presence, provided they are destined to be *more aggressive than "dew"*: the very thing of which the prophet immediately proceeds to assure us: "And the remnant of Jacob"—the same remnant—"shall be among the nations"—the same position, stated in duplicate: "among the nations, in the midst of many peoples:" in what character? as gentle "dew" merely? nay! "as a lion among the beasts of the jungle, As a young lion among flocks of sheep, Who if he passeth by, both treadeth down—and teareth in pieces—and none can deliver." How wonderfully, though poetically, do those features of the psalmist's description here reappear, which intimate that in spite of their "holy adorning" and their fresh and brilliant beauty, the newly revealed army of volunteers are volunteers of a king whose iron sceptre is now, on this "his day of warfare," to be "stretched forth" by Jehovah "out of Zion"! We tenaciously adhered, a little way back, to the fact

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that, although the "iron sceptre" was the Messiah's, yet it was JEHOVAH who would stretch it forth from Zion to the ends of the earth. And is not this our reward—namely, to discover in this "remnant of Jacob" the very means by which Jehovah will extend that resistless sway of which the psalmist had spoken?

Thus, then, we appear to be absolved from any need to push further our quest after the Messiah's volunteering people as referred to in the third verse of our psalm. They are the "remnant of Jacob" "among the nations," "in the midst of many peoples," sustaining the well-known characteristics of "dew"—"that tarrieth not for man," and of "lions" from whose downtreading and tearing prowess the sheep cannot escape. If the provision of such a people for the crisis is not a stretching forth of Messiah's strong sceptre out of Zion to the ends of the earth, we should like to know by what more striking and powerful metaphor such an idea could be conveyed. For the present, then, we are well content with the Massoretic text, which spells with a "d" and not with an "r"; and so are prepared to rest in the descriptive clause "In holy adorning" as applied to the "remnant of Jacob"; rather than "On the holy mountains," which would have confined their gathering to a single spot. Such volunteers are a thousand times more formidable where they are, scattered among the nations; unnoticed, forgotten, trampled under foot; and yet able,—in the strength of Jehovah their God and in their newborn enthusiasm for their Anointed King newly seated in Zion,—to utter a roar which shall make all the continents of the world tremble. By what means Jehovah will clothe this scattered "remnant of Jacob" with garments of "holy adorning," so that like Jehoshaphat's Levites of old (2 Ch. 20:19-22) they shall go forth singing to the battlefield, perchance to find the foe already demolished, we know not; but if Jehovah here declares that he will so stretch forth his Messiah's strong sceptre to the ends of the earth, we can calmly await the fulfilment. The morning which shall witness that army's birth has not yet dawned. We are the more content to abide by the "holy adorning" clause of the Massoretic Hebrew text, in that, besides its immediate application to the Messiah's volunteers, it gives forth in advance something of the fragrance of the Messiah's own Kingly priesthood, with the revelation of which a march has now to be stolen upon us. The Volunteer Army is ready, so far as the psalm itself is concerned: ready, in that with more or less of vividness it now stands before the mental eye of the sympathetic reader.

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But meanwhile a promotion has come to the Messiah during his absence in heaven at Jehovah's right hand. An immeasurable honour has been conferred upon him.

Ver. 4. *Sworn hath Jehovah, and will not regret: THOU art a priest to the ages After the manner of Melchizedek.* Note that this statement is not made in terms which describe a proceeding now to take place, but in terms which express accomplishment already completed. The words are not—"Jehovah sweareth," or "now proceedeth to swear"; but *Jehovah hath sworn.* The constituting mandate (or *oath*), making the Messiah priest, has already been uttered; and, having regard to the place occupied by this report of that mandate, we may reasonably conclude that the priestly instalment took place in heaven, when the Messiah sat down at Jehovah's right hand. Of this instalment, however, no details are given. They are left over for a Christian Writer to supply; and right worthily has the Writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews supplied all necessary details; as to the grounds on which this honour was conferred on the Messiah—how he who now is made priest had previously offered himself as a sacrifice,—and as to the abolishing effect of this decree on the Levitical priesthood. No such details, be it well observed, are here given. The installing announcement alone is here made, in briefest terms, and as of an event already accomplished. This last point is the matter to be emphasised here. The new King has come to Zion; has received his commission to subdue and humiliate his foes; and his army of volunteers is ready. At this juncture the action of the poem is stayed, to make way for this brief and authoritative announcement of the accomplished fact of the installation of David's "lord" into a Kingly Priesthood resembling that of Melchizedek. Now, as the action of the psalm is immediately resumed as soon as ever this heavenly event is proclaimed; as the strong sceptre of the Messiah is immediately stretched forth out of Zion; and as the foes are immediately put beneath the Messiah's feet,—the proper effect of the interpolated priestly announcement is to call attention to *the kind of King* which earth receives in now submitting to the all-subduing Messiah. In sitting on David's throne, which is his own earthly throne in Zion, David's "lord" sits there as a priest upon his throne: as at once priest and king, exercising simultaneously and harmoniously the functions of both offices,—perfectly representing and effectuating Jehovah's rule over men, and as perfectly representing and presenting men's need to Je-

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hovah. He will thus, in his own person, give a strong lead to Israel in becoming, according to her original mission (Exo. 19), "a kingdom of priests" to all nations. He will thus become the Antitype of the "Sign-men," Joshua and his friends in the prophecies of Zechariah, by permanently bearing both offices (Zech. 3:8, 6:9-15). He will thus, far surpass his father David, who once or twice in a passing way, served as a High Priest to the priests of Israel (2 S. 6:5, 14, 1 Ch. 15, 16). Especially will he thus become, to the whole earth and for ever, what Melchizedek was for a short while to a small area around Salem of old (Gen. 14).

Vers. 5-7. The climax of the whole psalm comes at last. The climax is a crisis. The crisis is a battle which decides the fate of the world by subduing it to the final reign on earth of its Priestly King. The whole psalm leads up to this terrible crisis. The first verse characterises it as the time of bringing Messiah's enemies beneath his feet, until which the invitation extends to sit down at Jehovah's right hand in heaven. The second verse centralises the crisis in Zion. The third verse definitely names it Messiah's "day of warfare." The fourth verse, as we have said, stays the action of the psalm for the purpose of announcing an already accomplished heavenly fact. Having done this, the fifth verse unmistakably resumes the action of the psalm by further naming the coming day as Jehovah's *day of anger* and by plunging into the actual crushing of the foes, giving us to witness STROKE AFTER STROKE of Jehovah's activity in fulfilling the promise made at the outset to David's "lord." The first stroke is the crushing of kings. The second stroke is the filling of the nations, or of the battle-field of the nations, with dead bodies. The third stroke is the crushing of an individual *head*, who, however, is head *over a wide land*. These three strokes complete the down-treading action of the psalm—complete the overthrow and trampling underfoot of Messiah's foes—complete the rescue of Messiah's inheritance. The single remaining verse celebrates the victory.

We have characterised this as a "terrible" crisis, and so it is. But, unless words are to be tortured, it is THE CRISIS OF THE PSALM: moreover, it is the crisis of the Bible—of other psalms, as the second with its dashing in pieces, the forty-fifth with its sharp arrows in the heart of the king's enemies whereby peoples fall under him, the seventy-second where the king's enemies are made to lick the dust; and of the prophecies generally, such as

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Isaiah Second, Twenty-fourth, Sixty-third, Sixty-sixth, and others too numerous to be mentioned; of several significant places in the Gospels and the Epistles, reappearing with an accession of heavenly terror in the Apocalypse. It is a "terrible" crisis, but no daring criticism can root it out of the Bible. And, though "terrible," it seems to be a *needful* crisis. For, truly, the witness of nineteen centuries seems to declare that it may be absolutely needful that Jehovah's PHYSICAL FORCE through means of Messiah's *iron sceptre* should maintain and enforce the moral suasion of many foregoing centuries. And, once more, though "terrible," thank God it will be *final and efficacious*. For, thereby, the Messiah will "speak peace to the nations" in terms which will compel war to cease and clear the way for gentler forces to operate to the ages.

Ver. 5. Before noticing, in a little detail, the three strokes of displeasure with which the foes of the Messiah are actually made his footstool, it is desirable to assure ourselves that those three strokes are here attributed to JEHOVAH HIMSELF rather than to the Messiah. Whether this is the case, turns upon the nice and rather critical question—Who is intended by "*The Lord at thy right hand*" of ver. 5? Is it Messiah on Jehovah's right hand, or is it Jehovah on the Messiah's right hand? And, as involved in this broader question, is the narrower one—Who is the person whose *right hand* is here spoken of? In other words, to whom is this line (with the following lines) addressed? If Jehovah is addressed, then "the Lord at his right hand" will be the Messiah—"The Messiah hath crushed kings," &c.; whereas, if the Messiah is addressed, then it will be Jehovah who crusheth kings, &c. Now, notwithstanding the plausibility of the contention that the word A-D-N-I should be pronounced *adhoni* ("my lord"), and so be regarded as a repetition of the word standing at the end of the first line of the psalm, yet as this would probably necessitate another change, which neither the Hebrew text nor the ancient versions sustain, "My lord at HIS right hand"; we shall do well to pause and look well to the context, before we decide this nice point. Now the opinion is here submitted, that the better conclusion is: That the Messiah is here directly addressed, and therefore that "the Lord at Messiah's right hand" is Jehovah. And, though this may be said to involve a change of their relative position—so that, in ver. 1, Messiah is seen on Jehovah's right hand; and, in ver. 5, Jehovah is discovered on the Messiah's right hand,—yet there can be no valid

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objection to this. The scene has changed, and with it the relative positions; and there is nothing whatever incongruous, but rather everything befitting, that in heaven the Messiah should be on Jehovah's right hand, and on earth Jehovah should be on the Messiah's right hand; especially as this very representation has already and so lately been made as in vers. 30, 31 of the next preceding psalm: "I will thank Jehovah . . . because he taketh his stand at the right hand of the needy." There is therefore plainly nothing incongruous, if in this place, the representation is, that Jehovah, here, on earth, on "*the day of Messiah's warfare,*" takes his stand at the Messiah's right hand to direct and aid him in overthrowing his foes, and letting the world and all future generations see that it was JEHOVAH'S hand that did it. And as, on the one hand, there is nothing incongruous to be alleged against this conclusion, so on the other there are these reasons to be urged in its favour: (1) that the vowel-pointing of the Massoretic text can stand—*Adonai—Sovereign Lord*, equivalent to Jehovah; (2) that those codices which actually have Jehovah (see *Gn.* under text) will be substantially correct; (3) that no change further on in the line, from "thy" to "his" will be required; and (4)—most weighty reason of all—that continued prominence will thereby be given to the feature made prominent at the beginning of the psalm, That it is emphatically JEHOVAH who places the Messiah's enemies beneath his feet. *He* does this, because he it is who provides the Messiah with his wonderful army of volunteers, he it is who crushes kings, judges nations, crushes the head over a wide land. This then may be regarded as provisionally settled, that the fifth verse opens by declaring that Jehovah, on the Messiah's right hand, does the things that follow, to each of which we may now devote a moment's attention.

Jehovah, at the Messiah's right hand, *crushes Kings*—literally *hath crushed*, the well-known perfect tense of prophetic certainty. Then there *are* "kings" in the final opposition raised against the Messiah's wielding his strong sceptre out of Zion. There *are* "kings" who have not shewn the "prudence" urged upon them in the Second Psalm. They will have dared an impious, desperate thing; and for it they will be "crushed."

Jehovah, at the Messiah's right hand, *judgeth* (*proceedeth to judge, will judge*) *among the nations*,—the tense being here changed to the so-called "imperfect," more exactly, the initiative, incipient or incomplete, precisely suited to indicate a further

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and perhaps prolonged process. No details, saving one, are here supplied as to the nature of this judging among the nations. The one which is supplied is sufficiently startling: throughout the nations which are being judged, or on the battlefield to which the nations gather, there is a filling of the places of conflict (or the one battlefield) with the slain—the dead bodies—the corpses—the *g'wioth*. Let him who dares, attempt to spiritualise and thereby evaporise this! Beware how you minimise the Divine wielding of Messiah's "iron sceptre"! This is the second stroke. The third follows.

Jehovah, at the Messiah's right hand, *hath crushed* (again the perfect of certainty) *the head over a wide land*. The rebellious *kings* have a "head": the infatuated *nations* have a head. That "head" has become "head"—"over a wide land," or has gone up to do battle, "over a wide country." The student of prophecy does not need to inquire who that head is. Even the thoughtful reader who has got no further than this psalm may surmise that here at last is the key that unlocks the secret of that "throne of iniquity" which so unaccountably started out into prominence in Ps. 94: "Can the throne of engulfing ruin be allied to thee, which frameth mischief by statute?" It would not be surprising if the instructed Bible student were to exclaim without more delay: "Yes! I see: this other *head* that is to be crushed is none else than Antichrist or the Man of Sin or the Lawless One whom 'the Lord Jesus is to destroy by the breath of his lips and to paralyse with the brightness of his coming.'" Nor would he be wrong. Nevertheless, it may be a useful throwing of ourselves upon Old Testament testimony, if we simply confirm our apprehension by yet another reference to it as set forth by the prophet Isaiah (30:29-33):—"A song shall ye have, As in the night of hallowing a festival, And gladness of heart as when one goeth with the flute To enter the mountain of Jehovah Unto the Rock of Israel." Language, this, which appears as if expressly framed to suit those "Volunteers," coming forth "out of the womb of the dawn," "robed in holy adorning" of which we read in the third verse of this psalm. "Then will Jehovah cause to be heard the resounding of his voice, And the bringing down of his arm shall be seen, In a rage of anger, And with the flame of a devouring fire, A burst, and downpour and a hailstone! And at the voice of Jehovah shall Assyria be crushed, With his rod will he smite, And it shall come to pass that every stroke of the staff of doom which Jehovah shall lay



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upon him shall be with timbrels and with lyres, when with battles of brandished weapons he hath fought against them. For there hath been set in order beforehand a Tophet, yea the same for the king hath been prepared, He hath made it deep, made it large,—The circumference thereof is for fire and wood in abundance, The breath of Jehovah like a torrent of brimstone is ready to kindle it.” Assyria first—Assyria last: that came out in the quotation from Micah. The overthrow of Sennacherib a type—the overthrow of Antichrist the antitype. But note, as the supreme thing in relation to our psalm, the activity of Jehovah: Jehovah’s voice—Jehovah’s arm—Jehovah’s rage—Jehovah’s rod Jehovah’s strokes of doom—Jehovah’s enkindling breath; and say whether it does not read as if expressly intended to be a commentary on our Psalm—on Jehovah’s opening revelation to David’s “lord” our Messiah. Here is the king—the “head” king of iniquity; here is the day of anger; here, the making of the Messiah’s foes a stool for his feet. Ye forthcoming army of volunteers, yet to spring sparkingly forth from the womb of the dawn! get ready your flutes and timbrels and lyres; for although the slaughter will be terrible, yet the joy will be great, and the songs that will be evoked will continue to resound through the after ages.

Ver. 7. After the battle, the restoration of the inheritance! And so, by the help of Dr. Briggs, we read from a critically emended text: *An inheritance on the way he maketh it, Therefore he* (Jehovah still, as all along so far in these concluding verses) *exalteth the Head*—the true Head, the Messiah, the rightful Head of a ransomed and delivered world. Of course, if anyone choose to abide still by the Massoretic Hebrew text,—down to the last verse and to the minutest letter, including the editorially supplied vowel points, he can do so with very little disturbance to the general effect; and, bringing the Messiah to the front as an exhausted warrior, snatching a refreshing drink of the book by the way, and then lifting up his head to pursue the flying foe and so completing his conquest—to which he will naturally give a fitting explanation. But probably a goodly contingent even of conservative critics will prefer the more dignified and commensurate ending suggested above, especially when they discover the minuteness of the changes involved, probably imperilling not more than a single consonant in the original text, in the process of copying which such an error might easily be made. An excellent, dignified, and adequate

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conclusion to the psalm, will certainly be realised if we thus read and expound the seventh verse. *An inheritance on the way* (at once) *he* (Jehovah) *maketh it*, (namely) *the wide land* rescued from Antichrist, or even the whole earth occupied by the nations previously mentioned as having to pass through Jehovah's refining judgment; handing it over to him, the Messiah, in pursuance of the offer of the Second Psalm—"Ask of me, and I will give nations as thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as thy possession." Thus will Jehovah make good the very last line of the psalm also: *Therefore* (and thus) *he* (Jehovah) *exalteth* the (rightful and all worldly) *Head* (of the world redeemed by him, even the Messiah, David's long-looked-for *lord*: to whom and for whom this sublime and significant revelation was made by the Holy Spirit speaking by David).

The references to this psalm in the N.T. demand a brief notice. "No psalm is more frequently quoted and alluded to in the N.T. It was, as we have seen, quoted by our Lord (Mat. 22:44, Mk. 12:36, Lk. 20:42, 43); and His use of its language as recorded in 26:64 (=Mk. 14:62, Lk. 22:69) clearly involved (since its Messianic significance was acknowledged) and assertion of His Messiahship in answer to the High-priest's adjuration. Ver. 1 is applied by St. Peter to the exaltation of Christ in his Resurrection and Ascension (Acts 2:34, 35) and is quoted in Heb. 1:13 to illustrate the superiority of the Son to Angels. Cp. also Mk. 16:19, Acts 5:31, 7:55, 56, Rom. 8:34, I Cor. 15:24ff, Eph. 1:20, Col. 3:1, Heb. 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 13, 12:2, I Peter 3:22, Rev. 3:21. Ver. 4 serves as the basis of the argument in Heb. 5:5ff, 6:20, 7:17ff concerning the superiority of Christ's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood"—Kp. in "Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges." In accordance with the lofty outlook of some of these references, it would not have been improper to render the second line of this psalm—"Sit thou enthroned at my right hand," only that such a prominence given to heavenly kingship would have been a little beyond the scope of the psalm, and was by no means demanded by the Hebrew word employed. Carefully followed, the context suggests no more than honour, rest, and waiting; in exact accordance with Heb. 10:13 ("waiting henceforth"). In point of fact, the Son of David is also the Son of God; and the heavenly honour, rest, and waiting secured by his session at the right hand of God, are coincident with heavenly activity, in other

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capacities and for other ends than those brought into view by the psalm. In like manner, it would probably have been premature, had we, in seeking for the "volunteers" of ver. 3, referred to the army seen in heaven in Rev. 19. The coincidence is indeed striking, especially as between the "holy adorning" seen by the psalmist and the "fine linen, white and pure" described by the seer in Patmos. The happy medium to be desired in adjusting the revelations of the Old and New Testaments is to make haste slowly; not to hurry the elder scriptures into disclosures quite beyond their scope, nor yet to overrule, and far less to suppress or make of no effect their communications.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm is to be a "revelation". Just what is involved in the use of this word?
2. This revelation consists in what fact?
3. To whom is this revelation to be given? When? Under what conditions? With what result?
4. The phrase "sit thou at my right hand until I make thy foes a stool for thy feet" moves the Messiah from earth to heaven. How?
5. Who is to conquer the enemies of the Messiah? How?
6. What is meant by the phrase "Thy sceptre of strength"?
7. Are we now moved from heaven back to earth? There can be no spiritual meaning to the "Zion" here mentioned. Do you agree? Discuss.
8. King Jesus is ruling with a rod of iron out of Jerusalem in the midst of His foes. Is this to be a real circumstance? Discuss.
9. Who are "his people" as in vs. 3? Before you attempt an answer discuss the three characteristics of "his people." These qualities should characterize "his people" today.
10. What a beautiful figure of speech: "out of the womb of the dawn, Thou hast the dew of thy young men." How do Christians well compare with dew? i.e. real "new creatures in Christ Jesus".
11. A reference in Micah (5:7) is used by the writer to interpret this part of verse three. Does it fit? Discuss.
12. "The people of God"—indeed the "army of God" according to Rotherham is "the remnant of Jacob". These are scattered "among the nations"—plainly put—: are these Christian Jews who are scattered among the nations and

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who will one day be called (or caught up) to Jerusalem to fight in the bloody battle of God? Discuss.

13. In verse five we are asked to believe that God is moved to the Messiah's right hand. Do you accept this thought? Please, please, read some other commentary in addition to this one on this point.
14. "The climax is a crisis" in this psalm. What is it? The crisis of this psalm is the crisis of the Bible i.e., according to the writer. Discuss.
15. The three strokes of displeasure by which the Messiah's foes are made the footstool of His feet are here described (in vs. 5). What are they?
16. The "crushing of head" refers to the "man of sin". Do you agree? Discuss.
17. What happens after this great battle? Discuss.

## PSALM 111

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Alphabetical Psalm in Praise of Jehovah.

### ANALYSIS

The Psalm is composed of Ten Verses: vers. 1-8 have Two Clauses each, Initialled by 16 successive letters of the Hebrew Alphabet; and vers. 9 and 10 have Three Clauses each, Initialled by the 6 remaining letters of the Alphabet: thus making, in all, 22 lines; and employing the entire alphabet as initials. The First Verse states the THEME of the psalm, and the Last Verse supplies the THEME for the Next Psalm; so that the Second of the pair Begins where the First Ends.

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!

- 1 I will thank Jehovah with a whole heart,  
In the council<sup>1</sup> of the upright and the congregation.
- 2 Great are the works<sup>2</sup> of Jehovah,  
Studied by all who take pleasure therein.
- 3 Majestic and stately<sup>3</sup> is his work,  
And his righteousness standeth fast for aye.

1. Or: "confidential gathering"—Dr.

2. Or: "doings."

3. Ml. or: "majesty and stateliness."

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- 4 A memorial hath he made for his wondrous works,  
*Gracious and compassionate*<sup>4</sup> is Jehovah.  
5 Prey<sup>5</sup> hath he given to them who revere him,  
He remembereth to the ages his covenant.  
6 The might of his works<sup>6</sup> declared he to his people,  
In giving them the inheritance of the nations.  
7 The works of his hands are truth and justice,  
Trustworthy are all his precepts.  
8 Sustained are they to futurity to the ages,  
Wrought out in truth and uprightness.  
9 Ransom sent he unto his people,  
He commanded to the ages his covenant;  
Holy and to be revered is his name.  
10 The beginning of wisdom is the reverence of Jehovah,  
Excellent insight have all they who do those things,<sup>7</sup>  
His praise standeth fast for aye.

(Nm.)<sup>8</sup>

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 111

Hallelujah! I want to express publicly before His people my heartfelt thanks to God for His mighty miracles! All who are thankful should ponder them with me.

3 For His miracles demonstrate His honor, majesty, and eternal goodness.

4 Who can forget the wonders He performs—deeds of mercy and of grace?

5 He gives food to those who trust Him; He never forgets His promises!

6 He has shown His great power to His people by giving them the land of Israel, though it was the home of many nations living there.

7 All He does is just and good, and all His laws are right,

8 For they are formed from truth and goodness, and stand firm forever.

9 He has paid a full ransom for His people; now they are

4. Cp. Exo. 34:6.

5. Or (mf.): "food."

6. Or: "doings."

7. Heb.: "them."

8. See 112 (beginning).

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always free to come to God (what a holy, awe-inspiring name that is).

10 How can men be wise? The only way to begin is by reverence for God. For growth in wisdom comes from obeying His laws. His name forever.

### EXPOSITION

Considering how artificial is the structure of these twin psalms, it is remarkable how little sense has been sacrificed to form: perhaps *prey* (ver. 5) is the only instance in this psalm in which a less happy word seems to have been used owing to acrostic exigencies. It is further observable that notwithstanding the proverbial style of sentiment which prevails, the striking history of Israel has, in this psalm in particular, furnished several couplets: as probably the "passover" memorial of ver. 4; the grant of Canaan in ver. 6; and again the deliverance out of Egypt and covenant at Sinai in ver. 9. An allusion to Exo. 34 ("the Refrain of the Bible") may be detected in ver. 4. The subtle difference between *deed*—thing done—and *work*—"thing made"—may also repay reflection. Jehovah is worthy to be praised both for his "deeds" and his "works." The practical trend of both psalms, and the especial link between the two, clearly proclaim: "I am holy, therefore be ye holy." It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the character of the God whom we worship.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is a grand psalm of praise. Please find in it present-day reasons for praise.
2. Why use an acrostic?
3. How does our consideration of the character of God aid our worship?

## PSALM 112

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Alphabetical Psalm in Praise of the Man who Revereth Jehovah.

PSALM 112  
ANALYSIS

The structure of this Psalm exactly corresponds with that of the foregoing (of which see the "Analysis").

(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!

- 1 How happy the man who revereth Jehovah,  
In his commandments he delighteth greatly:
- 2 Mighty in the earth shall be his seed,  
The generation of the upright shall be blessed:
- 3 Comfort and riches are in his house,  
And his righteousness standeth fast for aye:
- 4 He hath arisen in darkness a light to the upright,  
*Gracious and compassionate*<sup>1</sup> and righteous:
- 5 Well is it with the man who is gracious and lendeth,  
He shall maintain his words in the judgment:
- 6 For to the ages shall he not be shaken,  
An age-abiding remembrance shall the righteous man  
become:
- 7 Of evil tidings will he not be afraid,  
Steadfast is his heart led to trust in Jehovah.
- 8 Sustained in his heart he is not afraid,  
Until that he gazeth on his adversaries:
- 9 He hath scattered abroad he hath given to the needy,  
His righteousness standeth fast for aye:  
His horn shall be exalted with honour:
- 10 A lawless one shall see and be vexed,  
His teeth shall he gnash and shall melt away;  
The desire<sup>2</sup> of lawless ones shall vanish.<sup>3</sup>

(Nm)<sup>4</sup>

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 112

Praise the Lord! For all who fear God and trust in Him are blessed beyond expression. Yes, happy is the man who delights in doing His commands.

2 His children shall be honored everywhere, for good men's sons have a special heritage.

1. Cp. Exo. 34:6 and Ps. 111:4.

2. Gt.: "The hope." Cp. 9:18, Prov. 10:28—Gn.

3. Cp. 1:6.

4. See 113 (beginning.)

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

3 He himself shall be wealthy, and his good deeds will never be forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

4 When darkness overtakes him, light will come bursting in. He is kind and merciful—

5 And all goes well for the generous man who conducts his business fairly.

6 Such a man will not be overthrown by evil circumstances. God's constant care of him will make a deep impression on all who see it.

7 He does not fear bad news, nor live in dread of what may happen. For he is settled in his mind that Jehovah will take care of him.

8 That is why he is not afraid, but can calmly face his foes.

9 He gives generously to those in need. His deeds will never be forgotten.<sup>1</sup> He shall have influence and honor.

10 Evil-minded men will be infuriated when they see all this; they will gnash their teeth in anger and slink away, their hopes thwarted.

## EXPOSITION

Although the course run by this psalm naturally differs from that of its predecessor, yet the correspondences between the two, both in thought and language, are numerous. Note the identity of line ver. 3b in the two psalms; also the recurrence of the "refrain" snatch in ver. 4b of this psalm as well as that; which, in this second case, is the more remarkable, because it probably applies to MAN that which was originally spoken by Jehovah concerning HIMSELF: as much as to say—"I am *gracious and compassionate*, be ye the same." Then comes the question whether, if line *b* of this verse is transferred to man, line *a* also should not be applied in like manner. If so, we reach the rather startling comparison of the Jehovah-revering MAN to a *light arising in the darkness* enshrouding his afflicted but *upright* brother. This is a by-no-means incredible result; and the strong current man-ward of this whole psalm appears to warrant our resting in it. The quotation of ver. 9 in 2 Cor. 9:9 may usefully remind us how strongly the great exponent of justification by faith teaches Christians, that they have been "created in Christ Jesus upon a footing of good (and noble) works, which God prepared beforehand, that therein we might walk" (Eph. 2:10).

1. Literally, "his righteousness endures forever."



## PSALMS 112 AND 113

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. We can learn much from psalms 111 and 112 by a comparison and contrast. Graham Scroggie gave a very helpful chart on this which we reproduce here:

#### PSALM CXI

1. Praise ye the Lord.
1. The upright.
10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
2. Them that delight therein.
3. His righteousness endureth for ever.
4. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.
4. He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered.
5. Them that fear Him.
7. His commandments.
8. Established (stand fast).

#### PSALM CXII

1. Praise ye the Lord.
2. The upright.
1. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.
1. Delighteth greatly in His commandments.
- 3, 9. His righteousness endureth for ever.
4. He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.
6. The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.
8. He shall not be afraid.
1. His commandments.
8. Established.

2. To whom do the words: "gracious and compassionate" in vs. 4b refer? This becomes a startling thought. Why?

## PSALM 113

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song of Sublime Simplicity: reaching its Climax  
by Rejoicing with a Glad Mother!

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Praise Invited from Jehovah's Servants, for All Time, through All the World. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, Jehovah's Incomparable Loftiness and Condescension in Contrast. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, The Lowly are Exalted and the Barren Wife made Glad.

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!

1. Praise O ye servants of Jehovah,  
praise the name of Jehovah:

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 Let the name of Jehovah be blessed  
from this time forth and to the ages:
- 3 From the rising of the sun unto the going in thereof  
worthy to be praised is the name of Jehovah.
- 4 High above all nations is Jehovah,  
above the heavens is his glory
- 5 Who is like unto Jehovah our God,—  
that on high sitteth,
- 6 that down low looketh,—  
In the heavens and on the earth?
- 7 Who raiseth out of the dust the poor,  
from the dunghill<sup>1</sup> uplifteth the needy:
- 8 To seat [him] with nobles,  
with the nobles of his people.
- 9 Who giveth an abiding home to the barren of the house,  
[now] mother of the sons to her joy!  
(Nm.)<sup>2</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 113

- Hallelujah! O servants of Jehovah, praise His name.
- 2 Blessed is His name forever and forever.
  - 3 Praise Him from sunrise to sunset!
  - 4 For He is high above the nations; His glory is far greater  
than the heavens.
  - 5 Who can be compared with God enthroned on high?
  - 6 Far below Him are the heavens and the earth; He stoops  
to look,
  - 7 And lifts the poor from the dirt, and the hungry from  
the garbage dump,
  - 8 And sets them among princes!
  - 9 He gives children to the childless wife, so that she becomes  
a happy mother. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord.

## EXPOSITION

This is a Song of exquisite simplicity and grace. The momentary feeling that it starts with mincing steps, quickly gives place to the perception that its stairlike advances soon mount from the simple to the sublime. The *servants of Jehovah*

1. Or: "ash-heap."
2. See 114 (beginning).

## PSALM 113

are the only safe custodians of his *praise*. But, instead of keeping his praise to themselves, they are called upon to give it wing through all time and to the ends of the earth. So much already the first stanza embraces.

Jehovah is related to *all nations*, but *high above* them all: indeed, *above the heavens is his glory*—his Messengers and Ministers are far beneath him—his throne is ever above them. Even in heaven, although *he goeth high to sit*, yet he *bendeth low to look*,—which appears to settle a nice point as to the construction of the second stanza, and to intimate that even in heaven the condescension of Jehovah is recognised, and not merely here on earth. He is therefore incomparable both *in the heavens and on the earth*.

But *the dust* and *the dunghill* especially savour of earth. It is here that patience and hope especially need to be nursed; and silent sorrow most strongly commands our sympathy. “Depressed in spirit” was Hannah, before she became the mother of Samuel; and, in another way, more sorely tried, still, was Mary the mother of Jesus. The praises of Israel have been composed to help out the sorrows of sufferers into soothing and helpful expression; and the language of both Hannah and Mary is reflected or anticipated here, where, with striking significance, the last word is *joy!* (Cp., for the Mother City, Isaiah 60:14-22; 66:7-14).

This psalm is the first of the series called “The Hallel”—sometimes “The Egyptian Hallel”—sung on occasion of the three great national festivals, the new moons and (portions of it) at the commencement of the New Year. At the Passover, this psalm and the next were sung at the beginning of the celebration, and the remaining four psalms (115-118) after the pouring out of the “fourth” cup. That such a psalm as this should have been made the first of such a series is profoundly significant. Only to think it possible that a King wrote this psalm while waiting in patience for the birth of his Firstborn, is to catch a glimpse of Sacred Romance.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the purpose and use of this psalm?
2. There must be great benefit in praise or adoration to Jehovah. Why isn't it more prominent today?
3. Our God is both high and low. In what sense?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

4. This is a psalm for the expectant mother. It is referred to Mary and Hannah—just how related?
5. Sacred Romance might be involved. How?

## PSALM 114

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Passover Song.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Deliverance out of Egypt set forth as the Basis of Jehovah's Worship and Reign in Israel. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Nature's Excitement over the Birth of the Nation. Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, Nature Interrogated as to the Cause of her Excitement. Stanza IV., vers. 7, 8, The Psalmist Answers for Nature: Jacob's God is Nature's Lord.

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!

- 1 When Israel came forth out of Egypt,  
the house of Jacob from a people of unintelligible speech
- 2 Judah became his sanctuary,  
Israel his realm.
- 3 The sea saw and fled,  
the Jordan turned backward;
- 4 The mountains skipped like rams,  
the hills like the young of the flock.
- 5 What aileth thee O thou sea that thou fleest?  
thou Jordan that thou turnest backward?
- 6 Ye mountains that ye skip like rams?  
ye hills like the young of the flock?
- 7 At the presence of the Lord be in birth-throes O earth!  
at the presence of the God of Jacob:
- 8 Who turneth the rock into a pool of water,  
flint into a fountain of water.

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 114

Long ago when the Israeli escaped from Egypt, from that land of foreign tongue,

## PSALM 114

2 Then the lands of Judah and of Israel became God's new home and kingdom.

3 The Red Sea saw them coming and quickly broke apart before them! The Jordan River opened up a path for them to cross!

4 The mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs!

5 What's wrong, Red Sea, that made you cut yourself in two? What happened, Jordan River, to your waters? Why were they held back?

6 Why, mountains, did you skip like rams? Why, little hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, the God of Jacob.

8 For He caused gushing streams to burst from flinty rock.

## EXPOSITION

The exceeding beauty of this psalm must be confessed by all who, being able to appreciate poetry as such, at the same time possess an historical imagination. The moment this little poem is regarded as written for a passover celebration, and therefore as one of a series let into the midst of historical readings and accompanied by ceremonial actions,—not only is its beauty seen, but its brevity is saved from all suspicion of baldness. Each stanza says so little; and yet, for such an occasion, there is in that little so much that is to the point. The first stanza covers at once the birth of the nation, and its orderly establishment in the Holy Land under David and Solomon. The second stanza comprehends the miracles at the Red Sea and the Jordan, and the agitations of Sinai which attended the bringing of the nation into Covenant. In the third stanza, the poet interrogates the Sea, the River, the Mountains and Hills, as though he were there on the spot as a witness of their actions. In the fourth stanza, he justifies their excitement, by charging them to do the very things of which he has been witnessing; only with the understanding that these things are the legitimate concomitants of such a nation's birth. Even this he says in suchwise as to convey two further truths: namely, that he *Lord (Adon)* of nature is the *God (Eloah)* of Jacob, and no mere tribal Deity,—as moderns too hastily assume; and, by expressing the action of Omnipotence on *rock* and *flint* by means of a timeless participle (*who turneth*) further intimates

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that such manifest control over nature's laws merely awaits Jehovah's sovereign will.

This psalm being anonymous and the immediate occasion of its composition being unknown, dogmatism is precluded; but, if conjecture may sometimes serve useful ends, it may be asked, —Could any author more likely than ISAIAH be named? or any occasion more probable be suggested than Hezekiah's Great Passover? Its position in "The Hallel" could have been assigned to it at a later date.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Show the beauty and purpose of this psalm.
2. Trace the progressive history of Israel in the psalm.
3. Who was the possible author? What was the possible occasion of its composition?

## PSALM 115

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Not for Her Own Glory but for His, Israel moves herself to trust in Jehovah to Shew his Superiority over Idols.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Introductory appeal to Jehovah. Stanza II., vers. 4-8, Idols Disparaged. Stanza III., vers. 9-11, With Alternate Voices, the Choir encourages Israel to Trust. Stanza IV., vers. 12, 13, The Congregation Proclaims its Confidence. Stanza V., vers. 14, 15, A Priest Blesses the Congregation. Stanza VI., vers. 16-18, A United Chorus of Praise.

(No "P.R.I." here in M.T.)

- 1 Not unto us Jehovah not unto us  
but unto thine own name give glory,  
because of thy kindness because<sup>1</sup> of thy truth.
- 2 Wherefore should the nations say—  
"Where pray is their God?"
- 3 When our God is in the heavens,  
all that he pleased hath he done?

1. So M.T. (without "and"). Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "and because"—Gn.

PSALM 115

- 4 Their idols are silver and gold,  
the work<sup>2</sup> of the hands of men:—
- 5 A mouth have they but do not speak,  
Eyes have they but do not see;
- 6 Ears have they but do not hear,  
A nose have they but do not smell;
- 7 Their hands! but they do not feel,  
Their feet! but they do not walk,  
They make no murmuring sound with their throat.
- 8 Like them shall become they who make them,  
every one<sup>3</sup> who trusteth in them.
- 9 O Israel!<sup>4</sup> trust thou in Jehovah,  
*Their<sup>5</sup> help and their shield is he!*
- 10 O house of Aaron! trust ye in Jehovah,  
*Their help and their shield is he!*
- 11 Ye that revere Jehovah! trust in Jehovah,  
*Their help and their shield is he!*
- 12 Jehovah hath remembered us he will bless—  
*will bless the house of Israel,*  
*will bless the house of Aaron,*
- 13 *will bless them who revere Jehovah,*  
the small as well as the great.
- 14 Jehovah will add unto you—  
*unto you and unto your children.*
- 15 Blessed are ye of Jehovah,  
maker of heavens and earth.
- 16 The heavens are the heavens of<sup>6</sup> Jehovah,  
but the earth hath he given to the sons of men.
- 17 It is not the dead who praise Yah,  
nor any that go down into Silence;
- 18 But we will bless Yah,  
from this time forth and to the ages.<sup>7</sup>

(Nm.)<sup>8</sup>

2. Some cod. (w. Sep. and Vul.): "works" (pl.)—Gn.

3. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): "And every one"—Gn.

4. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): "O house of Israel"—Gn.

5. That "our" does not stand here, as in 33:20, "may be explained from the antiphonal singing; so far, however, as the psalm supplicates God's protection and help to a military expedition, the declaration of assured hope, *their Help and Shield is He*, may be referred with Hitzig to the army that has gone or is going forth"—Del.

6. "Are assigned to"—Br. (reading SiMiM instead of SHaMaim).

7. Cp. Isa. 38:18, 19.

8. See 116 (beginning).

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### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 115

Glorify Your name, not ours O Lord! Cause everyone to praise Your lovingkindness and Your truth.

2 Why let the nations say, "Their God is dead!"<sup>1</sup>

3 For He is in the heavens, and does as He wishes.

4 Their gods are merely man-made things of silver and of gold.

5 They can't talk or see, despite their eyes and mouths!

6 Nor can they hear, nor smell,

7 Nor use their hands or feet! Nor speak!

8 And those who make and worship them are just as foolish as their idols are.

9 O Israel, trust the Lord! He is your helper. He is your shield.

10 O priests of Aaron, trust the Lord! He is your helper; He is your shield.

11 All of you His people, trust in Him. He is your helper; He is your shield.

12 Jehovah is constantly thinking about us and He will surely bless us! He will bless the people of Israel and the priests of Aaron,

13 And all, both great and small, who reverence Him.

14 May the Lord bless you richly both you and your children.

15 Yes, Jehovah who made heaven and earth will personally bless you!

16 The heavens belong to the Lord, but He has given the earth to all mankind.

17 The dead cannot sing praises to Jehovah here on earth.<sup>2</sup>

18 But we can! We praise Him forever! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

### EXPOSITION

The fact that this psalm is without head-line to divide it from the foregoing, confirmed as it is in many ancient authorities by being run on as a continuation of that which has gone before, is of sufficient force to shew at what an early date this sequence was effected; but can scarcely prevail to over-ride internal evidence in favour of an independent origin. In its contents

1. Literally, "Where is their God?"

2. Implied.



## PSALM 115

this psalm strongly asserts its individuality; and, indeed, points clearly to a situation so much like that formed by the league of surrounding nations against King Jehoshaphat (2 Ch. 20), as to throw any other theory of origin into the shade. That it came into further use with great acceptance at the time of the return from the Babylonish Exile in nowise conflicts with this theory of its original composition. It will be noted that the tone of the psalm is peculiar: it is neither despairing nor triumphant. Honour is anticipated, but rendered in advance to Jehovah himself. Idolatry presents itself forcibly enough to call forth elaborate sarcasm; yet it would seem as though the worshippers of Jehovah were not out of peril, hence they encourage each other to have confidence—*trust ye in Jehovah*; but they encourage each other in song—in responsive song! All the essential conditions for this peculiar state of things may be found in the critical condition of affairs when nations of idolaters were surrounding King Jehoshaphat; when his army in going forth against its enemies was assured it would not have to fight; and when bands of singing Levites were provided, well able to raise responsive song on what might have been a battlefield, for they went forth before the armed men! In point of fact, we can almost see the turning point of affairs on that memorable day reflected in the psalm itself at ver. 12. For if,—when the history records that “Judah came near the watch-tower of the wilderness (and) they turned towards the multitude, and lo! there they were, dead bodies fallen to the earth, with none to escape;”—if, just then, a priest had broken the silence by exclaiming in changed tense and in a tone of triumph,—*Jehovah hath remembered us!* could anything have been more appropriate or more dramatic? It is quite true that many able critics, who cannot see behind the return from the Exile, find another and a not unsuitable crisis of affairs, to fit in with that change of language in the psalm: they picture a public Temple service as in progress, and that when the sacrifice is laid on the altar and Jehovah as of old lights the flame of acceptance on the altar, the priest then exclaims—*Jehovah hath remembered us!* But surely it would have been all the more remarkable if the language to express that Divine manifestation had been provided some centuries earlier, when a wide land constituted the altar and holocaust of idolaters were the victims.

Possibly another link of connection is lying to our hand. Jehoshaphat lived before Hezekiah. Hezekiah, through means of

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

his royal library, must have been acquainted with the songs of his predecessors. What if,—in providing for his Great Passover, to which he was so anxious to bring, in reunion, all Israel,—what if he discovered and brought into passover use this song of Jehoshaphat's days, weaving it into the service, with probably some of his own compositions,—would not such an appropriation of this psalm help to fix it in the "Hallel" for ever?

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What evidence of independent origin is found in this psalm? Read II Chr. 20.
2. This psalm was used for a very special occasion—what was it?
3. Rotherham seems very confident as to the historical circumstances for the original use of this song. Where and when?
4. Hezekiah could have made special use of this psalm. How?

## PSALM 116

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Individual Thanks for Deliverance from Peril of Death.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, With Profession of Love the Psalmist Describes his Peril and Prayer. Stanza II., vers. 5-9, In Glowing Terms describes Jehovah's Answer. Stanza III., vers. 10-14, Reviewing his Trial, he Desires to Return Public Thanks. Stanza IV., vers. 15-19, The Costliness of Death Intensifies his Desire for Publicity in Thanksgiving.

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.

- 1 I love—  
For Jehovah heareth my voice my supplications;
- 2 For he hath inclined his ear unto me,  
and throughout my days will I call.<sup>1</sup>
- 3 There encompassed me the meshes of death,  
and the straits of hades overtook me;  
distress and sorrow I found:

1. Or: "invoke."

PSALM 116

- 4 And with the name of Jehovah I called,<sup>2</sup>  
 "Ah now! Jehovah! oh rescue my soul!"
- 5 *Gracious*<sup>3</sup> is Jehovah and righteous,  
 and our God is *compassionate*;<sup>3</sup>
- 6 Preserver of the simple-minded is Jehovah:  
 I was brought low and to me he brought salvation.
- 7 Turn in O my soul to thine abiding rest,<sup>4</sup>  
 for Jehovah hath dealt bountifully with thee
- 8 For he hath rescued my soul from death,  
 mine eyes from tears,  
 my foot from thrusts:<sup>5</sup>
- 9 I will walk to and fro<sup>6</sup> before Jehovah,  
 in the broad land<sup>7</sup> of the living.
- 10 I have kept my faith so I will speak:  
 I was humbled greatly,—
- 11 I said in mine alarm:  
 "All mankind are a delusion!"<sup>8</sup>
- 12 How can I repay Jehovah  
 all his benefits upon me?
- 13 The cup of deliverances<sup>9</sup> will I lift,  
 and with the name of Jehovah will I call;
- 14 My vows to Jehovah will I pay,—  
 may it be before all his people!
- 15 Costly in the eyes of Jehovah  
 is death to his men of kindness:
- 16 Ah now! Jehovah for I am thy servant,  
 I am thy servant the son of thy handmaid,—  
 thou hast loosened my bonds.
- 17 To thee will I sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
 and with the name of Jehovah will I call.
- 18 My vows to Jehovah will I pay,  
 may it be before all his people!

2. Or: "invoked."

3. Exo. 34:6.

4. *Ml.* "rests"—prob. pl. of intensification.

5. *Cp.* 56:13.

6. "The *Hithpa*, '*ethhalek* denotes a free and sprightly walking along"—

Del.

7. *Ml.* "lands."

8. *Cp.* Isa. 58:6.

9. Or: "a great salvation" (pl. intensive).

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 19 In the courts of the house of Jehovah,  
in the midst of thee O Jerusalem!  
(Nm.)<sup>10</sup>

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 116

I love the Lord because He hears my prayers and answers them.

2 Because He bends down and listens, I will pray as long as I breathe!

3 Death stared me in the face—I was frightened and sad.

4 Then I cried, "Lord, save me!"

5 How kind He is! How good He is! So merciful, this God of ours!

6 The Lord protects the simple and the childlike: I was facing death and then He saved me.

7 Now I can relax. For the Lord has done this wonderful miracle for me.

8 He has saved me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

9 I shall live! Yes, in His presence—here on earth!

10, 11 In my discouragement I thought, "They are lying when they say I will recover."<sup>1</sup>

12 But now what can I offer Jehovah for all He has done for me?

13 I will bring Him an offering of wine<sup>2</sup> and praise His name.

14 I will publicly bring Him the sacrifice I vowed I would.

15 His loved ones are very precious to Him and He does not lightly let them die.<sup>3</sup>

16 O Lord, You have freed me from my bonds and I will serve you forever.

17 I will worship You and offer You a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

18, 19 Here in the courts of the Temple in Jerusalem,

10. See Ps. 117 (beginning).

1. Literally, "the cup of salvation" i.e., the thank-offering of wine for saving me.

2. Literally, "I said in my alarm, all men are liars."

3. Literally, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." See context for validity of the paraphrase.

## PSALM 116

before all the people, I will pay everything I vowed to the Lord.  
Praise the Lord.

### EXPOSITION

The personal note running through this psalm is so clearly that of an individual as distinguished from the *people* (vers. 14, 18), and so vividly recalls the known experiences of King Hezekiah, that we may fairly be excused from going any further in quest of the probable author. The modernisation of the original language to suit a later time (to which critics call attention), is so well within the editorial freedoms known to have been taken by the ancient Sopherim, as not to raise an argument in favour of a later origin. Starting from the presumption that Hezekiah wrote this psalm, we soon meet with indications confirming this conclusion; and those indications afford help to the more complete understanding of this deeply experimental composition.

The opening line has greatly puzzled critics by reason of its abruptness. May not that abruptness,—probably amounting to a broken construction,—be best accounted for as a manifestation of overwhelming affection? *I love*, says the writer, and then as good as says—“How MUCH I love, let the following song reveal.” The circumstance that he presently uses language closely akin to that which stands at the opening of Ps. 18, to which we have already seen cause to think Hezekiah prefixed a line expressive of tender affection, makes us the more persuaded that this psalm is his.

Then, too, there is a line further on (ver. 11) which, even as conceived in bitter disappointment, seems—as usually translated—to contribute very little to general edification. It is quite true that either Hezekiah, or any other tried saint, *might* by repeated betrayals have been tempted to conclude that “All men are false.” But if we put this to the test, by asking whether it is *likely* that Hezekiah, either as prince or king, had ever been so utterly bankrupt of trusty friends as this utterance of despair seems to imply,—we are compelled to admit it to be very unlikely indeed. So, apprehending some error in translation, we hail from the pen of Aglen, in Ellicott's Commentary, the suggestion of quite a different turn to the passage: “In an ecstasy of despair, I said, ‘The whole race of mankind is a delusion.’” And again—“Once in distrust I thought that God did not care for man, and that the whole of humanity was a

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

failure." Well, take this hint, and transplant it into the circumstances of Hezekiah; and then say, whether it does not savour of a very possible temptation. Childless, facing death, the Davidic heirship and covenant in peril of extinction and dishonour; and if the promise to David fail, where will be that to Abraham; what will become of the promise to the Race? "Is not the whole race of mankind a delusion?" Diseased thought, illogical, gratuitous? Yes! but—as a *temptation*, to be afterwards recalled with shame, and only to be divulged when faith has consciously revived,—is it not possible, with a verisimilitude which remarkably well fits the extraordinary circumstances?

Once more: there are those singular lines—*Costly in the eyes of Jehovah Is death to his men of kindness* (ver. 15). A glimmer of their meaning has dawned on several commentators; but how that meaning is intensified when the lines are put into a Hezekian setting! "It is no light thing," says Perowne, "in the sight of God that his servants should perish." With clearer apprehension, Delitzsch observes: "The death of His saints is not cheap to God; He does not lightly suffer matters to come to such a pass; He does not suffer His own to be torn from Him by death." True, in no case, can it be said that his saints are "torn from him by death, since their spirits return to him, and remain in his safe-keeping; nevertheless, they are certainly "torn" from his kingdom here on earth; and the point is that he rightly estimates the sacrifice. It is a *costly* process to let them die as they do: their service is lost, their praises are hushed, their complete personalities are in abeyance until the Resurrection. To forget this would be to unlearn and practically contradict the close of the psalm (115) we so lately studied; and it would be prematurely, yea and violently, to cut ourselves adrift from the keen and clear perception possessed by Hezekiah himself, as seen in Isa. 38:18, 19, that it is the especial function of THE LIVING—not of the dead—to praise Jehovah. Reverting to the *costliness* of death in the eyes of Jehovah,—two reflections appeal to us forcibly: How incalculable is the price which Jehovah is paying by permitting so many generations of his saintly ones to die—must it not be with a view to some commensurate end? And, again, if Jehovah counts *costly* the death of his ordinary, imperfect *men of kindness*; how costly does he reckon the death of Him who was the perfect reflection of this love and who He raised from the dead?

## PSALMS 116 AND 117

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is a very personal psalm. Who wrote it?
2. How has the apparent abruptness of the opening of the psalm been explained?
3. Rotherham seems to think verse eleven expresses a thought not compatible with the experience of Hezekiah (or anyone else). What is the thought? Do you agree?
4. There seems to be much indication of a lack (or at best fluctuating) of faith in the psalms. Why so? We either believe or we do not believe. Discuss.
5. Verse 15 offers a good proof-text for the death of some faithful, fruitful servant of the Lord. "The death of His saints is not cheap to God." Discuss this beautiful thought. Read Isa. 38:18, 19.

## PSALM 117

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

All Nations Invited to Join in Israel's Tribute of Praise.

### ANALYSIS

By Synonyms of Unmistakable Universality, All Nations are Invited to Praise Jehovah for his Kindness and Faithfulness to Israel.

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!

- 1 Praise Jehovah all ye nations,  
laud him all ye tribes of men:
- 2 For his kindness hath prevailed over us,  
and the truth of Jehovah is to the ages.

(Nm.)<sup>1</sup>

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 117

Praise the Lord, all nations everywhere. Laud Him, all the peoples of the earth.

2 For He loves us very dearly, and His truth endures. Praise the Lord.

1. See Ps. 118 (beginning).

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### EXPOSITION

This is the shortest psalm, and it has frequently been described as the grandest: it certainly is very significant. On the one hand, its appeal for universal praise to Jehovah is unequivocal: in the other, the ground of that appeal is abundantly worthy, though perhaps not at once perceived to be so special as it really is. As soon, however, as due prominence is given to the undoubted facts—that Israel as a nation is the speaker giving this invitation to the other nations of the earth; that the invitation comes from the heart of a nation met in solemn festival especially to memorialise and celebrate the Divinely achieved triumphs of her own history; and then the precise terms are given their proper value by which the especial reason for universal praise is conveyed, then it must be admitted by the candid and trained reader—trained in the history of Israel and in the course of the psalms hitherto—that the pronoun *us* of the psalm means specifically ISRAEL. The speakers say—*His kindness hath prevailed over US*, and there is no reason to doubt that they mean exactly what they say; and though to some minds, this conclusion may occasion a feeling of momentary disappointment, that the basis of invited praise is not made wider, as by saying—*For His kindness hath prevailed over YOU*, yet a few moments' reflection may suffice to convert this feeling into one of admiration for the very precision of the reference to Israel. There need, of course, be no apprehension—that the nations whose mouths are to be opened to celebrate Israel's mercies will be closed to the joyful acknowledgement of their own. But the point of the psalm is,—and it is in every way a triumphant point—a note worthy to be resounded through all the earth,—that Israel belongs to the nations, that her triumph is their triumph and benediction; that in her national history more than in their own, the *kindness* and *faithfulness* of Jehovah will have been displayed in a manner worthy to occasion, not only universal, but never-ending, adoration. We of the nations to whom the privilege has been given to anticipate that coming triumph,—how can we enter into the spirit of this psalm unmoved? By all our grief over Israel's long-protracted obstinacy, and over the suffering judicially permitted for that obstinacy,—are we moved with joy to look forward to this coming Divine triumph: when Jehovah's kindness will—deep down in Israel's heart, and all abroad in unmistakable openness of national demonstration—PREVAIL OVER ISRAEL. To look forward to such a



## PSALMS 117 AND 118

Victory of Love, is to know a feeling akin to ecstasy; and that we should receive an invitation to indulge in so unselfish an anticipation from Jewish lips, in Jewish homes and Jewish synagogues, is to be conscious of an additional satisfaction which will one day be appreciated by our brethren of the Twelve-tribed nation. We heartily thank them for this their Passover Invitation preserved in their Hallel.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is the shortest psalm and in some way the grandest. In what way? Discuss.
2. Is there here a promise of the general turning of Israel to Jehovah in some future time? If so what effect is it to have on the rest of the nations?

## PSALM 118

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Passover "Hosanna"-Song.

### ANALYSIS

(See bracketed Headlines let into the Psalm).

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!

(PART I.—INVITATIONS TO PRAISE.)

(First in Standing Refrain: then in Appeal to Three Classes.)

- 1 *Give ye thanks to Jehovah for he is good,  
for to the ages is his kindness.*
- 2 Pray you let Israel' say—  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 3 Pray you let the house of Aaron' say—  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 4 Pray you let them who revere' Jehovah say—  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*

(PART II.—THE PROCESSION SONG.)

(Answer to Prayer Acknowledged.)

- 5 Out of the strait called I on Yah,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Yah answered me with a roomy place.<sup>1</sup>  
(Sentiments Occasioned.)

6 Jehovah is mine I will not fear,  
what can man' do unto me?

7 Jehovah is mine as my great Helper,<sup>2</sup>  
so I shall gaze on them who hate me.

8 It is better to take refuge in Jehovah,  
than to put confidence in man:

9 It is better to take refuge in Jehovah  
than to put confidence in nobles.

(Entangling Alliances Severed.)

10 All nations compassed me about,—  
in the name of Jehovah verily I cut them off;<sup>3</sup>

11 They compassed me about yea they encompassed me about,—  
in the name of Jehovah verily I cut them off:

12 They compassed me about as bees (encompass) wax,<sup>4</sup>  
they blazed up<sup>5</sup> as the fire of thorns,—  
in the name of Jehovah verily I cut them off.

(An Unnamed Enemy Addressed.)

13 Thou didst thrust sore at me that I might fall,  
but Jehovah was my helper.

(Snatch from the Song of the Exodus.)

14 *My might and melody is Yah,*  
*and he hath become mine by salvation.<sup>6</sup>*

(Jubilation in the Homes of the Righteous.)

15 A voice! a ringing cry and salvation<sup>7</sup> in the homes<sup>8</sup> of the  
righteous!

"The right hand of Jehovah is doing valiantly!"

16 "The right hand of Jehovah is exalting itself!"

"The right hand of Jehovah is doing valiantly!"

(A Nation's Inference.)

1. That is, "(by granting me) a roomy place." Cp. 18:19, 31:8. Or (metaph.): "with freedom."

2. Ml.: "my helpers." Prob. pl. of intensification.

3. "Will cut them to pieces."—"Will mow them down"—Dr. "Will circumcise them"—O.G. Prob. better as above, and (w. Kp.) tense rendered as a "graphic imperfect" (Cp. vers. 5, 13).

4. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn.

5. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.)—Gn.

6. Cp. Exo. 15:2, Isa. 12:2.

7. Or: "victory."

8. Ml.: "tents."

PSALM 118

- 17 I shall not die but live,  
and tell of the works<sup>9</sup> of Yah.  
18 Yah chastened me sore,  
But unto death did not give me over.

(PART III.—REQUEST FOR ADMISSION  
INTO THE TEMPLE.)

- 19 Open unto me the gates of righteousness,  
I would enter by them I would thank Yah.

(PART IV.—REPLY FROM WITHIN.)

- 20 This is the gate of<sup>10</sup> Jehovah:  
Such as are righteous may enter thereby.

(PART V.—PRAISE IN THE TEMPLE.)  
(All Israel as One Man.)

- 21 I would thank thee, that thou hast answered me,  
*and hast become mine by salvation.*<sup>11</sup>

(A Voice Announces.)

- 22 A stone the builders' rejected  
hath become head of the corner!

(The People respond.)

- 23 From Jehovah hath this' come to pass:  
it is wonderful in our eyes!

(A Voice)

- 24 This is the day Jehovah' hath made!  
(The People Respond.)

Let us rejoice and exult therein.<sup>12</sup>

(United "Hosanna"<sup>13</sup>-Prayer.)

- 25 Ah pray Jehovah! do save pray!  
ah pray Jehovah! do send success pray!

(Priest, as if Noticing the Approach of a  
Distinguished Worshipper.)

- 26 Blessed is he that entereth in the name of Jehovah!<sup>14</sup>  
(Levites, as if Welcoming his Retinue.)

9. Or: "doings."

10. Or: "for."

11. Cp. ver 14.

12. Or: "in him."

13. "Hosanna" Heb. word, meaning *save now! save, we pray*"—Liddell and Scott.

14. Matt. 23:39: "Until ye say," "Until that day, the subject of all prophecy, when your repentant people shall turn with true and loyal Hosannas and blessings to greet 'Him whom they have pierced': see Deut. 4:30, 31, Hosea 3:4, 5, Zech. 12:10, 14:8-11. Stier well remarks, 'He who reads not this in the prophets, reads not yet the prophets aright'"—Alford in *loco*.

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We have blessed you out of the house of Jehovah!

(Priest and Levites when Proceeding to Sacrifice.)

27 Jehovah is the Mighty One<sup>15</sup> and he hath kindled a light<sup>16</sup>  
for us,—

bind the festal sacrifice with cords!—  
up to the horns of the altar.

(Doxology by the People as One Man.)

28 My Mighty One<sup>15</sup> art thou and I will thank thee,  
my Adorable One<sup>17</sup> I will exalt thee.

(The Temple Refrain.)

29 *Give ye thanks to Jehovah for he is good,  
for to the ages is his kindness.*

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 118

Oh, thank the Lord, for He's so good! His lovingkindness  
is forever.

2 Let the congregation of Israel praise Him with these  
same words: "His lovingkindness is forever."

3 And let the priests of Aaron chant, "His lovingkindness  
is forever."

4 Let the Gentile converts chant, "His lovingkindness is  
forever."

\* \* \* \* \*

5 In my distress I prayed to the Lord and He answered  
me and rescued me.

6 He is for me! How can I be afraid? What can mere  
man do to me?

7 The Lord is on my side, He will help me. Let those who  
hate me beware.

8 It is better to trust the Lord than to put confidence in  
men.

9 It is better to take refuge in Him than in the mightiest  
king!

10 Though all the nations of the world attack me, I will  
march out behind His banner and destroy them.

11 Yes, they surround and attack me; but with His flag  
flying above me I will cut them off.

15. Heb.: 'El.

16. Mal. 1:10.

17. Heb.: 'Elohim.

## PSALM 118

12 They swarm around me like bees; they blaze against me like a roaring flame. Yet beneath His flag I shall destroy them.

13 You did your best to kill me, O my enemy, but the Lord helped me.

14 He is my strength and song in the heat of battle, and now He has given me the victory.

15, 16 Songs of joy at the news of our rescue are sung in the homes of the godly. The strong arm of the Lord has done glorious things!

17 I shall not die, but live to tell of all His deeds.

18 The Lord has punished me, but not handed me over to Death.

19 Open the gates of the Temple<sup>1</sup>—I will go in and give Him my thanks.

20 Those gates are the way into the presence of the Lord, and the godly enter there.

21 O Lord, thank you so much for answering my prayer and saving me.

22 The stone rejected by the builders has now become the capstone of the arch!<sup>2</sup>

23 This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous to see!

24 This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 O Lord, please help us. Save us. Give us success.

26 Blessed is the One who is coming, the One sent<sup>3</sup> by the Lord. We bless You from the Temple.

27, 28 Jehovah God is our light. I present to Him my sacrifice upon the altar, for You are my God, and I shall give You this thanks and this praise.

29 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is so good! For His lovingkindness is forever.

## EXPOSITION

This psalm forms a worthy climax to the Hallel. Its leading voice—the "I" of the psalm—appears to be that of the Restored Nation, since no known individual wholly answers to its use through this particular psalm. If any individual voice is heard in it, it is that of Nehemiah, and that only near the beginning.

1. Literally, "the gates of righteousness."

2. Literally, "the head of the corner."

3. Literally, "in the name of the Lord."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

As to the question of authorship,—whether or not Hezekiah or Isaiah began to write this psalm, as the conclusion of the Pass-over Hallel of their day,—this much is clear, that it was at least completed after the Exile and was expressly adapted for the consecration of the Second Temple. Zechariah, or Haggai, or both, may have composed it; or at least have given to it those exquisite finishing-touches which so admirably adapt it to that auspicious event.

It is obviously a *processional* psalm, and in the highest degree dramatic. The general course of it is clear; and the sound of several voices can be plainly heard, though precisely *who* speaks in the several divisions of the psalm is, naturally, to some extent, a matter of conjecture. Our headlines will therefore be accepted as exegetical suggestions, rather than as authoritative determinations—which, in no case, could they pretend to be.

Part I.—The standing “Refrain” of Temple psalmody which both opens and closes this psalm constitutes a remarkable testimony to the goodness of Jehovah, as a settled conviction in the heart of the Nation. However severely Jehovah had dealt with them, his abounding and abiding goodness to them was a fixed article of their faith.

The threefold appeal (vers. 2-4) which prolongs the national Refrain, is for several reasons interesting: partly because this is the second instance of its occurrence, the first being found at 115:9-11, and the third (amplified) at 135:19, 20; partly also because of its recognition of proselytes, as forming the third division, a class lying on the outside of Israel proper, and yet attached to them in the same general bonds of worship,—a recognition which reappears in the New Testament (Acts 13:16, 26, 16:14, 17:17, 18:7; cp. I K. 8:41, Isa. 56:6).

Part II.—It is not quite clear whether the *strait* and the *roomy place* of ver. 5 are anything more than picturesque phrases for expressing, in contrast, “distress” and “deliverance”; so that it may be needless to ask *what strait? what roomy place?* Deliverance from the irksome conditions of captivity would in any case justify the contrast; but, partly influenced by what has shortly to follow in the psalm, we can scarcely avoid reflecting how miserably hampered for want of elbow-room were the returned exiles, for carrying forward the work of restoration. How serious this difficulty was, and at how severe a cost it was overcome, the psalm itself will in a little vividly remind us.

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The circumstance that, for *two* lines announcing the *facts* of prayer and deliverance (ver. 5), our song devotes *eight* lines to the expression of *sentiments* thereby demanded (vers. 6-9) may usefully remind us of the need there is that the Divine facts of Redemption should find fruitful lodgment in appreciative hearts. Of Nehemiah, we are already reminded (in 9b). HE had occasion for putting only a very little confidence in *nobles* (Neh. 6:17).

Is it too much to say that by finding in the next stanza (vers. 10-12) rather "the severance of entangling alliances" than the raising of a fierce battle-cry, we avoid the rock on which many expositions have split; and are wholly left without excuse if we incontinently hurry down the centuries to the time of the Maccabees to discover an atmosphere of defiance in which these lines, as commonly understood, could have originated? In any case, it was not until we observed, with acquiescence, Kirkpatrick's suggestion, that the context is better consulted by taking the verb variously rendered "will cut to pieces," "will mow down," "will circumcise," rather as vividly descriptive *past* tenses than as threatening *futures*.—it was not till then that everything in the psalm seemed naturally to fall into its right place. "Cut off" and "circumcise" of course go hand in hand thus far: that there is "a cutting off" in "circumcising." Only instead of supposing this psalmist to threaten to "circumcise" Israel's enemies (or else, as the word may be otherwise rendered, to "cut them to pieces," or "mow them down" by the edge of the sword),—if, rejecting these applications of the word, we take the "circumcising"-knife as sternly turned, by penitent Israel, against herself, in the way of cutting herself free from the entangling alliances which nearly strangled her on her return from captivity,—in that case, we reach a result worthy of the best of Israel's psalmists; worthy of Israel herself as now, at last, profiting by the chastising hand of her God; and worthy of being embalmed in song as a morally heroic act to be ever afterwards imitated, especially at Passover times. Let anyone read through the book Nehemiah with this thought before him, and he must be rather wanting in discernment if the spectacle that most impresses him be not just this—the awful flashing of the Pasha's terrible circumcising-knife as he unsparingly cut off Israel from her entangling alliances: foreign traders, foreign wives, all must go, if Israel is to be saved! We have only to imagine a poet-scribe, aware of Nehemiah's resolute doings and

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in full sympathy with the spirit that actuated them, setting himself to memorialise them in Passover Song,—and what could be wished for more appropriate than the wonderful stanza before us? Those buzzing *bees* and lacerating *thorns* of would-be helpers, anxious only to thwart and hinder,—here we have them, photographed for all time, in this Passover Song!

It was a terrible ordeal for Israel! Nor is it at all incredible that the poet—in concentrating all the stinging of the bees and all the piercing of the thorns into the personification of one unnamed enemy—*Thou didst thrust sore at me that I might fall* (ver. 13)—was thinking of an enemy, not only unnamed, but also *invisible!* Zechariah, at all events, knew of an “Accuser” who durst present himself at the right hand of the Angel of Jehovah (Zech. 3:1); and the *sore thrust* at Israel’s fidelity, which Nehemiah resisted, was probably as determined as SATAN himself could make it.

The Song of Triumph, sung on Deliverance from Egypt, in its sublimest sentiment (ver. 14), well becomes this new Triumph for Israel. Jehovah (“the Becoming One”) having “become” the *might* of his people in trial, and the *melody* of his people in triumph, Israel more firmly than ever before, now becomes His in the strong ties of gratitude: *Mine by salvation!* It is all there.

The *jubilation* of vers. 15, 16 possesses quite a fascination, by reason of its highly dramatic record. It must be confessed, however, that it severely taxes the power of sober exegesis. In the first place, it is not clear whether the more literal meaning *tents* should be pressed: if it should, then the thought of the reader is carried away to an army camping out, to whom is brought news of victory, as if achieved by a relieving force in some other part of the field; since men actually engaged in fighting are not found in their “tents,” and yet it would seem that the battle is actually being waged somewhere when these outbursts of triumph are heard in the *tents* alluded to—if such be intended. It is so easy in Hebrew story to take “tents” as simply standing for “homes” that we are tempted to simplify in that direction. But then, again, why are the “tents” or “homes” termed those of *the righteous?* Are they *the homes of the righteous* “nation preserving fidelity,” of which we read in Isa. 26:1? It may be so; and it would not be very wild so to conclude, seeing that that phrase occurs in a song to be sung “in the land of Judah.” Of course, those who fly from the



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nation of Israel to the Church of Christ, for relief from every difficulty in Old Testament interpretation, need not feel any difficulty here. They could say: "Ah, yes! during the present dispensation, there have been rousing outbursts of jubilation *in the homes of the righteous* as news has arrived of the conversion to Christ of the South Sea Islanders, the Chinese, etc., etc. And the righteous dwellers in those homes have exclaimed—just like this in the psalm—*The right hand of Jehovah is doing valiantly!*" Now we have to confess that we could envy the facility with which many enliven Old Testament exegesis by such natural sallies of Evangelical fervour as this; but then we are sharply called to account by the context, here in this psalm, and are admonished that, after all, such imaginative applications *are not exegesis*. For what is it that follows? Is it, or is it not, "a Nation's Inference" (vers. 17, 18), drawn from the exploits of *Jehovah's right hand* of which they now hear, that they, the Nation, *shall not die but live, And recount the doings of Yah?* Besides: these extracts are taken from the Passover procession-song of Israel; and as the procession slowly moves up to the gate of the Temple to seek admission, is it not the obvious dictate of candour to enquire, WHOM the processionists represents: is it their own nation or is it not? At least, if we demur to this, let us in all consistency accept the peril of *national extinction* and *national chastening from hand of Yah*, of which the context here speaks, before we foist any Gentile nation or Church into Israel's place as pictured in this psalm. She has had her centuries of humiliation and shame and sore sorrow. Of *jubilation*, in the past, she confessedly has had but few and short-lived occasions. If, therefore, it be seemly that we should conclude that Israel as a nation will yet repent; and that thereupon the "set time" for Jehovah to make bare his arm on her behalf will come, let us reverently let be, and see whether, even yet, in the future, this bright vision of national joy shall not be filled to the full. We are not even sure that it may not be necessary to restore the "tents" in their literality; seeing that, according to the prophet Zechariah (12:7), Jehovah intends, *in the yet future siege of Jerusalem*, "to save the tents of Judah first," and what precisely that may mean, perhaps only fulfilment can shew. In spite of the outstanding grounds for suspending our judgments seen in this part of our psalm, let us note well that the loud note of jubilation has in it the following clear significance, namely: That at the very time that

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these shouts of triumph are being raised in the *tents* or *homes* of the righteous, Jehovah is glorifying his power on Israel's behalf. To that conclusion we are bound by the language employed.

Parts III. and IV. need but little comment. It is only dramatically that they come into great prominence. Still they are not without significance for exegesis. As, just now, the "tents" or "homes" through which victory resounded were described as those of "the righteous," so now the same moral quality is again brought into prominence. The gates into which the processionists desire to enter are frankly admitted to be *gates of righteousness*; and by giving them this designation, the applicants acknowledge that only in the character of "righteous" men can they expect to enter; as, on the other hand, they seem to protest that, conceding them this claim, admission cannot be denied them. This moral prerequisite is abundantly confirmed by the answer which comes from within. This particular gate is, for some reason, described as in an especial way belonging to *Jehovah* or as reserved for his use; and then it is added that *such as are righteous may enter thereby*, no doubt implying that none others may. All of which goes strongly to protest to Israel that her worship makes for righteousness; that Jehovah is a righteous God; that sin must be put away if the worshipper is to have any communion with Him. The interest of these verses, however, is mainly dramatic. Silence gives consent. No protest comes from within, to the effect that the applicants cannot be allowed to enter; and as (in Part V., ver 21) the *I* of the applying nation is resumed in the language of direct address to Jehovah, the inference is that the entrance has now been effected, and that it is *within the sacred precincts of the Temple* that this voice is raised. The language is that of thanksgiving: "*I would thank thee*—this is wherefore I have come into thy presence—that thou hast answered me; thou hast saved me—*thou hast become mine by salvation.*" And thus again the climacteric language of the Exodus is used, now for a second time; and as no further words are added as following in sequence as part of Israel's praise, we are perhaps entitled to say that this Refrain from the song of the ancient Exodus is felt to be too expressive to need further addition. Such, at least, is our decipherment of these dramatic words. There can be nothing further for Israel than that Jehovah *should have become hers by salvation*: provided, always, that the salvation itself has at

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last answered to the ideal of Jehovah's own kindness and faithfulness as expressed in his promises. So that, until this goal is reached, every returning Passover should become another rung in the ladder of national advance.

We cannot doubt that we are justified in thus regarding ver. 21 of our psalm as leading us up to a *resting and breathing place*, if for no other reason than this: that the remainder of the psalm seems to be broken up into something like a rather fragmentary and conversational *retrospect*. Henceforth the building—whether the literal Second Temple, or Israel herself under the notion of a temple—is complete; and the assembled people give themselves up to the pleasure of admiring it. As they view the FINISHED EDIFICE, a voice breaks in,—we prefer to regard it as a *prophetic* voice, the voice of a Haggai or a Zechariah:

A stone the builders rejected  
Hath become the head of the corner!

There it is, *in situ*, in its place in the building, before all eyes, challenging examination. Can any fail to note the present prominence of that *Stone*, or deny its past history of *rejection*? Can any word of excuse be offered to shield those mistaken *builders* who formerly set it aside? Silence leaves those builders to bear the blame of their mistake. But if the builders, whose province it was to know and act, set aside that most magnificent Corner Stone, Whose doing is it that it is now in its right place? The answer comes from the beholders, with firm conviction and undisguised admiration:

From Jehovah hath this come to pass:  
It is wonderful in our eyes!

Is all this a parable? And, if so, what does it mean?

History records no such literal incident in connection with the building of the Second Temple. Surely then, the Temple must be Israel! Besides, if the insertion of this Rejected Stone in the Temple was effected by Jehovah's own hands, apparently without human instrumentality,—then again must we not conclude, for this reason also, that the Temple is the nation of Israel? And if, by the Temple, the Nation itself is here ultimately meant, then Who was this CORNER-STONE, first rejected then accepted?

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We have said that history records no such incident in connection with a literal Stone. It is easy, with Thrupp and Plumptre, to conjecture that such an incident may have happened; nor is it at all unwarranted to imagine such a thing, so long as the only object is to form clear conceptions of what ideas the language fairly conveys. But the point of importance just here is, to keep open the natural connection between the literal and the metaphorical in interpretation. It is right to cling to literal interpretations whenever they will fairly stand; but it is also right, and at times very important, to recognise that when the literal will not fairly stand, then the metaphorical conception should be frankly adopted. It is so here. The very form of the saying—so terse, so telling—almost reduces it to a proverb, convenient for conveying forcibly the familiar occurrence of the promotion to power of the person or party that had previously been set aside through prejudice or enmity. That it is proverbial here, and so also prophetic, we have already seen cause to conclude. The correctness of such conclusion is further confirmed by the fact that a celebrated prophet before the Exile (Isa. 28:16) had already familiarised the minds of the people with this very metaphor in a most impressive manner, and for most serious educational ends: "Therefore, thus saith the Sovereign Lord, Jehovah,—Behold me founding in Zion a stone, a stone of testing, a costly corner of a well-laid foundation: he that trusteth shall not make haste." This, be it remembered, is said long after Solomon's temple had been built: therefore the foundation here is metaphorical—one for men themselves to be builded upon. "He that trusteth" is plainly he that comes to rest on this foundation: therefore, again, this promised new foundation, spoken of by Isaiah, is metaphorical. The proposal to lay this foundation in Zion is plainly the fundamental part of a great moral testing, to which it is proposed that the "scoffing rulers of Jerusalem" (Isa. 28:14) shall be brought. With all this teaching, Israel had now for centuries been familiar: as also she had been made familiar—still under the figure of a sacred edifice, because an ASYLUM—with "a stone to strike against and a rock to stumble over" to the testing of "both houses of Israel" (Isa. 8:14). To which may be added that Zechariah, one of the post-exilic prophets (cp. Ezr. 5:1, 6:14), is manifestly quite familiar with this metaphorical style of teaching; since he knows not only of a Living foundation stone below, but of a Living Cope or Gable-stone above—one with seven

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eyes! (Zech. 3:9). To come back to our psalm, there can be no doubt that the builders who rejected the very Stone that Jehovah afterwards made head of the corner, were thereby themselves tested and proved incompetent builders of Israel.

Yes! it is a parable, here in the psalm; and, to the Christian Expositor, its meaning is as clear as day:—Israel, as a nation, first rejects her own Messiah; and then, by a series of providences which mark out the entire revolution as Jehovah's own doing, accepts him as the chief corner-stone of her national structure. But, such is the power of this same testing-stone, that, in the very process of reversal, Israel herself becomes a new, a regenerated, Nation.

Here again, as in expounding Ps. 110, we come upon an occasion of deep emotion, as we think of the mighty ministry of the already written word to the mind of Jesus of Nazareth in giving him solace as his Rejection drew near! (Mat. 21:42, Mk. 12:10, 11, Lu. 20:17).

*This is the day Jehovah hath made!* says another (or the same) prophetic voice (ver. 24); meaning thereby, naturally, the day when these things are fulfilled by the national regeneration of Israel: to which the people—being at length the entire nation—will respond: *Let us rejoice and exult therein!* as well they may!

But that day has not come yet; and until it does come, Israel is taught, at every passover celebration, to pray with an importunity of pleading touchingly expressed in the quaint words—

Ah pray Jehovah! do save, pray!

Ah pray Jehovah! do send success, pray!

That the three English words, *do save, pray*, in the above quotation, are an exact rendering of the Hebrew compound-word *hoshiah-na* which constitutes our adopted word "hosanna," may be news to more than a few English readers. At first, this may seem to be a mere curiosity of literature, and of no further importance. But further reflection will dispel this easy-going conclusion. As reappearing in the Gospels in connection with the story of what is called "the triumphal entry" of Jesus into Jerusalem (Mat. 21:9, Mk. 11:9, Lu. 19:38, Jn. 12:13), it may turn out to be something more than a curiosity of literature to be informed that *hosanna*, instead of being a mere flourishing banner-word of PRAISE, really constitutes a PRAYER of the most importunate significance. For who does not see, that to cry

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out to this Nazarene Claimant to the Messiahship, "Do save, pray!" constituted a far graver offence in the Jewish rulers' eyes than merely to flourish a comparatively unmeaning compliment of praise by way of welcoming him to the holy city? The jealous rulers of Jerusalem may very well think: This prophet of Galilee may be able to speak beautiful parables and even to heal a few sick folk,—but who is HE that he should be able to "save" Israel? No wonder that those rulers were vexed beyond measure. Not on this man, as a Corner Stone, do these "builders" desire Israel to build!

Even in this ancient literary museum of wonders, we now come upon a line or two of surpassing interest. We have presumed to place ver. 26 in a headline setting, which, if correct, may cause it to burst forth with a blaze of light, by bringing it into touch with the most thrilling biography of the world. Or rather, perhaps, it should be said that, with or without explanation, it already stands in vital connection with the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

It will be remembered that, according to the scenic plan of this Temple Procession, the main body of processionists have already come up to the Temple Gates—requested admission—been answered from within by the laying down of the great condition of entry—have gone triumphantly through those jealous gates—and, *within*, have raised their final Song of Triumph. And yet now, after this,—after the Retrospective Dialogues of prophet and people as to the admired *Corner Stone*, and as to the New Dispensation *Day* that has dawned, and after the united importunate "Hosanna" Prayer that all the Congregation of Israel have offered,—after all this, a strange incident happens! It would seem as though an unexpected arrival catches the High Priest's eye. Some distinguished Stranger has, thus late, presented Himself at the Temple Gate: to whom the observant priest cries out in holy ecstasy—

Blessed is he that entereth in the name of Jehovah!

And then the attendant Levites, observing further that the distinguished Stranger has with him a body of Attendants,—with a like inspiration, but changing the singular *he* to the plural *you*,—called for by the shifted application of the welcome,—exclaim:

We have blessed you out of the house of Jehovah!

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Do we dream? Or are we suddenly precipitated into the Spirit-land of the Unfulfilled? In any case, here are the words, in their precise significance. And here is the setting of scenic crisis in which the words fall upon our wondering ears. We have not invented these arresting conditions. The materials for thought have been lying, waiting, embedded, here for long centuries. Is it possible at last to wake up to their true significance?

We must be forgiven if we avow our overwhelming conviction, that we do here catch a glimpse of a thrilling incident yet, in the future, to be fulfilled; and to the certain fulfilment of which the four Gospels in our hands give us not only the clue but the positive assurance. The event which here casts its shadow before, is nothing less than this: The sudden arrival of the Lord (*ha'-adon*) whom Israel all along in her better moments has been "seeking," "even the Messenger of that (New) Covenant" which shall yet be solemnised with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Mat. 3:1, Jer. 31:31).

How come we by the courage to say this? Where is our "gospel" evidence which furnishes the link which connects these things together? In reply, we simply point to the words of our Lord Jesus which he spoke to the Jewish rulers when he bade them officially his solemn farewell. "Henceforth," said he (Mat. 23:39), "ye shall not see me until ye say:—

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

using the very words by which the Septuagint translates the line in this psalm which is now engaging our attention; and which Westcott and Hort and Nestle in their Greek Testaments print in special O.T. quotation-type, the Ginsburg-Salkinson Hebrew New Testament giving the identical Hebrew words that stand in the psalm—*Baruk habba' beshem Yahweh*. So that, in point of fact, what Jesus here says amounts to this—"Ye reject me now: henceforth ye shall not see me until ye welcome me with especial and official Temple Greetings!" That glad day has yet to come; but when it does come this incident in our psalm, we may well believe, will be fulfilled with perfect precision and undoubtedly with an excitement which will thrill through all earth and heaven. We must not forget that, when Jesus used these words from the psalm (Mat. 23:39), they had already been employed (Mat. 21:9), some days before, by the multitude and the children, to give emphasis to their welcome of Jesus as the Messiah. While this fact goes to show plainly that our psalm

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had come by that time to be regarded as undoubtedly Messianic, —the two incidents, when set side by side, have a deeper lesson to convey. The welcome which the *multitude* gave to Jesus, the Jewish *rulers* took care *not* to extend to him. But could Jesus be satisfied without receiving such an official welcome? Could he pass the matter by as an incident of no importance? Could he be content with the welcome of the unlettered throng, and treat an official welcome as unnecessary? He could not. He knew that an official welcome was what the psalm had foretold; and he knew that what was denied him then should be accorded him thereafter. 'Tis as if he had on occasion of his finally leaving the temple said:—"Ye have not said these words; but you or your successors *will* say them. Till then, we part: you go your way—I go mine." That is the lesson which this second quotation of those words in the psalm by Jesus himself warrants us to learn. And therefore we confidently claim that our Master himself confirms our interpretation of this remarkable verse (26) in our psalm, as betokening nothing less than a national welcome to the Messiah, a national acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as the once rejected Corner-stone.

The next section of the psalm (ver. 27) need not detain us, notwithstanding that endless conjectures have been offered by expositors as to its precise meaning. We have ventured to suggest the general conception of the verse by heading it, "Priests and Levites when proceeding to Sacrifice"; as good as to say, these words appear suitable for them to utter when about to offer the Chief Sacrifice of the day. The first line is not so very difficult; especially if we accept the suggestion of Thrupp, in which, by reference to Mal. 1:10, he obtains for the close of the line this allusion—"and he hath set alight the fire on our altar which is approvingly to consume our sacrifice." And then this turn of *line one* may help us to obtain a feasible sense for *line two*, which has been the most troublesome to interpreters—"Bind the festal sacrifice—which consists of many victims that have come crowding into the temple court about the altar ready to be slain—Bind these *with cords*, so as to have all ready. The Divine fire is even now alight in the wood; therefore, lose no time; proceed rapidly with the immolation. Pile up the sacrificial pieces up to the horns—and so to the complete circumference—of the altar." Or, throwing in the middle line of the verse as parenthetical, "The fire of approval which Jehovah the Mighty One hath kindled upon our altar hath already reached even to



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the horns; therefore pile up the victims on the altar without delay." To all appearance, it is a ceremonial allusion, to which some simple act on occasion of an ordinary passover might do sufficient justice, so as to prevent its seeming to be unmeaning. But, if we are right in throwing the chief fulfilment of it into the future; then, like the Corner-Stone, this Sacrificial part of the Great Ceremonial may prove to be wholly metaphorical, and its Lesson be evolved in a manner which no human eye has ever witnessed and which no imagination can conjecture. We need not be further anxious about this confessedly puzzling verse. Some day it may be that we shall simply smile at our dullness of perception.

The conclusion of the psalm is abundantly worthy of its main burden; and consists of a Special Doxology for the occasion, and then of the standing Temple Refrain. Respecting the former (ver. 28), our only regret is, that, owing to our not being accustomed to discriminate, in English, between the two Hebrew Divine names '*El*' and '*Elohim*', we are without the linguistic means, in strict verbal translation, to give effect to the probable climax which their parallelistic use here constitutes. Still, as there is a perceptible ascending force in the other members of the lines, by which *thank thee* is intensified into *exalt thee*; we may perhaps complete the discrimination between the two lines, if, for '*El*', we say *Mighty One*, and for '*Elohim*', *Adorable One*. The main thing to note is that now again, once more, the whole nation is speaking as one man in language of blissful appropriation:—

My Mighty One art thou and I will thank thee,  
My Adorable One I will exalt thee.

When that Doxology is really and realisingly uttered in fulfilment of the prophecy of this Passover Psalm, Heaven and Earth will be nearer to each other than they have ever been before.

Give ye thanks to Jehovah for he is good,  
For to the ages is his kindness.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "This psalm forms a worthy climax to the Hallel"—what is meant?
2. What was the specific occasion and author of this psalm?

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3. The three-fold appeal of verses 2-4 is interesting for at least two reasons. What are they?
4. What was "the strait" and "the roomlyplace" of verse 5?
5. It is more important to express our adoration and praise than petitions. Why?
6. Rotherham's heading: "Entangling alliances severed" is an innovation. Why? Discuss.
7. Who is the enemy of vs. 13? How decided?
8. "Jubilation in the homes of the righteous" (vs. 15, 16) offers a real exegesis problem. What is it?
9. Rotherham firmly states "imaginative applications *are not exegesis*"—with this we agree. But, we wonder who exercises more imagination—the Evangelical writers or Rotherham? Discuss.
10. What are the "gates of righteousness" of verse 19? Is there any application for us in this? Discuss.
11. From vs. 21 to the end of the psalm we have a different literary form. What is it? What building is here involved?
- 12.. Who voices these words: "A stone the builders rejected hath become the head of the corner"?
13. When were the above words fulfilled?
14. The figure of the cornerstone and the foundation was very familiar to Israel. Give examples.
15. Are we to believe Jesus is the chief—once rejected—later accepted cornerstone of the Jewish nation—or regenerated Israel? Discuss.
16. The three English words: "do save, pray" are quite significant when studied in-depth. Discuss.
17. Verse 26 offers a beautiful thought for discussion—please take the time to understand the point and application here made.
18. Jesus twice fulfilled the words of vs. 26. Explain.
19. Verse 27 gives a problem. What is it? How answered?
20. This is indeed a magnificent psalm. How much of it did the Jewish nation understand?

## PSALM 119

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Jehovah's Will in Relation to Human Character and Conduct, celebrated in Twenty-two Alphabetical Stanzas, and by the aid of Eight Comprehensive Synonyms.

## PSALM 119

### ANALYSIS

(The analysis of this Psalm may be seen in its superficial structure, and further discovered by an examination of the following Table of Synonyms.)

#### SYNONYMS EXPRESSIVE OF JEHOVAH'S WILL IN RELATION TO HUMAN CONDUCT AS CELEBRATED IN PSALM 119.

#### TABLE OF PRINCIPAL WORDS AND PHRASES USED IN CONNECTION WITH EACH SYNONYM.

English	Hebrew	No. of oc. in M.T.	No. Emended	
1. COMMANDMENTS	<i>mizwah</i>	22	22	look well to, 6; go astray from, 10, 21, 110; run in way of, 32; lead in path of, 35; delight in, 47, 143; keep, (55), 60; believe in, 66; understand in order to learn, 73; are faithfulness, 86, 151; broad, 96; make wise, 98; observe, 115; love, 47, 127; long for, 131; quicken, (156), done, 166; not forgotten, 176.
2. DECISIONS (appointments)	<i>mishpat</i>	23	22	learn, 7; rehearse of thy mouth, 13; long for, 20; esteem, 30; good, 39; wait for, 43; remember, 52; thanks for, 62; better than g. and s., 72; righteous, 75; execute on (just decision), 84; h. and earth stand by, 91; not turned aside from, 102; keep, 106; afraid of, 120; done, 121; shew favour ac. to, 132; equitable, 137; quicken ac. to, 149; righteous and age-abiding, 160; praise for righteous, 164; sing of, 172.
3. LAW or INSTRUCTION	<i>torah</i>	25	22	walk in, 1; delight in, (16), 70, 77, 92, 174; discern wonders out of, 18; favour with, 29; observe, 34; keep, 44, 136; forsake, 53; not forgotten, 61, 109, 153; men not ac. to, 85; love, 97, 113, 165; frustrate,

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English	Hebrew	No. of oc. in M.T.	No. Emended
4. PRECEPTS or CHARGES	<i>pikkudh</i>	21	22 126; truth (or faithfulness), 142; go far from, 150. keep, 4, 63, 128, 134, 168; so-liloquise in, 15, 78; observe, (22), 56, 69, 100; cause to understand, 27; long for, 40; sought out, 45, 94; not forsaken, 87, do, (112); stray from, 118; not forgotten, 141; know from, 152; love, 159; choose, 173.
5. PROMISE or SAYING	<i>'imrah</i>	19	22 keep, (5), 67; treasure, 11; not hide, (19); quicken ac. to, (25), 107, 154; leadeth to revere, 38; salvation ac. to, 41; hath quickened, 50; shew favour ac. to, 58; comfort ac. to, 76; eyes bedimmed for, 82, 123; to gen. after gen., 90; smooth (sweet), 103; uphold ac. to, 116; direct footsteps in, 133; love, refined, 140; soliloquise in, 148; joyful over, 162; deliver ac. to, 170.
6. STATUTES	<i>hok hukkah</i>	19	22 keep, 8; teach me, 12, 26, 64, 68, (108), 124, 135, 172; soliloquise in, 23, 48; point out to me the way of, 33; become melodies, 54; be thorough in, 80; not forgotten, 83, 93; get understanding out of, (104); delight in, 117; righteous, (144); observe, 145; not sought after, 155; love, 163.
7. TESTIMONIES	<i>'edah 'eduth</i>	23	22 observe, 2; rejoice in, 14; delight, 23; keep close to, 31; incline heart to, 36; speak of bef. kings, 46; swerved from, 51, 157; turned feet to, 59; learn, (71); know, 79; keep, 88, 146, 167; dil. consider, 95; are soliloquy, 99; take as inheritance, 111; love, 119, 167; get to know, 125; wonderful, observe them, 129; commanded as righteous and faithful, 138; help me, (175).

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English	Hebrew	No. of oc. in M.T.	No. Emended
8. WORD	<i>dhabhar</i>	22	22 walk in, (3); take heed ac. to, 9; keep, 17, 57, 101; raise up ac. to, 28; quicken, 37; trust in, 42; remember, on wh. hope, 49; deal well ac. to, 65; wait for, 74, 81, 114, 147; stationed in heavens, 89; lamp and light, 105; surety with, (122); opening giveth light, 130; forgot-ten, 139; not kept, (158); stood in awe of, 161; cause understanding ac. to, 169.

[1. THE EIGHTFOLD ALEPH.]

Each verse in the Hebrew beginning with the letter Aleph;  
and so with the rest.

- 1 How happy the blameless in behaviour—<sup>1</sup>  
who walk in the LAW of Jehovah.
- 2 How happy they who observe his TESTIMONIES—  
with a whole heart do they seek after him.
- 3 Yea they have not wrought perversity—  
in his (WORD)<sup>2</sup> have they walked.
- 4 Thou thyself hast commanded thy PRECEPTS—  
to be kept<sup>3</sup> diligently.
- 5 Ah! that my ways might be established—  
to keep thy (PROMISE).<sup>4</sup>
- 6 Then shall I not be put to shame—  
when looking well unto all thy COMMANDMENTS.
- 7 I will thank thee with uprightness<sup>5</sup> of heart—  
when I learn thy righteous DECISIONS.
- 8 Thy STATUTES will I keep—  
do not forsake me utterly.

1. U.: "way."

2. M.T.: "ways"—not one of the eight synonyms: "word" otherwise missing from stanza.

3. Ml.: "to keep."

4. M.T.: "statutes," in ver. 8: "promise" not otherwise in stanza.

5. Or: "straightforwardness."

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### [2. THE EIGHTFOLD BETH.]

- 9 Whereby shall a young man keep<sup>6</sup> pure his path?—  
by taking heed according to thy WORD.<sup>7</sup>
- 10 With all my heart have I sought after thee—  
let me not go astray from thy COMMANDMENTS.
- 11 In my heart have I treasured thy PROMISE—<sup>8</sup>  
to the end I may not sin against thee.
- 12 Blessed art thou Jehovah—  
teach me thy STATUTES.
- 13 With my lips have I told  
of all the DECISIONS of thy mouth.
- 14 In the way of thy TESTIMONIES have I rejoiced—  
as over all riches.
- 15 In thy PRECEPTS will I soliloquise—  
that I may discern thy paths.
- 16 In thy (LAW)<sup>9</sup> will I delight myself—  
I will not forget thy word.<sup>10</sup>

### [3. THE EIGHTFOLD GIMEL.]

- 17 Deal bountifully with thy servant I shall live—<sup>11</sup>  
so shall I keep thy WORD.<sup>12</sup>
- 18 Unveil thou mine eyes that I may discern  
wonderful things<sup>13</sup> out of thy LAW.
- 19 A sojourner<sup>14</sup> am I in the earth—<sup>15</sup>  
do not hide from me thy (PROMISE).<sup>16</sup>
- 20 Crushed is my soul with longing  
for thy DECISIONS at all times.
- 21 Thou hast rebuked the insolent as accursed—<sup>17</sup>  
who go astray from thy COMMANDMENTS.

6. Or: "make."

7. Some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "words" (pl.)—Gn.

8. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "promises" (pl.)—Gn.

9. M.T.: "statutes"—in ver. 12: "law" not otherwise in stanza.

10. In some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "words" (pl.)—Gn.

11. Cp. Isa. 38:19.

12. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "words" (pl.)—Gn.

13. Cp. ver. 27.

14. Cp. ver. 54, Ps. 39:12, Gen. 47:9.

15. Or: "land."

16. M.T.: "commandments"—in ver. 21: "promise" not otherwise in stanza.

17. Or: "insolent—accursed are they who," etc.

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- 22 Roll off from me reproach and contempt—  
for thy (PRECEPTS)<sup>18</sup> have I observed.
- 23 Although princes have taken their seat against me have  
talked—  
thy servant doth soliloquise in thy STATUTES.
- 24 Yea<sup>19</sup> thy TESTIMONIES are my delight—  
[they are] my counsellors.<sup>20</sup>

[4. THE EIGHTFOLD DALETH.]

- 25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust—  
quicken me according to thy (PROMISE).<sup>21</sup>
- 26 My ways I recounted and thou didst answer me—  
teach me thy STATUTES.
- 27 The way of thy PRECEPTS cause thou me to understand—  
so will I soliloquise in thy wondrous things.<sup>22</sup>
- 28 My soul hath wept itself away for grief—  
raise me up according to thy WORD.<sup>23</sup>
- 29 The way of falsehood remove from me—<sup>24</sup>  
and with thy LAW be gracious unto me.<sup>25</sup>
- 30 The way of faithfulness have I chosen—  
thy DECISIONS do I esteem.<sup>26</sup>
- 31 I have kept close to thy TESTIMONIES—  
Jehovah! do not put me to shame.
- 32 The way of thy COMMANDMENTS will I run—  
for thou wilt enlarge my heart.<sup>27</sup>

[5. THE EIGHTFOLD HE.]

- 33 Point out to me Jehovah the way of thy STATUTES—  
and I will observe it unto the end.

18. M.T.: "testimonies"—in ver. 24: "precepts" not otherwise in stanza.

19. So Dr., Br.; also Per.; "Nevertheless" (thus connecting vers. 23, 24)  
—Del.

20. Ml.: "my men of counsel"="my counsellers"="my counsellors."

21. M.T.: "word"—in ver. 28: "promise" otherwise not in stanza.

22. Cp. vers. 18, 129.

23. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.): "according to thy words" (pl). But  
other cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "in (or 'by') thy words" (pl).—Gn.

24. Cp. Mt. 6:13.

25. "And favour me with Thine instruction" ("torah not having the  
notion of fixed doctrine, but that of living empirical instruction")—Del.  
"Grant me thy law graciously"—A.V., R.V., Dr. "With thy law be gracious  
to me"—Br., Per. "Bestow upon me thy law"—Carter. "Be gracious to me  
according to thy law"—Aglen.

26. So Dr. "Have I set before me"—Del.

27. "That is, cause it to swell for joy." Cp. Isa. 60:5—Dr. Sp. I.  
Watts'h'm. "My God the spring," ver. 4.

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- 34 Cause me to understand that I may observe thy LAW—  
and I will keep it with a whole heart.
- 35 Lead me in the path of thy COMMANDMENTS—  
for therein do I find<sup>28</sup> pleasure.
- 36 Incline my heart unto thy TESTIMONIES—  
and not unto covetousness.
- 37 Cause mine eyes to pass on from beholding unreality<sup>29</sup>  
by thy (WORD)<sup>30</sup> quicken thou me.
- 38 Confirm unto thy servant thy PROMISE—  
which leadeth men to revere thee.<sup>31</sup>
- 39 Cause to pass away my reproach which I have feared—  
for thy DECISIONS are good.
- 40 Lo! I have longed for thy PRECEPTS—  
in thy righteousness quicken thou me.

### [6. THE EIGHTFOLD WAW.]

- 41 And let thy kindness reach me O Jehovah—  
thy salvation according to thy PROMISE.
- 42 And I will make answer to him that reproacheth me—  
for<sup>32</sup> I trust in thy WORD.
- 43 And do not snatch away from my mouth a truthful word  
utterly—  
because for thy DECISIONS have I waited.
- 44 And I will keep thy LAW continually—  
to the ages<sup>33</sup> and beyond.
- 45 And I will walk to and fro in a roomy place<sup>34</sup>  
because thy PRECEPTS have I sought out.<sup>35</sup>
- 46 And I will speak of thy TESTIMONIES before kings—  
and shall not be put to shame.
- 47 And I will delight myself in thy COMMANDMENTS—  
the which I have loved.

28. Or: "have I found."

29. So Dr. "Without real, *i.e.*, without divine substance; God-opposed teaching and life"—Del. "Worthlessness"—Br. "Delusion"—Carter. "Perhaps *from looking on idols*"—Aglen. And cp. Mt. 6:13.

30. M.T.: "ways"—not one of the eight; "word" not otherwise in stanza.

31. Cp. 130:4.

32. Or: "that."

33. U.: "to times age-abiding."

34. Cp. 18:19, 31:8, 118:5.

35. Or: "studied."



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48 And I will lift up mine open hands<sup>86</sup> unto thy  
commandments—<sup>87</sup>  
and will soliloquise in thy STATUTES.

[7. THE EIGHTFOLD ZAYLN.]

49 Remember the WORD to thy servant—  
seeing that thou hast caused me to hope.  
50 This is my comfort in my humiliation—<sup>88</sup>  
that thy PROMISE hath quickened me.  
51 Insolent men have scorned me exceedingly—  
from thy (TESTIMONIES)<sup>89</sup> have I not swerved.  
52 I have remembered thy DECISIONS [that have been] from  
antiquity Jehovah—  
and have consoled myself.  
53 A ranging heat hath seized me by reason of the lawless—  
forsakers of thy LAW.  
54 Melodies have thy STATUTES become to me—  
in my house of sojourn.<sup>40</sup>  
55 I have remembered in the night thy name Jehovah!  
and have kept thy (COMMANDMENTS).<sup>41</sup>  
56 This hath become mine—  
that thy PRECEPTS have I observed.

[8. THE EIGHTFOLD HETH.]

57 My portion Jehovah!  
I have said<sup>42</sup> I would keep thy WORDS.  
58 I have sought the smile of thy face<sup>43</sup> with a whole heart—  
be gracious unto me according to thy PROMISE.  
59 I thought on my ways—  
and turned my feet unto thy TESTIMONIES.  
60 I have hastened and not delayed—  
to keep thy COMMANDMENTS.  
61 The meshes of lawless men have enclosed me—  
thy LAW have I not forgotten.

36. Ml.: "palms."

37. M.T. adds: "which I have loved"—"repeated probably by error from ver. 47"—Dr.

38. Cp. vers. 67, 71, 75, 92, 107.

39. M.T.: "law"—in ver. 53: "testimonies" not otherwise in stanza.

40. Cp. ver. 19, Ps. 39:12, Gen. 47:9. Or—may not the allusion be to a temporary banishment? Cp. and consider Pss. 42, 43.

41. M.T.: "law"—in ver. 53: "commandments" not otherwise in stanza.

42. Or: "promised." Cp. 1 Ch. 27:23, 2 Ch. 21:7, Est. 4:7, 2 K. 8:19, Neh. 9:23; hence *'imrah* easily becomes "promise" where context favours.

43. "Lit. make the face of any one sweet pleasant"—O.G. 318b.

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- 62 At midnight I arise to give thanks to thee—  
because of thy righteous DECISIONS.
- 63 Companion am I to all who revere thee—  
and to them who keep thy PRECEPTS.
- 64 Of thy kindness Jehovah the earth is full—  
thy STATUTES O teach me.

### [9. THE EIGHTFOLD TETH.]

- 65 Well hast thou dealt with thy servant—  
O Jehovah according to thy WORD.
- 66 Good perception<sup>44</sup> and knowledge teach thou me—  
for in thy COMMANDMENTS have I believed.
- 67 Before I was humbled<sup>45</sup> I was going astray—  
but now thy PROMISE<sup>46</sup> have I kept.
- 68 Good art thou and a doer of good—<sup>47</sup>  
teach me thy STATUTES.
- 69 Insolent men have plastered falsehood over me—<sup>48</sup>  
I with a whole heart will observe thy PRECEPTS.
- 70 Unfeeling like fat<sup>49</sup> is their heart—  
I in thy LAW have found delight.
- 71 Well was it for me that I was humbled—<sup>50</sup>  
to the end I might learn thy (TESTIMONIES).<sup>51</sup>
- 72 Better to me the (DECISIONS)<sup>52</sup> of thy mouth—<sup>53</sup>  
than thousands of gold and silver.

### [10. THE EIGHTFOLD YODH.]

- 73 Thine own hands made me and established me—  
cause me to understand that I may learn thy  
COMMANDMENTS.
- 74 They who revere thee shall see me and rejoice—  
that<sup>54</sup> for thy WORD I waited<sup>55</sup>

44. Ml.: "taste"—quick moral perception.

45. Cp. refs. to ver. 50.

46. "Promise"—if understood as conditional or directory: else, "saying."

47. Cp. Wesley's hymn: "Good thou art."

48. So Dr.

49. "Impervious to good influences; cp. Isa. 6:10"—Dr.

50. Cp. refs. to ver. 50.

51. M.T.: "statutes"—in ver. 68: "testimonies" not otherwise in stanza.

52. M.T.: "law"—in ver. 70: "decisions" not otherwise in stanza.

53. Cp. vers. 13, 88.

54. Or: "because."

55. Cp. 35:27.

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- 75 I know Jehovah that righteous are thy DECISIONS—  
and in faithfulness didst thou humble<sup>56</sup> me.
- 76 Let thy kindness pray serve to comfort me—  
according to thy PROMISE to thy servant.
- 77 Let thy compassions reach me that I may live—  
for thy LAW is my delight.
- 78 Put to shame<sup>57</sup> be insolent men that with falsehood they  
deprived me of justice—<sup>58</sup>
- I soliloquise in thy PRECEPTS.
- 79 Let those who revere thee turn<sup>59</sup> unto me—  
and they shall<sup>60</sup> know thy TESTIMONIES.
- 80 Let my heart be blameless<sup>61</sup> in thy STATUTES—  
to the end I may not be put to shame.

[11. THE EIGHTFOLD KAPH.]

- 81 My soul languisheth<sup>62</sup> for thy salvation—  
for thy WORD have I waited.
- 82 Bedimmed are mine eyes for thy PROMISE—  
saying When wilt thou comfort me?
- 83 Though I have become like a wine-skin in smoke  
thy STATUTES have I not forgotten.
- 84 How many are the days of thy servant?  
when wilt thou execute on my persecutors a DECISION?<sup>63</sup>
- 85 Insolent men have digged for me pits—  
who are not according to thy LAW.
- 86 All thy COMMANDMENTS are faithfulness—  
falsely<sup>64</sup> have they persecuted me help me!
- 87 Almost had they made an end of me<sup>65</sup> in the land—<sup>66</sup>  
but I forsook not thy PRECEPTS.
- 88 According to thy kindness quicken me—  
that I may keep the TESTIMONY<sup>67</sup> of thy mouth.

56. Cp. refs. to ver. 50.

57. Cp. 35:26.

58. So (prob.)—O.G.

59. Or: "return."

60. Or: "who"—ancient authorities divided.

61. Or: "thorough"; cp. ver. 113.

62. Cp. 84:2.

63. A pos. error for the customary "thy decisions."

64. Cp. ver. 78: and 35:19.

65. Cp. 35:25.

66. Or: "earth."

67. "Read 'testimonies' as usual"—Br.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### [12. THE EIGHTFOLD LAMEDH.]

- 89 To the ages<sup>68</sup> O Jehovah—<sup>69</sup>  
thy WORD is stationed in the heavens.
- 90 To generation after generation is thy PROMISE—<sup>70</sup>  
thou hast<sup>71</sup> established the earth and it standeth.
- 91 By thy DECISIONS they stand to-day—  
for they all<sup>72</sup> are thy servants.
- 92 Unless thy LAW had been my delight—  
then should I have perished in my humiliation.<sup>73</sup>
- 93 To the ages will I not forget thy STATUTES—<sup>74</sup>  
for by them hast thou quickened me.
- 94 Thine am I O save me—  
for thy PRECEPTS have I sought out.<sup>75</sup>
- 95 For me have lawless men waited to destroy me—  
thy TESTIMONIES do I diligently consider.
- 96 To all completeness have I seen an end—  
broad is thy COMMANDMENT exceedingly.

### [13. THE EIGHTFOLD MEM.]

- 97 Oh how I love thy LAW!—  
all the day is it my soliloquy.
- 98 Beyond mine enemies shall thy COMMANDMENT make me  
wise—  
for age-abiding it is mine.
- 99 Beyond all my teachers have I shewn understanding—  
because thy TESTIMONIES are a soliloquy to me.
- 100 Beyond elders do I get understanding—  
because thy PRECEPTS have I observed.
- 101 From every path of wickedness have I restrained<sup>76</sup> my feet—  
to the end I might keep thy WORD.
- 102 From thy DECISIONS have I not turned aside—  
for thou thyself hast directed me.

68. U.: "To times age-abiding."

69. "For ever is Jahve"—Del.

70. M.T.: "faithfulness"—not a syn.: "promise" not otherwise in stanza.

71. Or: "didst."

72. "All things"—Dr. "All beings"—Del.

73. Cp. refs. to ver. 50, and cp. Gen. 8:21, 22, also Ps. 33:6-9.

74. M.T.: "precepts"—in ver. 94: "statutes" not otherwise in stanza.

75. Or: "studied."

76. Dr. after P.B.V.: "refrained."

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- 103 How pleasant<sup>77</sup> to my palate is thy PROMISE<sup>78</sup>—  
more than honey to my mouth.  
104 Out of thy (STATUTES)<sup>79</sup> do I get understanding—  
therefore do I hate every path of falsehood.

[14. THE EIGHTFOLD NUN.]

- 105 A lamp to my foot is thy WORD—  
and a light to my path.  
106 I have sworn and have confirmed it—  
to keep thy righteous DECISIONS.  
107 I have been humbled<sup>80</sup> exceedingly Jehovah!  
quicken thou me according to thy (PROMISE),<sup>81</sup>  
108 The freewill offerings of my mouth accept pray Jehovah!  
and thy (STATUTES)<sup>82</sup> teach thou me.  
109 My life<sup>83</sup> is in mine open hand<sup>84</sup> continually—  
yet thy LAW have I not forgotten.  
110 The lawless set a trap for me—  
yet from thy COMMANDMENTS<sup>85</sup> I went not astray.  
111 I have taken as an inheritance thy TESTIMONIES to the ages—  
for the exultation of my heart are they.  
112 I have inclined my heart to do thy (PRECEPTS)—<sup>86</sup>  
a reward to the ages.

[15. THE EIGHTFOLD SAMECH.]

- 113 Half-hearted ones<sup>87</sup> do I hate—  
but thy LAW do I love.  
114 My hiding-place and my shield art thou—  
for thy WORD have I waited.  
115 Depart from me ye evil-doers—  
and I will observe the COMMANDMENTS of my God.  
116 Uphold me according to thy PROMISE that I may live—  
and do not shame me out<sup>88</sup> of my hope.

77. Ml.: "smooth."

78. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): "are thy promises" (pl.)—Gn.

79. M.T.: "precepts"—in ver. 100: "statutes" not otherwise in stanza

80. Cp. refs. to ver. 50.

81. M.T.: "word"—in ver. 105: "promise" not otherwise in stanza.

82. M.T.: "decisions"—in ver. 106.

83. U.: "soul."

84. Ml.: "palm."

85. M.T.: "precepts"—"commandments" not otherwise in stanza.

86. M.T.: "statutes"—(now) in ver. 108.

87. Cp. ver. 80n.

88. Or: "on account."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 117 Support me that I may be saved—  
and I will delight in thy STATUTES continually.
- 118 Thou hast made light of all who stray from thy  
(PRECEPTS)—<sup>89</sup>  
because of the falsehood of their deceit.<sup>90</sup>
- 119 Dross have I accounted<sup>91</sup> all the lawless of the land—<sup>92</sup>  
therefore do I love thy TESTIMONIES.
- 120 My flesh hath bristled up from dread of thee—  
and of thy DECISIONS have I been afraid.

### [16. THE EIGHTFOLD AYIN.]

- 121 I have done (thy righteous DECISIONS)—<sup>93</sup>  
do not leave me to mine oppressors.
- 122 Be thou surety (with thy WORD)<sup>94</sup> for thy servant for good—  
let not insolent men oppress me.
- 123 Mine eyes have become dim for thy salvation—  
and for thy righteous PROMISE.
- 124 Deal with thy servant according to thy kindness—  
and thy STATUTES teach thou me.
- 125 Thy servant am I cause me to have understanding—  
so shall I get to know thy TESTIMONIES.
- 126 It is time for Jehovah to act—  
they have frustrated thy LAW.
- 127 Therefore do I love thy COMMANDMENTS—  
more than gold yea than fine gold.
- 128 Therefore all thy PRECEPTS concerning me have I kept—<sup>95</sup>  
every path of falsehood<sup>96</sup> do I hate.

### [17. THE EIGHTFOLD PE.]

- 129 Wonderful<sup>97</sup> are thy TESTIMONIES—  
therefore hath my soul observed them.
- 130 The opening of thy WORD<sup>98</sup> giveth light—  
causing the simple to understand.

89. M.T.: "statutes"—in ver. 117: "precepts" not otherwise in stanza.

90. Cp. 35:19.

91. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn.

92. Or: "earth."

93. M.T.: "justice and righteousness"—in which case no synonym in ver.

94. So Br. M.T.: no synonym.

95. So. *Gt.*

96. Cp. ver. 118, Ph. 35:19.

97. Cp. vers. 18, 27.

98. M.T.: "words" (pl.).

PSALM 119

- 131 My mouth have I opened wide and panted—<sup>99</sup>  
because for thy COMMANDMENTS have I longed.
- 132 Turn to him that loveth thy name—  
and according to thy DECISIONS be gracious unto me.<sup>100</sup>
- 133 My footsteps direct thou in thy PROMISE—<sup>101</sup>  
and let no iniquity<sup>102</sup> have dominion over me.
- 134 Ransom me from the oppression of man—  
and I will keep thy PRECEPTS.
- 135 Thy face light thou up on thy servant—  
and teach me thy STATUTES.
- 136 Streams<sup>103</sup> of water have run down mine eyes—<sup>104</sup>  
because they have not kept thy LAW.

[18. THE EIGHTFOLD ZADHE.]

- 137 Righteous art thou Jehovah—  
and straightforward<sup>105</sup> are thy DECISIONS.
- 138 Thou hast commanded as<sup>106</sup> righteousness thy TESTIMONIES—  
and as<sup>106</sup> exceeding faithfulness.
- 139 My zeal hath undone<sup>107</sup> me—  
for mine adversaries have forgotten thy WORD.<sup>108</sup>
- 140 Refined<sup>109</sup> is thy PROMISE to the uttermost—  
and thy servant loveth it.
- 141 Young<sup>110</sup> am I and despised—  
thy PRECEPTS have I not forgotten.
- 142 Thy righteousness is right to the ages—<sup>111</sup>  
and thy LAW is truth.
- 143 Strait and stress have found me—  
thy COMMANDMENTS are my delight.

99. Cp. Pss. 42, 43.

100. Verse emended after Br., restoring synonym.

101. "Promise"—if understood to be conditional and directory: otherwise "saying."

102. "Naughtiness"—Dr.

103. "Rills"—Dr.

104. Cp. 42:3.

105. "Upright"—Dr. "Straight"—Del. Cp. 19:8.

106. Or: "in."

107. U.: "exterminated."

108. M.T.: "words" (pl.). Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Syr.): "word" (sing.)—Gn.

109. "Sterling metal"—Dr. Cp. Pro. 30:5. "Is very pure"—Del.

110. So Del. "Small"—Per., Kp., Br., Dr. ("or young"). "Little"—Carter. "More often of age"—O.G.

111. U.: "to times age-abiding."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

144 Righteous are thy (STATUTES) to the ages—  
give me understanding that I may live.

### [19. THE EIGHTFOLD KOPH.]

145 I have called with a whole heart answer me Jehovah!—  
thy STATUTES will I observe.

146 I have called upon thee O save me!—  
and I will keep thy TESTIMONIES.

147 I am beforehand with the morning twilight and cry for  
help—  
for thy WORD<sup>112</sup> have I waited.

148 Mine eyes forestall the night-watches—  
to soliloquise in thy PROMISE.

149 My voice O hear according to thy kindness—  
Jehovah! according to thy DECISIONS<sup>113</sup> quicken me.

150 They have drawn near who persecute<sup>114</sup> with infamous  
devices—  
from thy LAW have they gone far away.

151 Near art thou Jehovah—  
and all thy COMMANDMENTS are truth.

152 Long have I known from thy (PRECEPTS)—<sup>115</sup>  
that to the ages<sup>116</sup> thou didst found them.

### [20. THE EIGHTFOLD RESH.]

153 O see my humiliation and rescue me—  
for thy LAW have I not forgotten.

154 Plead my cause and redeem me—  
by thy PROMISE O quicken me.

155 Far from lawless men is salvation—  
for thy STATUTES have they not sought out.<sup>117</sup>

156 Thy compassions are many Jehovah—  
according to thy (COMMANDMENTS)<sup>118</sup> quicken me.

157 Many are my persecutors and mine adversaries—  
from thy TESTIMONIES have I not swerved.

112. MSS. and versions vary between "word" and "words"—cp. Gn.

113. So (pl.) in some cod. (w. 6 ear. pr edns.)—Gn. M.T. sing.

114. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): "persecute me"—Gn.

115. M.T.: "testimonies"—in ver. 146: "precepts" otherwise not in stanza.

116. U.: "to times age-abiding."

117. Or: "studied."

118. M.T.: "decisions"—in ver. 160: "commandments" not otherwise in stanza.



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- 158 I beheld traitors and felt loathing—  
because thy (WORD)<sup>119</sup> had they not kept.  
159 O see that thy PRECEPTS I have loved—  
Jehovah! according to thy kindness quicken me.  
160 The sum of thy word is truth—  
and to the ages are all<sup>120</sup> thy righteous DECISIONS.

[21. THE EIGHTFOLD SIN (OR SHIN).]

- 161 Princes have persecuted me without cause—  
but of thy WORD<sup>121</sup> hath my heart stood in awe.  
162 Joyful am I over thy PROMISE—  
like the finder of spoil in abundance.  
163 Falsehood I hate and abhor—  
thy (STATUTES)<sup>122</sup> I love.  
164 Seven times a day have I praised thee—  
because of thy righteous DECISIONS.  
165 Blessing in abundance<sup>123</sup> have the lovers of thy LAW—  
with nothing to make them stumble.  
166 I have hoped for thy salvation Jehovah—  
and thy COMMANDMENTS have I done.  
167 My soul hath kept thy TESTIMONIES—  
and I have loved them greatly.  
168 I have kept thy PRECEPTS (and thy testimonies)—<sup>124</sup>  
for all my ways are before thee.

[22. THE EIGHTFOLD TAU.]

- 169 Let my ringing<sup>125</sup> cry come near before thee Jehovah!—  
according to thy WORD cause me to understand.  
170 Let my supplications come in before thee—  
according to thy PROMISE deliver me.  
171 Let my lips pour forth praise—  
because thou teachest me thy STATUTES.  
172 Let my tongue sing (in faithfulness)  
of thy rightful DECISIONS.<sup>126</sup>

119. M.T.: "promise"—in ver. 154: "word" not otherwise in stanza.

120. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "all"—Gn. M.T.: "is each of."

121. MSS. and versions vary between "word" and "words"—cp. Gn.

122. M.T.: "law"—in ver. 165: "statutes" not otherwise in stanza.

123. Or: "great peace," "great prosperity."

124. Clearly redundant. "Implying variant readings at an early date"—

Br.

125. Or: "piercing."

126. M.T.: "Let my tongue sing thy promise—for all thy commandments are righteous." "Promise" is in ver. 170; and "commandments" in ver. 176.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 173 Let thy hand be ready to help me—  
for thy PRECEPTS have I chosen.
- 174 I have longed for thy salvation O Jehovah!  
and thy LAW is my delight:
- 175 Let my soul live and it shall praise thee—  
and let thy (TESTIMONIES)<sup>127</sup> help me.
- 176 I have strayed like a wandering sheep seek thou thy  
servant—<sup>128</sup>  
for thy COMMANDMENTS have I not forgotten.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 119

Happy are all who perfectly follow the laws of God.

2 Happy are all who search for God, and always do His will,

3 Rejecting compromise with evil, and walking only in His paths.

4 You have given us Your laws to obey—

5 Oh, how I want to follow them consistently.

6 Then I will not be disgraced, for I will have a clean record.

7 After You have corrected<sup>1</sup> me I will thank You by living as I should!

8 I *will* obey! Oh, don't forsake me and let me slip back into sin again.<sup>2</sup>

9 How can a young man stay pure? By reading Your word and following its rules.

10 I have tried my best to find You—don't let me wander off from Your instructions.

11 I have thought much about Your words, and stored them in my heart so that they would hold me back from sin.

12 Blessed Lord, teach me Your rules.

13 I have recited Your laws,

14 And rejoiced in them more than in riches.

127. M.T.: "decision." In some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Vul.): "decisions" (pl.)—Gn. "Decisions" needed in ver. 172.

128. "If I should go astray—like a lost sheep seek thy servant; for," etc.—Del. "I wander like a lost sheep; seek thy servant"—Carter. "I have gone erringly astray like lost sheep; seek thy servant; for," etc.—Leeser. "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; O seek thy servant; for," etc.—Dr.

1. Literally, "when I learn (have experienced) Your righteous judgments."

2. Literally, "Oh forsake me not utterly."

## PSALM 119

15 I will meditate upon them and give them my full respect.

16 I will delight in them and not forget them.

17 Bless me with life<sup>3</sup> so that I can continue to obey You.

18 Open my eyes to see wonderful things in Your word.

19 I am but a pilgrim here on earth; how I need a map—  
and Your commands are my chart and guide.

20 I long for Your instructions more than I can tell.

21 You rebuke those cursed proud ones who refuse Your  
commands—

22 Don't let them scorn me for obeying You.

23 For even princes sit and talk against me, but I will  
continue in Your plans.

24 Your laws are both my light and my counselors.

25 I am completely discouraged—I lie in the dust. Revive  
me by Your Word.

26 I told You my plans and You replied. Now give me  
Your instructions.

27 Make me understand what You want; for then I shall  
see Your miracles.

28 I weep with grief; my heart is heavy with sorrow; en-  
courage and cheer me with Your words.

29, 30 Keep me far from every wrong; help me, undeserving  
as I am, to obey Your laws, for I have chosen to do right.

31 I cling to Your commands and follow them as closely  
as I can. Lord, don't let me make a mess of things.

32 If You will only help me to want Your will, then I will  
follow Your laws even more closely.

33, 34 Just tell me what to do and I will do it, Lord. As  
long as I live I'll wholeheartedly obey.

35 Make me walk along the right paths for I know how  
delightful they really are.

36 Help me to prefer obedience to making money!

37 Turn me away from wanting any other<sup>4</sup> plan than Yours.  
Revive my heart toward You.

38 Reassure me that Your promises are for me; for I trust  
and revere You.

39 How I dread being mocked for obeying; for Your laws  
are right and good.

40, 41, 42 I long to obey them! Therefore in fairness re-  
new my life, for this was Your promise—yes, Lord, to save me!

3. Literally, "deal bountifully that I may live."

4. Literally, "from beholding vanity."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Now spare me by Your kindness and Your love. Then I will have an answer for those who taunt me, for I trust Your promises.

43 May I never forget Your words; for they are my only hope.

44, 45, 46 Therefore I will keep on obeying You forever and forever, free within the limits of Your laws. I will speak to kings about their value; and they will listen with interest and respect.

47 How I love Your laws! How I enjoy Your commands!

48 "Come, come to me," I call to them, for I love them and will let them fill my life.

49, 50 Never forget Your promises to me Your servant; for they are my only hope. They give me strength in all my troubles; how they refresh and revive me!

51 Proud men hold me in contempt for obedience to God, but I stand unmoved.

52 From my earliest youth I have tried to obey You; Your Word has been my comfort.

53 I am very angry with those who spurn Your commands.

54 For these laws of Yours have been my source of joy and singing through all these years of my earthly pilgrimage.

55 I obey them even at night and keep my thoughts, O Lord, on You.

56 What a blessing this has been to me—to constantly obey.

57 Jehovah is mine! And I promise to obey!

58 With all my heart I want Your blessings. Be merciful just as You promised.

59, 60 I thought about the wrong direction in which I was headed, and turned around and came running back to You.

61 Evil men have tried to drag me into sin, but I am firmly anchored to Your laws.

62 At midnight I will rise to give my thanks to You for Your good laws.

63 Anyone is my brother who fears and trusts the Lord and obeys Him.

64 O Lord, the earth is full of Your lovingkindness! Teach me Your good paths.

65 Lord, I am overflowing with Your blessings, just as You promised!

66 Now teach me good judgment as well as knowledge! For Your laws are my guide.

## PSALM 119

67 I used to wander off until You punished me; now I closely follow all You say.

68 You are good and do only good; make me follow Your lead!

69 Proud men have made up lies about me, but the truth is that I obey Your laws with all my heart.

70 Their minds are dull and stupid, but I have sense enough to follow You.

71, 72 The punishment You gave me was the best thing that could have happened to me, for it taught me to pay attention to Your laws. They are more valuable to me than millions in silver and gold!

73 You made my body, Lord; now give me sense to heed Your laws.

74 All those who fear and trust in You will welcome me because I too am trusting in Your Word.

75, 76, 77 I know, O Lord, that Your decisions are right and that Your punishment was right and did me good. Now let Your lovingkindness comfort me, just as You promised. Surround me with Your tender mercies, that I may live. For Your law is my delight.

78 Let the proud be disgraced, for they have cut me down with all their lies. But I will concentrate my thoughts upon Your laws.

79 Let all others join me, who trust and fear You, and we will discuss Your laws.

80 Help me to love Your every wish; then I will never have to be ashamed of myself!

81 I faint for Your salvation; but I expect Your help, for You have promised it.

82 My eyes are straining to see Your promises come true. When will You comfort me with Your help?

83 I am shriveled like a wineskin in the smoke, exhausted with waiting. But still I cling to Your laws and obey them.

84 How long must I wait before You punish those who persecute me?

85, 86 These proud men who hate Your truth and laws have dug deep pits for me to fall in. Their lies have brought me into deep trouble. Help me, for You love only truth.

87 They had almost finished me off, yet I refused to yield and disobey Your laws.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

88 In Your kindness, spare my life; then I can continue to obey You.

89 Forever, O Lord, Your Word stands firm in heaven.

90, 91 Your faithfulness extends to every generation, like the earth You created; it endures by Your decree, for everything serves Your plans.

92 I would have despaired and perished unless Your laws had been my deepest delight.

93 I will never lay aside Your laws, for You have used them to restore my joy and health.

94 I am Yours! Save me! For I have tried to live according to Your desires.

95 Though the wicked hide along the way to kill me, I will quietly keep my mind upon Your promises.

96 Nothing is perfect except Your words.

97 Oh, how I love them. I think about them all day long.

98 They make me wiser than my enemies, because they are my constant guide.

99 Yes, wiser than my teachers; for I am ever thinking of Your rules.

100 They make me even wiser than the aged.

101 I have refused to walk the paths of evil for I will remain obedient to Your Word.

102, 103 No, I haven't turned away from what You taught me: Your words are sweeter than honey.

104 And since only Your rules can give me wisdom and understanding, no wonder I hate every false teaching.

105 Your words are a flashlight to light the path ahead of me, and keep me from stumbling.

106 I've said it once and I'll say it again and again: I will obey these wonderful laws of Yours.

107 I am close to death at the hands of my enemies; oh, give me back my life again, just as You promised me.

108 Accept my grateful thanks and teach me Your desires.

109 My life hangs in the balance, but I will not give up obedience to Your laws.

110 The wicked have set their traps for me along Your path, but I will not turn aside.

111 Your laws are my joyous treasure forever.

112 I am determined to obey You until I die.

113 I hate those who are undecided whether or not to obey You; but my choice is clear—I love Your law.

## PSALM 119

114 You are my refuge and my shield, and Your promises are my only source of hope.

115 Begone, you evil-minded men. Don't try to stop me from obeying God's commands.

116 Lord, You promised to let me live! Never let it be said that God failed me.

117 Hold me safe above the heads of all my enemies; then I can continue to obey Your laws.

118 But You have rejected all who reject Your laws. They are only fooling themselves.

119 The wicked are the scum You skim off and throw away; no wonder I live to obey Your laws!

120 I tremble in fear of You; I fear Your punishments.

121 Don't leave me to the mercy of my enemies, for I have done what is right; I've been perfectly fair.

122 Commit Yourself to bless me! Don't let the proud oppress me!

123 My eyes grow dim with longing for You to fulfill Your wonderful promise to rescue me.

124 Lord, deal with me in lovingkindness, and teach me, Your servant, to obey;

125 For I am Your servant; therefore give me common sense to apply Your rules to everything I do.

126 Lord, it is time for You to act. For these evil men have violated Your laws,

127 While I love Your commandments more than the finest gold.

128 Every law of God is right, whatever it concerns. I hate every other way.

129 Your laws are wonderful; no wonder I obey them.

130 As Your plan unfolds, even the simple can understand it.

131 No wonder I wait expectantly for each of Your commands.

132 Come and have mercy on me as is Your way with those who love You.

133 Guide me with Your laws so that I will not be overcome by evil.

134 Rescue me from the oppression of evil men; then I can obey You.

135 Look down in love upon me and teach me all Your laws.

136 I weep because Your laws are disobeyed.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

137 O Lord, You are just and Your punishments are fair.

138 Your demands are just and right.

139 I am indignant and angry because of the way my enemies have disregarded Your laws.

140 I have thoroughly tested Your promises and that is why I love them so much.

141 I am worthless and despised, but I don't despise Your laws.

142 Your justice is eternal for Your laws are perfectly fair.

143 In my distress and anguish, Your commandments comfort me.

144 Your laws are always fair; help me to understand them and I shall live.

145 I am praying with great earnestness; answer me, O Lord, and I will obey Your laws.

146 "Save me," I cry, "for I am obeying."

147 Early in the morning, before the sun is up, I was praying and pointing out how much I trust in You.

148 I stay awake through the night to think about Your promises.

149 Because You are so loving and kind, listen to me and make me well again.

150 Here come these lawless men to attack me;

151 But You are near, O Lord; all Your commandments are based on truth.

152 I have known from earliest days that Your will never changes.

153 Look down upon my sorrows and rescue me, for I am obeying Your commands.

154 Yes, rescue me and give me back my life again just as You have promised.

155 The wicked are far from salvation for they do not care for Your laws.

156 Lord, how great is Your mercy: oh, give me back my life again.

157 My enemies are so many. They try to make me disobey; but I have not swerved from Your will.

158 I loathed these traitors because they care nothing for Your laws.

159 Lord, see how much I really love Your demands. Now give me back my life and health because You are so kind.



## PSALM 119

160 There is utter trust in all Your laws; Your decrees are eternal.

161 Great men have persecuted me, though they have no reason to, but I stand in awe of only Your words.

162 I rejoice in Your laws like one who finds a great treasure.

163 How I hate all falsehood but how I love Your laws.

164 I will praise You seven times a day because of Your wonderful laws.

165 Those who love Your laws have great peace of heart and mind and do not stumble.

166 I long for Your salvation, Lord and so I have obeyed Your laws.

167 I have looked for Your commandments and I love them very much;

168 Yes, I have searched for them. You know this because everything I do is known to You.

169 O Lord, listen to my prayers; give me the common sense You promised.

170 Hear my prayers; rescue me as You said You would.

171 I praise You for letting me learn Your laws.

172 I will sing about their wonder, for each of them is just.

173 Stand ready to help me because I have chosen to follow Your will.

174 O Lord, I have longed for Your salvation and Your law is my delight.

175 If You will let me live, I will praise You; let Your laws assist me.

176 I have wandered away like a lost sheep; come and find me for I have not turned away from Your commandments.

## EXPOSITION

The "Descriptive Title" prefixed to this psalm may make the inadequate impression, that here we have an excessively artificial composition; and a cursory perusal of the psalm itself may awaken the further apprehension, that this artificially constructed series of sayings is wearisomely monotonous. The instant correction of these plausible forebodings is desirable. The monotone, whose existence cannot be denied, is that of a lullaby by which a troubled soul may be softly and sweetly hushed to rest. The art is so exquisite that, when familiarised, it not only gratifies the taste, but aids the judgment, and

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ministers to the hunger of the spirit. This psalm, so far as it is a song at all, is one composed in mournful measure. It is, however, a soliloquy rather than a song. It is a study set to the murmuring of the sea. Its repetitions are like the recurring waves of light by which new satellites are discovered in the ancient heavens. In truth, it reveals a soul in close communion with God; and its art resolves itself into the measured movements of an eagle's wings by which is sustained its nearness to the sun.

The art is undeniably there: *visibly* there—in the eight-fold *aleph*, the eight-fold *beth*, and so on to the end of the Hebrew alphabet of twenty-two letters, yielding in all one hundred and seventy-six verses; *credibly* there—in the eight synonyms which continue changefully pealing like so many bells till full measure has been given; and *possibly* there—in the closing assonances in *ka* and *ee* which some critics deem they discover in the original, though now buried beneath numberless transpositional inadvertences committed by editors and copyists not sufficiently on the alert to safeguard so many stylistic beauties.

But the art is subservient to the sense. Even the grouped initial letters are luminous with concentrated rays of light. For instance, the *aleph* bursts forth, once and again, with impassioned benedictions on the head of the man of God—at once rebuking those who fancy that art cannot minister to devout feeling; the humble linguistic "peg," *waw*, shews how nimbly it can suggest logical continuity of thought; the serpent-like *teth*, harmless as a dove, and full of all "goodness," makes the dweller in its stanza feel that it is "good" to be here; the *ayin* has an "eye" to the beautiful, and opens fresh "fountains" of gladness; and, to name no more, the *zadhe* looks well to it that "righteousness" shall be strong, and "right" on every side be done.

Then those eight synonyms—even though we have lost for the present the poetry of the system by which, chorus-like, they change places—how logically expansive and expanding they are! They are the sworn foes of over-narrowness of definition, and irresistibly demand that grace be permitted to temper law. For what, let us ask, is the master-thought of the psalm? A weighty question truly, and one to which the synonyms must be heard in reply. The verbs—to *love*, to *hate*, to *run*, to *keep*, to *quicken*, etc.—all have their quota of evidence to tender; but they cluster about their nouns, and chiefly about those sturdy synonyms—*law*, *precept*, *word*, etc.—which dominate the landscape. If we

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start with ever so narrow a concept of *law*, for example,—then we have to hearken to *testimony*, with its “witness” to the love of God as well as to the duty of man. If we begin with the *written* “word,” as we very well may, by starting at *statute*, from a root meaning “to engrave,”—then the question comes—whether we must not include the *oral* “word” as well, seeing that the psalmist speaks of *waiting for it* (74, 81, 114, 147), which he would not need to do if it were already in his hand. *The word written and oral*—so far, at least, we must go. But we find the *word stationed in the heavens*; its synonymous *promise* assuring us that Jehovah hath *established the earth so that it standeth*; and its synonymous *decisions* evidently applying to all created things in *heaven and earth*, and causing them all to obey as *Jehovah’s servants*. We are thus uplifted to the altitude of Jehovah’s WILL—*written, oral, or effectuated* only, by the silently working power of God. THE KEY-NOTE OF ALL THE SYNONYMS IS, THEREFORE, JEHOVAH’S WILL HOWEVER MADE MANIFEST.

This conclusion at once places us at the psalmist’s own angle of vision, and explains how it is that his whole soul is aflame with affection for an object so variously named as by these eight synonyms. But it does more. It justifies our adoption of a new synonym—or at least it vindicates our search for one, so as not to render both *dabhar* and *’imrah* by the one English term “word.” The presumption is that in some way they perceptibly differ, or they would not both be employed. “Saying” for *’imrah* would have commended itself but for the feeling that it leaned over too much to the sense of “familiar proverb.” Finding, therefore, that the usage of this term has generally an especially gladsome set of words in association with it (as tracing it through the Table will shew), we have ventured on the welcome word *promise* as its suitable English representative. There is one restriction to be placed on all these synonyms; and that is, that they must be held to have a regulative bearing on human character and conduct. The manner of the man they make is always an essential question throughout the psalm. The psalmist’s one absorbing passion is to be conformed to Jehovah’s will. The word “promise,” therefore, can only be accepted in so far as it submits to this limitation. But, to this rule, it easily conforms; since divine “promises” are often, in their very wording, directory of human conduct; and even when no condition is expressed, one nevertheless is mostly implied. Indeed, it may perhaps safely be said, and dutifully borne in

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mind, that as a rule Jehovah's promises *are* conditional; and only when it is distinctly protested by Himself that they are absolutely unconditional, can they wisely be so held. There is perhaps not more than a single instance to be discovered in the accompanying Table in which the rendering of *'imrah* needs to be subdued to "saying."

Thus far our effort after exposition has been directed chiefly to the helping of the student to use the Table of Synonyms with pleasure and profit. It is needless to remind him that there are several other veins of interest running through the psalm: as, for instance the words descriptive of sacred study and meditation, and those displaying the moods and tenses of affection and devotion and holy living.

But all these lines of inquiry fall into a secondary place when compared with the familiar question of authorship; which, in this case, becomes one of unusual interest—unless, indeed, it is at once vetoed as a bootless inquiry. The present writer,—forgetting that he had already, when commenting on Pss. 1 and 19, committed himself to an opinion as to the authorship of this psalm also,—started to deal with this extraordinary composition with an open mind as to its probable author; and could not help being at once rather fascinated by the opinion of Thrupp that Daniel wrote it. But, little by little, the plausibility of this conclusion melted away before continuous meditation on the circumstantial evidence, which, it should be noted, is in this case unusually voluminous. Here is a man admitting us into his closet, and permitting us to hearken to the prolonged outpouring of his soul before Jehovah; in the course of which he not only reflects the character and aspirations and struggles of his own soul, but makes so many allusions to his enemies and affords so many indications of his relations to them and their attitude and endeavours regarding him, that it becomes feasible that with due patience we shall discover with something like moral certainty *who he is*. And, in point of fact, the situation ultimately becomes so patent, that we are persuaded that only one man in the field of sacred story fits the situation and fulfils its many-sided demands. But, in order to make this discovery, we need to have studied the psychology of the previous psalms with some persistence and insight. If we have already caught glimpses of THE MAN, without foreseeing whither they would lead us; but now at length realise a SITUATION exactly fitted for him, and, so far as we can judge, for no other possible writer

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of a psalm like the present, we may hope for the patience of our readers, before the strength of our persuasion that we have found the author, is condemned. Those fellow-students who have accompanied us in our investigation of Pss. 31, 35; 42, 43, will anticipate the avowal that here again we are on the track of PRINCE HEZEKIAH. We say "prince" advisedly; for it is only by antedating Hezekiah's ascension to the throne; by reflecting that he must have been prince before he became king; by assuring ourselves that he must have had a history before he began to reign, that certainly he did not burst forth from oblivion an already strong man of God without decision of character previously formed or moral culture previously pursued; that probably he had had a godly mother; that possibly he had quite easily and naturally come under the tutorial care of the prophet Isaiah with whom we know he was intimate in after years; that, almost certainly, he had long had access to the royal library in which the archives of Israel and the psalms of David were stored; that as a king's son he would be well-educated, would have leisure at command, and could easily secure assistance in any pursuit in which he might care to indulge;—it is only when we put these things together, that we begin to conceive of the situation as it really must have been formed by the circumstances and conditions of Hezekiah's younger days. These are by no means all the formative influences on which we can reckon. The life and doings of his father Ahaz are known to us: his vanity—his timidity—his inclinations towards idolatry—his readiness to use his priests as patrons of his apostate doings and his ministers as the tools of his innovating designs: these things are well known to us. Then we have our knowledge of human nature to furnish an element of guidance. We can readily conceive how the pious and faithful Hezekiah would be a thorn in his father's side; a reflection on his father's instability; a rebuke to the sycophantic courtiers who would be only too ready to connive at his father's questionable courses; and, moreover, how, *less than a word* from such a father against such a son would serve as a cloak under which those courtiers who chiefly wished to curry favour with the reigning monarch would little by little develop into persecutors of the pious prince and, it may be, secure his banishment from court, or at least his retirement into country life. Then, too, we must remember that Hezekiah did not begin to reign till he was twenty-five; and if we date his conscious manhood and perceptible self-assertion

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no further back than to eighteen years of age, that gives us seven ample years for culture in music and song, abundant leisure for searching among the library scrolls and tablets, and for *writing acrostics of any length*. Hezekiah, at five-and-twenty, would practically be as old as most of his compeers at fifty.

If now we bring into comparison with these conditions the indications afforded by the psalm itself, we become more and more amazed at the correspondence between the two sets of circumstances. Daniel, it is true, had enemies of high rank (23, 161) watchful and treacherous (61, 85, 110, 150; 118, 158): Hezekiah's enemies were all this; and, besides, had one characteristic which Daniel was not confronted with in Babylon: Hezekiah's enemies were faithless to the Divine Law, which they nevertheless knew (118, 150, 158); and this alone puts Daniel out of court as having any claim to be considered the author of this psalm. Not only were this writer's enemies acquainted with the law of Jehovah, but they were frustrators of it (126); and it is no wonder that our author was both indignant at their conduct (53) and deeply grieved by it (136). Hezekiah's privileged position, in having access to the Library of the Law, fully justified him in promising that those who *turned* (or *returned*) to him should know Jehovah's testimonies (79). He could tell them as well as any scribe. Accustomed, as prince, to enjoy the benefit of competent counsellors, in dark days of apostacy he would be glad to find *counsellors* in his much-loved sacred books (24). His position made him well aware of the value of wealth; and, therefore, it was no empty comparison when he preferred the knowledge of Jehovah's will to *all riches, to thousands of gold and silver* (14, 36, 72, 127). If Hezekiah was ever banished to the upper reaches of the Jordan, as appears probable (Ps. 42), we can perceive an especial fitness in the allusion here (54) to his "house of sojourn," made vocal with "melodies" in honour of Jehovah's "statutes"; and at the same time can appreciate his sense of distance from Jehovah's house which he so greatly loved (41, 77). It is only needful to add, that in spite of the appearance of age in the author of this psalm which has persuaded several commentators into the inference that he was at least a middle-aged man, the balance of evidence contained in the comparisons and positive assertion of the psalm itself (99, 100, 141) is decidedly in favour of the conclusion that he was still a young man when he composed it; and we can well believe what an unspeakable solace it was to the ban-

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ished prince Hezekiah thus to beguile the weary hours in constructing this work of sacred art—which probably, merely as literature, has few if any equals in the world. The references appended to the text above, calling attention to the third stanza of Ps. 35, will add another item of circumstantial evidence, which tends to make the inference, that Hezekiah wrote this psalm as well as that stanza, well-nigh irresistible.

It was hoped to close this merely introductory "Exposition" with the foregoing paragraph. But the psalm refuses to be hastily dismissed. By this time it has cast over us a spell which is not easily broken. We began with something akin to a defence of the psalm from the suspicion of necessarily being dry, because so obviously artificial and inevitably monotonous. But, little by little, how completely has such an anticipation vanished. How full the psalm is of passion; how many sidelights on character does it convey; how gem-like many of its single sentences have come to sparkle in our eyes, commending themselves as texts and mottoes, memorable words of warning and cheer; how charmingly its biographical contributions, profusely scattered through its stanzas, have opened up to us the engrossing incidents which probably bestudded a single good man's life; and especially how profound are the historical and theological problems to which it effectively introduces us. Only to instance a single biographical suggestion, and an unexpected theological inquiry:—What have we before us in the way of personality, but a young man, who at least once went astray; whose sin seems to have become known to those who wished him ill, who very probably magnified his offence, procuring by their evil tongues a punishment which, directly or indirectly, nearly cost the young prince his life: this same young man, being led to bethink him of his ways, to turn his feet into the way of Jehovah's testimonies, and ever after to serve his pardoning God with an enthusiasm and thoroughness which converted his ill-wishers into crafty and persistent persecutors. Some such personal history as this floats before us, as the kaleidoscope of alphabetical reminiscence continues its aphoristic suggestions. The theological inquiry alluded to is no less profound than that which concerns itself with the beginnings and fluctuations of the divine life in the human soul. This same young man, was he already a backslider in the divine life when he first egregiously went astray; or did he suddenly fall into unforeseen and unexpected temptation and as quickly experience recovery to Divine

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favour, thenceforth to walk more guardedly than before in the narrow way of Jehovah's commandments? We cannot exactly know; nor would we, if we could, brood over the diagnosis of his sin. The thing that interests us is, the simple fact, that eleven times over in the course of this psalm is reference made to the quickening of the spiritual life within him (namely in vers. 25, 37, 40, 50, 88, 93, 107, 149, 154, 156 and 159); which interest is intensified into sustained wonder, that the contact of Jehovah's WILL, which we are so ready to denominate LAW, and to regard as "killing" rather than "giving life," should have been so largely instrumental in bringing this psalmist's soul into conscious nearness to God. As closely related Scripture words often qualify each other; so it would seem do related human experiences, though far removed in point of time and condition, limit each other so materially as to require careful adjustment before we finally pronounce on the whole psychological question involved. In other words: How can we harmonise the condemnatory and slaying effects of "law" as portrayed in the Seventh of Romans with the life-giving functions discharged by "law" in the one hundred and nineteenth psalm? Doubtless, there is perfect harmony between them: but how seldom do we allow a steady eye on that harmony to guard us from exaggerations when we are engrossed in either the one sphere of thought or the other. It may be added that, intimately entwining itself with these biographical and theological questions, is another, which, though closely related, is nevertheless distinct: namely, the historical problem of growing spirituality in the nation of Israel. Many writers plausibly argue that these remarkable approximations of Old Testament spirituality to that of New Testament times, can only have resulted from the long and severe discipline of the Exile. Grant that assumption, as regards the nation as a nation, does it hold good also and equally of individuals? We need not disturb the foregone conclusion which goes so far to solve the mystery of pain, namely that the highest form of goodness can be produced only from the refining process of suffering; and yet we may discover, that the painful schooling of a nation is mostly or always heralded by the stern discipline of individuals. From this point of view, the enquiry becomes pertinent, how far the best of the pre-exilic kings were perfected by suffering; or, to close in upon the problem offered by this psalm: If we assume that such a chastened composition as the one-hundred-and-nineteenth psalm



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could only have sprung from the soil of sanctified suffering, it is still open to us to conclude that the Young Prince Hezekiah had himself graduated in that school; and that he, out of the treasuries of a varied and instructive experience, stored and wrought up into exquisite form during a period of ample leisure, produced this unique sacred composition—which not being a Temple Song was not earlier introduced in the Psalter, and being in an especial sense a piece of private autobiography was not readily placed at the public service; but which some such discerning Scribe as Ezra has, under Divine Guidance, saved from permanent oblivion.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How answer the charge that this psalm is “wearisomely monotonous”? Rotherham uses two or three beautiful figures of speech to answer this charge. Discuss them.
2. There are two devices used to give art and beauty (as well as structure) to this psalm. What are they?
3. What is the “master-thought of the psalm”? How is an answer reached to the above question?
4. The writer of the psalm is “aflame with affection” for the object of this psalm. What is it? Why so concerned about it?
5. There are nine synonyms instead of eight. Why? What is the ninth?
6. The study of all 176 verses of this psalm is a life-long pursuit. Consider what is said here about the study and meditation on the word of God. What about holy living as seen in this psalm?
7. There is some possibility that Daniel was the writer of this psalm. Why rejected?
8. Hezekiah is the writer of the psalm with hardly a question of doubt in the mind of Rotherham. Do you agree? Discuss.
9. At what time in the life of Hezekiah was this written? Hezekiah’s resources for writing were very good. What were they?
10. The life and doings of Ahaz could relate to this psalm. How?
11. Consider the details given as to the enemies of Hezekiah and of Daniel. How compared and related to this psalm?
12. The place of the writing is also discussed. What is said?

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13. There is an intriguing biographical inference to the author in the psalm. What is it?
14. What theological question could be raised here? How answered? (It is important—do not ignore it!)
15. The historical problem of growing spirituality in the nation of Israel is here mentioned. What is said about it?

## PSALM 120

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

*Peace versus War.*

### ANALYSIS

(See Inserted Headlines.)

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(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

(A GRATEFUL KING'S MEMORIAL.)

- 1 Unto Jehovah in the distress that befell me  
I called and he answered me:—
- 2 "Jehovah! oh rescue my soul—  
from the lip of falsehood  
from the tongue of deceit."

(A BELLIGERENT COUNSELLOR'S WARLIKE SPEECH.)

- 3 "What shall one give to thee and what shall one add to thee,  
thou tongue of deceit?
- 4 Arrows of a warrior—  
sharpened with glowing coals of broom!"<sup>1</sup>

(THE PEACEFUL KING'S LAMENT.)

- 5 "Ah! woe is me! that I sojourn with Meshech—<sup>2</sup>  
that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!<sup>3</sup>
- 6 Full long hath my soul had her dwelling  
with haters<sup>4</sup> of peace!

1. "The broom shrub makes the best charcoal, and therefore the best coal to burn and glow"—Br.

2. "The Moschi . . . in Assyr. times they dwelt in W. (or N.W.) Armenia"—O.G.

3. "Tribes of nomads in Arabian desert"—O.G.

4. So (pl.) some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "a hater" (sing.)

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7: I am peace! but when I speak  
they [are] for war!"

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 120

In my troubles I pled with God to help me and He did!

2 Deliver me, O Lord, from liars.

3 O lying tongue, what shall be your fate?

4 You shall be pierced with sharp arrows and burned with glowing coals.<sup>1</sup>

5, 6 My troubles pile high among these haters of the Lord, these men of Meshech and Kedar. I am tired of being here among these men who hate peace.

7 I am for peace, but they are for war, and my voice goes unheeded in their councils.

## EXPOSITION

If we assume the correctness of Dr. Thirtle's solution of the title of the following fifteen psalms, as on broader grounds we deem ourselves entitled to do, we ought to find the contents of the psalms themselves continually verifying that conclusion. We shall accordingly call attention, in the quietest way possible, to the passing indications afforded, that the so-called "Songs of Degrees," or "Songs of Ascents," more exactly *Songs of the Steps*, are commemorative of the two-fold deliverance—of Israel from the Assyrians, and of Israel's King from the premature death with which he was threatened by Jehovah. We need not suppose them all composed in celebration of the particular crisis when the sign of the Dial-steps was vouchsafed, so long as, in a general way, they are all such as Hezekiah might have either written or adapted to the various events of his reign, and employed especially to commemorate its crowning deliverance. Should two or three of these psalms approve themselves as written to celebrate Hezekiah's great Passover-feast to which he invited the Northern Tribes with a chequered and yet encouraging response, so much the better; since no one can doubt that the king would naturally desire to memorialise his efforts after the reunion of the Tribes; and then, besides, the larger the area from which our circumstantial evidence as to authorship is de-

1. Literally, "with coals of the broom tree."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

rived, the more convincing ought to be the result when the converging rays of light are brought to a focus.

It is easy to recognise the probability that, for some time after he began to reign, Hezekiah had about him counsellors who, without being actually disloyal to him, were quite unable to take his exalted views of the reality of Jehovah's protection of Israel; and, consequently, how naturally it came about that when, in the earlier days of the Assyrian Invasion, the King's whole soul was set for *peace*, by reason of his confident trust in Jehovah, his courtiers were some of them utterly unable to follow his counsels; and, indeed, were only moved by his pacific assurances to fiercer denunciations of the foe. This apprehension of the state of the atmosphere at Hezekiah's Court, forms an apt preparation for the first psalm in the series. Kirkpatrick's explanation of the strikingly figurative language employed in the course of this psalm may usefully guard us from stumbling at the outset.

"*Meshech*, mentioned in Gen. 10:2 as a son of Japheth, was a barbarous people living between the Black Sea and the Caspian, probably the Moschi of Herodotus (iii. 94) and Mushki of the Assyrian inscriptions: *Kedar*, mentioned in Gen. 25:13 as the second son of Ishmael, was one of the wild tribes which roamed through the Arabian desert, 'whose hand was against every man' (Gen. 16:12). Obviously the psalmist cannot mean to describe himself as actually living among peoples so remote from one another, but applies these typical names of barbarian tribes to his own compatriots, as we might speak of Turks and Tartars."

These "Turks and Tartars" were in Hezekiah's Court, and the king was getting weary of them. It is submitted that the very terms of the psalm exactly suit such a situation, and not at all the state of affairs during the Exile, or after it in the neighborhood of Jerusalem.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The following fifteen psalms are commemorative of a two-fold deliverance. What is it?
2. In what place in this psalm are the counsellors of Hezekiah found?
3. Who is the "Meshech" of verse 5?
4. How did Hezekiah feel God would deliver Israel? How was Israel delivered?

PSALM 121

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Jehovah the True Helper and Keeper of Israel.

ANALYSIS

(See Inserted Headlines.)

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

(THE KING, SEEING JERUSALEM SURROUNDED  
BY AN ARMY.)

- 1 "I keep lifting mine eyes unto the mountains—  
whence cometh my help?"

(STRONG COUNSELLOR'S ASSURANCE.)

- 2 "Help<sup>1</sup> is from Jehovah—  
maker of heaven and earth!"

(WEAK COUNSELLOR'S PIOUS WISH.)

- 3 "May he not<sup>2</sup> suffer thy foot to slip!  
may he that keepeth<sup>3</sup> thee not<sup>2</sup> slumber!"

(STRONG COUNSELLOR'S RE-ASSURANCE.)

- 4 "Lo! neither<sup>4</sup> will slumber nor<sup>4</sup> sleep  
the Keeper of Israel.

- 5 Jehovah—thy Keeper—Jehovah  
is thy shade on thy right hand:

- 6 By day the sun shall not smite thee,  
nor the moon by night.

- 7 Jehovah will keep thee from every evil—  
he will keep thy person,<sup>5</sup>

1. Merely omitting the suffix *yod* from the noun for "help" converts this verse into a timely positive assurance.

2. The subjective or deprecative negative is here used, and by the headline is dramatically accounted for.

3. N.B. how the "strong counsellor" catches up this word and repeats it five times.

4. In contrast with the negative in ver. 3, that here used is positive, and states a fact.

5. Heb. *nepshesh*: U.: "soul." We need to be reminded how frequently *nepshesh* means "person"—in good contrast, here, with "goings."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 8 Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in—  
from henceforth and to the ages!"<sup>6</sup>

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 121

Shall I look to the mountain gods for help?

2 No! My help is from Jehovah who made the mountains!  
And the heavens too!

3, 4 He will never let me stumble, slip or fall. For He  
is always watching, never sleeping.

5 Jehovah Himself is caring for you! He is your defender.<sup>1</sup>

6 He protects you day and night.

7 He keeps you from all evil, and preserves your life.

8 He keeps His eye upon you as you come and go, and  
always guards you.

### EXPOSITION

Notwithstanding his strong faith in Jehovah, Hezekiah's confidence would naturally be tried as the Assyrians approached the sacred city. Jerusalem was surrounded by mountains; and to these the King would instinctively lift up his eyes to see whether the Assyrians were coming; and, in moments of distress, might well ask—whence his *help* could come. Such a strong man as Isaiah would be at hand to assure him; and ver. 2 would be worthy of *him* and of the occasion. It is easy to apprehend how a weaker counsellor might thereupon express the pious wish that Jehovah's help might not fail, but in such terms as tended rather to weaken the King's faith than to strengthen it. The first adviser, therefore, renews his assurances of Jehovah's help in more vigorous and ample terms. *Lo!* says he,—*Look you!*—as of some open and manifest truth—and then he proceeds with his re-assurance in positive terms of utmost vigour; accumulating the Divine titles to confidence, figuratively picturing the pervading presence of Jehovah's protection, playing with the word employed by his weaker friend—*Keeper*—till it echoes with triumphant faith. Then, too, the very word *keep* is exquisitely fitted to the position of a king who could not move—

6. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Ages."

1. Literally, "your shade at your right hand."

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but must wait till he should "see the salvation of God." How much easier thus to apply the words, than to force the accustomed thought of help coming from the mountains of Judæa to bring the returning exiles out of Babylon.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Verse one of this psalm is very much misunderstood. The help *does not* come from the hills—from whence? Discuss.
2. Who would give help and assurance to Hezekiah? (i.e. besides God)
3. There seems to be two counsellors in this psalm. What does each say? Who are they?

## P S A L M 1 2 2

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Tribes Welcomed to the Passover.

### ANALYSIS

(See Inserted Headlines.)

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(Lm.) Song of the Steps—By David<sup>1</sup>  
(A PILGRIM'S REMINISCENCE OF THE  
START FROM HOME.)

- 1 I rejoiced with those who were saying to me:—  
"To the house of Jehovah we go!"

(A BAND OF PILGRIMS' OUTBURST OF  
TRIUMPH ON ARRIVAL.)

- 2 Standing are our feet—  
within thy gates—  
O Jerusalem!

(THE PILGRIMS, ADMIRING THE CITY, ARE  
REMINDED OF ITS RELIGIOUS USE.)

- 3 Jerusalem!  
She that hath been built up a veritable city,  
Joined for her part into a unity:

1. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.) omit: "By David"—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 4 Whither have come up tribes—  
The tribes of Yah—  
A testimony to Israel—  
To give thanks to the name of Jehovah.

### (SURPRISED OBSERVATION OF JUDICIAL PREPARATIONS.)

- 5 Surely there have they placed seats<sup>2</sup> for justice!  
seats<sup>2</sup> for the house of David!

### (PRAYERS SUGGESTED FOR JERUSALEM'S PEACE.)

- 6 Ask ye the peace of Jerusalem:—  
"Quiet be they who love thee!  
7 let there be peace within thy walls!  
quietness within thy palaces!"

### (AN INDIVIDUAL'S EAGERNESS TO JOIN.)

- 8 "For the sake of my brethren and my friends  
do pray let me speak:—  
'Peace be within thee!  
9 For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God  
let me seek to secure a blessing for thee.' "

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 122

I was glad for the suggestion of going to Jerusalem, to the Temple of the Lord.

2, 3 Now we are standing here inside the crowded city.

4 All Israel—Jehovah's people—have come to worship as the law requires, to thank and praise the Lord.

5 Look! There are the judges holding court beside the city gates, deciding all the people's arguments.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May all who love this city prosper.

7 O Jerusalem, may there be peace within your walls and prosperity in your palaces.

8 This I ask for the sake of all my brothers and my friends who live here;

9 And may there be peace as a protection to the Temple of the Lord.

2. Or: "thrones."



PSALM 122  
EXPOSITION

It will be noticed that some authorities omit the ascription of this psalm to *David*; and, judging from internal evidence, nothing can well be imagined more perfectly fitting, for its primary occasion, than to view it as King Hezekiah's welcome to the Northern Tribes whom he had invited to join in the celebration of his great Passover. The completeness of its adaptation to that memorable occasion cannot be exaggerated. Down to the minutest detail, it approves itself as worthy of the man who conceived it, and the occasion for which it was first intended.

Imagine, then, the profound satisfaction with which a godly Northerner heard one after another of his neighbours declaring his intention to respond to good King Hezekiah's invitation, by going up to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem. That gives the *motif* of the first brief stanza, ver. 1.

Think, further, of the feelings of a band of such pilgrims when they first found themselves standing within the gates of the Sacred City. Naturally, the first person singular has given place to the first person plural—the *I* of isolated reception of the news of intention to go, is exchanged for the *our* of companionship in the triumph of actual arrival. Every word tells exactly as written: *Standing—are our feet—within thy gates—O Jerusalem!* We can perceive the thrill of emotion with which the feet of the pilgrims press the hallowed ground. That is our second stanza.

The newly-arrived gaze around them in silent astonishment and admiration, as if perchance they had hitherto only been accustomed to the straggling houses of a country village, and had never seen a real city before. "*Jerusalem!* and this is she!—*she that hath been built*, compact and continuous, as a *city worthy of the name*; every dweller in close touch with his neighbour, for fellowship in need, in worship, and in mutual defence; Jerusalem—striking *symbol of unity*. We, of the Tribes have been scattered and divided,—but our beloved Jerusalem is ONE!" So may we appreciate the first half of the third stanza.

Fine the tact of poetic vision, that sees the chance of here introducing a skilful and strong reminder of the duty of the Tribes to their Mother City. Nothing so prosy and pedagogic as to say, "Whither the tribes ought regularly to come up, as for centuries they have not done": nothing so *awkward as that* comes from the poet's pen; but rather the gracious recognition

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

that they *have responded* to the King's invitation; since here, in fact, they are; as Northerner, having already greeted Northerner in Jerusalem, rejoices to know: *Whither have come up tribes.* Moreover, these *tribes that have come up*, are not aliens and rebels; oh no! *but tribes of Yah*, that had a right to come—a *testimony to Israel*, by the original ordinance, making for national unity; and how much more *telling a testimony* now, when men from all quarters are once more joining in bearing it. They have come, not to be reprimanded for their long absence, but to join in the soul-cementing bonds of united *praise to Jehovah*—their ancestors' still Living God. That excellent stroke of poetic policy completes our third stanza.

If any one thing, more than another, should elicit our admiration of the Divine Tact of this psalm-writer, it is the way in which he succeeds in bringing in—as by means of a casual observation—the most delicate of reminders that the holy people, who are *religiously* one, should be *judicially*, and therefore *civilly*, one also. It is not hinted that a notice had been seen exhibited at the street-corners, to the effect that "All coming to Jerusalem to worship are expected to bring with them their civil causes to be tried by the rightful present Representatives of the Beloved King David." No! it is—as to its actual poetic form—not an authoritative notice at all; but merely a sojourner's surprised and significant observation of something in the city he has seen. But what has he seen? Nothing more than *empty chairs*, placed in the public area set apart as forum. But those empty chairs are eloquent; for they are chairs of state. "*Surely, there, have they placed seats for justice: seats for the house of David!*" so remarks the pilgrim as he passes by, impressed by the sight, the profound meaning of which he thoughtfully ponders.

But a truce to object-lessons and moralisings prompted by them. The great Feast is rapidly reaching its climax of UNITED INTERCESSION. Here are fitting prayers suggested. The city as a whole filling every mind, "*Ask ye the peace of Jerusalem,*" says the poet: and in so doing, such things as the following, it will be seasonable that ye say:—"Quiet be they who love thee: may they 'lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and gravity.' *Let there be peace within thy walls, O Jerusalem*—whatever storms may rage in foreign lands. And *quietness itself*—in purest distillation—*be within thy palaces* of state and power." All of which, the student of the psalm can amplify according to his own sense of fitness.

## PSALMS 122 AND 123

But the closing stanza must not be missed nor slurred over; for, in truth, it asks to be read with a delicate meaning discovered between its lines. For who is the INDIVIDUAL that closes the psalm? Who is he that, having so thoughtfully provided for the spiritual wants of others, now begs to be heard for himself:—"begs," we say, advisedly; since no scholar can deny that a homely *passion of importunity* is there, in the Hebrew, which sooner than let the mere English reader miss we have ventured to represent by the quaint form of request, "*Do pray let me speak*"? Who is this, then, with a heart so large that he can, within the compass of two closing sentences, take in with loving embrace his *brethren and friends* and likewise, with worshipful concern, *the house of Jehovah*? Is it not the author of the psalm himself, who can no longer be restrained from speaking for himself; and who, for some of us, by the fitness of every word of the psalm to the man and to the occasion, has virtually signed his name, KING HEZEKIAH?

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the particular occasion of this psalm? We are invited to use our imagination as to the circumstances.
2. An appreciation for the nation is obtained by this visit. How?
3. There is "an excellent stroke of poetic policy in the third stanza. What is it?"
4. How was the religious, judicial and civil unity of Israel suggested?
5. Give several phrases as to the *united intercession*.
6. The writer of the psalm has an individual request at the close of the psalm. What is it?

## P S A L M 1 2 3

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The King's Response to the Injunction to Lift up  
his Eyes as High as Heaven.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I, ver. 1, An Individualistic Couplet by way of Response to the Exhortation in Ps. 121:2. Stanza II, ver. 2, Israel unites in getting into an

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Attitude of Earnest Waiting on Jehovah; which, in Stanza III., vers. 3, 4, Finds expression in Importunate Entreaty.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 "Unto thee have I uplifted mine eyes,  
O thou who art enthroned in the heavens!"
- 2 Lo! as the eyes of menservants unto the hand of their lord,  
as the eyes of a maidservant unto the hand of her lady  
So our eyes are unto Jehovah our God,  
until that he be gracious unto us.
- 3 "Be gracious unto us O Jehovah be gracious unto us,  
for greatly are we sated with contempt:
- 4 Exceedingly sated on her part is our soul—<sup>2</sup>  
with the scorn of the arrogant,  
the contempt of the proudest oppressors."

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 123

O God enthroned in heaven, I lift my eyes to You.

2 We look to Jehovah our God for His mercy and kindness just as a servant keeps his eyes upon his master or a slave girl watches her mistress for the slightest signal.

3, 4 Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy. For we have had our fill of contempt and of the scoffing of the rich and proud.

## EXPOSITION

Most naturally, King Hezekiah, who is a skilful leader in psalmody as well as a worthy example of devotion, leads off this psalm; which comes out well as a Response to the Assurance in 121:2—"Help is from Jehovah—maker of heaven and earth."

The second verse gathers up into congregational expression a representation of a waiting and watching attitude towards Jehovah which is at once homely, beautiful and suggestive. These worshippers, though on earth, are led to regard themselves as attendants in presence of their Heavenly King; full in his view; awaiting his pleasure. As personal attendants await in silence the slightest expression of the will of their superior; watching the pointing finger which says "Go," the open

1. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

## PSALMS 123 AND 124

palm which says "Bring," the beckoning movement which says "Come"; so, says the psalmist, even with such profound respect and watchful attention are *our eyes unto Jehovah our God, until that he be gracious unto us*. Surely, a comparison as suggestive as it is beautiful. Such servants know their master's or mistress's ways—the meaning of each familiar gesture. They need no loud word of formal command: all they require is, to catch the slightest hint of the superior's WILL as the sufficient signal for obedience. And so, the least word from Isaiah for instance, would be intimation enough for both the King and his people:—without (say) going to the Pentateuch, or to Mount Sinai, for a formal "Thus saith the Lord."

This adjustment of the mental attitude of the worshipping nation towards Jehovah is then at once merged in importunate entreaty. The plea is pointedly put—*Be gracious unto us, O Jehovah,*—and emphatically repeated—*be gracious unto us;* and then weighted with a reason: *for greatly are we sated with contempt*. "Oh! we have had enough of this vile and blaspheming Rabshakeh and his imperious master." We all know the story. Fancy the foreigner on our own soil; and ourselves at the time in certain and miraculously attested covenant relation with the Maker of heaven and earth! and should *we* not have importuned our God in some such strains as these?

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is a "response psalm"; a response to what?
2. A beautiful court scene is here given—i.e. a scene in the court of King Jehovah. What is involved?
3. How beautifully is obedience to God here suggested. Discuss.
4. What is meant by the phrase ". . . greatly are we sated with contempt"?

## P S A L M 1 2 4

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Sudden and Complete Deliverance Acknowledged  
as Jehovah's Own Work.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Israel taught to Recognize and Remember the Extent

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

of her Danger as figured by On-rushing Waters. Stanza II., vers. 6-8, Praise offered for Deliverance as from a Beast of Prey and from a Fowler's Trap.

### (Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 "If it had not been Jehovah who was for us"—  
oh let Israel say—
- 2 "If it had not been Jehovah who was for us,  
when man rose up against us
- 3 Then alive had they swallowed us up  
in the glow of their anger against us;
- 4 Then the waters had washed us away,  
the torrent had gone over our soul;
- 5 Then had gone over our soul the waters so proud."
- 6 Blessed be Jehovah!  
who gave us not over as a prey to their teeth.
- 7 Our soul like a bird hath escaped from the trap of the  
fowlers,  
the trap is broken and we are escaped.
- 8 Our help is in the name of Jehovah,  
maker of heaven and earth.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 124

If the Lord had not been on our side (let all Israel admit it), if the Lord had not been on our side,

2, 3 We would have been swallowed alive by our enemies,  
destroyed by their anger.

4, 5 We would have drowned beneath the flood of these  
men's fury and pride.

6 Blessed be Jehovah who has not let them devour us.

7 We have escaped with our lives as a bird from a hunter's  
snare. The snare is broken and we are free!

8 Our help is from the Lord who made heaven and earth!

## EXPOSITION

Of the three conceivable situations which have been thought of as originating this striking and beautiful psalm, the first fits not at all, the second fits but awkwardly, the third fits admirably—as glove to hand for which it was made. The

## PSALM 124

first, is the deliverance from Babylon; the second, that from the conspiracy of the little surrounding nations to Nehemiah and his brethren after their return to the homeland; and these, it will be perceived, are exilic and post-exilic: of comparatively late date for inclusion in Israel's Psalter. The third, is the deliverance of Judah from the Assyrian invader Sennacherib, which carries back the psalm into Hezekiah's times, and places it alongside of its companions, the other "Songs of the Steps."

As to the first of these occasions, suffice it to say that Judah was not about being *swallowed up* in Babylon since they had long sojourned there, had built houses, and practised their religion in their foreign home; and on the other hand their return from Babylon was not in the least like being snatched from the teeth of a beast of prey or being set free from a broken *trap* or *snare* with an instant and complete liberation. Kirkpatrick plainly sees this, and his words are worth recording here. "It is commonly supposed," says he, "to be the thanksgiving of the returned exiles for deliverance from the Babylonian captivity. No less event, it is urged, could have evoked such strong emotion." It is well that he notes this strong emotion. "But the language of the psalm," he continues, "points rather to some sudden danger which had been providentially averted, than to a blow which had actually fallen." And then he goes on to emphasise "the danger which menaced the restored community when Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem." But neither was this danger so sudden, nor was deliverance so definite, instant, and complete as to answer to the description of the psalm. Turn back to the deliverance from the Assyrian invasion and the Divine overthrow of Sennacherib's army in a single night, and then how apt and impressive the Psalmist's description of both danger and deliverance; how abundantly justified the "strong emotion" which the psalm unmistakably betrays. More than this. The invasion of Palestine by Assyria had been actually foretold by Isaiah (8:6-8) in terms precisely similar to those of the first stanza of this psalm; so that when the psalmist speaks of *the waters so proud* which had threatened to engulf Judah, he may excusably be thought to have had the very terms of Isaiah's prediction in mind, as he had spoken of "the waters strong and many of the River (Euphrates)," rolling on throughout Judah, overflowing and passing along "till unto the neck he shall reach." Thirtle is amply justified in thus commenting upon the psalm before us:—"It is all true

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

of Hezekiah and his experiences during the Assyrian invasion. The first four verses reflect the desperate character of the situation, when there was no resource but Jehovah. David was enabled to effect many escapes; the great escape of Hezekiah is outlined in his remarkable story. That it was comparable to a bird securing its freedom after being imprisoned in a cage (ver. 7a) may be gathered from the boastful words of Sennacherib himself, as appearing in the well-known Taylor cylinder ('Records of the Past,' Second Series, vol. vi., pp. 90, 91): 'Hezekiah of Judah . . . I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem, his royal city . . . He was overwhelmed by the fear of the brightness of my lordship (lines 11-30)'—Thirtle, "Old Testament Problems," pp. 41, 42.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the three possible situations for the setting of this psalm?
2. Show how the first and second situations could not fit the psalm.
3. Even archeology confirms Rotherham's position on this psalm. Discuss.

## PSALM 125

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Trust in Jehovah Encouraged in Presence of the Invader.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Jerusalem Safe under Jehovah's Protection. Stanza II., ver. 3, The Sceptre of the Lawless One will be Removed. Stanza III., vers. 4, 5, Prayer for the Good, a Threatening for Such as Yield to the Enemy, and a Benediction on Israel.

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(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 They who trust in Jehovah  
are like Mount Zion which cannot be shaken.
- 2 To the ages sitteth Jerusalem enthroned—  
mountains round about her;



## PSALM 125

And Jehovah is round about his people—  
from henceforth and to the ages.

- 3 Surely he will not let the sceptre of the lawless one<sup>1</sup> rest—  
on the lot of the righteous,  
To the end the righteous may not thrust forth  
on perversity their hand.
- 4 Oh do good Jehovah unto such as are good—  
even to such as are upright in their hearts;
- 5 But as for such as turn aside their crooked ways  
Jehovah will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity!<sup>2</sup>  
Peace upon Israel!

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 125

Those who trust in the Lord are steady as Mount Zion,  
unmoved by any circumstance.

2 Just as the mountains surround and protect Jerusalem, so  
the Lord surrounds and protects His people.

3 For the wicked shall not rule the godly, lest the godly  
be forced to do wrong.

4 O Lord, do good to those who are good, whose hearts  
are right with the Lord;

5 But lead evil men to execution. And let Israel have  
quietness and peace.

## EXPOSITION

Each stanza in this psalm bears witness to the presence of the Invader. The word for *trust* in ver. 1 is the same as that found in 2 Ch. 32:10. Ver. 3 assumes that the sceptre of the foreigner is at present resting on Israel's inheritance; but is a source of danger to the wavering. In ver. 5 we catch sight of those who are coquetting with the enemy and running into the danger of being involved in his ruin: as the Assyrians—such as are left—are about to be led away in shame to their own land, so let all renegades in Israel beware lest they too be *led forth* with the authors of all this *trouble*. *Mount Zion* itself stands firm amidst her surrounding *mountains*: so let

1. So some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: (changing a vowel-point): "lawlessness."

2. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.)

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Jehovah's people rest trustful under Jehovah's strong protection. "The political situation was one which called for the encouragement ministered by the words; and the conduct of Hezekiah in the day of adversity shows the mighty influence of Isaiah's advice and the prevailing efficacy of his prayers"—Thirtle, O.T.P., 44.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read II Chro. 32:10 and discuss its application to this psalm.
2. Even when Sennecharib was about to conquer Jerusalem there were those who were "coquetting with the enemy"—how do we know this?
3. How do the prayers of Isaiah relate to this psalm?

## PSALM 126

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Invader Gone: the First Sowing Begun.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, The Deliverance of Zion calls forth the Jubilations of her People, and the Frank Acknowledgment of Neighbouring Nations. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, Prayer for the Renewed Culture of the Devastated Land.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 When Jehovah turned the fortunes<sup>1</sup> of Zion  
we became like men dreaming:
- 2 Then was filled with laughter our mouth,  
and our tongue with ringing cries.  
Then said they among the nations—  
"Great things hath Jehovah done with these!"
- 3 Great things hath Jehovah done with us—  
we are full of joy!
- 4 Oh turn Jehovah our fortunes—  
as channels in the south country.
- 5 They who are sowing with tears—  
with ringing cries may they reap!

1. Or: (ml. though less prob.): "the captivity"—see Exposition.

## PSALM 126

- 6 Though one goeth forth and weepeth—  
bearing a trail of seed<sup>2</sup>  
Let him come in with ringing cries—  
bringing his sheaves.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 126

When Jehovah brought back His exiles to Jerusalem, it was like a dream!

2 How we laughed and sang for joy. And the other nations said, "What amazing things the Lord has done for them."

3 Yes, glorious things! What wonder! What joy!

4 May we be refreshed<sup>1</sup> as by streams in the desert.

5 Those who sow tears shall reap joy.

6 Yes, they go out weeping, carrying seed for sowing and return singing, carrying their sheaves.

## EXPOSITION

It may readily be conceded that, if the opening line of this psalm had been followed by a suitable sequel, the reference might easily have been to a return from literal captivity. But when we examine the usage of the expression "to turn captivity" in various places,—including especially Job 42:10 and Ezekiel 16:53, 55,—and find how "captivity" came sometimes to mean great misfortune or misery, and "turning captivity" to express the idea of turning the fortunes of any one to a former condition of prosperity,—we may well hesitate long enough to examine the context. Now it cannot be denied that the context, in this case, points to some sudden turn of fortune, or relief from distress, such as to appear incredible to the recipients of the blessing; and, at the same time, such as to be so patent to onlooking *nations* as to call forth their frank and admiring acknowledgment of the signal interposition of Israel's God. We need not deny the possibility, or probability, that when the successive companies of Jewish captives in Babylon received permission to return to their own land, the news may have appeared to them to be too good to be true, and they may

2. That is, a small quantity, which can ill be spared because of the want at home, bringing tears to the eyes of the sower.

1. Literally, "Restore our fortunes, Lord."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

have seemed to themselves like men who were *dreaming*; nevertheless, we are not aware that we possess any historical record to that effect. And when we further inquire into the allusion, supposed to be made in this psalm, as to the effect of Israelitish emancipation on surrounding and observant nations, we must acknowledge that nothing in the Ezra-Nehemiah narratives in anywise appears like a verification of this glad song. Here, in this psalm, we have an apparently frank and ungrudging acknowledgement, by foreigners, of Jehovah's interposition for his people; and this acknowledgement is gladly repeated and confirmed by the beneficiaries, as though with a smile of recognition at the courtesy of the admission. Anything more unlike this than the snarling and suspicious and intriguing behaviour of Sanballat and his associates cannot be imagined. There may, of course, have been a brief and passing smile on the face of the neighbouring nations, when they witnessed the arrival of the Jews in their own land; but history is as silent as the grave about it, and therefore it is hard to believe that it should have thus become embalmed in one of Israel's songs.

A similar line of observation may be taken with respect to the second half of the psalm. It is quite true, that returned captives would naturally, soon after their home-coming, have to turn their attention to the cultivation of their recovered lands; and it is possible, that they had to go about their task with aching hearts. But, again, we have no record of all this; and least of all have we any reason to suppose that the returned exiles were so nearly confronted by *famine* as to find it difficult to procure seed for sowing. And yet that is precisely the view which this psalm presents.

On both counts, therefore, we have reason to suspect the view-point afforded by the assumption that these psalms are post-exilic.

Take back the origin of this psalm to the days of Hezekiah, and all is changed; both stanzas of the psalm find firm bases of fact on which to rest. We *know* that the nations honoured Hezekiah and Israel after the overthrow of the Assyrians (2 Ch. 32:22, 23); and we *know* that, before the deliverance, Israel had begun to suffer severely from famine (2 Ch. 32:11); and that it was an anxious question how the people should be fed until they could again grow their own corn (Isa. 37:30, 31).

And thus the evidence of the pre-exilic origin of these beautiful psalms grows upon our hands.

PSALMS 126 AND 127

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The usual historical setting for this psalm is seriously called in question by Rotherham. He has two reasons for doing so. Discuss them.
2. Rotherham concedes the possibility of a post-exilic date but doubts it. Discuss.
3. Read II Chr. chapter 32 and Isaiah chapter 37. Discuss your agreement (or disagreement) with Rotherham.

P S A L M 1 2 7

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

In Relief of Domestic and Civic Anxiety.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Jehovah's Blessing Succeeds our Endeavours, Allays our Anxieties, and Gives us Sleep. Stanza II., vers. 3-5, Children a Gift from Jehovah.

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(Lm.) Song of the Steps—By Solomon.

- 1 Except Jehovah build the house  
in vain<sup>1</sup> will its builders have toiled thereon:  
Except Jehovah watch the city  
in vain<sup>1</sup> will the watchman have kept awake.
- 2 It is vain<sup>1</sup> for you who early rise who late take rest,  
who eat the bread of wearisome toil:  
So would he give his beloved ones<sup>2</sup> sleep.<sup>3</sup>
- 3 Lo! an inheritance from Jehovah are sons,  
a reward is the fruit of the womb:
- 4 As arrows in the hand of a warrior  
so are the sons of the youth.
- 5 How happy the man who hath filled his quiver with them!  
they shall not be put to shame,—  
Surely they will speak with enemies in the gate.

(Nm.)

1. Or: "For unreality."

2. So (pl.) some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T. (sing.).

3. Thus w. Per., rather than "in sleep"—preferred by O.G. 446a, Dav. Heb. Syntax 97, Br. and others.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 127

Unless the Lord builds a house, the builders' work is useless. Unless the Lord protects a city, sentries do no good.

2 It is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, fearing you will starve to death; for God wants His loved ones to get their proper rest.

3 Children are a gift from God; they are His reward.

4 Children born to a young man are like sharp arrows to defend him.

5 Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. That man shall have the help he needs when arguing with his enemies.<sup>1</sup>

### EXPOSITION

The object and argument of this psalm are plain. Its object is, to allay carking care; and its argument is, that Jehovah cares for us—that the need of his blessing in order to the prosperity of our most arduous enterprises, should lead us to rest in him, since that is his way of leading us, that is how he would have us shew our trust in him. His benefactions are not deprecated: on the contrary, their value is picturesquely and impressively extolled; for how could anything surpass, for beauty and force, the picture of a yet able but ageing father, emboldened by the rally to him of stalwart sons, ready to speak with the enemy, either in judicial witness and plea on the forum, or by bold parley with the foe before striking the ready blow? Yet at the root of even this imposing tree of prosperity lay Jehovah's blessing. For it is thus that we grasp the unity of the psalm, in dissent from those critics who would divide it into two incoherent portions.

*In vain*, says the poet with threefold emphasis, your most toilsome work, your most wearisome watch, your most protracted restlessness, except you have Jehovah's blessing. It is by teaching you this lesson,—it is *thus*,—it is *so*,—that your loving heavenly Father *would give you sleep*.

This construction of the first stanza is surely sufficiently satisfying to lead us to acquiesce in the conclusion of A.V., R.V. (text), P.B.V., Perowne, Carter,—that the noun "sleep" is what is called "the accusative of object"; in other words, that "sleep" is the very blessing which Jehovah is here represented

1. Literally, "When they speak with their enemies in the gate."

## PSALM 127

as giving to his beloved ones. Nevertheless, it may be conceded to be, not only grammatically possible, but exegetically plausible and in a good degree satisfying, to render the word "sleep" as an "adverbial accusative" of time or manner—*in sleep*,—with R.V. (marg.), O.G., Davidson, Briggs, Leeser (*during sleep*); since it is perfectly true that the operations of nature are many of them still active, some of them especially active, while the worker is asleep, and not infrequently the plans of those with large enterprises on hand are advancing by leaps and bounds when the busy brain that originated them is sweetly at rest. Practically, the two constructions come nearly to the same thing; seeing that the likeliest way to get "sleep," is to be assured that all is going on well "during sleep." But *are* they going on well? Who knows, except Jehovah who never slumbers or sleeps (121:4)? Who can effectually prosper them, save the Maker of heaven and earth? Therefore, trust thou in Him—and rest.

The very geniality of this psalm, makes easy its assumed original application and intention, according to the theory favoured by the expositor. Quite taking is the suggestion of those who, from this psalm, picture the exiles rebuilding Jerusalem—the father aided by his numerous sons, speaking with and putting to shame or flight the troublesome Samaritans and others at Jerusalem's gate. Perhaps even more taking is the hint—that this psalm was first meant to encourage the *building* of an *ancestral house*, even the family of David, by one who had remained unmarried or a widower until about the time this *Song of the Steps* was written! This suggestion may attract to itself an especial interest if, with Thirtle (O.T.P. 49), we credit the Jewish tradition that King Hezekiah, after his recovery, married Isaiah's daughter Hephzibah; and if we conjecture, as we then may (2 K. 21:1), that this good king had yet to wait two or three years before there was born to him an heir! Even learned critics may forget to allow for the touch of nature which makes the whole world kin. In any case we have not yet felt any literary compulsion to carry the dating of these "Songs of the Steps" to a period so late as the Exile.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the one outstanding purpose of this psalm?
2. In verses three through five we have a picture of sons aiding

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- and helping their father—but under what circumstances? How do we know this is the proper application? Discuss.
3. How does the noon “sleep” have a very prominent part in the first half of this psalm? Discuss.
  4. How related to the building of the Temple?

## PSALM 128

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Happy Home and a Prosperous Commonwealth.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, The Happy Home Described. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The Interest of the Commonwealth in Such a Home.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 How happy every one who revereth Jehovah—  
who walketh in his ways!
- 2 The toil of thine own hands when thou eatest—  
how happy for thee! and good for thine!
- 3 Thy wife—  
like a fruitful vine in the recesses of thy house!  
Thy children—  
like plantings of olive-trees around thy table!
- 4 Lo! surely thus shall be blessed the man who revereth  
Jehovah.
- 5 May Jehovah bless thee out of Zion;  
and gaze thou upon the prosperity of Jerusalem,
- 6 And see thou sons to thy sons.  
Peace be upon Israel!

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 128

Blessings on all who reverence and trust the Lord—on all who obey Him!

2 Their reward shall be prosperity and happiness.

3 Your wife shall be contented in your home. And look at



## PSALM 128

all those children! There they sit around the dinner table as vigorous and healthy as young olive trees.

4 That is God's reward to those who reverence and trust Him.

5 May the Lord continually bless you with heaven's blessings<sup>1</sup> as well as with human joys.<sup>2</sup>

6 May you live to enjoy your grandchildren! And may God bless Israel!

## EXPOSITION

Every one can see how delightful a companion picture this psalm forms to that which has immediately preceded it. It overflows with tender admiration for the man who, in his home, realises to the full the richness of Jehovah's blessing: *How happy* (ml., *Oh the blessednesses of*) twice exclaims the psalmist: first thinking of the devout mind and the well-ordered life of the chief recipient of Jehovah's blessing; then passing on to the sturdy independence of the man in being permitted to earn his own livelihood and that of his wife and children. No idler is he: no mere dependent. *Happy for thee* to gain thine own bread by thy toil, and to have loving ones to share it with thee, and *good for thine*, to nestle under thy wing and multiply thy blessings: *thy wife, like a vine*—graceful, dependent, fruitful—*in the recesses of thy house*, her sheltered heaven on earth, where she prefers to be; *thy children like plantings*—still young—of *olive-trees* on the way to transplantation into homes of their own, but at present placed around thy table as its richest ornament.

His neighbours call attention to him (*Lo!*) as a witness to Jehovah's kindness and faithfulness, and as an encouragement to others. In fact, the State sends blessings into the Home; and the Home—such a home returns blessings to the State. On such homes, worshippers implore benedictions from Jehovah: out of such homes welcoming eyes behold *the prosperity of Jerusalem*. And so, back and forth, the blessing goes and comes: from *thee* outwards to *Jerusalem*, from Jerusalem inwards and upwards to thy *grandchildren*. Out of such happiness, in giving and receiving, come finally devout good wishes for all the people: *Peace be upon Israel!*

1. Literally, "from Zion."

2. Literally, "of Jerusalem."

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It would seem that never in history was the theme of this psalm more needed in our nation. Discuss.
2. What prominent place does the wife have in this picture?
3. What effect upon neighboring nations would the devotion of Israel have?
4. Are we oversimplifying to suggest that in this psalm is the answer to our domestic and national dilemma?

PSALM 129

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel's Thanks for Past Deliverances, and  
Prayer for Continued Vindication.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Israel's Experience of Vexation and Deliverance.  
Stanza II., vers. 5-8, The Shame and Chagrin Awaiting all the Haters of Zion.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 "Full much have they harassed me from my youth"—  
pray let Israel say:
- 2 "Full much have they harassed me from my youth—  
but they have not prevailed against me.
- 3 Upon my back have ploughed the ploughers—  
they have lengthened their field.<sup>1</sup>
- 4 Jehovah is righteous—  
he hath cut asunder the cords of the lawless."
- 5 Let them be put to shame and retreat backward—  
all the haters of Zion!
- 6 Let them become as the grass of housetops—  
which before it hath unsheathed doth wither,<sup>2</sup>
- 7 Wherewith hath filled his hand no reaper,  
and his bosom no binder:
- 8 Neither have said the passers-by—

1. "Furrow-strip"—Del. A highly poetic description of the extent of country occupied by an invader.

2. As much as to say: "As grass withered before it unsheaths its ear, so let the Assyrians vanish before they unsheath a sword against Jerusalem."

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"The blessing of Jehovah be unto you!"

[nor heard in reply]

"We have blessed you in the name of Jehovah."<sup>3</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 129

Persecuted from my earliest youth (Israel is speaking),

2 And faced with never-ending discrimination—but not destroyed! My enemies have never been able to finish me off!

3, 4 Though my back is cut to ribbons with their whips, the Lord is good. For He has snapped the chains that evil men had bound me with.

5 May all who hate the Jews be brought to ignominious defeat.

6, 7 May they be as grass in shallow soil, turning sear and yellow when half grown, ignored by the reaper, and despised by the binder.

8 And may those passing by refuse to bless them by saying, "Jehovah's blessings be upon you; we bless you in Jehovah's name."

## EXPOSITION

The solidarity of Israel as a nation is here strikingly and even pathetically set forth. The *youth* of the nation is by implication traced back to Egypt; and her experience since then of trouble from without is gathered up into one sad memory. That is one aspect of the figure—the nation represented as an individual. Then the individualised nation is identified with the land in which she dwells; and the rude dealings of the invader with the land are figured as the ploughing of long furrows upon her bare back. How pathetically this latest memory pictures the ruthless doings of Sennacherib is evident. But deliverance has come; and the sudden liberation of the land from the invader is vividly set forth as *the cutting asunder of the cords* by which the slave had been held bound while the cruel lash was laid on. It was emphatically JEHOVAH who cut asunder those cords. The deliverance was not obtained by battle, nor by long journeying out of a foreign land.

3. "The last line should be printed as a return greeting from the reapers—Aglen.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

So let all Israel's enemies be vanquished, like these Assyrians, who have been *put to shame and have retreated backward* (comp. 2 K. 19:36). And now, further, Assyria is paid back in her own coin: she had spoken of the nations who were unable to resist her might as "grass on the housetops" (2 K. 19:26, Isa. 37:27); and here she is herself made the object of the contemptuous comparison, with an additional stroke of wit at her expense: *Let the haters of Zion be as the grass of the house tops, which before it hath unsheathed doth wither*. Assyria had not unsheathed her sword against Jerusalem! And no friendly greetings were likely to congratulate her on the harvest she had reaped in Jehovah's inheritance.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There is something very pathetic about this psalm—What is it?
2. Why compress all the history of Israel into one sad memory picture? i.e. What was the immediate cause for this?
3. Compare II Kings 19:36; Isaiah 39:27 and show how it relates to verses five through eight.

## PSALM 130

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Ransomed out of the Depths.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-2, The Fact of Supplication Narrated. Stanza II., vers. 3-4, The Terms of the Supplication Stated. Stanza III., vers. 5-6, The Urgency of the Supplication Described. Stanza IV., vers. 7-8, An Extension of the Supplication Urged.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 Out of the depths called I upon thee Jehovah!
- 2 "Sovereign Lord oh hearken unto my voice,  
let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications:—
- 3 If iniquities thou shouldst mark<sup>1</sup> O Yah!  
Sovereign Land!<sup>2</sup> who could stand?

1. Ml.: "watch." "Retainest"—Del.; "treasure up"—Leeser; "Wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss"—P.B.V.

2. Some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns.): "Jehovah"—Gn.

## PSALM 130

- 4 Surely with thee is Pardon—<sup>3</sup>  
to the end thou mayest be revered.”<sup>4</sup>
- 5 I awaited Jehovah—  
my soul waited for his word:<sup>5</sup>
- 6 My soul shewed her hope for Jehovah—  
more than watchers for the morning—  
watchers for the morning.
- 7 Hope thou O Israel for Jehovah;  
for with Jehovah<sup>6</sup> is Kindness,<sup>7</sup>  
and plenteously with him is there ransoming:
- 8 He himself then will ransom Israel from all his iniquities.  
(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 130

- O Lord, from the depths of despair I cry for Your help:  
2 “Hear me! Answer! Help me!”
- 3, 4 Lord, if You keep in mind our sins then who can ever  
get an answer to his prayers? But You forgive! What an awe-  
some thing this is!
- 5 That is why I wait expectantly, trusting God to help, for  
He has promised.
- 6 I long for Him more than sentinels long for the dawn.
- 7 O Israel, hope in the Lord; for He is loving and kind,  
and comes to us with armloads of salvation.
- 8 He Himself shall ransom Israel from her slavery to sin.

## EXPOSITION

This psalm is known as one of the Seven Penitential psalms. It is in fact penitential, and therefore this classification need not be disturbed; but it might as accurately have been described as a Plea for Ransom, and in any case has characteristics all its own.

The course of our Expositions hitherto has specially prepared us for this psalm. Presuming that King Hezekiah wrote or selected it for a place in his series of “Songs of the Steps,”

3. Ml.: “the pardon”—*qy.* supply: “which we need.”

4. Cp. 119:38. And see Exposition.

5. Here shd. be the verse division.—Gn.

6. So some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.)—Gn.

7. Ml.: “the kindness”—*qy.* supply: “on which we rely.”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

we have only to turn to his commemorative "Writing" preserved in Isaiah 38, to discover a note harmonising with the present composition, in the grateful acknowledgement there preserved: "Thou hast cast, behind thy back, all my sin." The "sin" acknowledged there, prepares us for the *iniquities* presupposed here. Moreover, when we were led to attribute the authorship of Ps. 119 to Hezekiah, it was impossible not to be impressed with the well-known phenomenon of a good man passionately devoted to "Jehovah's will," and yet bearing about with him a chastening memory of personal sin. These two lines of observation respecting Hezekiah prepare us to expect that no collection of psalms would be considered by him even approximately complete, that did not include at least one penitential psalm.

Reaching the present psalm thus, by a path which quickens our expectation of discovering something fresh and valuable, we are not disappointed. It is indeed a remarkable composition: simple, beautiful, profound. It says but little, but it implies more than we can easily grasp. Its most striking feature is its twofold reference, first to an individual, and then to a nation. Neither of these references can justly be denied; although, in point of fact, the former has been strangely doubted, and the latter is perhaps seldom pressed home to its legitimate conclusion.

The precise nature of the junction between the national lesson and the individual, is perhaps not demonstrably clear. Did the psalmist leave his own petitions in the waiting stage, as requests not as yet answered; and so incite his people to join him in blended pleading for answers yet to be vouchsafed both to him and to them? Or does he, rather, as we incline to think—from his somewhat exuberant lingering over the *watchers for the morning*—give us leave to interpolate *there* his own implied reception of an answer of peace; in the inspiring strength of which he at once proceeds strongly to urge Israel to take heart and plead for *national redemption*? It is a nice point, but important to the translator; who, according to his solution of it, may, in ver. 1, say *called*, as of petitions by this time answered; or else, "have called," as of petitions still urged before the Divine throne. Again, in ver. 5, he may either say *I awaited*, as though now "awaiting" no longer, or "I have awaited"—implying the undertone, "and am awaiting still." Notwithstanding the fact that thus, throughout the psalm, there are delicate shades of meaning needing to be discriminated with unusual care, it would

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be quite a mistake to infer that there are no broad lessons plainly conveyed.

At every turn, there are suggestions which instantly strike and deeply impress, notwithstanding an affluence of meaning which is not put into words. For example: the familiar term *mark* referring to *iniquities* in ver. 3, seems to be as good a word as can be selected; and yet it is seen by every thoughtful reader to convey nothing less than this: "to *mark*, in order to remember; and to remember, in order to punish."

So, again, there is an exquisite fineness of implication in the delightful turn of the phrase *with thee*, which the Hebrew emphasises by the position assigned to it: *with thee is Forgiveness*, rather than, "thou dost forgive," or "thou canst forgive." No, *with thee*. It is as though Jehovah had a store of forgivenesses, as though he had a cherished delight in forgiving; as though it were just *like* him. And so, in the last stanza: with *Jehovah is kindness*, and *plenteously with him is there ransoming*—a little awkward, perhaps, in English; yet how richly suggestive: it seems to tell of that, *and the like of that*, continually going on. Phases of truth, these, which penitent souls sorely need to make their own.

Of another order, perhaps, is the profound statement of design in the Divine forgiving: *to the end thou mayest be revered*. We should not have been surprised to read, "to the end thou mayest be LOVED"; but *revered!*—that demands a little thought. Is it that we poor erring ones could not think of mere Infinite Power without hardening our hearts? As soon, however, as we admit the concurrent conception of Infinite Pity, then we dare *think*, then our adoration rises, then we *revere!*

Already we have caught a foreglimpse of the weighty close of the psalm. It is indeed a worthy close. Sudden is the transition from the individual to the nation, and yet not so sudden and strange as to throw doubt on the unity of authorship. Indeed, it is easy to see, that the mind at work in the second stanza is at work in the fourth; and that the *Forgiveness* of the second is worthily matched by the *Ransoming Kindness* of the fourth. Still, it is a climax. The forgiven individual ascends to a mighty daring when he addresses his *nation* in such terms as these. He has experience—he has faith—he has inspiration. He clearly means his own nation; for he beholds them laden with their own long-accumulated national burden of *iniquities*. What other nation under the sun would consent to be charged with those in-

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iquities? It is only as the poet suns himself in the conception of *ransoming being at home with Jehovah*, that he rises to the crowning thought that *Jehovah himself* will ransom Israel from all his iniquities; and, if from his iniquities,—then why not also from his shame before the nations, his long, long exile from his own land?

Of the two great Old Testament words for redeeming, one (*ga'al*) “implies relationship” (O.G. 145), and the other (*pa dhah'*, that used here) carries with it the “underlying thought of payment” (O.G. 804). Jehovah is Israel's Kinsman-Redeemer; and he who of old gave Egypt for Israel's ransom (Isa. 43:3) will be able to find if he has not already “found a ransom” of such abiding worth that—in view of it, as a public justification —“Israel shall be saved in Jehovah with salvation to the ages” (Isa. 45:17, 25).

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why include this psalm of repentance at this juncture?
2. This psalm implies much more than it says—give two examples.
3. How is both the individual and national need preserved and answered?
4. Why is the term “revered” used?
5. What is the climax and close of the psalm—how related to us?

## PSALM 131

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Sinking of Self in Seeking Israel's Welfare.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, Direct Protestation of Humility. Stanza II., ver. 2, The Weaning from Selfishness. Stanza III., ver. 3, Israel again Encouraged to Hope.

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(Lm.) Song of the Steps—By David.

1. Jehovah! not haughty is my heart—  
nor lofty are mine eyes;



## PSALM 131

Neither have I moved among great things—  
or among things too wonderful for me.

- 2 Surely I have soothed<sup>1</sup> and stilled<sup>2</sup> my soul—  
like a weaned child concerning his mother:  
Like the weaned child concerning myself is my soul.<sup>3</sup>
- 3 Hope O Israel for Jehovah—  
from henceforth and unto the ages.<sup>4</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 131

Lord, I am not proud and haughty. I don't think myself better than others. I don't pretend to "know it all."

2. I am quiet now before the Lord, just as a child who is weaned from the breast. Yes, my begging has been stilled.

3 O Israel, you too should quietly trust in the Lord—now, and always.

## EXPOSITION

The conclusion has everything in its favour, that David began this psalm, and Hezekiah finished it. The first stanza strongly commends itself as probably reflecting the feeling of David in view of the unlooked-for honour conferred on him when taken from the humble occupation of tending his father's sheep to be king over Israel. He had had no thought, no ambition, for such *great things*: they would have appeared *too wonderful for him*. So, we may well believe, David subsequently wrote—and sang; though how his little song originally ended we cannot know. Hezekiah, it would seem, discovered the unconsidered trifle, and added to it an adaptation which made it suit his own case with exquisite precision. If he had never felt the stirrings of personal ambition before, he was certainly lifted off his feet when he showed the messengers from Babylon all his treasures. He was sternly rebuked, prospectively punished,

1. Ml.: "smoothed."

2. Some cod. (w. Sep. and Vul.): "uplifted" (weRomamti instead of weDomamti)—Gn. True in itself and tempting; but, in view of context, not so likely.

3. "Like a weaned upon his mother, my soul is upon me as a weaned child"—Dr. So, in effect, Del., Per., Kp.; but Br.: "so is bountiful dealing upon my soul."

4. U.: "and unto times age-abiding."

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and—he humbled himself; but not without a struggle: he had to be weaned from Self, and has here described the process, with unsurpassable insight and delicacy. He had had to smooth and soothe his ruffled soul; and wean himself from any longer drawing sweet satisfaction from what Self could afford. Henceforth he must take a manlier part than nestle on the soft bosom of Self. He was weaned. And now he would wean Israel. Trouble awaited her in the future—this also now he knew. But, having in his previous song sung of ransom from iniquities, and of Jehovah himself as Ransomer, he must needs now again urge Israel, with tenderer pathos and with longer outlook than before, to *hope for Jehovah, from henceforth and unto the ages*. This loving call still woos Israel to hear.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How was this psalm composed?
2. David was “surprised by joy”—how?
3. There is a marvelous lesson of the life of Hezekiah described—what is it? Discuss.

## PSALM 132

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Davidic Dynasty Humbled and Exalted.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza, vers. 1-10, Prayer by the Typical Messiah. Anti-Stanza, vers. 11-18, Promise for the Antitypical Messiah.

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(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 Remember O Jehovah unto David—  
all his humiliations:—
- 2 What he sware unto Jehovah—  
vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob:
- 3 “Verily I will not enter into the tent of my house—  
I will not go up on the couch of my bed,
- 4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes—  
nor to mine eyelids slumber:

## PSALM 132

- 5 Until I find a place for Jehovah—  
habitations for the Mighty One of Jacob.”
- 6 “Lo! we heard of it in Ephrathah—  
we found it in the fields<sup>1</sup> of the forest:
- 7 ‘We would fain enter into his habitations!  
we would bow down at his footstool!’
- 8 ‘Arise! Jehovah to thy resting-place—  
thou and the ark of thy strength:
- 9 Thy priests let them be clothed with righteousness—  
thy men of kindness let them ring out their joy.’”
- 10 For the sake of David thy servant  
do not turn away the face of thine Anointed One.<sup>2</sup>
- 11 Jehovah sware to David—  
in truth will he not turn back from it:  
“Of the fruit of thy body  
will I seat on a throne for thee:
- 12 If thy sons keep my covenant—  
and my testimonies which I shall teach them  
Even their sons unto futurity—  
shall sit on a throne for thee.”
- 13 For Jehovah hath chosen Zion—
- 14 “This is my resting-place unto futurity—  
here will I dwell for I have desired it:
- 15 Her provision will I abundantly bless—  
her needy ones will I satisfy with bread;
- 16 Her priests also will I clothe with salvation,  
and her men of kindness shall indeed ring out their joy.<sup>3</sup>
- 17 There will I cause to bud a horn unto David,  
I have set in order a lamp for mine Anointed One:
- 18 His enemies will I clothe with shame—  
but upon himself shall blossom his crown!”

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 132

Lord, do You remember that time when my<sup>1</sup> heart was so filled with turmoil?

2, 3, 4, 5 I couldn't rest, I couldn't sleep, thinking how I

1. Some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns.): “field” (sing.)—Gn.

2. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., “Anointed.”

3. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., “Kindness.”

1. Literally, “David's soul.”

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ought to build a permanent home for the Ark<sup>2</sup> of the Lord, a Temple for the mighty One of Israel. Then I vowed that I would do it; I made a solemn promise to the Lord.

6 First the Ark was in<sup>3</sup> Ephrathah, then in the distant countryside of Jaar.

7 But now it will be settled in the Temple, in God's permanent home here on earth. That is where we will go to worship Him.<sup>4</sup>

8 Arise, O Lord, and enter Your Temple with the Ark, the symbol of Your power.

9 We will clothe the priests in white, the symbol of all purity. May our nation shout for joy.

\* \* \* \* \*

10 Do not reject Your servant David—the king You chose for Your people.

11 For You promised me that my son would sit on my throne and succeed me. And surely You will never go back on a promise!

12 You also promised that if my descendants will obey the terms of Your contract with me, then the dynasty of David shall never end.

13 O Lord, You have chosen Jerusalem<sup>5</sup> as Your home:

14 "This is My permanent home where I shall live," You said, "for I have always wanted it this way.

15 I will make this city prosperous and satisfy her poor with food.

16 I will clothe her priests with salvation; her saints shall shout for joy.

17 David's power shall grow, for I have decreed for him a mighty Son.<sup>6</sup>

18 I'll clothe His enemies with shame, but He shall be a glorious King."

## EXPOSITION

Again are we enabled to realise how truly and helpfully previous psalms lead us forward to what still awaits us. That

2. Implied.

3. Literally, "Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah."

4. Literally, "We will go into His tabernacles; we will worship at His footstool."

5. Literally, "Zion."

6. Literally, "a progeny."

## PSALM 132

little snatch of a song, in praise of humility, which we have just dismissed,—how truly does it prepare us for the *humiliations of David*, with a reference to which this psalm opens.

But Jehovah humbles his loyal servants in order to fit them for the greater things to which they may not prematurely aspire; and if the Son of David who pens this psalm has schooled himself successfully into the spirit of the psalm we have just admired for its lessons of humility, he is thereby only the better prepared to lead us forward to the “wonderful things” to which this psalm conducts us.

Though he now only introduces it into his series of *Step Songs*, it has probably lain in his repertoire since those early days of his reign when, having cleansed the Temple, he anew dedicated it to the worship of Jehovah; installing priests and Levites in the zealous discharge of their duties, taking care suitably to clothe them with official garments, and bountifully to provide for their temporal needs. We can imagine no more congenial occasion than this, for the origin of this intensely Messianic psalm. Everything in that occasion and in this psalm favours their being thus brought together. Newly come to the throne, after some years of reproach and patient waiting, and godly self-discipline, the author cannot forget that he now stands in covenant line with his revered ancestor David, whose songs he has so often studied with delight. Having found vent for his reforming zeal by cleansing the temple and restoring its inspiring ritual, now to be renewed with accompanying songs,—what more natural to a born poet and an anointed prophet-king than to compose a psalm like this: a psalm in every way worthy of such an auspicious occasion? Note, especially, in glancing through the psalm with these incidents in view, how, notwithstanding the unfeigned humility which restrains him from once formally alluding to himself or indulging in so much as a first personal pronoun, the profound consciousness of Messianic heirship is upon him. For to whom but to himself can we suppose him to refer at the close of the first stanza, when, gathering up all that has gone before, he pleads: *For the sake of David thy servant—do not turn away the face of thine Anointed One.* With the fitting occasion for this prayer in our minds, we instinctively supply the unspoken burden of it: “Do not turn away his face, when he thus presents anew to thee thine own holy temple, cleansed, and vocal with thy praise.”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

By connecting this first climax, in ver. 10, with the opening words of the psalm, we grasp the indisputable fact that *this first stanza is a prayer: Remember . . . do not turn away*. All that comes between is pleading. As much as to say: "By all the devotion and enthusiasm and energetic service and consecrating forethought of my revered ancestor David, whose words and deeds I this day recall, and humbly mention as my pleading before thee,—O Jehovah, do not turn away my face."

Once we grasp the firm logic of this intercession, we can easily allow for the poetic freedom with which the details are filled in. Whether we are to accept the allusion to *Ephrathah* as to the name of a district large enough to include Kirjath-jearim where the ark was, or to understand David to refer to tidings of the whereabouts of the ark with which they were familiar in his youth in Bethlehem-ephrathah, becomes a matter of small importance. With a like sense of freedom as to details, we can, without disturbance to the general sense, understand the *we* of vers. 6 and 7 as proceeding originally from David, in recognition of the people who accompanied him when he went to fetch up the ark to Jerusalem; and, then, again we can hear David's own voice of invocation in vers. 8 and 9 even though the terms of the invocation were taken from the story of the original journeying of the ark through the wilderness, and again employed by Solomon on an intermediate occasion. All this poetic and highly picturesque filling in of the argument drawn from David and his times by no means robs this part of the psalm of its force as a mighty plea urged by King Hezekiah.

In like manner, the general sense of *promise granted in answer to prayer*, becomes evident as dominating the second half of the psalm (vers. 11-18), notwithstanding the sweep of its contents and the loftiness of its closing aspiration. The first half of the psalm led off with what David *swore* to Jehovah; the second half begins, its response, with what Jehovah *swore* to David. And therein—in that covenant-oath to David—lay promises yet unexhausted and which guarantee to Hezekiah, as being in the line of the covenant, all the favour he might need for himself and for the temple he this day hallows to Jehovah.

It is worthy of note how the interests of the throne and of the temple here again intertwine. The covenant, through Nathan, points to the throne (vers. 11 and 12); and then immediately the temple is introduced as in some way supporting

## PSALM 132

the throne: *For Jehovah hath chosen Zion—hath desired it as a habitation for himself.* Such intertwining of the two interests has characterised the Davidic Covenant from the first; for was it not just when David proposed to build a *temple* that Jehovah promised him an abiding *throne*? Possibly there is in this more than meets the eye. Be that as it may, the blending of interests goes on quite to the end of the psalm: ver. 14—place; ver. 15—place; ver. 16—place; ver. 17—throne; ver. 18—throne and *crown!* That is the climax—*crown* the final word.

In these last 5 verses of 10 lines, the whole passion of the psalm is expressed; and the expression is in every way most beautiful and impressive. As to form, it is all direct divine speech: Jehovah's voice alone is heard throughout; and if the speech as a whole was never uttered before, then it may be taken as a new and complete revelation of things never before so connectedly divulged.

The original petitions of David are hereby represented as granted—reaffirmed—amplified. The *resting-place* reappears as *desired, found, perpetual.* The *priests* and *Levites* are heralded by *provision* in abundance and *satisfied needy ones.* The very clothing of the priests is enhanced from *righteousness to salvation.* The official *men of kindness,* the Levites, do INDEED *ring out their joy,* with reduplicated emphasis. Not only is what was asked in David's petitions now abundantly given; but more than was asked, at least so far as this psalm is concerned. For again, as already observed, the temple gives place to the throne: *There* (in that place) *will I cause to bud a horn unto David—a living symbol of power. His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon himself shall blossom his crown—a living symbol of royalty.* Bold metaphors truly; but for that very reason fitting the ultimate climax of the psalm and causing us to feel instinctively that a greater than Hezekiah is here. They are, indeed, things "too wonderful" for him; and, therefore, here he leaves them unexplained. The THRONE in its PLACE, and the final HEIR on the throne, would all in due time be revealed.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does psalm 131 prepare us for psalm 132?
2. When was the psalm written? When was it used?
3. How is the term "Ephrathah" used in verse 6?
4. What is the gist or theme of the prayer in verse one through ten?

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5. What is the response or answer to the prayer as in verse eleven through eighteen?
6. In what sense or meaning is this psalm Messianic?

## PSALM 133

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Brethren in Fellowship: a Charming Spectacle.

### ANALYSIS

A Glimpse of Fraternal Reunion (ver. 1) suggests Comparison: (ver. 2) with the Descending Oil of Sacred Consecration; and (ver. 3) with the Descending Dew of Natural Refreshing.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps—By David.

- 1 Lo! how good and how delightful—  
the dwelling<sup>1</sup> of brethren all together;<sup>2</sup>
- 2 Like the precious oil upon the head—  
flowing down upon the beard the beard of Aaron—  
which floweth down over the opening of his robe:
- 3 Like the dew of Hermon—  
which floweth down over the mountains of Zion;  
For there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing—  
life unto the ages!

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 133

How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers live in harmony!

2 For harmony is as precious as the fragrant anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head, and ran down onto his beard, and onto the border of his robe.

3 Harmony is as refreshing as the dew on Mount Hermon, on the mountains of Israel. And God has pronounced this eternal blessing on Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> even life forevermore.

1. Or: "remaining," "abiding."

2. "For brethren to dwell also together"—Dr.

1. Literally, "Zion."



PSALM 133  
EXPOSITION

This beautiful psalm was manifestly prompted by a spectacle actually beheld. It points with the finger to some memorable scene, which lingers in the poet's mental vision. Probably nothing so perfectly answerable to the enthusiasm of this little snatch of song, has ever been suggested, as the Reunion of the Tribes on the occasion of Hezekiah's great passover. It is true the Northern Tribes were not so extensively represented at the feast as was desired; but those who came were welcome; and it is given to a seer to behold the ideal in the actual.

The stay in the sacred city was not long, but it was an *abiding* while it lasted: it brought brethren face to face who had never before seen each other; and, sweeping away prejudices and misunderstandings, cementing holy friendships by sacred service and song and by the giving and receiving of domestic courtesies, made the participants realise how truly they were brethren.

The comparisons employed to celebrate such reunion, converge to a single point, without losing their native attributes of many-sided suggestiveness. The precious perfumed oil, poured on Aaron's head, and not merely sprinkled on his garments as in the case of his sons, would naturally retain its symbolic fitness to suggest a gracious, delightfully fragrant, unseen influence; and in like manner the dew of Hermon would not lose its inherent adaptedness to convey the subsidiary ideas of copiousness and invigoration because of a further main point to be emphasised. Nevertheless, while these clustering conceptions around the figures employed need not be stripped off them, the single point to which both figures are directed should be firmly grasped. That point is the expansive and diffusive *descent* of the influence—of the invigoration—which is unmistakably urged home by the threefold use of the words *flowing down* or *descending*. The sacred oil *flows down* from the head to the beard, from the beard to the robe, and so by implication embraces and consecrates the whole man. The dew of the lofty summits of Mount Hermon *flows down* or *descends* (at times) not merely down upon that mountain's own spurs, but further and further down, until it reaches and rests upon the lowly Mount Zion in the south: which last point has been distinctly made credible by the observations of travelers in Switzerland and in Palestine. So, the poet would have us observe, the realisation of brotherly fellowship by those who are brethren, is

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

an expanding and descending force, however gentle and unobserved; which reaches down far below the point of original bestowment of the grace. By the help of these simple analogies the mind of the reader climbs to higher things: to the rich influences descending from public worship into family life and into civic communities. The Christian will be forgiven if he is reminded of the ever descending grace which flows down from his Head in heaven: if a poetic Christian, he may indulge in a smile at the psalmist's adroitness in fetching one of his similes from the far North beyond where the Northern tribes dwelt, to their quite legitimate gratification; and, if at the same time he is a breezy Christian, possessing some breadth and flexibility of apprehension,—he will be unable to restrain himself from a feeling of additional pleasure that the spell of the psalmist's genius, having first appropriated a *sacred* symbol, then goes farther afield and presses a *secular* symbol into his service; reflecting that, even the dew of Hermon may benefit Zion, even as Christ is head over all things to his Church. Yet, when all comes to all, lowly Zion will be loftier in his eyes than Lebanon; for, *there, in Zion, hath Jehovah commanded the blessing even life for evermore.*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What particular event seems to fit this psalm?
2. What are the motivations and methods of fellowship and unity?
3. There are two beautiful figures of speech in this psalm—show how they perfectly accomplish their purpose.

## PSALM 134

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Night Service in the Temple.

### ANALYSIS

(See Inserted Headlines.)

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(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

## PSALM 134

(ADDRESSED TO NIGHT-WATCHERS IN THE TEMPLE.)

- 1 Lo! bless ye Jehovah all ye servants of Jehovah,  
who stand in the house of Jehovah in the dark night:<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Lift up your hands in holiness<sup>2</sup> and bless ye Jehovah.

(THEIR REPLY.)

- 3 May Jehovah bless thee out of Zion—[He who is] Maker of  
heaven and earth!

(Nm.)<sup>3</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 134

Oh, bless the Lord, you who serve Him as watchmen in the Temple every night.

2 Lift your hands in holiness and bless the Lord.

3 The Lord bless you from Zion—the Lord who made heaven and earth.

## EXPOSITION

The purpose and structure of this psalm are simple and evident. There is in the Temple a Night-service, which becomes the occasion of a charge from the people to the Levites who represent them, and of a benediction from the Levites on the people before they depart to their homes. There is a probable reference to such a service in 1 Ch. 9:33; and the priestly response is after the manner of Num. 6:24. The stair-like movement characteristic of the previous "Step-Songs" is perceptible in this psalm also, as witness the five-fold repetition of the name *Jehovah*, which, reverently uttered, would impart to this final song a suitable solemnity. That the *standing in the house of Jehovah* points to the ministrations of the officials of the Temple, is sufficiently evident from the following passages; namely, Deu. 10:8, 18:7, 1 Ch. 23:30 and 2 Ch. 29:11. Concerning the lifting up of hands in worship, Pss. 28:2, 44:20, 63:4, 88:9, 119:48, and 141:2, may be profitably compared; while, as to the accompanying words "in holiness" or "to the sanctuary," the preference of Delitzsch, with R.V. text, for the "accusative of direction"—*unto the sanctuary*, is perhaps not quite so plainly

1. So Br. "in the nights"—Dr.

2. Or: "unto the sanctuary."

3. See Ps. 135 (beginning).

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

correct as the "accusative of definition" = *in holiness*, with R.V. margin; although the reason given by Aglen for the latter is scarcely conclusive. He says: "Since the servants of Jehovah are here addressed as standing in the sanctuary, this direction seems unreasonable." The unreasonableness disappears if we remember that the ministrants might be already standing within the Temple courts, and yet direct their uplifted hands toward the holy shrine. Still, *in holiness* appears the more obvious rendering; which becomes doubly acceptable when viewed as supplying the idea of "holy hands" in 1 Tim. 2:8. It remains only to add: that the simple structure of this psalm by no means pre-supposes the elaborate ritual of perambulating the Temple courts during the night, which the Talmud connects with the Second Temple. There is nothing here which the reforming King Hezekiah might not have arranged or restored.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is the last of the fifteen psalms devoted to the *Song of the Steps*—it is appropriate that it be a night service in the temple—Read I Chronicles 9:33 and Numbers 6:24 to aid in visualizing the circumstances.
2. Delitzsch seems to see some objections to an in the temple worship. How does Rotherham answer the objection?
3. Are we to actually "lift up our hands" in the worship of our Lord? cf. I Timothy 2:8.

## PSALM 135

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Call to Temple-Worship.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, A Charge to the Levites to Lead in the Delightful Duty of Praise. Stanza II., vers. 5-7, A Personal Enforcement of this Duty—based on the Works of Creation. Stanza III., vers. 8-12, The Same—based on Israel's History. Stanza IV., vers. 13, 14, Jehovah's Name and Memorial a Guarantee of Future National Blessing. Stanza V., vers. 15-18, Reproach cast on Idols. Stanza VI., vers. 19-21, Four Classes called upon to Bless Jehovah.

PSALM 135

(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Praise ye the name of Jehovah,  
praise O ye servants of Jehovah:
- 2 Who stand<sup>2</sup> in the house of Jehovah,  
in the courts of the house of our God.
- 3 Praise ye Yah for good is Yahweh,<sup>3</sup>  
make melody to his name for it is full of delight.
- 4 For Jacob hath Yah chosen for himself,  
Israel as his own treasure.<sup>4</sup>
- 5 For I know that great is Jehovah,  
and our sovereign Lord is beyond all gods:
- 6 All that Jehovah pleased hath he done—  
in the heavens and in the earth,  
in the seas and all resounding deeps:
- 7 Causing vapours to ascend from the end of the earth,  
lightnings for the rain hath he made,  
Bringing forth wind out of his treasuries.
- 8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt—  
from man unto beast,
- 9 He sent signs and wonders into thy midst O Egypt  
on Pharaoh and on all his servants.
- 10 Who smote great nations,  
and slew mighty kings:
- 11 Reaching to Sihon king of the Amorites,  
and to Og king of Bashan,  
and to all the kingdoms of Canaan;
- 12 And gave their land as an inheritance—  
an inheritance to Israel his people.
- 13 Jehovah! thy name is to the ages,  
Jehovah! thy memorial<sup>5</sup> is to generation after generation;
- 14 For Jehovah will vindicate his people,  
and on his servants have compassion.<sup>6</sup>
- 15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold,  
the work<sup>7</sup> of the hands of men:
- 16 a mouth have they—but do not speak,  
eyes have they—but do not see,

1. See Ps. 105 headline (P.R.I.).

2. For this word, see Exp. of Ps. 134.

3. =Jehovah; both spelled thus to shew its relationship to "Yah."

4. Cp. Exo. 19:5.

5. Cp. Exo. 3:14, 15.

6. Cp. Deu. 32:36.

7. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "works" (pl.)—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 17 ears have they—but do not give ear,  
nay there is no breath at all in their mouth.  
18 Like them shall become they who make them—  
every one who trusteth in them.  
19 O house of Israel bless ye Jehovah,  
O house of 'Aaron bless ye Jehovah,  
20 O house of Levi bless ye Jehovah.  
O ye who revere Jehovah bless ye Jehovah.  
21 Blessed be Jehovah out of Zion—  
who inhabiteth Jerusalem.

(Nm.)<sup>s</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 135

Hallelujah! Yes, let His people praise Him, as they stand in His Temple courts.

3 Praise the Lord because He is so good; sing to His wonderful name.

4 For the Lord has chosen Israel as His personal possession.

5 I know the greatness of the Lord—that He is greater far than any other god.

6 He does whatever pleases Him throughout all of heaven and earth, and in the deepest seas.

7 He makes mists rise throughout the earth and sends the lightning to bring down the rain; and sends the winds from His treasures.

8 He destroyed the eldest child in each Egyptian home, along with the firstborn of the flocks.

9 He did great miracles in Egypt before Pharaoh and all his people.

10 He smote great nations, slaying mighty kings—

11 Sihon, king of Amorites; and Og, the king of Bashan; and the kings of Canaan—

12 And gave their land as an eternal gift to His people Israel.

13 O Jehovah, Your name endures forever; Your fame is known to every generation.

14 For Jehovah will vindicate His people, and have compassion on His servants.

8. See Ps. 136 (beginning).

## PSALM 135

15 The heathen worship idols of gold and silver, made by men—

16 Idols with speechless mouths and sightless eyes.

17 And ears that cannot hear; they cannot even breathe.

18 Those who make them become like them! And so do all who trust in them!

19 O Israel, bless Jehovah! High priests of Aaron, bless His name.

20 O Levite priests, bless the Lord Jehovah! Oh bless His name, all of you who trust and reverence Him.

21 All people of Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> praise the Lord, for He lives here in Jerusalem. Hallelujah!

### EXPOSITION

With this psalm, we return to the series distinctively named "Hallels"; and may, from that circumstance, judge with considerable probability as to the bearings of the contents we may find in them. They are pre-eminently Temple psalms, almost certainly composed and not merely adapted for that purpose; and were probably written or collected and edited by King Hezekiah for the re-opening of the Cleansed Temple. How well—let us ask—do they answer to such an origin and design? Do they contain any features from which fitness for such an intention can fairly be inferred? Leaving these questions to receive incidental answers, let us look at the psalm now before us.

It is obviously fitted for its purpose. It is, as to contents, manifestly a *public* psalm, appealing to the whole people. It celebrates their favoured position (ver. 4); extols their covenant God, both as the God of all Creation (vers. 5-7), and as Author of their national Redemption, in bringing them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land (vers. 8-12); it brings up from Mosaic times (Ex. 3:14, 15), in its rich significance, the "Memorial" Name of their covenant God, which it sets forth in its promissory significance (vers. 13, 14); it pours reproach upon the idols of the nations, in a manner fitted to impress on Israelites the preciousness of their knowledge of the one Living and True God (vers. 15-18); and then, having previously at the outset, charged the Levites to lead in such delightful worship, it closes by solemnly calling upon the whole people, even including Gentile proselytes, to sustain *the house of Aaron* and *the house of Levi* in Jehovah's praise (vers. 19-21). It is, therefore, emphatically

1. Literally, "the Lord be blessed from Zion."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

a *national* song. Indeed, it has not a private or personal allusion in it—with one exception. That exception, however, is very observable. It consists of the sudden introduction, at ver. 5, of a personal note, on which probably no one lower than a King would have adventured. Who is this that presumes to say—*I know that great is Jehovah?* Any godly monarch in Israel, it is true, might thus have made prominent his own individuality. A Jehoshaphat, for example, on the one hand, or a Josiah, on the other, might have thus *authenticated* Jehovah's praise; or, of course, a Hezekiah—no smaller man nor less godly. Indeed, even for Hezekiah, one could almost wish for circumstantial evidence, dating this psalm late enough to clothe the speaker with such a strong assurance as would naturally spring from a recent recovery from sickness or a recent rescue from a foreign invader; and it is only when we recall our late conclusions respecting Hezekiah's youth, and the strong presumption thence arising that he experimentally *knew* Jehovah's power,—that we became reconciled to his thus magnificently saying "*I know.*" But recalling this, we do feel content to leave it as the greater probability that the good King did, for the occasion named, compose this psalm: the more so, for that we have no knowledge of the poetic and musical accomplishments of either Jehoshaphat or Josiah.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by saying some psalms are "Hallels"?
2. What indications are in this psalm of its being a "public" psalm?
3. This is also a "national" song. Discuss such indication.
4. There is an exception to the public and national aspect of this psalm. What is it?

## PSALM 136

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Second Call to Temple-Worship, with Responses Inserted.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, A Threefold Call for Thanks, based on the three leading Divine Names. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, the Call Continued, based on



## PSALM 136

the General Wonders of Heaven and Earth. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, On the Ruling Lights of the Heavens. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, On the Exodus from Egypt. Stanza V., vers. 13-15, On the Passage through the Red Sea. Stanza VI., vers. 16-22, On Guidance through the Wilderness into Israel's Promised Inheritance. Stanza VII., vers. 23-26, On Subsequent Deliverance from Low Estate, Adversaries, and Famine.

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.

- 1 Give ye thanks to Jehovah—for he is good,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 2 Give ye thanks to the God of gods,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 3 Give ye thanks to the Sovereign Lord of lords,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 4 To him that doeth great wonders by himself alone,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 5 To him who made the heavens with understanding.  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 6 To him that stretched out the earth upon the waters,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 7 To him that made great lights,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 8 The sun to rule over the day,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 9 The moon and stars to rule over the night,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 10 To him that smote the Egyptians in their firstborn,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 11 And brought forth Israel out of their midst,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 12 With a firm hand and an outstretched arm,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 13 To him that divided the Red Sea into parts,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 14 And caused Israel to pass over through the midst thereof,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 15 And shook off Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 16 To him that led his people in the wilderness,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 17 To him that smote great kings,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*

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- 18 And slew majestic<sup>1</sup> kings,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 19 Even Sihon king of the Amorites,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 20 Also Og king of Bashan,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 21 And gave their land for an inheritance,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 22 An inheritance to Israel his servant,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 23 Who in our low estate was mindful of us,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 24 And rescued us<sup>2</sup> from our adversaries,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 25 Who giveth bread to all flesh,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 26 Give ye thanks to the GOD of the heavens,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 136

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His loving-kindness continues forever.

2 Give thanks to the God of gods, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

4 Praise Him who alone does mighty miracles, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

5 Praise Him who made the heavens, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

6 Praise Him who planted the water within the earth,<sup>1</sup> for His lovingkindness continues forever.

7 Praise Him who made the heavenly lights, for His lovingkindness continues forever;

8 The sun to rule the day, for His lovingkindness continues forever;

1. Br.: "noble."

2. Ml.: "tare us away."

1. Or, "who separated the earth from the oceans."

## PSALM 136

9 And the moon and stars at night, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

10 Praise the God who smote the firstborn of Egypt, for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever.

11, 12 He brought them out with mighty power and up-raised fist to strike their enemies, for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever.

13 Praise the Lord who opened the Red Sea to make a path before them, for His lovingkindness continues forever,

14 And led them safely through, for His lovingkindness continues forever—

15 But drowned Pharaoh's army in the sea, for His loving-kindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever.

16 Praise Him who led His people through the wilderness, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

17 Praise Him who saved His people from the power of mighty kings, for His lovingkindness continues forever,

18 And killed famous kings who were their enemies, for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever;

19 Sihon, king of Amorites—for God's lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever—

20 And Og, king of Bashan—for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever.

21 God gave the land of these kings to Israel as a gift forever, for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever;

22 Yes, a permanent gift to His servant Israel, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

23 He remembered our utter weakness, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

24 And saved us from our foes, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

25 He gives food to every living thing, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven, for His loving-kindness continues forever.

## EXPOSITION

Though, in general purpose and in leading characteristics, this psalm is much like the preceding one, it nevertheless has several features of its own. It is a Hallel like the foregoing:

2. Implied.

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that is, it is expressly adapted to Temple worship; and, like that, broadly bases Jehovah's claims to worship on creation and (national) redemption. It is, however, special, in that it formally introduces, as ground for adoration, the three leading Divine names — *Jehovah*, *Elohim* ("God") and *Adonai* ("Sovereign Lord"); deals with the passage through the Red Sea by three distinct movements (*divided—caused to pass—shook off*); and, after falling back on the previous psalm by way of abbreviated quotation as to taking possession of Canaan, lastly brings forward *three* reminiscences, which throw a welcome sidelight on the time at which the psalm was probably composed. These three reminiscences are concerned with: (1) *a low estate*, (2) *a rescue from adversaries*, and (3) *a supply of bread*: just these—no others—no more: a cluster of coincidences, finding a striking verification in the times of King Hezekiah. (1) The *low estate* of the nation during the presence of the Assyrians in the land is manifest (cp. 2 K. 17:19-23, 19:3, 2 Ch. 29:8, 9); and is a phrase more exactly fitted for that application than for the Exile in Babylon, which surely was something more than a "low estate." (2) The *forcible rescue* from the Assyrians was unique; and the word is more suited to allude to that event than to permissions to captives to return to their land of their own free will. (3) As we have already been reminded by Ps. 126, there was a near approach to famine when the Assyrians were gone; and though the statement as to the provision of *bread* is here couched in general terms, yet a recent event might well have suggested such a grateful acknowledgement just here. Even Delitzsch, though clinging to a post-exilic origin to the psalm, sees here a reference "to a time in which they suffered from famine as well as slavery." "Invasion" and "famine" wholly meet the case, and then there is the "forcible rescue": respecting which Aglen's note is suggestive: "*Redeemed.—Better, as in original, snatched us from.* (Compare Ps. 7:2, used of a lion suddenly seizing his prey.)" So suddenly did Jehovah seize Sennacherib.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm is much like the one preceding it but it has its own distinctive features. Discuss the similarities and differences.
2. Discuss the meaning and application of the three divine names; i.e. for our day.

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3. There are several triads in this psalm, three names, three stages of crossing the Red Sea; three reminiscences. Discuss the latter.
4. Once again this psalm is linked with a Hezekiah and Sennacherib. How?

## PSALM 137

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Returned Levite's Memories of Babylon, Apostrophe to Jerusalem, and Imprecations on Edom and on Babylon.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, A Returned Captive's Record of the Declinature of Himself and Brethren to Sing Songs of Zion on Foreign Soil. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, To his Brethren, he excuses the Refusal and Apostrophises Jerusalem. Stanza III., ver. 7, He prays for the Punishment of Edom's Perfidy. Stanza IV., vers. 8, 9, He Bitterly Apostrophises Babylon.

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(Nm.)

- 1 By the streams of Babylon  
there we sat down yea we wept—  
when we remembered Zion.
- 2 On<sup>1</sup> the poplars<sup>2</sup> in the midst thereof  
we hung up our lyres.
- 3 For there asked our captors of us—  
words of song!  
And our spoilers—<sup>3</sup>  
of gladness!<sup>4</sup>  
"Sing to us of the Songs of Zion."
- 4 How could we sing the songs of Jehovah—  
on a foreign soil?—

1. Or: "by." So Br.

2. So O.G. "*arab*, as is now established by botanists, denotes the *Populus Euphratica*, very young specimens of which with their narrow leaves may easily be confounded with willow underwood, upon a superficial inspection"—Delitzsch.

3. So *Gt.*; and so ("prob.") Dr.

4. Cp. ver. 6, same word. Here prob. "words" that is "of gladness" shd. again be understood from previous line.

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- 5 "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem  
let my right hand play me false!"<sup>5</sup>
- 6 let my tongue cleave to my palate—  
If I lift not up Jerusalem above mine own crowning  
gladness."<sup>6</sup>
- 7 Remember O Jehovah, to the sons of Edom—  
the day of Jerusalem!  
Who kept saying "Lay bare!" "Lay bare!"  
"as far as the foundation within her!"
- 8 O despoiling<sup>7</sup> daughter of Babylon!—  
how happy he who shall repay thee  
the dealing which thou didst deal out to us!
- 9 how happy he who shall snatch away—  
and dash to pieces—thy children—against the crag!
- (Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

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Weeping, we sat beside the rivers of Babylon thinking of Jerusalem.

2 We have put away our lyres, hanging them upon the branches of the willow trees,

3, 4 For how can we sing? Yet our captors, our tormentors, demand that we sing for them the happy songs of Zion!

5, 6 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill upon the harp. If I fail to love her more than my highest joy, let me never sing again.

7 O Jehovah, do not forget what these Edomites did on that day when the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem. "Raze her to the ground!" they yelled.

8 O Babylon, evil beast, you shall be destroyed. Blessed is the man who destroys you as you have destroyed us.

9 Blessed is the man who takes your babies and smashes them against the rocks!<sup>1</sup>

5. So *Gt.* (ml.) "fail" or "deceive." M.T.: "forget."

6. Same word as in ver. 3; and shd. by all means be rendered both times alike.

7. So *Gt.* "Targ., Pesh. and many moderns, read (with different vowels), *thou waster*"—Dr. M.T.: "that hast been despoiled."

1. Perhaps this could be paraphrased, "Blessed is he who invades and sacks your city."

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EXPOSITION

Is this the voice of a returned captive, or of one still in Babylon? If the former, as appears the natural conclusion from the references to a past time and a distant place—*there we sat down*,—then the further question arises, whether this sounds like the voice of an aged man who has dwelt nearly a lifetime in captivity, and who is therefore old and feeble, whose hand and tongue now falter from playing and singing the songs of Zion as once they did; or of one who has been permitted to return with vigour and delight to the crowning joys of home and the still higher joy of Levite work in Jerusalem? To this question also it will be easy to give the obvious answer, once we realise the strength of the position taken up by Thirtle, when he reminds us of the devastation of many cities of Judah by the Assyrians in the days of King Hezekiah before Jerusalem was approached; of the fact that the kings of Assyria were also kings of Babylon; and of the likelihood that dwellers in the cities of Judah would actually be deported to Babylon, long before the great Exile in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. For certainly it is the obvious answer—to say, that the poet who writes this vigorous psalm has manifestly been a captive only long enough to realise the bitterness of exile and to return to the joys of home and the exhilaration of renewed Levitical functions in Jerusalem. Everything, down to the minutest shade of language and feeling, agrees with such an outlook.

Before verifying this, we may quote from Delitzsch his beautiful picture of the mourners by Babel's streams. "The psalm is evidently a song not written during the time of the Exile, but in recollection of it. The banks of rivers, like the shores of the sea, are a favorite haunt of such as deep grief drives away from the tumult of men into solitude: the boundary line of the river gives to solitude a secure background; the monotonous splashing of the waves nourishes the dull, melancholy alternation of thoughts and feelings; and at the same time the sight of the cool, fresh water exercises a soothing influence upon the consuming fever in the heart. The rivers of Babylon are the Tigris and Euphrates along with the tributary streams that feed them and the canals that connect them . . . As soon as they sat down in the loneliness of the river's banks they immediately began to weep, inasmuch as, at the sight of the so totally different nature around them, the remembrance of Zion only forced itself upon them all the more strongly, and their sorrow at being cut

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off from their native land indulged itself all the more freely, where no hostilely observant eyes repressed it."

How easily grafts itself into this picture the persuasion that these captives were Levites; and so, as practised singers, wedded to their lyres, had them with them in the land of their banishment; and were prone to use them, if only by stealth; sometimes in snatches of Temple-songs of joy, when secure in their homes, or otherwise, and indeed oft, for improvising dirges suited to their sorrow. They were skilled musicians, with melodious *tongues* and skilful *right-hands*, wherewith to lift the song and sweep the strings. Their furtive exercises in their favourite work had revealed their musical accomplishments to their heathen neighbours; who, following them to their lonely water-side haunts, begged of them to let them hear some of those ravishing strains of sacred joy which they had occasionally overheard. The request was pointed: not wailings by the water-side, was the kind of song requested; but genuine *songs of Zion*, which the harpists well knew meant the sacred *songs of Jehovah's* joyful praise.

This was a form of request with which compliance was not possible: the only answer was, with respectful but mournful gesture, to *hang up* their *lyres* on the neighbouring trees, as emphasising decisively the impossibility of granting that pointed request. The connecting *For* which opens the third verse of the psalm sufficiently indicates that such decisive action was the only reply then given; and, indeed, it is not easy to see how the words of the fourth verse could have been then spoken without needlessly provoking *captor-spoilers*; far less would prudent captives there and then indulge in the patriotic outbursts of vers. 5 and 6; which, indeed, could not but have seemed to the ears of foreign masters to breathe defiance. How unspeakably more natural to postpone the apostrophe to Jerusalem to a point of time after the accomplished return; and, with that transfer, to regard the preceding question also as spoken to the sympathetic ears of brethren at home, causing it to mean: "The feeling, that compliance would have been profanation, as you brethren can at once appreciate, is why no other answer to our captors was possible but to hang up our lyres on the neighbouring poplars."

It serves as an independent confirmation of this exegesis to rescue from dislocation the two connected occurrences of the word *gladness* as found in both ver. 3 and ver. 6. It is an exegetical sin against continuity of thought to render the original



## PSALM 137

word first as *mirth* and then as *joy*. It was not mere secular "mirth" that was requested in ver. 3; but, as the parallelism shows, the sacred *gladness* audible in *the songs of Zion*, which were at the same time *the songs of Jehovah*. Every sensitive mind instinctively feels that, second only to the joy of regained Temple worship, would be, to the psalmist, the *crowning joy* of his recovered home; and that it is something worth saying to aver that the supreme joy of sacred service towered above even domestic blessedness.

This song has been described as "blended of tears and fire." We are easily touched by the "tears"; but the "fire" finds us less sympathetic. Nevertheless a strong appeal is made to our respectful considerateness, both by the prayer against Edom, and by the apostrophe to Babylon. Edom, the near neighbour and blood relation of Israel, brought on herself the bitter resentment of the prophets, as their piled-up reproaches attest (Amos 1:11, Obad. 10ff, Joel 3:19, Jer. 49:7ff, Lam. 4:21f, Eze. 25:2ff, 35:12ff, Isa. 34, 63:1f), and Babylon had already begun those cruelties in Israel and Judah (Jer. 50-51, Hab. 1:5-11 and others), which were yet to serve further as Jehovah's chastising rod on his faithless people. "The barbarous customs of Oriental warfare spared neither women nor children in a war of extermination. Cp. Isa. 13:16, Hos. 10:14, 13:16, Nah. 3:10, 2 Kings 8:12, Hom. II. 22:63. The stern law of retaliation demanded that Babylon should be treated as she had treated Jerusalem"—Kp. We cannot wonder that the demand of "blood for blood" had not then been hushed, when we consider how often even now, in cases of excited racial hatred, it still makes itself heard. The people of Jehovah had not then been led up to those difficult heights from which alone can come the prayer, "Father! forgive them; they know not what they do!" But Israel's Messiah has already led the way.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There is quite a discussion as to the historical setting of this psalm. Just when was it written? Why?
2. The captive who wrote this psalm has certain distinct characteristics. Discuss two of them.
3. It would seem the shores of a river is a good place to mourn. Why? Why not sing—or even refuse to sing?

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4. Is the condemnation of Edom just? cf. Amos 1:11; Obadiah 10:11; Joel 3:19.
5. How was the law of retaliation applied to Babylon?

## PSALM 138

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A King's Public Thanks for Advancement in Royal Dignity.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Public Thanks for Unexpected Advancement and for the Lofty Feeling thereby imparted. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, Anticipations of the Homage of Other Kings to Jehovah, which is Traced to its Moral Cause. Stanza III., vers. 7-8, Assurance of the Coming Completion of Jehovah's Promises.

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(Lm.) By David.

- 1 I will thank thee<sup>1</sup> with my whole heart,  
before messengers divine<sup>2</sup> will I make melody unto thee:
- 2 I will bow down towards thy holy temple,<sup>3</sup>  
and thank thy name for thy kindness and for thy  
faithfulness;  
for thou hast magnified above all thy name thy promise:<sup>4</sup>
- 3 In the day that I called thou didst answer me,  
didst embolden me in my soul with strength.<sup>5</sup>
- 4 All the kings of the earth will thank thee Jehovah,  
when<sup>6</sup> they have heard the sayings of thy mouth;
- 5 And will sing of the ways of Jehovah,  
because great is the glory of Jehovah:
- 6 Though lofty is Jehovah yet the lowly he regardeth,  
but the haughty afar off doth he acknowledge.

1. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.) add: "Jehovah"—Gn.

2. Cp. 8:5, 29:1, 89:6-9.

3. Cp. 5:7.

4. So Del.; and cp. 119 (Table) for "promise." Well explained: "The fulfillment of Thy promise surpasses the renown of all Thy former mercies."  
—Dr.

5. "Didst inspire me with courage—a lofty feeling permeated my soul"  
—Del.

6. Or: "because."

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- 7 If I walk in the midst of distress thou revivest me:  
over the wrath of mine enemies thou stretchest forth thy  
hand,<sup>7</sup>  
and thy right hand saveth me.
- 8 Jehovah will complete (all things)<sup>8</sup> on my behalf:  
Jehovah thy kindness is to the ages,—  
the works<sup>9</sup> of thine own hands do not discard.  
(Lm.) to the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 138

Lord, with all my heart I thank You. I will sing Your praises before the armies of angels<sup>1</sup> in heaven.

2 I face Your Temple as I worship, giving thanks to You for all Your lovingkindness and Your faithfulness, for Your promises are backed by all the honor of Your name.<sup>2</sup>

3 When I pray, You answer me, and encourage me by giving me the strength I need.

4 Every king in all the earth shall give You thanks, O Lord, for all of them shall hear Your voice.

5 Yes, they shall sing about Jehovah's glorious ways, for His glory is very great.

6 Yet though He is so great, He respects the humble; but proud men must keep their distance.

7 Though I am surrounded by troubles, You will bring me safely through them. You will clench Your fist against my angry enemies! Your power will save me.

8 The Lord will work out His plans for my life—for Your lovingkindness, Lord, continues forever. Don't abandon me—for You made me.

## EXPOSITION

The sudden reappearance of psalms ascribed *To David*, together with a survey of the literary field in which they present themselves, suggests the obvious conclusion, that an early psalter was concluded with the Hallel psalms 105-107; 111-118; 135-136; and 146-150; and that, subsequently, other psalms were

7. Some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns. [1 Rabb.], Sep.): "hands" (pl.)—Gn.

8. So Dr. Cp. Ps. 57:2.

9. Some cod. (w. Syr.): "work" (sing.)—Gn.

1. Literally, "before the gods," or "before the idols."

2. Literally, "You have exalted Your word above all Your name."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

inserted among them. Of these subsequently inserted psalms, there are two groups assigned to "David"; namely, 108-110 and 138-145. Why they thus appear in two groups, rather than in one, is uncertain; but may easily have arisen from the order in which they were found, or the sources from which they were taken. The more urgent question is, how they came to be so belated in finding their way at all into the collected Praises of Israel.

Let us assume that we cannot now get to know this: is our ignorance material? There are many possible reasons why such a thing as so late a discovery of certain psalms might easily have happened. These two groups of Davidic psalms might have already appeared in other connections, and been regarded as sufficiently well preserved already; or they may have been stored at some spot or treasured in some library inaccessible to the earlier collectors of psalms. But the important point to note is, that no incident or accident of this kind is of sufficient weight to throw the smallest doubt upon the incorporated literary assignment of these psalms to David.

Because they are attributed to David, in closely-written and even continuous headlines, the presumption is that they came from his pen; and, unless we can establish the existence of an amount of Librarian carelessness or audacity which is inherently improbable, we ought not to set aside this presumption, save for good and strong cause.

Minute differences of style or orthography are seen to be insufficient reason for such discredit, as soon as proper consideration is given to the liberty known to have been taken by the Sopherim in controlling the Sacred Text. In the one known process of transliteration alone, they may have introduced orthographic peculiarities which it would be a great mistake to ascribe to a higher or earlier source, so as to disturb the question of original authorship.

Again: similarities to other psalms, may be due to such a cause as duplicate production from the author's own pen, who may have more than once given expression to similar sentiments, while in the same circumstances or in the same vein of feeling.

Once more: in some of these similar strains there may be special features which nowhere else appear: why not?

How these possibilities and cautions apply to the matter in hand will presently be seen.

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We have here more psalms attributed to David: are they sufficiently like him to allow us to accept them on their own profession? Do they dovetail into what we know of him already and into what we have from him elsewhere? In our many-sided care not to be misled, may we not justly beware of being prejudiced against an addition to our autobiographical materials? Let this be the spirit, then, in which we proceed to the consideration of this new and important batch of psalms ascribed "To David."

The first of the present series, namely the 138th, strikes us as not only an exceedingly bright and acceptable addition to those which have gone before; but as at once harmonising with what we know of David, and at the same time taking us a little beyond it.

The first stanza strikes just such a note as would be congenial to David's circumstances and sentiments soon after the communication to him of the Divine Oath by Nathan respecting the permanent continuance in his house of the Throne of Israel (2 Sam. 7). Just as here portrayed, he would then worship before the newly brought-in Ark; and it commends itself to us as eminently fitting, that such an advance in Jehovah's self-manifestation as was constituted by the new and unexpected promises contained in his newly received Covenant, should have at this time found unique expression in the line (ver. 2):

for thou hast magnified above all thy name thy promise;  
as to which see Driver's excellent comment at the foot of the text above. Corresponding with this, it is easy to conceive how almost dangerously life-like was the enhanced sense of *royal importance* as, in Delitzsch's apt words, "a lofty feeling permeated his soul."

In the second stanza of the psalm, we come upon something which seems at once new and apt: a sentiment not so clearly expressed elsewhere, but which nevertheless we are glad to perceive could find lodgment in David's mind. That the kings of the earth should do homage to David's Heir—this we have already perceived, as from Pss. 72 and 89; but that those kings should, for themselves, rejoice in the *sayings of Jehovah's mouth*, and should, in the right of their own joy, *sing of his ways* because of *the greatness of his glory*—this is peculiarly acceptable: most of all acceptable, and of charming interest, because of the implied peculiarity, that such enthusiasm would be roused even in the minds of *kings* by Jehovah's supreme *regard* for

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

the *lowly*. How this strikes a note not unknown to David, because probably taught him by Samuel, may be seen by reference to 18:20-27 with our Exposition thereof.

But, as the third stanza makes us feel, we have not done with David—the historical David—who, by little turns of expression peculiarly his own, lets us know that, while he is not yet finally out of *trouble*, he is confident that his covenant God *will complete all things on his behalf*. As in the earlier psalms of David which passed under Hezekiah's co-editing care, so this also is well handed over to *the Chief Musician*, which makes us feel quite at home, satisfied that the choirs will be well instructed how to deal with this addition to their Temple treasures.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is suggested by the sudden reappearance of psalms ascribed to David?
2. "There are many possible reasons" why these psalms of David are so late in appearing. Discuss at least one possible reason.
3. The literary critic is quick to see another author or redactor in any difference in expression. Show how this is a false practice.
4. This psalm well illustrates II Samuel 17. How?
5. A new thought concerning David is found in the second stanza. What is it?
6. "He who began a good work will perfect it." How does this thought apply to David?

## PSALM 139

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Individual submits Himself to Jehovah's All-Searching Eye.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-6, Jehovah's Knowledge considered as Taking into View every Form of Human Activity. Stanza II., vers. 7-12, There is No Escaping that Knowledge by Distance or Darkness. Stanza III., vers. 13-18, Based upon the Creatorship of each Individual, Jehovah's Knowledge rises

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to Precious Purposes Realisable by Fellowship with Him in a Higher Life. Stanza IV., vers. 19-24, The Lesson thus Learned produces a Passionate Espousal of Jehovah's honour, which feeling, however, is Jealously Guarded by Prayer.

(Lm.) By David—Psalm.

- 1 Jehovah! thou hast searched me and knowest:—
- 2 Thou knowest my downsitte and mine uprising,  
thou understandest my purpose from afar.
- 3 My journeying and my resting hast thou traced out,<sup>1</sup>  
and with all my ways art thou familiar.
- 4 When (as yet) there is no speech in my tongue  
lo! Jehovah thou knowest it all.
- 5 Behind and before hast thou shut me in,  
and hast laid upon me thine outspread hand.
- 6 Too wonderful is thy<sup>2</sup> knowledge for me,  
inaccessible! I cannot attain to it.
- 7 Whither can I go from thy spirit?  
or whither from thy face can I flee?
- 8 If I ascend the heavens there art thou,  
and if I spread out hades as my couch behold thee!
- 9 I mount the wings of the dawn,  
settle down in the region behind the sea
- 10 Even there thy hand leadeth me.  
and thy right hand holdeth me.
- 11 If I say—"Only let darkness shut me in,<sup>3</sup>  
and the light about me be night"
- 12 Even darkness would not darken from thee,  
and night like day would shine,—  
so the darkness as the light.
- 13 For thou thyself didst originate the first rudiments of my  
being,<sup>4</sup>  
didst weave me together<sup>5</sup> in the womb of my mother.
- 14 I thank thee that thou hast shewn thyself fearfully  
wondrous,—<sup>6</sup>

1. So Sep. Or (Heb.): "winnowed."

2. "Thy" in Sep. and Vul.

3. So Gt. M.T.: "bruise me."

4. ML: "my reins."

5. Or (less prob.): "screen me."

6. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Syr.)—Gn.

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- wonderful are thy works,  
and my soul knoweth [it] well.
- 15 My frame<sup>7</sup> was not hid from thee  
when I was made in secret,  
was skilfully wrought<sup>8</sup> in the underparts of the earth.<sup>9</sup>
- 16 Mine undeveloped substance<sup>10</sup> thine eyes beheld,  
and in thy book all of them were written—  
even days preordained,—  
and for it<sup>11</sup> one among them.
- 17 To me then how precious thy purposes O GOD!  
how numerous have become their heads!
- 18 I would recount them—beyond the sands they multiply!  
I awake—and my continued being<sup>12</sup> is with thee.
- 19 Wouldst thou O God slay the lawless one!—  
then ye men of bloodshed depart from me!—
- 20 Who speak of thee wickedly,  
have uttered for unreality thy name.<sup>13</sup>
- 21 Must not I hate them who hate thee O Jehovah?  
And them who rise up against thee must I not loathe?
- 22 With completeness of hatred do I hate them,  
as enemies have they become to me.
- 23 Search me O GOD and know my heart,  
try me and know my disquieting<sup>14</sup> thoughts;
- 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me,  
and lead me in a way age-abiding.<sup>15</sup>

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

7. Ml.: "my bone."

8. If the initial "r" in Heb. was an accidental repetition from the previous word (wh. ends w. that letter), then we might render the word so shortened: "I arose." And this might convey a double allusion to race origin and individual origin.

9. "The secret laboratory of the origin of earthly existence"—(Cp. Job 1:21, Sir. 40:1)—Del.

10. Ml.: "my ball"—as yet unrolled! Br. conjectures *grl* (instead of *glm*) "my lot."

11. Namely, "for my undeveloped substance": "one among them," namely, "among preordained days." So, prob., if w. Del. we prefer the Heb. marginal reading (in one recension) *welo*=*waw*, *lamed*, *waw*; otherwise, if we follow M.T., *welo*'=*waw*, *lamed*, *aleph* (same pronunciation), we must say: "And NOT one among them."

12. Ml.: "my continuance."

13. So *Gt.*: cp. Exo. 20:7.

14. Cp. 94:19.

15. That is, "a way enduring or holding on to the ages." In contrast with the "way" that "vanishes," 1:6. Cp. "the path of life," 16:11.



PSALM 139  
PARAPHRASE  
PSALM 139

O Lord, You have examined my heart and know everything about me.

2 You know when I sit or stand. When far away You know my every thought.

3 You chart the path ahead of me, and tell me where to stop and rest! Every moment, You know where I am!

4 You know what I am going to say before I even say it.

5 You both precede and follow me, and place Your hand of blessing on my head.

6 This is too glorious, too wonderful to believe!

7 I can *never* be lost to Your Spirit! I can *never* get away from God!

8 If I go up to heaven You are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, You are there.

9 If I ride the morning winds to the farthest oceans,

10 Even there Your hand will guide me, Your strength will support me.

11 If I try to hide in the darkness, the night becomes light around me!

12 For even darkness cannot hide from God; to You the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to You.

13 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body, and knit them together in my mother's womb.

14 Thank You for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it.

15 You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion!

16 You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in Your Book!

17, 18 How precious it is, Lord, to realize that You are thinking about me constantly! I can't even count how many times a day Your thoughts turn towards me!<sup>1</sup> And when I waken in the morning, You are still thinking of me!

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Literally, "how precious are Your thoughts to me."

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19 Surely You will slay the wicked, Lord! Away, blood-thirsty men! Begone!

20 They blaspheme Your name and stand in arrogance against You—how silly can they be?

21 O Lord, shouldn't I hate those who hate You? Shouldn't I be grieved with them?

22 Yes, I hate them, for Your enemies are my enemies too.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart, test my thoughts.

24 Point out anything You find in me that makes You sad, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

## EXPOSITION

This beautiful and heart-searching psalm may be conveniently regarded as resolving itself into four Stanzas of six verses each, as set forth in our Analysis.

I. *Jehovah's Knowledge considered as taking into view every form of human activity.* A survey which includes a man's *downsitting* when his day's work is done, his *uprising* when his night's rest is over, and his chief *purpose* during the twenty-four hours; which traces his *journeying* from place to place, his *resting* at noon and at night, and his *ways* of deporting himself wherever he may be,—may be said to touch in general terms on all the forms which individual activity can assume. If, to these specifications, are added those processes of the mind which prepare for *speech*, and which prompt and guide the *tongue* in its utterance,—we may conclude that nothing of importance remains uncomprehended in this brief enumeration. Nevertheless, there is yet another aspect under which individual activity may be viewed; and that is, its narrow limitation. There are on every side bounds which it cannot overpass; an individual's *downsittings* and *uprisings* can only attain a certain number, and then they must cease; and so with all his forms of activity. Such limitation is graphically set forth in the simplest and most picturesque language: *Behind and before hast thou shut me in, and hast laid on me thine outspread hand.* This reflection, by so far, enhances the thoroughness of Jehovah's knowledge of me. He knows all the movements I can make, and he himself strictly limits those movements; which emphasises the main point, which is, that Jehovah knows every individual thoroughly: knows, with first-hand knowledge; as the result of personal search and tracing and testing; knows, by anticipation, even the as yet unspoken words that are coming. It is not

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surprising that the psalmist realises how such knowledge surpasses any knowledge which he himself possesses: *Too wonderful is thy knowledge for me.*

II. *There is no Escaping that Knowledge by Distance or Darkness.* The psalmist first tests the question, whether by *Distance* he can hide himself from God. No: not by distance: whether the distant *height*, or the distant *depth*, or the distant *breadth*: the distant and dazzling height of *heaven*; or the dim, dark depth of *hades*, the underworld of the dead; or the hazy remoteness of the shores and islands *behind* the *hinder* Mediterranean *Sea*: escape to any of these distances will be no escape from Jehovah; who is above, below, beyond; present everywhere—present, in the diffused vitality of his *spirit*, present, in the personal capacity of revealing his *face* in wrath or love. The poet is only testing the question in all the forms his thoughts can appreciate. He does not say he wishes to escape: in fact, he almost implies that he does not; for, in putting the case, merely to test the possibility, he rather assumes the love than the wrath of the Omnipresent One: *There, thy hand leadeth me, and thy right hand holdeth me.* But, if he *would* escape, he *could* not—that is his main point.

Having tested the question of escape from God's knowledge by means of "Distance," he next propounds the question whether by means of *Darkness* such escape were possible. Again he concludes in the negative. *Darkness is no darkness to Jehovah.*

III. *Based upon the Creatorship of Each Individual, Jehovah's Knowledge rises to Precious Purposes realisable by Fellowship with Him in a Higher Life.*

This comprehensive summary of the third stanza of our psalm is not more comprehensive than the particulars which it seeks to express. Nevertheless, being highly charged with meaning, it may be helpful to draw out its main points in the form of three distinct propositions.

1. Jehovah's knowledge of men is based upon his creatorship of each individual.

2. His creatorship of each individual comprehends benevolent purposes with respect to them.

3. His benevolent purposes with respect to each individual require for their realisation the advantages of a higher life than the present.

1. *Jehovah's knowledge of men is based upon his creatorship of each individual.* The causal word *For*=*Because*, which

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opens this stanza, strictly and properly leads up to this conception: "Thou hast such an intimate knowledge of me as neither change of activity, nor distance, nor darkness can obstruct, *because* thou didst make me: *because* I am thy creature: *because* thou art my creator." This is the first strong and clear point in this third stanza of our psalm. Observe that it is clearly and strongly expressed. It is expressed by almost every form of language by which the idea could be conveyed: *He originated the first rudiments of my being*. Then he carries on the formative work so begun: *He wove me together*. He constructed my *bony framework*. Moreover he yet further advanced his handiwork to completion, by *skilfully* imparting the whole *variegated web-work* of nerves and blood-vessels. We need not trust too much to a single form of expression; but it may safely be said that at least three times over in this short paragraph is Jehovah's creatorship of the human body affirmed. Sum them all up, and put them in their proper connection of thought, by saying: He knows me thoroughly because he made me. He made, not only my spirit, but my body also.

We are not going too far when we individualise, and say: "He made *me*. He made *my* body." We are not going too far, because *precisely that* is what the psalmist says.

But does he not also generalise, and speak of the origin of the *race* under cover of the origin of the *individual*? The correct answer to that plausible question would seem to be this: Yes, he does also generalise; but without withdrawing his individualisation. He refers to the *literal mother's womb* of the individual, as well as—probably and allusively—to the figurative mother's womb here glanced at under the terms *underparts of the earth*. We need not deny the allusion. It is the easiest and happiest way of accounting for the introduction of that remarkable expression; which it may be observed is also found in the Septuagint and Vulgate: As the race was originally brought forth out of the underparts of the earth, so the individual is, at birth, brought forth from the maternal concealment answering thereto. But such an allusion does not dominate the passage: the psalm distinctly and repeatedly affirms the Divine Creatorship of the body of each individual human being.

The importance of this teaching will be evident to every thoughtful mind. The consequences which follow from it may, without exaggeration, be described as tremendous. To say that BEHIND EVERY HUMAN BIRTH DIVINE CAUSATION IS IMPLIED is to

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make a statement which may undoubtedly be abused. But, on the other hand, still more deplorable consequences will result from denying it. The alternative—that of cutting any single creature adrift from its Creator—must at all costs be avoided.

Jehovah created the race: Jehovah creates every individual of the race. Jehovah is the Father of our spirits—doubtless with special immediateness, beautifully symbolised by the directness with which each breathing thing draws its breath from God. But, though not without creaturely intervention, yet through “the fathers of our flesh,” Jehovah’s creatorship takes effect: his power and wisdom and love are operative in the production of our individual bodies also. It is this which the third stanza of our psalm so strongly teaches, and the more thoroughly and fearlessly we appropriate the solemn thought, the more shall we have ultimate cause for rejoicing.

Jehovah knows me thoroughly, because he made me; and he made my body as well as my spirit—he made the whole man, the entire compound psychic individual.

This is not to say that even he, at my first birth, brought a clean thing out of an unclean; but it is to say, that my first birth, with all its drawbacks, lays a foundation for a second: a second birth whose very object will be to bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Creation may be followed by destruction; but that is not its object. Creation may be followed by salvation.

2. *Jehovah’s creatorship of each individual comprehends benevolent purposes respecting each.* What is it but Jehovah’s individual creatorship which calls forth the significant line which now comes before us?

To me, then, how precious thy purposes, O God!

Having employed the word “purpose,” in ver. 2, in relation to man, we are bound in consistency to use it now, in ver. 17, in relation to God, the word being the same in the original. God has not only “thoughts” about us when individually creating us, but purposes, and because these purposes are *precious*, therefore we must assume them to be benevolent; purposes of good and not of evil; of salvation, and not of destruction. Some, indeed, prefer the qualifying word “weighty” here instead of “precious”; but as “precious” is the more customary and obvious rendering, we shall hold ourselves warranted to abide by that more inspiring word until driven out of it. Inasmuch, however, as the immediately following context confirms the preferred and

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customary rendering, we have no fear of being driven out of the welcome conception of a benevolent Divine purpose in connection with every human birth.

It is quite true that the psalmist with great emphasis asserts the individuality of his own appreciation of God's benevolent purposes in his creation. *To me, then, how precious!* and he had every right to do this. "*To me, knowing thee as I know thee;*" "*To me, then, considering this matter as I have done, and pondering deeply upon it as I have pondered,—how precious thy purposes are!*" But is this to shut others out from the same appreciation; or, is it, rather, to invite them to follow him? Let us beware of narrowing the ground of the exclamation so as to cut it away from under any man's feet. Suffice it, then, to observe—that the psalmist neither says nor implies, "Because I am a good man, therefore are thy purposes such as they are, therefore are they precious to me." No! the whole spirit of the stanza, and of the psalm hitherto, suggests the simpler and broader ground: "Because I am a man, and because thou didst make me to be a man, therefore are thy purposes to me as man so precious."

3. *Jehovah's benevolent purposes with respect to each individual require for their realisation the advantages of a higher life than the present.* Nearly everything here turns on the bearing of the word *awake*; although something also turns upon the fact that the words *I am still* may give place to a more literal rendering, *my continuance*, which more literal rendering may justly assume the significant form, *my continued being*, as we see from Ps. 104:33: *I awake—my continued being is with thee.* Chiefly, the decision turns upon the scope or intention of the word *awake*. Does the psalmist intend to imply that he had nearly or quite fallen asleep under the weight of his profound meditation, but that when he roused himself he still found himself revolving the old problem,—found him *with God* in the sense of still thinking about him? Or does he rather rise to a higher thought—that of awaking to a higher life than the present?

We may and must dismiss the former as purely fanciful: there is nothing sleepy about what has gone before—all is alert, wakeful; with no indication even of weariness in the mind of the psalmist. Besides which, there is something essentially feeble in reducing the weighty words *with thee* to mean no more

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than thinking about thee; since they more properly mean in company with thee—in thy presence.

On the other hand there are attractive parallels for investing the word “awake” with a far richer meaning; such as, “Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust” (Isa. 26:19), “many of the sleepers in the dusty ground shall awake” (Dan. 12:2), and especially—

As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness,  
I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.

—Ps, 17:15.

Who can deny that, so to understand the words of our psalm, is to bring its third stanza to an altogether worthy conclusion? The whole context is strong, and favours a strong conclusion. Particularly strong and suggestive are the two lines falling between the two great words *purposes* and *awake*: *how numerous have become the heads of them, namely thy purposes; and—I would recount them—beyond the sands they multiply.* Only regard the *purposes* as finding final culmination in the bestowment of IMMORTAL LIFE; only regard the *awaking* as being the GREAT AWAKING to that life; and then this multiplication of the Divine “purposes” is abundantly accounted for. The “purposes” culminating in the Great Awakening naturally multiply on both sides of that climax: on this side, and on that; as leading up to it, and as carrying us beyond it. He who “purposes” to bestow on me immortality, will he not “purpose” to prepare me for that priceless boon? Will he not “purpose” redemption, “purpose” sanctification, “purpose” the necessary discipline of suffering, “purpose” victory over temptation? So that we may well exclaim, *How numerous the purposes leading me up to the Great Awakening!* And again, will that Great Awakening not itself lead on to further and higher and still multiplying results? Does Jehovah “purpose” to awake me to an idle, sterile life? When I am awakened, will there be nothing for me to do, no lost ones to seek and save, no new worlds to conquer, no new victories to achieve, no new songs to sing, no new book of nature’s secrets to open? Verily, it is as the psalmist says, *How the heads of coming possibilities in the future multiply beyond the sands?*

On every ground, therefore, are we emboldened to conclude, that this *Awaking* is THE GREAT AWAKING TO IMMORTALITY. On the ground of the utter feebleness of the *alternative view*, which fancies that this wakeful psalmist fell asleep; on the ground

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of the felt *preciousness* of these Divine *purposes*; and on the ground of their abundant *multiplication*, which can never so prolifically multiply as when clustered about Jehovah's greatest gift, age-abiding life:—on all these substantial grounds we choose this conclusion, and rest in it, that the climax of this third stanza does really mean—I *awake* to immortal life—and find that *my continued being* is to be enjoyed in fellowship *with thee* my loving Creator!

IV. *The lesson thus learned produces a Passionate Espousal of Jehovah's honour: which feeling, however, is Jealously Guarded by Prayer.*

That is what we really have here, in the final stanza of our psalm: let us brush aside everything which hinders our seeing it.

Granted that the language employed is, some of it, such as we could not use: simply because we are not in the psalmist's circumstances. What were those circumstances?

As this question necessarily throws us back on the problem of authorship, it may be permitted us to say: that this "Study" was commenced under the impression that DAVID HIMSELF was the Writer of the whole of this psalm, the manifest difference in tone between the first three stanzas and the last being sufficiently accounted for by the easy supposition, that three-fourths of the psalm were written by David in his comparatively early and untroubled days, and the last part, after his days of conflict had set in; but that, on closer consideration of the peculiar language of the fourth stanza and contemplation of the circumstances—the whole state of things—thereby implied, the modified conclusion was reached, that, while David probably wrote the major part of the psalm, namely its continuously calm stanzas one, two, and three, being probably the whole original psalm, and abundantly entitling the psalm as a whole to bear his honoured name, it was his descendant HEZEKIAH who, having drunk in the existing psalm, in letter and spirit, then added to it the present fourth stanza. The sufficient reason for this modification may be allowed to stand thus: the fourth stanza does *not exactly suit* any known circumstances through which David passed, but *does exactly and most wonderfully fit* the peculiar condition of things which existed in the days of Hezekiah. So much for clearness being premised, the case may be thus stated, looking steadfastly and with a single eye to the exact language of this the fourth stanza of the psalm.



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These are the words of a responsible King in Israel: with a foreign invader trampling down the land; leaving his subjects little chance of exercising the most ordinary rights of citizenship, and still less of maintaining the appointed central worship in Jerusalem; many of the Levites being beleaguered in the cities where are their homes, and consequently being unable to ascend to the holy city to attend there to their sacerdotal duties. All this, observe, simply because of this same Invader—this lawless foreigner—who will, if he can, dethrone Israel's rightful monarch, and draw the people away from their allegiance to Jehovah himself. And now the question is:—If, under these circumstances, the King prays—*Wouldst thou, O God, slay the lawless one!* is he doing wrong? Deserves he to lose our sympathies? Can we condemn him? Note, that he does not propose to *slay the lawless one* himself; he merely commits him to the judgment of God: *Slay him, O God!* Is that a wrong prayer for Israel's King, under such circumstances.

But let us be at pains to take in the whole situation. There is a war-party in Israel, who are prepared to rush forward into *blood-shed*, with or without Jehovah's permission. We know them; we have met with them before: we have heard their peace-loving King lament that he dwelt among them: bitterly complaining of them in such terms as these, "*I am peace; but when I speak, they are for war!*" (Ps. 120). These are the men to whom the devout monarch here says threateningly in a significant aside: *then, ye men of blood-shed, depart from me!* As much as to say, "Once the Lawless One is slain by God's hand, your excuses for plunging into a wilful war will be silenced; and, depend upon it, I shall hasten to rid myself of your hated presence in my Court."

Not only was there a war-party in Israel, but that war-party was composed of *profane* men—men *who spake* of Jehovah *wickedly*, who tried to maintain *falsehoods* by the irreverent use of *his* holy name: men, in a word, who *hated* Jehovah! Those are the men whom this praying, Jehovah-loving monarch has to confront. And we ask, was he wrong in drawing a line at them? Could he do otherwise than exclaim, in loyalty to the God whom he adored and loved: *Must I not hate them who hate thee, O Jehovah?* There is no paltry, personal animosity in the language. In point of fact, these men might have been the king's own enemies, but of that he takes no account. Wholly on public grounds—solely for Jehovah's

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sake—he *accounts* them as his own enemies. That—no more, no less—is what the language expresses.

And so we claim to have brushed aside all obstructions to the reception of the large and solemn lesson here conveyed. It is an object-lesson; and is nothing less than this: That when a man rightly appreciates the *precious purposes* which his Creator cherishes towards him, then is he propelled by the highest moral compulsion to love him in return; to vindicate his honour; and to count his Creator's enemies as his own.

Yet, in such a passionate espousal of Jehovah's honour, there undoubtedly lurks a subtle danger; lest the public hate should take up into itself personal animosity; let an abhorrence of men's godless principles and animus should overlook the yet lingering preciousness of their personalities, not yet, it may be, wholly corrupt and finally abandoned.

And it is submitted, that this is one of the finest things in this matchless psalm; namely, that the psalmist is fully aware of this danger; and makes a determined stand against it, by voluntarily submitting himself to the searching eye of his heart-searching God; imploring to know whether there is in him—even by way of mixed motives—*any hurtful way*; and seeking to be Divinely *led into a way*—up to and through the great Awakening—to the pure life that shall *abide to the ages*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Perhaps this is the most meaningful of all the psalms. Please read it and the exposition on it with this thought in mind. Discuss why you believe this psalm has meaning for you.
2. Someone said, "for the Christian, nothing happens in his life by accident, all is under God's hand of intent." The first six verses of this psalm surely confirm this thought. Discuss.
3. Not only does God know all my movements, "he himself strictly limits those movements," discuss this thought.
4. Does man have a strong temptation to run away and hide? Why? Is this true of all men?
5. There are various attempts to get away from God . . . to put distance between you and God. Discuss some modern-day applications of this.
6. Every fifth man in America is emotionally sick—i.e. ac-

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ording to some statistics—is this an attempt to escape God in the darkness? Discuss other forms of darkness. *Most of all*; discuss not only the futility of this effort but the needlessness of it.

7. What a tremendous thought! Not only did God create man, but He took a personal interest in creating each one. Discuss how very complete is the interest of our Creator in each one of us.
8. What is involved in the expression the “underparts of the earth”?
9. God has a plan and purpose for every life, is this taught in this psalm? Discuss.
10. How do the first and second births relate?
11. How is the word “precious” used in this psalm?
12. How is the word “awake” here used?
13. The multiplicity of the purposes of God is a strong argument for immortality. How so?
14. Rotherham has an interesting thought about the writing of the fourth stanza. Discuss.
15. Who was the “lawless one”? Why to be slain? Was this merciful?
16. What protection did the psalmist seek against the lawless one?

## PSALM 140

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Deliverance from Slandering and Violent Enemies  
Implored and Expected.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Rescue from Violent Slandering Besought. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, The Plottings of the Slandering Indicated. Stanza III., vers. 6-8, Personal Relation to Jehovah and His Past Mercies Pleaded. Stanza IV., vers. 9-11, Prayer becomes Impassioned Imprecation. Stanza V., vers. 12, 13, Calm Assurance at length comes of Complete Vindication.

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(Lm.) A Psalm—By David.

- 1 Rescue me Jehovah from evil men,  
from the man of violent deeds wilt thou preserve me:

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- 2 Who have devised evil things in [their] heart,  
every day they stir up wars:
- 3 They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent,  
the venom of the viper<sup>1</sup> is under their lips. □□
- 4 Keep me Jehovah from the hands of the lawless one,  
from the man of violent deeds. wilt thou preserve me,—  
who have devised to give a thrust unto my footsteps.
- 5 Proud men have hid a trap for me and nooses,  
they have spread a net by the side of the track,—  
lures have they set for me. □□
- 6 I have said unto Jehovah—"My GOD art thou!  
oh give ear, Jehovah to the voice of my supplications.
- 7 Jehovah Sovereign Lord my stronghold of salvation,  
thou hast been a screen to my head in the day of arms.
- 8 Do not grant Jehovah the desires of the lawless one,  
his device do not promote." □□<sup>2</sup>
- 9 If they who encompass me lift up their head<sup>3</sup>  
let the mischief of their own lips cover them:
- 10 Let him rain upon them<sup>4</sup> live coals,  
into the fire let him cast them—  
into the place of flowing waters that they rise not again.
- 11 The slanderer<sup>5</sup> shall not be established in the land,  
the man of violence let calamity hunt him in great haste.<sup>6</sup>
- 12 I know that Jehovah will execute the right of the humbled,  
the vindication of the needy.
- 13 Surely righteous ones shall give thanks unto thy name,  
upright ones shall dwell in thy presence.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

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O Lord, deliver me from evil men. Preserve me from the violent,

2 Who plot and stir up trouble all day long.

3 Their words sting like poisonous snakes.

1. Or? "spider"—O.G. "The meaning of the Heb. word is uncertain"—Dr.

2. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Selah."

3. So Del. divides the verses.

4. So *Gt.*, cp. 11:7.

5. *ML.*: "man of tongue."

6. So Del., "With thrust upon thrust."—O.G., Dr.

## PSALM 140

4 Keep me out of their power. Preserve me from their violence, for they are plotting against me.

5 These proud men have set a trap to catch me, a noose to yank me up and leave me dangling in the air; they wait in ambush with a net to throw over and hold me helpless in its meshes.

6, 7, 8 O Jehovah, my Lord and Savior, my God and my shield—hear me as I pray! Don't let these wicked men succeed; don't let them prosper and be proud.

9 Let their plots boomerang! Let them be destroyed by the very evil they have planned for me.

10 Let burning coals fall down upon their heads, or throw them into the fire, or into deep pits from which they can't escape.

11 Don't let liars prosper here in our land; quickly punish them.

12 But the Lord will surely help those they persecute; He will maintain the rights of the poor.

13 Surely the godly are thanking You, for they shall live in Your presence.

## EXPOSITION

The situation indicated by this psalm is clearly Davidic. The very fact that *slander* is the primary weapon relied upon by the writer's enemies is enough to make us suspect who the writer is; and when *violence* is seen waiting on slander, ready to strike as soon as slander has succeeded in doing its poisonous work, we have instantly all the conditions required by the psalm vividly brought before our minds: that is, as soon as we think of *David at Saul's court* as the sufferer and Petitioner of the psalm. There is no need to risk a universal negative, by denying that any other man ever lived in whose history these peculiar conditions met; but the doubt may be confidently expressed, that it would be extremely difficult to imagine a second hero able to meet the requirements here indicated. He must be a believer in Jehovah—a man of prayer—a man who has been under arms—a man who can point to past divine deliverances—a man whose life is at the mercy of a slanderous tongue—and, to forbear further specification, a man whose rescue from present peril will cause righteous men to thank Jehovah and dwell securely in his presence. David fulfils all these conditions; and, not knowing where to find another who does this, we may well

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hold ourselves justified in accepting the traditional ascription of authorship to be well sustained.

The reader who pleases to turn to our exposition of Ps. 69 will see how far we are from offering an unqualified defence of the imprecations which several of the psalms contain; but the above considerations respecting the peculiar conditions which met in David, may suggest in great strength the plea that it is no wonder that, *in his circumstances*, he did call to Jehovah for heavy judgments on his enemies. David—notwithstanding his reverent and tender scruples against lifting up a finger to injure his tyrannical master, Saul—was, after all, looking forward to the personal occupancy of the throne of the kingdom, and where, then, could he naturally desire these turbulent enemies to be, if not swept away by the judicial visitations of Jehovah? How else could he look forward to a kingdom in which the *humbled* and *needy* should be *vindicated*, and men be free to *dwell* in safety and *thankfulness* in Jehovah's *presence*? In those circumstances probably no man living is now placed.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is described as an "imprecatory psalm"; what is meant by this expression? How is it to be understood?
2. Show how appropriate this psalm is to David's experience.
3. In David's circumstance we can understand his desire, as here expressed. Discuss.

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### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Temptation to Conspiracy Shunned.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Prayer for Guarded Speech. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, Danger from Proffered Hospitalities. Stanza III., vers. 6, 7, Guarded Admissions. Stanza IV., vers. 8-10, Prayer for Personal Preservation.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 Jehovah I have called upon thee, oh haste thou unto me:  
oh give ear to my voice when I call unto thee.

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- 2 Prepared be my prayer as incense before thee,  
the uplifting of my hands as the grain-offering of the  
evening.
- 3 Oh set thou Jehovah a guard to my mouth,  
oh watch thou over the door of my lips.
- 4 Let not my heart incline unto a matter of wrong,  
to practise practices in lawlessness with men who are  
working iniquity,—<sup>1</sup>  
so shall I not taste of their dainties.
- 5 Let a righteous man smite me in kindness and rebuke me,  
but the oil of the lawless let it not anoint my head;<sup>2</sup>  
for still my prayer must be against their wrongs.
- 6 "When their judges have been let fall by the side of a crag  
then have they hearkened to my sayings, in that they are  
mild:"<sup>3</sup>
- 7 "As one plougheth and furroweth the earth  
scattered are our bones at the mouth of hades."
- 8 For unto thee Jehovah Sovereign Lord are mine eyes,  
in thee have I taken refuge do not pour out my life.<sup>4</sup>
- 9 Keep me out of the clutches of the trap they have laid for me,  
and the lures of the workers of iniquity.<sup>5</sup>
- 10 Let lawless men fall into the snares thereof:  
I shall rejoice<sup>6</sup> while I pass by.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

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Quick, Lord, answer me—for I have prayed. Listen when  
I cry to You for help!

2 Regard my prayer as my evening sacrifice and as incense  
wafting up to You.

3 Help me, Lord, to keep my mouth shut and my lips sealed.

4 Take away my lust for evil things; don't let me want to  
be with sinners, doing what they do, sharing their dainties.

1. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.).

2. So Sep.: thus intelligibly leading on to what follows.

3. So Fuerst. U.: "sweet," "pleasant," "delightful."

4. U.: "soul."

5. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.).

6. So Br., reading *'hd* instead of *yhd*. "So by an easy emendation of a  
difficult text, which varies in Heb. and Sep., and is variously interpreted in  
versions."

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5 Let the godly smite me! It will be a kindness! If they reprove me, it is medicine! Don't let me refuse it. But I am in constant prayer against the wicked and their deeds.

6, 7 When their leaders are condemned, and their bones are strewn across the ground<sup>1</sup> then these men will finally listen to me and know that I am trying to help them.

8 I look to You for help, O Lord God. You are my refuge. Don't let them slay me.

9 Keep me out of their traps.

10 Let them fall into their own snares, while I escape.

## EXPOSITION

Some close connection between this psalm and the previous has been generally seen by Expositors, and indeed must be admitted on the evidence; but the situation has materially changed. There—in the foregoing psalm—the danger to the psalmist arose from the slanderous tongues of others; here, the danger apprehended is from an incautious use of his own tongue. And this perception helps us to seize the nature of the change which has come over the psalmist's enemies. Before, they wished to ensure his downfall by falsely accusing him to his master, whose permission they sought to employ violence towards the object of their hatred. Now, however, a deeper plot endangers his life. It is not for their royal master that they really care, but for themselves; and they have conceived the dark project of employing David to assassinate Saul. With the assassin, indeed, they will make short work, and place their nominee on the throne of Israel. Such is the plot.

The evidence of it is not historic, but circumstantial, and springs exclusively from the thoroughness with which such a situation accounts for the extraordinary difficulties which attach themselves to the language of the psalm: whose words, though obscure in places, are by no means so difficult to decipher, as is the connection of thought which binds them together. The psalm, in fact, is incoherent, until its main drift is detected; but, when that is discovered, difficulties materially diminish.

There were men at Saul's court wicked and unscrupulous enough for any crime consistent with their own safety and ambition: to wit, Cush the Benjamite and Doeg the Edomite.

1. Literally, "As when one plows and cleaves the earth, our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol."



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David may have unwittingly so far put himself into their power as unintentionally to lead them to contemplate the possibility of making him wholly subservient to their nefarious designs. It would be surprising if he had never betrayed, in their presence, how sorely he felt the wrong that Saul was all along doing him; and, in particular, the king's cruel slaughter of the priests of Nob may have extorted from his noble soul—in his enemies' hearing—some such identification with the sufferers as is implied in the fraternising language of one significant line in our psalm:—

Scattered are our bones at the mouth of hades;

for, in truth, the slaughter at Nob was great, and in the hasty burial of the slain, it may easily have happened that the bones of the victims were left to be upturned by some neighbouring farmer as he made his furrow in the field. How easily may David have more than once expressed so keen a regret over this horrible incident, as to betray the undoubted truth, that his sympathies were much more with the slain than with the slayer; and, so, how plausibly may an occasion have been given to those whose hatred of him was very much in the proportion of the love of others, his friends.

Only, now, their policy is not so much the slanderous use of their own tongues to Saul, as the inducing of David so to add to his lamentations over his master's cruelty as to improve their chance of inciting him to conspire against him. To this end, they flatter and court him; they invite him to a feast, and will undoubtedly entertain him well, not forgetting to *anoint his head* as an honoured guest!

This is the plot, through which the psalmist sees; of which he stands in wholesome dread; against which he prays in tones of rhythmic passion, to which he attunes his inevitable lyre. *That*, we instinctively feel, is how this psalm was produced.

Look through it carefully from this point of view and see how naturally it yields up at least the principal portion of its contents when set to this key-note, and how eloquently forcible those contents, in that case, become.

Like Daniel, at a later time, David feels that he must needs be circumspect even in his prayers; lest his enemies, overhearing him, manufacture treason out of his devotions. He is therefore urgent in this particular request:

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Jehovah, I have called upon thee, oh haste thou unto me:  
oh give ear to my voice when I call unto thee.

He proceeds to crave that there may be no unguarded word in his devotions, but all be as orderly and circumspect as the ordering of a morning or evening sacrifice.

Prepared be my prayer as incense before thee,  
the uplifting of my hands as the grain-offering  
of the evening.

How so? the answer immediately follows:—

Oh set thou Jehovah a guard to my mouth,  
oh watch thou over the door of my lips.

The reason for this prayerful caution has already become obvious.

The second stanza is naturally a little more explicit:—

Let not my heart incline unto a matter of wrong;  
and would it not be “WRONG” to take away Saul’s life? We know how David’s soul would recoil from the thought!

Moreover, there will be foreigners in this feast whose heathenish *practices* cannot for a moment be trusted. The whole thing is *lawless*; and by teachings and ceremonies of *lawlessness* will it be sustained. So the psalmist apprehends, and wisely resolves:—

So shall I not taste of their dainties.

“I will come under no social obligation to them.”

Let a righteous man smite me—it were a kindness,—  
let him even rebuke me!

“It would do me no harm.”

But the oil of the lawless—let it not anoint my head!

“By such courtesies I might be overcome; and I would by no means have it so: I cannot consent to unnerve my soul from praying continually against the enormous *wrong* which they are plotting.”

Is the next stanza enigmatic? It may be so; and may have been intentionally so left.

“When their judges have been let fall by the side of a  
crag,  
then have they hearkened to my sayings, in that they  
are mild.”

## PSALM 141

“Did I ever say this? And do they, according to the idiom of our tongue [as plural of intensity], take me to have meant, that *Our great Judge*, Saul, might be *let fall from a crag*? And do they suppose that my further meaning was: That, when the present monarchy is removed by Divine Visitation upon the Great Offender, then they will turn to me in approval of my sayings; will admit that what I had repeatedly said was well within bounds,—was reasonable,—was *mild* in comparison with what I might have said?” It is conceivable, that, while the psalmist saw how easily his enemies could thus intensify and exaggerate the meaning of these sayings so as to make them appear treasonable, the Spirit of Prophecy may have prevented his withdrawing them.

It is further possible that some link of speech has fallen out of this stanza, which, if recovered, would make easily intelligible the present bare four lines: of which a merely conjectural paraphrase has thus been submitted. And it is highly probable, as a little ago was suggested, that the psalmist would have frankly admitted that he had identified himself with the priests who had so fearfully suffered for his sake at Nob.

Our admission that this short stanza of the psalm is decidedly enigmatic, and may include one or even two proverbial sayings to which we have lost the clue, does not by any means throw the remainder of the psalm into obscurity. In any case, if the glimpse we have obtained of the origin of this psalm be correct—we cannot be surprised to find the psalmist moved by the gravity of his danger to renewed entreaties for Jehovah’s protection. If his enemies could only involve him in a plot TO TAKE AWAY SAUL’S LIFE, the *pouring out* of his own *life* would speedily follow! Cruel, indeed were *the clutches of the trap they had laid* for him. But by Jehovah’s help in keeping his *heart* right, and his eyes open, and his resolve firm not to accept of their festivities—either their anointing oil for his head or their dainties for his palate—he could calmly hope to *pass by* the danger unharmed.

Perhaps it may, without presumption, be allowable to submit in conclusion,—that the dating by some eminent critics of the composition of this psalm within that period of David’s life covered by the revolt of Absalom, utterly fails to find foothold in the first stanza of the psalm. The fundamental pre-supposition furnished by that stanza is by no means thereby met. No such critical danger at that time attached to any words

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

which might fall from David's lips: no emissaries were waiting to run and report them to Absalom; and, if there had been, Absalom had not yet obtained any power to avenge them. By throwing the scene back to the days of Saul, all is changed; and the feasibility of thus obtaining a suitable situation to call forth the psalm is so patent as to render inexcusable the resort of some critics to a post-exilic period, and the violent expedient of turning the suppliant of the psalm into a nation. Leave the individualistic feature of the psalm intact; and the nation can then help itself by appropriating its own condition whatever it finds likely to contribute to its edification.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the definable similarity between this psalm and the preceding one?
2. What is the dark plot of these enemies of David's?
3. What real purpose did these men have in their plot? Who were the possible perpetrators?
4. How had David (possibly) unwittingly put himself in their power?
5. "Scattered are our bones at the mouth of hades"—how shall we understand this expression. Discuss.
6. David feels even his devotion could be a danger to him—how so?
7. The thought of daily personal devotions—i.e. prayer and the meditation on His Word is assured as the practice of David and others. Are we less in need than they? Why do we fail in this privilege?
8. What a sore temptation are social obligations! As with David so with us. How shall we protect ourselves from them?
9. There seems to be an enigmatic stanza in this psalm. Where is it? What does it mean?
10. Show how other possible solutions as to the setting of this psalm fail to properly interpret it.

## PSALM 142

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Loud Outcries in a Cave Succeed Guarded Petitions at Court.

PSALM 142  
ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, A Loud-Voiced Prelude. Stanzas II. and III., vers. 3, 4, Severity of the Late Trial at Court. Stanza IV., ver. 5, Final Prayer before Flight. Stanza V., ver. 6, Want Before, Pursuers Behind. Stanza VI., ver. 7, Faith Brightens the Prospect.

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(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By David—  
When he was in the Cave—a Prayer.

- 1 With my voice<sup>1</sup> to Jehovah I cry,  
with my voice<sup>1</sup> to Jehovah I make supplication:
- 2 I pour out before him my complaint,<sup>2</sup>  
my distress before him I declare.
- 3 Though my spirit fainted upon me  
yet thou approvedst my path:  
In the way which I was accustomed to walk  
they had hidden a trap for me.
- 4 I looked to the right-hand and saw—<sup>3</sup>  
that there was none who for me had regard.  
Escape had vanished from me,  
there was none to care for my life.<sup>4</sup>
- 5 I cried unto thee O Jehovah,  
I said "Thou art my refuge,  
my portion in the land of the living."
- 6 Oh attend unto my piercing cry,  
for I am brought very low:  
Rescue me from my pursuers,  
for they are stronger than I.
- 7 Oh bring forth out of the dungeon my soul,  
to give thanks to thy name.  
For my sake will the righteous wear crowns,<sup>5</sup>  
for thou wilt deal bountifully with me.

(Nm.)

1. Or: "aloud."

2. Or: "murmuring," "soliloquy."

3. "The ancient versions, nearly without exception, have here the first person"—Per. The imperative—which Per. himself, after Jerome, approves—brings forward the request into the cave, and thereby renders it so unmeaning as to discredit the ancient headline. See our Exposition.

4. U.: "soul." See Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

5. "On account of me the righteous shall adorn themselves with crowns, i.e., they shall triumph on account of me"—Del. "Crown themselves because of me"—R.V. (marg.). "Put out crowns because of me (i.e., appear wearing crowns, fig. for 'triumph')"—Dr.

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### PARAPHRASE

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How I plead with God, how I implore His mercy, pouring out my troubles before Him.

3 For I am overwhelmed and desperate, and You alone know which way I ought to turn to miss the traps my enemies have set for me.

4 (There's one—just over there to the right!) No one gives me a passing thought. No one will help me; no one cares one whit what happens to me.

5 Then I prayed to Jehovah. "Lord," I pled, "You are my only place of refuge. Only You can keep me safe.

6 Hear my cry, for I am very low. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me.

7 Bring me out of prison, so that I can thank You. The godly will rejoice with me for all Your help."

### EXPOSITION

This psalm triumphantly vindicates its library head-line, both as to author and as to occasion. The slandering of David to his master had already done its deadly work, and probably led to previous flights from Saul's presence. But now, to slanders, have succeeded flatteries, and deep-laid schemes to involve David in conspiracy, as revealed in the previous psalm. To aggravate the perils of David's position, Jonathan seems to have been absent from Court, probably sent on some expedition which kept him away from Saul's *right-hand*, and deprived David of the one friend at Court on whom he could rely. Under these circumstances, David—no doubt with a chosen band of men around him—betook him to flight: this time probably to the caves of En-gedi (1 Sam. 24), if we may assume that his resort to the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22) had fallen earlier in his chequered career. It is surprising how thoroughly this psalm yields up its varied contents to our apprehension when once it is let into a situation substantially such as is thus indicated. Each stanza contributes something to the verisimilitude of the whole.

Stanza I. is a mere prelude, but at once affords a contrast to the extreme caution in prayer revealed in the foregoing psalm. That prayer, we may well believe, was uttered, not only in circumspect words, but in subdued tones; but the caution of that prayer now gives place to the abandon of this, and twice

## PSALM 142

over we are assured that this psalm was uttered *aloud*. Far away among the south-eastern hills, interned in the far-reaching caves of En-ge-di (according to Del., "such a labyrinthine maze of passages and vaults, that the torches and ropes of explorers have not to the present time been able to reach the end"), his faithful scouts ready to give him warning of the least appearance of danger, the psalmist could here sweep his strings with a will and plainly reveal in words the varying moods of his deeply exercised mind.

Stanza II. records from the recent past a violence of mental disturbance consistent with an instinctive and almost unreasoned but strong concentration of resolve, taking the short form: "Not treason, but flight." That plot was too infamous for parleying: flight only could be trusted to parry the insidious blow.

Stanza III. strikingly suggests, that, if only Jonathan had been at his father's *right-hand*, the extremity of flight might have been averted, or at least postponed. Who, that remained, *cared* for the Bethlehemite's *life*?

Stanza IV., which gives meaning to the flight, suggests, by its unexpected brevity, the connecting link between the past and the present in the form of an unexpressed sequel, furnishing a strong lead up to what is to follow: As much as to say: "My flight, O Jehovah, is into thine own arms: because thou art *my refuge*, I thus take refuge in thee; because thou art *my portion in the land of the living*, my trust is, that I shall not find these caves to be the caves of death: therefore am I here."

Stanza V. picks up the thread. Companions in arms cause their leader anxious care. Among rocks and caves, provisions soon run short. Of this, David is well aware; and his trust is in Jehovah for his men as well as himself. But the emergency is great, and prayer becomes a *piercing cry*; for, says the careful commander, *I am brought very low*. Besides, discovery by Saul's soldiers might mean unequal battle or renewed flight. *Rescue me from my pursuers, for they are stronger than I*. All is vivid: realistic. This is no child's play. These are not dreams.

But Stanza VI. reminds us that, in this prolonged conflict, great moral issues are at stake. Saul stands for force and self-will: David, for faith and the will of Jehovah. "The poet's way of looking at his own fate and that of his enemies in a not merely ideal, but in a divinely ordained causal, connection with the general end of the two powers that are opposed to one

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

another in the world, is one of the characteristic features of the Psalms of David written at the time of his persecution by Saul"—Del. Hence, in passing, the importance of holding fast the true Davidic origin of these psalms; hence moreover, the cogency of the reminder, in this final stanza, that David is being Divinely enabled to grasp the issues involved. Not without a struggle, but with it; not without prayer, but with it and through it, does David here rise to the assurance that he shall yet be *brought out* of this *Dungeon*, for such literally it is; that, for his deliverance, he will *give thanks unto Jehovah's name*; and that *the righteous*, who, though conspicuous by their absence from Saul's Court, are nevertheless to be found scattered throughout the land, shall joyfully acknowledge how *bountifully* Jehovah hath *dealt* with the hero who is now leading them on to the abiding victory of faith and patience.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is David in a cave? Which one?
2. Why such a loud protest? Song becomes a grand vehicle for prayer, praise, soliloquy, instruction, etc? How do we personally (not congregationally) use it today?
3. Show the connection and meaning of stanza two, three, and four.
4. Stanza five indicates the very real danger involved. Discuss.
5. David has assurance of ultimate victory, but not because of himself—nor by his own efforts. Discuss.

## PSALM 143

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Continued Concealment in the Cave: its Grievs and its Gains.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Remarkable Pleadings and Deprecation. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, How the Trial Tries. Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, How the Student Studies. Stanza IV., vers. 7-12, How the Petitioner Perseveres in Prayer.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 Jehovah hear thou my prayer,  
oh give ear unto my supplications,—  
in thy faithfulness answer me in thy righteousness;



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- 2 And do not enter into judgment with thy servant,  
for no one living can appear just before thee.
- 3 For a foe hath pursued my soul,<sup>1</sup>  
hath crushed to the earth my life;  
hath made me dwell in dark places—  
like the ancient dead;<sup>2</sup>
- 4 And my spirit hath fainted upon me,  
in the midst of me astounded is my heart.
- 5 I have remembered the days of aforetime,  
I have talked to myself of all thy doings,—<sup>3</sup>  
on the works<sup>4</sup> of thy hand I soliloquise:
- 6 I have spread out my hands unto thee,  
my soul is like<sup>5</sup> a weary land for thee. ☞☞
- 7 Haste thee answer me Jehovah, my spirit languisheth,—  
do not hide thy face from me,  
or I shall be made like them who are going down into the pit.
- 8 Let me hear in the morning thy kindness,  
for in thee do I trust:  
Let me know the way wherein I should walk,  
for unto thee have I uplifted my soul.
- 9 Rescue me from my foes Jehovah!  
for thee have I waited.<sup>6</sup>
- 10 Teach me to do thy pleasure for thou art my God,  
let thy good spirit<sup>7</sup> lead me in a level land.<sup>8</sup>
- 11 For the sake of thy name Jehovah wilt thou revive me?  
in thy righteousness wilt thou bring forth out of distress  
my soul?
- 12 And in thy kindness wilt thou exterminate my foes,  
and destroy all the adversaries of my soul:  
because I am thy servant.

(Nm.)

1. Or: "person."  
2. Or: "like the dead of (by-gone) ages."  
3. So (pl.) some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "doing" (sing.)  
4. So (pl.) some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "work" (sing.)  
5. So M.T. Some cod. (w. 7 ear. pr. edns.): "in"—Gn.  
6. Or: "hoped"—so *Gt.* M.T. (obscure).  
7. *ML.*: "Thy spirit a good one."  
8. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.): "way." Others (w. Syr.): "path."  
Cp. 27:11—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 143

Hear my prayer, O Lord; answer my plea, because You are faithful to Your promises.<sup>1</sup>

2 Don't bring me to trial! For as compared with You, no one is perfect.

3 My enemies chased and caught me. They have knocked me to the ground. They force me to live in the darkness like those in the grave.

4 I am losing all hope; I am paralyzed with fear.

5 I remember the glorious miracles You did in days of long ago.

6 I reach out for You. I thirst for You as parched land thirsts for rain.

7 Come quickly, Lord, and answer me, for my depression deepens; don't turn away from me or I shall die.

8 Let me see Your kindness to me in the morning, for I am trusting You. Show me where to walk, for my prayer is sincere.

9 Save me from my enemies, O Lord, I run to You to hide me.

10 Help me to do Your will, for You are my God. Lead me in good paths, for Your Spirit is good.

11 Lord, saving me will bring glory to Your name. Bring me out of all this trouble because You are true to Your promises.

12 And because You are loving and kind to me, cut off all my enemies and destroy those who are trying to harm me; for I am Your servant.

### EXPOSITION

This psalm is obviously an advance upon the previous. The psalmist is still *dwelling in dark places*; but his continued hiding among the rocks leads him to compare himself with *the ancient dead*, forgotten of their old associates. The protraction of this state of things brings peculiar trials and special exercises of mind. It is one thing to take flight from foes, and put forth those active powers of mind which are roused to meet emergencies as they arise; but quite another thing to remain for some time in banishment. When long-looked-for deliverance is delayed, the most heroic may become impatient; and a more leisurely

1. Literally, "answer me in faithfulness and righteousness."

## PSALM 143

consideration of the causes and ends of protracted trial may favour an anxious weighing of problems not before pondered. It is evident that David found it so; and, accordingly, this psalm gives tokens of the stress and strain upon his mind; and, amidst the overhanging gloom, freshness of thought is seen in exercise, grappling with old problems in new forms and pondering questions not before considered.


Stanza I. of this psalm urges pleas which have not quite lately come before us; and one, besides, which, when let into David's living and connected history, may be regarded as newly projected into his experience. In other words, the pleas that Jehovah would be *faithful* and *righteous* in delivering his servant, may on reflection be recognised as forms of thought with which the psalter has already made us familiar. Even when blessings sought originate in purest favour, as soon as they are held forth in *promises*, the holder of the promises may plead with Jehovah to be "faithful" to his word. And where, as in David's case in contrast with that of Saul, loyal devotion is regarded as putting Jehovah to the test, to sustain the devotion he himself has called into exercise, even a humble petitioner may wax bold to remind Jehovah of his "righteousness," as a reason for not failing to rescue him from trials which fidelity has occasioned. So far we readily recall reflections which make us feel to be on familiar ground.

It is true that *the sense of sin which shrinks from the severity of Divine justice* is, in like manner, not at all a new concept to the student of the psalter; for this is only the last of a *series* of penitential psalms. But the point of our present reflection is, that, though last in the order of place in the book, this penitential psalm is probably the first in the order of experience in the life of the psalmist—so far as we can judge. David is yet a young man. The great and deplorable sins of his later life have not yet cast their shadows over his soul. But here, in the gloom of the rocks amongst which he is hiding, the seeming delay of Jehovah to deliver him, drives him into himself with such heart-searching as to draw from him the protest, that, when all comes to all, *no one living can appear just before a holy and heart-searching God*. It is well to note this psychological moving force, in estimating the contribution which the psalter makes to our knowledge of the human soul and Jehovah's general dealings with the consciences of men.

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Stanza II. sharply recalls us to the actual world in which David lived. To all appearance, his *foe*, Saul—of whom it would be pedantic not to think in this connection—has the upper hand of him: it is *he* who is *crushing his life to the earth* and driving him to hide in these *dark places*. At times his *courage* forsakes him: his *mind* is bewildered. Was it for this that he had been anointed of Samuel; for this, that the Spirit of Sacred Minstrelsy had so oft and so mightily come upon him?

Stanza III. widens our outlook: it reveals the banished young soldier as a man of meditation. How many of its treasures Sacred History had laid at his feet we know not; but a sufficient selection of them, evidently, to enable him to *remember the days of aforetime*. Some familiarity with the contents of the Book of Exodus, would warrant him to say to Jehovah—*I have talked to myself of all thy doings*; and a similar general knowledge of the story of Genesis, complemented as it must have been by his own open-air observations of nature by day and by night, would naturally prepare him to add—*On the works of Thy hands I soliloquise*. With oriental proneness to gesture in devotion, and with a shepherd's alertness to observe when a land wants water and how barren it is without it,—his meditations prompt his prayers as he adds—*I have spread out my hands unto thee, my soul is like a weary land for thee*. Very natural—if the devoutness was there, to awaken his thoughts and unseal his lips.

We may not be too sure that the mysterious word *Selah*, which our sign  represents, has yet yielded up its secret; but, assuming, as our sign by its form is intended to suggest, that it somehow has practically the effect of at once pointing backwards and forwards, as if to say, "These things being so, then note well what follows," we are entitled to note how suggestive is the translation which is now made in the psalm (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Selah"). All, so far, may be regarded as preliminary; but now, with rapid movements of desire, petition follows petition, at the rate of two per verse, to the very end of the psalm,—which, therefore, we have not cared to subdivide: *Haste thee answer me—do not hide—let me hear—let me know — rescue — teach — lead — revive — bring forth — exterminate —destroy*: each petition being sustained by a cogent reason why it should be granted; and all wound up with the crowning reason, which explains so much: *because I am Thy servant*. There are several salient points in this volley of petitions: among which

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should be noted the firm grip taken of facts, for, to all seeming, David and his men were *at death's door*; the care with which conduct is placed under Divine direction—"Shall I go further away? remain where I am? or hope shortly to return?" *Let me know the way wherein I should walk*; and the facility with which the psalmist's mind ascends to the high level of Divine teaching, which, under the circumstances, cannot mean less than—"So may *thy spirit* influence my spirit, that my ways, in the whole scope and drift of them, may *please thee*; and I meanwhile may find the *way* of Duty to be *plain and accessible*." For the most startling thing of all, we are by this time measurably prepared: To David's quick vision, it by this time began plainly to appear, that either he or Saul must be slain. How far he was, by word or deed, from himself moving a finger to slay Saul; how far from tolerating the doing of the deadly deed by others; all this we well know. All the same, as surely as he knew he was *Jehovah's servant*, and his cause Jehovah's cause, so surely is now borne in upon him the conviction, irresistibly intensified into a prayer: *And in Thy kindness wilt thou exterminate my foes, and destroy all the adversaries of my soul, because I am thy servant*. Let no man repeat this prayer until he is as sure as David was that no other issue is possible. Nevertheless, let no man shrink from appropriating and administering the spiritual tonic consisting in the assurance, soon to come before us in the most benevolent and sympathetic of Spiritual Songs: *Jehovah preserveth all them who love Him—but all the lawless He destroyeth*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In this psalm, David is still hiding in a cave, but he has problems here not before considered. What are they?
2. There are two concepts in stanza one with which we are familiar and one we have not before considered. Discuss them.
3. Saul surely seems to have the advantage, mention two or three.
4. David evidently had a copy of the law of the Lord with him in the cave. What indications are there that this is true?
5. The word "Selah" seems to signal the expression of the deepest meaning or purpose of this psalm. Discuss.
6. There is in this psalm a veritable valley of petitions. List three or four of them.

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7. David's basic problem was not that he was hiding in a cave. As to his future, what did he need to know?
8. At this time, it evidently became clear to David that to overcome his foe, what must finally take place?

## PSALM 144

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

From David's Psalms are Selected Strains, by one of his Sons,  
Emboldening him to Plead for Deliverance from Foreigners.  
An Appendix anticipates Happy Times.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I, vers. 1, 2, Blessing rendered to Jehovah in language taken from Psalm 18. Stanza II, vers. 3, 4, Confession of Man's Insignificance and Frailty, as found in Psalms 8 and 39. Stanzas III. and IV., vers. 7-11, Petitions for Deliverance from Foreigners in Terms Suggested by Psalm 18 and rising to *Refrain* fervour. Stanza V., vers. 12-15, An Appendix, picturing the Temporal Benefits Resulting from the Realisation by a People that Jehovah is Their God.

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(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Blessed be Jehovah my rock!  
who teacheth my hands to war,  
my fingers to fight:
- 2 My kindness and my fastness,  
my lofty retreat and my deliverer—mine,  
my shield and he in whom I have taken refuge,  
who subdueth my people<sup>1</sup> under me.
- 3 Jehovah! what was an earth-born that thou shouldst  
acknowledge him?  
the son of a mere man that thou shouldst take account  
of him?<sup>2</sup>
- 4 An earth-born resembleth a vapour,<sup>3</sup>  
his days are like a shadow that passeth away.

1. A sp. vr. (sevir): "subdueth peoples" (pl.). In some cod. (w. Aram. and Syr.): "peoples" is both written and read. Cp. 18:47—Gn.

2. Cp. 8:4.

3. Or: "breath."

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- 5 Jehovah! bow thy heavens and come down,  
touch the mountains that they smoke:
- 6 Flash forth a flash and scatter them,  
send out thy arrows and confuse them:
- 7 Stretch forth thy hand<sup>4</sup> from on high:—  
*Snatch me away and rescue me—  
out of many waters,  
out of the hand of the sons of a foreigner:*
- 8 *Whose mouth speaketh unreality,  
and whose right-hand is a right-hand of falsehood.*
- 9 O God! a song that is new would I fain sing unto thee;  
with a lute of ten-strings would I fain play unto thee:—
- 10 Who giveth victory<sup>5</sup> to kings,  
who snatched away David his servant from the hurtful  
sword.
- 11 *Snatch me away and rescue me  
out of the hands of the sons of a foreigner:  
Whose mouth speaketh unreality,  
and whose right-hand is a right-hand of falsehood.*
- 12 When our sons are like plants well-grown while yet young,  
Our daughters like corners carved according to the  
construction of a palace;
- 13 Our garners full pouring out from one kind to another,  
Our flocks multiplying by thousands by myriads in the open  
fields,
- 14 Our kine great with young no premature births,—<sup>6</sup>  
With no goings forth to war and no cries of alarm in our  
broad-ways
- 15 *How happy the people when they have it thus!  
How happy the people when Jehovah is their God!*

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 144

Bless the Lord who is my immovable Rock. He gives me strength and skill in battle.

2 He is always kind and loving to me; He is my fortress,

4. So (sing.) in some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)  
—Gn. M.T.: "hands" (pl.).

5. Or: "salvation."

6. So Br. with probable correctness.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

my tower of strength and safety, my deliverer. He stands before me as a shield. He subdues my people under me.

3 O Lord, what is man that You even notice him? Why bother at all with the human race?<sup>1</sup>

4 For man is but a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.

5 Bend down the heavens, Lord, and come. The mountains smoke beneath Your touch.

6 Let loose Your lightning bolts, Your arrows, Lord, upon Your enemies, and scatter them.

7 Reach down from heaven and rescue me; deliver me from deep waters, from the power of my enemies.

8 Their mouths are filled with lies; they swear to the truth of what is false.

9 I will sing You a new song, O God, with a ten-stringed harp.

10 For You grant victory to kings! You are the one who will rescue Your servant David from the fatal sword.

11 Save me! Deliver me from these enemies, these liars, these treacherous men.

\* \* \* \* \*

12, 13, 14, 15 Here is my description of<sup>2</sup> a truly happy land where Jehovah is God:

Sons vigorous and tall as growing plants.

Daughters of graceful beauty like the pillars of a palace wall.

Barns full to the brim with crops of every kind.

Sheep by the thousands out in our fields.

Oxen loaded down with produce.

No enemy attacking the walls, but peace everywhere.

No crime in our streets.

Yes, happy are those whose God is Jehovah.

## EXPOSITION

This psalm is manifestly both adapted and composite. It is seen to be *adapted*: inasmuch as Stanzas I. and II. are based upon Davidic psalms, altered to suit a later set of circumstances than those to which the original psalms applied; and inasmuch as these are followed by special petitions, in Stanzas III. and IV., directly springing out of those altered conditions. On the face of it, the psalm is *composite*; the Appendix speaking for itself,

1. Literally, "or the son of man that You take account of him?"

2. Implied.



## PSALM 144

as being, both in form and substance, disjointed from what has gone before, couched in a wholly different vein, with no formal allusions to anything which has preceded it, and not only disconnected, but clearly incomplete, having no introduction of its own: nevertheless a most pleasing and worthy Appendix, with a reason for its present position which the thoughtful mind can easily supply—as much as to say, “Only let our God answer our foregoing petitions, and then we may hope for the realisation of the happy state of things which the following extract so beautifully portrays.”

We need not hesitate long before concluding that, in all likelihood, King Hezekiah was the adapter—almost the author—of vers. 1-11; inasmuch as the emergency which prompts the prayer is evidently caused by the presence of the *foreigner* in the land. Not even the gathering of the surrounding nations against Jehoshaphat so well meets the case; for the extreme annoyance and humiliation caused by the boastful *mouth* and the tyrannous *right-hand* of the enemy are far more like the experience due to a present and persistent invader like the Assyrians, than would be the mere gathering of Moab and Ammon, however alarming that gathering might be.

Assuming, then, that here we see the adapting hand of Hezekiah, it is only due to him to observe how wisely and well he has done his adapting work. If the reader of this Exposition will only have well in mind the sources indicated in our “Analysis” he will be able to appreciate the verifying observations which follow, though briefly expressed.

In Stanza I., the compiler simply pours forth adorations which suggest that he has just been reading the great triumphal song of his ancestor which we know as Ps. 18: adorations calculated to inspire confidence in the urgent petitions he is now about to urge.

In Stanza II., we have a singular combination of allusions, well befitting the humility of one who realises his personal littleness and unworthiness, in view of the largeness of the mercies for which he is about to ask.

In Stanza III., we come to petitions proper, the boldness of the figures of speech in which would surprise us, even though we know Hezekiah to be a poet, were it not that we can see he has been dwelling on the extraordinary imagery of the 18th Psalm: not exactly quoting its language, which indeed first appeared as thanksgiving for victories and deliverances already

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

vouchsafed, but remoulding it into the form of present petitions to suit the existing dire emergency. As if conscious that he had been drawing largely on an "old" song, the writer longs to launch upon a *new song*; and instantly bounds into the present by recognising victories heretofore granted to kings, and *the snatching away of David, his servant, from the hurtful sword*,—a clear enough indication that it is not the language of David himself that we are now reading, but that of another, who finds inspiration in David's memory.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There are three previous psalms quoted in this one. Which ones? For what purpose?
2. Who is the author of this psalm? Why not Jehoshaphat?
3. What part of this psalm is a "new song"? Discuss its meaning.

## PSALM 145

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Alphabetical Psalm in Praise of Jehovah's Greatness,  
Goodness and Righteousness.

### ANALYSIS

Naturally, this psalm falls into 21 Couplets (and Verses), the letter *mem* being absent from the Hebrew Text. Further division is not easy; but by restoring the missing letter, as indicated at the foot of ver. 13, the psalm might be resolved into Three Groups of Seven Couplets each, leaving the letter *tau*—the twenty-second—to head an Application of the Whole Psalm to the Psalmist himself and to All Flesh. Even so, however, this grouping would be merely formal, and not indicated by any corresponding division of topics. By accident rather than design, the dominant subject of each would be Jehovah's Greatness, Goodness, and Righteousness; and it may be of practical service to note this.

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(Lm.) Praise—By David.

- 1 I will exalt thee my God O king—  
and would fain bless thy name to the ages and beyond.

PSALM 145

- 2 Every day will I bless thee—  
and would fain praise thy name to the ages and beyond.
- 3 Great is Jehovah and to be praised exceedingly—  
and his greatness is unsearchable.
- 4 Generation to generation will laud thy works—  
and thy heroic deeds will they tell.
- 5 The stateliness of the glory of thy majesty will men speak—<sup>1</sup>  
and of thy wonders would I fain soliloquise.
- 6 And the might of thy fearful acts will men affirm—  
and of thy greatness will I tell.
- 7 The memory of the abundance of thy goodness will men  
pour forth,—  
and thy righteousness will they ring out.
- 8 *Gracious and compassionate is Jehovah—  
slow to anger and great in kindness.*
- 9 Good is Jehovah to all—  
and his compassions are over all his works.
- 10 All thy works Jehovah thank thee—  
and thy men of kindness bless thee.
- 11 The glory of thy kingdom they affirm—  
and thy heroic might they speak.
- 12 To make known to the sons of men his heroic acts  
and the glory of the stateliness of his kingdom.
- 13 Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages—<sup>2</sup>  
and thy dominion is over all succeeding generations.<sup>3</sup>
- 14 Jehovah is ready to uphold all who are falling—  
and to raise up all who are bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all for thee do wait—  
and thou givest them their food in its season.
- 16 Thou openest thy hand—<sup>4</sup>  
and satisfiest every living thing with good will.<sup>5</sup>
- 17 Righteous is Jehovah in all his ways—  
and kind in all his works.<sup>6</sup>

1. So it shd. be (and so the verse be divided) (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

2. So literally: "of all olamim" (pl.).

3. In some MSS. this verse is here found:—  
Faithful is Jehovah in all his words—  
and kind in all his works.

and so in Sep., Syr., and Vul.—Gn. This would supply the missing initial letter *nun*.

4. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., and Sep.): "hands" (pl.)—Gn.

5. So Dr. But Del.: "with favour."

6. Or: "doings."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 18 Near is Jehovah to all who call upon him—  
to all who call upon him in truth.
- 19 The pleasure of them who revere him he fulfilleth—  
and their cry for help he heareth and saveth them.
- 20 Jehovah preserveth all them who love him—  
but all the lawless he destroyeth.
- 21 The praise of Jehovah my mouth doth speak—  
and let all flesh bless his holy name  
to the ages and beyond:7

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 145

I will praise You, my God and King, and bless Your name each day and forever.

3 Great is Jehovah! Greatly praise Him! His greatness is beyond discovery!

4 Let each generation tell its children what glorious things He does.

5 I will meditate about Your glory, splendor, majesty and miracles.

6 Your awe-inspiring deeds shall be on every tongue; I will proclaim Your greatness.

7 Everyone will tell about how good You are, and sing about Your righteousness.

8 Jehovah is kind and merciful, slow to get angry, full of love.

9 He is good to everyone, and His compassion is intertwined with everything He does.

10 All living things shall thank You, Lord, and Your people will bless You.

11 They will talk together about the glory of Your kingdom and mention examples of Your power.

12 They will tell about Your miracles and about the majesty and glory of Your reign.

13 For Your kingdom never ends. You rule generation after generation.

7. U.: "to times age-abiding." &c. Many MSS. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.) here add:—

And we will bless Yah—

from henceforth and unto the ages—praise ye Yah.

Cp. Ps. 115:18—Gn.

## PSALM 145

14 The Lord lifts the fallen and those bent beneath their loads.

15 The eyes of all mankind look up to You for help; You give them their food as they need it.

16 You constantly satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.

17 The Lord is fair in everything He does, and full of kindness.

18 He is close to all who call on Him sincerely.

19 He fulfills the desires of those who reverence and trust Him; He hears their cries for help and rescues them.

20 He protects all those who love Him, but destroys the wicked.

21 I shall praise the Lord and call on all men everywhere to bless His holy name forever and forever.

## EXPOSITION

This delightful psalm, by its contents reminds us of Ps. 103; and, by both its contents and its form, of Ps. 34. It is surprising to find how easily the psalmist follows his alphabetical initialing of the verses without shewing constraint in his composition.

Passing on to the contents of the psalm, considered on their merits, it is eminently satisfactory to observe the restraint to which the enthusiasm of the writer submits itself. This is no mere adulation of the Almighty. The man that wrote this song was not aware of the shadows which frequently throw this life into gloom. He knew that the *compassions* of Jehovah towards the miserable were often called into exercise: that poor footsore and purblind travellers along life's journey were not infrequently in danger of *falling*; and many times needed help to prevent their being too long *bowed down*. And this is well: otherwise the very brightness of the psalm might have dazed the eyes of the sick and the weary.

However, behind the sympathetic tenderness of the psalm there is perceptible an element of strength which is fitted to act as a moral tonic on minds afflicted with indecision concerning right and wrong. Jehovah is *righteous* as well as *kind*. The very *heroic acts* by which Jehovah had so often delivered Israel, had undoubtedly fallen as heavy blows on tyrants and invaders who richly deserved to be smitten. It would be culpable carelessness for the singer of this song, utterly to forget the dark

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

side of the cloud whose silver lining now causes him so much genuine delight.

This psalm is noted among psalms for the universality of its terms. Not excluding beasts from the bountiful care of their Creator, how should it exclude men of any name or nation? *Good is Jehovah to all—and his compassions are over all his works*; not over and beyond his works—too high above them to benefit them—but *over*, protectingly and for blessing. That it should be immediately added: *All thy works thank thee*, seems almost too good to be true; too favourable a verdict to be pronounced upon men's response to Jehovah's goodness; too much like a verdict constructively framed in their favour, beyond their deserving. We could more easily accept the verdict if regarded as awarded to the lower creation—to the singing of the bird, the roaring of the lion and even the braying of the ass—than when taken to refer to "men made in the likeness of God"; those inferior creatures after their kind and in their own way, may be regarded as thanking their creator for what he has done for them; but these intelligent creatures, called men,—how can it be said of *them—all thy works thank thee*? As we cannot deny their inclusion among Jehovah's "works," we can only leave the statement, as a condescending construction put by a loving Creator on the common joy which men feel in view of the mercies which bestrew their path. Even beyond their intention, Jehovah will count their instinctive gladness as "thanks" rendered to him: if he can do no better with them he will class them with those lower creatures who *unconsciously* "thank" him. He seeks for more. He would have all men to become receivers and reflectors of his own kindness—his *hasidim*—*his men of kindness*, in whose hearts gratitude dwells and in whose lives benevolence overflows; men who go beyond thanks, men who *bless* Jehovah, and speak well of his name.

We confess we are amazed at the latitude of construction to which the psalm itself thus conducts us; but it has sterner things in store for us. There is a discipline in life that lies behind all this. Men cannot go on for ever, receiving God's gifts and remaining unmoved: they must either be melted into saints or hardened—by their own resistance—into sinners. They are under the law of love. Let them resist that—knowingly and persistently—and they must ultimately become *lawless*! And, against such, the stern announcement of this benevolent psalm has gone forth in tones of thunder:—

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Jehovah preserveth all them who love him—  
but all the lawless he destroyeth.

That is the last word of the last stanza of the psalm. There is nothing beyond it, saving an application by the psalmist to himself and to all flesh: nothing to tone this down or explain it away: it seems and it sounds absolute and final.

It confirms other psalm-deliverances that have gone before. We have already learned (Ps. 37) that "there is a future for the man of peace. But transgressors have been cut off together, the future of lawless men hath been cut off"; and from Ps. 73—"Lo! they who have gone far from thee shall perish, Thou wilt have exterminated every unchaste wanderer from thee." Small reason, then, is there in the Psalms as a collection, to blunt the prudent fear which this psalm is fitted to call into exercise.

And the less so, rather than the more, in consequence of the grandeur and the permanence of Jehovah's Kingdom. Jehovah's rule is all-pervading and ever-abiding. Men cannot escape his dominion. His own character is perfect and unchanging; his aim is to make men morally like himself—to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, to reform, remake, renew; to educate for immortality, and then bestow the boon. While his own character is perfect and unchanging, its manifestation to finite beings, under discipline, may require ages. To chastise them for their sins, and yet convince them that he is love, and to transform them into his own image,—this *may* be the work of ages: who can tell? Only the Infinite Searcher of Hearts can determine when all hope is past, and nothing is left but to destroy, to exterminate. He can create and he destroy; and none but he. It is something, then, of incalculable moment, to learn from his own lips what are the issues involved.

The close of this psalm goes back to its commencement. It ends with "I"—multiplied into the race, *all flesh*: it began with "I"—*I will exalt, would fain bless; will bless, would fain praise*. But very significantly and instructively was this beginning made; for all at once, by way of *desire*, the psalmist went bounding off beyond the narrow limits of the present life: *I would fain bless and praise thy name to the ages and beyond!* "For ever and ever will the poet thus extol God and bless His name; because the praising of God is his deepest need, in this devotion to the ever-living King he forgets his own mortality—this impulse of the soul, an impulse begotten by God himself,

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towards the praising of the God to whom the soul owes its origin, in which praise it finds its noblest enjoyment, is indeed a practical proof of a life after death"—Del. So it is indeed, to those in whom it exists; for see with what complete logic this one psalm proves it. Do I really *desire* to bless and praise Jehovah to the ages? Is that, in truth, my feeling towards him? Then the *desire* shall be granted; for again in this psalm it is written—*The pleasure of them who revere him he fulfilleth; and their cry for help he heareth and saveth them.* There is, therefore, both theoretic and practical safety in such a hope.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In this alphabetical psalm there are only 21 of the 22 letters. Why?
2. What are the three possible main divisions of this psalm?
3. This psalm can act as a tonic for certain needy persons. Who are they?
4. Are we to understand from this psalm that even the lower animals thank Jehovah? How so?
5. How wondrously good, kind, and righteous is our God. What should be the response of man? What is his response?
6. There seems to be a grand proof of immortality in this psalm. Discuss.

## PSALM 146

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Twelve Reasons for Trusting in Jehovah.

### ANALYSIS

Having, in Response to the Public Reader's Invitation, stirred up his Own Soul to Praise Jehovah all his Life Long (vers. 1, 2), the Psalmist urges a Caution against Trusting in Nobles (vers. 3, 4); and then (vers. 5-10) Felicitates the Man who makes the God of Jacob his Help—for a Series of Twelve Reasons, which he Poetically Unfolds.

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.

- 1 Praise Jehovah O my soul!



PSALM 146

- 2 I would fain praise Jehovah while I live,  
I would harp<sup>1</sup> to my God while I have being.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 Do not ye trust in nobles—  
in a son of the earth-born who hath no salvation:<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Forth goeth his spirit<sup>4</sup> he returneth to his ground,  
in that day his thoughts<sup>5</sup> perish.<sup>6</sup>
- 5 How happy is he who hath the God of Jacob as his help,  
whose hope is on Jehovah his God:
- 6 who made heavens and earth  
the sea and all that is in them,—  
the One who keepeth truth to the ages;
- 7 who executeth justice for the oppressed,  
who giveth bread to the hungry;  
Jehovah who releaseth the bound,
- 8 Jehovah who giveth sight to the blind,  
Jehovah who lifteth up the bowed down,  
Jehovah who loveth the righteous,
- 9 Jehovah who preserveth sojourners,—  
fatherless and widow restoreth;  
but the way of lawless ones he bendeth aside.<sup>7</sup>
- 10 Jehovah reigneth to the ages,  
Thy God O Zion to generation after generation.

(Nm.)<sup>8</sup>

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 146

Praise the Lord! Yes, really praise Him!

2 I will praise Him as long as I live, yes, even with my dying breath.

3 Don't look to men for help; their greatest leaders fail;

4 For every man must die. His breathing stops, life ends, and in a moment all he planned for himself is ended.

1. Or: "make melody."

2. Cp. 104:33.

3. Or: "deliverance."

4. Or: "breath." Cp. 104:29, 30.

5. "Fabrications"—Aglen; "purposes"—P.B. R.V. mgn.

6. Similarly: "Be not afraid . . . To-day he shall be lifted up, and to-morrow he shall in nowise be found, because he is returned unto his dust, and his thought is perished"—1 Mac. 2:63 (R.V.)

7. Thwarting it, and causing it to vanish. Cp. 1:6.

8. See 147 (beginning).

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5 But happy is the man who has the God of Jacob as his helper, whose hope is in the Lord his God—

6 The God who made both earth and heaven, the seas and everything in them. He is the God who keeps every promise.

7 And gives justice to the poor and oppressed, and food to the hungry. He frees the prisoners,

8 And opens the eyes of the blind; He lifts the burdens from those bent down beneath their loads. For the Lord loves good men.

9 He protects the immigrants, and cares for the orphans and widows. But He turns topsy-turvy the plans of the wicked.

10 The Lord will reign forever. O Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> your God is King in every generation! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

## EXPOSITION

The indications of authorship contained in this psalm are probably best met by supposing the principal portion of it to have been penned by Hezekiah, and the caution against trusting in nobles to have been added in the days of Nehemiah. Setting aside for the moment the excepted verses (3, 4) the psalm as a whole admirably suits the time and spirit of Hezekiah: the individuality of the opening lines, together with the inclusion of instrumental music, well agrees with the strongly devout and musically accomplished personality of the good King; and so does the enthusiasm with which Jehovah's worthiness of his people's confidence is amplified in the later verses: we can almost hear him saying, *Happy is the man*—"yea, and I am that man"; and then, as we read on, we are not only reminded of Hezekiah's favourite habit of alluding to Jehovah as *maker of heaven and earth*, but under nearly all the lines we can feel pulsating the rich experience of the same monarch, not failing to be reminded of the example which he had recently witnessed, in the overthrow of Sennacherib, of a *lawless* foreigner whose way had been *bent aside* into the pathless waste of destruction.

If this conclusion be accepted as sufficiently probable, then we shall naturally conclude that the caution against trusting in nobles—improbable from the pen of Hezekiah—was added after the exile, when, as remarked under Ps. 118, Nehemiah had good cause to distrust the nobles of Judah (Neh. 6:17-19).

It is a question of detail—but of some interest in exegesis

1. Literally, "Zion."

## PSALM 146

—to ask in what relation *nobles* (ver. 3) stand to the common *son of the earth-born* mentioned in the next line: are “nobles” distinguished from “common men,” or simply declared to be themselves but “common men”—mere mortals like the rest of mankind? If we make two classes out of the verse then “nobles” are left without any reason assigned why *they* should not be trusted. It seems better, therefore, to refrain from supplying a “nor” with the A.V. (and R.V.) (without acknowledgment of its being such) or an (“or”) with Dr., and to regard the second line as giving a conclusive reason why even “nobles” should not be trusted: as much as to say—“each of whom is a mere mortal like others, and what he may *think* to do for you, he may not live to accomplish.”

Another question of still greater critical nicety, is whether it is better to translate *ruah* in ver. 4 as *breath* or *spirit*. If the one implies the other, as suggested by a comparison of Gen. 2:7 with Ec. 12:7, then it does not really matter—provided the double inclusion, by marginal alternative or otherwise, be borne in mind.

Delitzsch well reminds us that this “How happy” of ver. 5 is the last of twenty-five occurrences of the original word (which means that) in the psalms. He also beautifully remarks on 9c: “Only one line is devoted to this manifestation of Jahve in the capacity of penal judge. For He rules in love and wrath, with most delight, however, in love.”

The critical reader will excuse the very elementary observation—submitted to help the uncritical—that it is sometimes convenient in the enumerations of the psalms, as elsewhere, to count the *verbs* which in their rich variety impart so much life to the composition: as for instance here:—1. *made*, 2. *keepeth*, 3. *executeth*, 4. *giveth*, 5. *releaseth*, 6. *giveth sight* (lit. *openeth*), 7. *lifteth up*, 8. *loveth*, 9. *preserveth*, 10. *restoreth*, 11. *bendeth aside*, 12. *reigneth*. So that we are well within our right in entitling this psalm—“Twelve reasons for trusting in Jehovah.”

And finally it may be assumed that no reader will fail to observe the keen appreciation of the gracious name *Jehovah* shewn by its five-fold emphatic repetition in vers. 7-9.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm has some very helpful reasons for trusting in Jehovah, but before these are considered, the psalmist must be in the mood for praising God. How is this achieved?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

2. Who is the author, and what is the circumstance of this psalm?
3. Why not trust in nobles?
4. List six of the twelve reasons for trusting in Jehovah. Make these reasons personal.

## PSALM 147

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Praise for the Restoration of Jerusalem and for Israel's Pre-eminence: with Grateful Recognition of Rain and of Spring.

### ANALYSIS

After the Repetition and Expansion of the "Public Reader's Invitation" (ver. 1), Jehovah is Praised as the Builder, Healer and Restorer of Jerusalem (vers. 2-6); as the Sender of Rain (vers. 7-11), of Security, Peace and Plenty, and of Winter and Spring (vers. 12-18); and as the Author of Israel's Pre-eminence (vers. 19, 20).

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#### (P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.

- 1 Praise ye Yah<sup>1</sup> for it is good,<sup>2</sup>  
make melody<sup>3</sup> to our God for it is full of delight:  
Comely is praise!
- 2 Builder of Jerusalem is Jehovah,  
the outcasts of Israel he gathereth:
- 3 He who granteth healing to the broken in heart  
and a binding up to their wounds:
- 4 who counteth out a number to the stars,  
to all of them names he calleth:
- 5 Great is our Sovereign Lord and of abounding strength,  
and to his understanding there is no calculation.<sup>4</sup>
- 6 Restorer of the humble is Jehovah,  
abasing lawless ones down to the ground.
- 7 Respond ye to Jehovah with a song of thanksgiving,  
make melody to our God with the lyre:

1. Prob. a choir's repetition of P.R.I.—see Exposition.

2. Cp. 92:1.

3. So *Gt.* [i.e. imper. pl.] as in 135:3.

4. Or: reckoning, ml. number.

## PSALM 147

- 8 who covereth the heavens with clouds,  
who prepareth for the earth rain;  
who causeth mountains to sprout grass;
- 9 Who giveth to cattle their food,  
to young ravens when they call:
- 10 Not in the heroic strength of the horse doth he delight,  
nor in the legs of a man hath he pleasure;
- 11 Pleased is Jehovah with them who revere him,  
with them who wait for his kindness.
- 12 Laud O Jerusalem Jehovah,  
Praise thou thy God O Zion,
- 13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates,  
hath blessed thy children within thee:
- 14 Who placeth as thy boundary peace,  
with the marrow of wheat doth satisfy thee.
- 15 Who sendeth his saying to the earth,  
very swiftly runneth his word;
- 16 Who giveth snow like wool,  
hoar frost like ashes he scattereth;
- 17 Who casteth down his ice<sup>5</sup> like morsels,  
Before his cold who can stand?
- 18 He sendeth forth his word and melteth them,  
he causeth a blowing of his wind there's a trickling of  
waters.
- 19 Who declareth his word to Jacob,  
his statutes and his decisions to Israel.
- 20 He hath not done thus to any nation,  
and decisions<sup>6</sup> he maketh not known to them.<sup>7</sup>

(Nm.)<sup>8</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 147

Hallelujah! Yes, praise the Lord! How good it is to sing  
His praises! How delightful, and how right!

2 He is rebuilding Jerusalem and bringing back the exiles.

3 He heals the broken-hearted, binding up their wounds.

4 He counts the stars and calls them all by name.

5. "As hailstones or as sleet"—Del.

6. Cp. 119, Table.

7. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

8. See 148 (beginning).

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

5 How great He is! His power is absolute! His understanding is unlimited.

6 The Lord supports the humble, but brings the wicked into the dust.

7 Sing out your thanks to Him; sing praises to our God, accompanied by harps.

8 He covers the heavens with clouds, sends down the showers and makes the green grass grow in mountain pastures.

9 He feeds the wild animals and the young ravens cry to Him for food.

10 The speed of a horse is nothing to Him. How puny in His sight is the strength of a man.

11 But his joy is in those who revered Him; those who expect Him to be loving and kind.

12 Praise Him, O Jerusalem! Praise Your God, O Zion!

13 For He has fortified your gates against all enemies, and blessed your children.

14 He sends peace across your nation, and fills your barns with plenty of the finest wheat.

15 He sends His orders to the world. How swiftly His word flies.

16 He sends the snow in all its lovely whiteness, and scatters the frost upon the ground,

17 And hurls the hail upon the earth. Who can stand before His freezing cold?

18 But then He calls for warmer weather, and the spring winds blow and all the river ice is broken.

19 He has made known His laws and ceremonies of worship to Israel—

20 Something He has not done with any other nation; they have not known His commands.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hallelujah! Yes, praise the Lord!

## EXPOSITION

Notwithstanding its almost certain post-exilic date and its evidently composite character, this is a beautiful and useful psalm. It would seem disingenuous not to admit that in all probability it received its present form and some of its strains in the post-exilic period, and was provided to celebrate the great Restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah. It is almost equally

## PSALMS 147 AND 148

certain that it was constructed, in part, of pre-existing materials: at least, this hypothesis would best account for the incorporation in it of what appear to be two fragments—one by way of thanksgiving for *rain* after drought, and the other in grateful recognition of the return of *spring* after a severe winter: both of which are not likely to have appeared side by side in one and the same original psalm.

The opening lines are unusually suggestive as to the remarkable repetition of the compound word—or rather the phrase—"hallelujah" (properly *hallelu Yah*) in connection with these late Hallel psalms. Some critics simply treat them as double "hallelujah" psalms, each one beginning *and* ending with that word. As soon, however, as we accept Dr. Ginsburg's opinion, as an expert, in favour of treating the word as a phrase, and the phrase as constituting the Public Reader's Invitation to join in the responses, we seem to be driven to form some other conclusion as to the reduplication—for as such it appears in Dr. Ginsburg's Hebrew Bible. In the present instance, the simplest theory would appear to be this: the first "hallelujah" may be regarded as the original invitation proper, to be *said* rather than *sung* by the prelector; and the second as a choir's taking up and repeating of the invitation—passing it on to the people, so to speak—at the same time expanding it into a small introductory stanza ending with *Comely is Praise*. The reason which supports this suggestion is, the unlikelihood that a psalm should begin with the word *For* (as Del., Per. and Dr. begin this psalm).

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is one of the latest psalms. At what time was it composed? How composed?
2. Why does Rotherham spend so much time and space on the use of the word "hallelujah"?
3. What shall we say of the present practice of attributing to "nature" the snow-frost-rain, etc.?

## PSALM 148

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Praise Invoked from All Creation.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-6, All Things in Heaven called upon to Praise Jehovah  
—for Reasons Given. Stanza II., vers. 7-14, All Things on Earth, in Like  
Manner: with a Specification of the Special Mercies and Duties of Israel.

#### (P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.

- 1 Praise ye Yah.<sup>1</sup>  
Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens,  
praise him in the heights;
- 2 praise him all ye his messengers,  
praise him all ye his hosts;<sup>2</sup>
- 3 praise him sun and moon,  
praise him all ye stars of light;
- 4 praise him ye heavens of heavens,  
and ye waters above the heavens:—
- 5 Let them praise the name of Jehovah,  
for he commanded and they were created;
- 6 And he stationed them perpetually to the ages,—  
a statute he gave and they do not transgress.
- 7 Praise ye Jehovah from the earth:  
sea-monsters<sup>3</sup> and all resounding deeps;
- 8 fire and hail snow and vapour,<sup>4</sup>  
blast of tempest executing his word;
- 9 ye mountains and all hills,  
fruit-trees and all cedars;
- 10 thou wild beast and all cattle,  
crawling creature and bird of wing;
- 11 kings of earth and all peoples,  
rulers and all judges of earth;
- 12 young men yea even maidens,<sup>5</sup>  
old men together with children:—
- 13 Let them praise the name of Jehovah,  
for exalted is his name alone,—  
his majesty is over earth and heavens;

1. Possibly a repetition of "P.R.I." by mistake. But prob. a choir's repetition as suggested in Exposition of previous Psalm.

2. So *read* in cod. wh. write "host" (sing.). Some cod. both *read* and *write* "hosts" (pl.)—Gn.

3. "Dragons"—Br.

4. "Or steam, smoke (Gen. 19:28, Ps. 119:83), alluding probably to phenomena accompanying a thunderstorm in mountain-regions"—Dr.

5. Or: "virgins."



PSALM 148

14 And he hath uplifted a horn for his people,—  
a theme of praise for all his men of kindness,  
for the sons of Israel a people near him.

(Nm.)<sup>c</sup>

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 148

Praise the Lord, O heavens! Praise Him from the skies!

2 Praise Him, all angels, all the armies of heaven.

3 Praise Him sun and moon, and all you twinkling stars.

4 Praise Him, skies above. Praise Him, vapors high above  
the clouds.

5 Let everything He has made give praise to Him! For  
He issued His command, and they came into being;

6 He established them forever and forever. His orders  
will never be revoked.

7 And praise Him down here on earth, you creatures of  
the ocean depths.

8 Let fire and hail, snow, rain, wind and weather, all obey.

9 Let the mountains and hills, the fruit trees and cedars,

10 The wild animals and cattle, the snakes and birds,

11 The kings and all the people, with their rulers and their  
judges,

12 Young men and maidens, old men and children—

13 All praise the Lord together. For He alone is worthy.  
His glory is far greater than all of earth and heaven.

14 He has made His people strong, honoring His godly ones  
—the people of Israel, the people closest to Him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hallelujas! Yes, praise the Lord!

EXPOSITION

This psalm is remarkable for its universal sweep, its unrivalled grandeur, and its national application. With clearly marked consecutiveness, it appeals first to the *heavens* (ver. 1) and then to the *earth* (ver. 7). In the fewest possible words it touches upon all things and beings above and below: poetically investing *things* with the intelligence of *persons*, provoking the interesting inquiry how this feature of the psalm is meant to

6. See Exposition of 147.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

be understood. And yet it finally gravitates to *Israel*, as the appointed (earthly) leader in the praises of the universe. The filling in of this outline gives occasion for many felicities of order and grouping: the *order* observed, beginning with the heavens and then descending to the earth, by a reverse movement, ascends again from the *earth* to the *heavens* (ver. 13). The *grouping* shows such subtle methods as—setting a species first, i.e., *messengers* (ver. 2a), a species of heavenly intelligences, and then *hosts* (ver. 2b), including both “messengers” and “attendants” (Ps. 103:20, 21); and such delightful juxtapositions as *young men* and *maidens*, (ver. 12a) and such charming contrasts as *old men* and *children* (ver. 12b): in the doing of which, resorting to the refinements of a passing compliment to maidenly modesty, by the delicate touch of a *yea even*; as much as to suggest that, though maidens may characteristically oft remain silent, yet, when Jehovah’s praises call on them to join, they need not hesitate to respond; and by the equally delicate *together with* of the next line, which has the effect of summoning groups of little ones to their grandsires’ knees. Both order and grouping are honoured by the way in which the breathless enumerations of objects in heaven and on earth are severally followed by deliberately drawn-out and restful reasons *why* those invoked should respond in praise. In the closing of the first stanza, the permanence of *law* is made prominent: *he commanded—he stationed—a statute he gave*, leading up to the significant fact, so beneficent in its results—*they do not transgress*. Alas for all concerned, if they did! So used as we are to the beneficent regularities of nature that our minds instinctively shrink from the unimaginable crudities and endless mishaps of “chance worlds.” “They do not transgress!” And so “the sun knows” the “place” (and the time) of his going in—to the inch and to the moment; or, if *he* does not know, *we* know, for him and of him, that he will *not transgress*. But when we make the rapid run of the second stanza from monsters to men, we begin to catch glimpses of a still softer light. We are, doubtless, still under the reign of law; but the law is becoming elevated from the law that controls matter to the law that governs mind. And mind perceives the name and fame of Jehovah. The atmosphere in which mind lives is appreciative knowledge. No knowledge in the creature: no name for the Creator. No eye to see: no glory seen, no praise forthcoming: no reciprocal love.

## PSALM 148

But how of created things that are not endowed with mind? Can *they too* praise? Yea, in their own way. Unconsciously; or, at best, half-consciously: dependent on Man to interpret their sighings and their songs. As the song of the bird is to the songster's uncomprehended ecstasy, so is the intelligent and sympathetic adoration of man to the instinctive impulse of the bird: its expression and interpretation.

This intimate relation between man who knows Jehovah's name and the creatures beneath him who—so far as we can tell—know it not, is deep-seated in the divinely appointed nature of things. As we voice their joys, they share our sorrows. They not only grow and sing, but they also shudder and groan. The sparrow falls dead, leaving its unprotected brood to perish; but not without our Father. And he has appointed that all creation—which at present is "sighing together and travailing-in-birth throes together until the present—shall, at the manifestation of the sons of God, be freed from the bondage of the decay into (not quite the glory, but) the freedom of the glory of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19-21). But everything in its own order: the Sons of God first, and creation afterwards. Everything in its own order: Israel first, and the nations afterwards. Hence, not by lapse or collapse, this magnificent psalm finds its climax in ISRAEL: prophetically declaring that Israel's God *hath uplifted a horn for his people*, (which constitutes) *a theme of praise for all his—hasidhim—his men of kindness*; the Levites, first; then, as represented by them, all Jehovah's ideal Israel—for the real will yet be transfigured into the ideal—a *people near him*, and through whom he can act on the nations (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kindness").

Meanwhile, where is the Church? Is that forgotten? Nay: but, throwing our minds back into the time and atmosphere of these "songs of Israel" before we give our answer, we reply: The Church is at present "hidden in God"; "hidden away from the ages and the generations" (Eph. 3); and, therefore, "hidden away" from the writers of these psalms. And woe betide us if we exegetically call the Church out of its divine concealment before its time. The presumption of so doing will be avenged at our hands—no later on than in the very next psalm (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kingdom").

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. All creation is called upon to express thanks and wonder at the goodness and greatness of our God. Is it happening? Discuss.
2. God has commanded, stationed, the physical creation. How did it (has it) responded? What lesson for us?
3. We could not imagine a world of chance and yet this is very much what the evolutionary concept of creation would ask us to believe. Discuss.
4. The law of the mind is involved in the second stanza of this psalm. Discuss.
5. There will come a time when all creation will be delivered from the limitations now upon it. Discuss cf. Romans 8:10-21.

P S A L M 1 4 9

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A New Song for Israel, which Others may Not Sing.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, A Well-Defined People Addressed. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, A Well-Defined Time Indicated. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, A Well-Defined Work Described.

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(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Sing ye to Jehovah a song that is new,  
his praise in the assembly of his men of kindness.<sup>2</sup>
- 2 Glad be Israel in his great Maker,  
let the sons of Zion exult in their King:
- 3 Let them praise his name in the dance,  
with timbrel and lyre let them make melody unto him.
- 4 Since Jehovah is taking pleasure in his people,  
adorneth the humble ones with victory<sup>3</sup>

1. Apparently doubled. See Exposition of 147.  
2. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kindness."  
3. Or: "salvation."

## PSALM 149

- 5 Let the men of kindness exult with glorying,<sup>4</sup>  
let them ring out their joy at their great Habitation:<sup>5</sup>  
6 Let extollings of GOD be in their throat,  
and a sword of two-edges be in their hand.  
7 To execute an avenging on the nations,  
chastisements on the peoples;  
8 To bind their kings with chains,  
their honourables with fetters of iron;  
9 To execute on them the sentence written<sup>6</sup>  
a stateliness it is for all his men of kindness.<sup>7</sup>

(Nm.)<sup>8</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 149

Hallelujah! Yes, praise the Lord! Sing Him a new song.  
Sing His praises, all His people.

2 O Israel, rejoice in your Maker. O people of Jerusalem,  
exult in Your King.

3 Praise His name by marching together to the Temple,<sup>1</sup>  
accompanied by drums and lyre.

4, 5 For Jehovah enjoys His people; He will save the humble.  
Let His people rejoice in this honor. Let them sing for joy  
as they lie upon their beds.

6, 7 Adore Him, O His people! And take a double-edged  
sword to execute His punishment upon the nations.

8 Bind their kings and leaders with iron chains,

9 And execute their sentences.

\* \* \* \* \*

He is the glory of His people. Hallelujah! Praise Him!

## EXPOSITION

The well-defined *People* is the Ideal Nation of Israel; the well-defined *Time* is the time of Israel's Restoration to Jehovah's favour, when that people again realise that Jehovah is indeed

4. Or: "with (ascriptions of) glory"—O.G. 459. Cp. 29:9.

5. So Br. w. probability: departing by one letter from M.T.: i.e., sh-k-n instead of sh-k-b.

6. "Viz, by prophets, in such passages as Mic. 4:13, Is. 41:15f, Joel 3:12-14"—Dr.

7. M.T. adds: "Praise ye Yah."

8. Apparently doubled. See Exposition of 147.

1. Literally, "Let them praise His name in the dance."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

*their King*; and the well-defined *Work* is the work of punishing Gentile nations. The lines along which legitimate interpretation should run are reasonably clear; but, by a corrupted exegesis, the scope of this psalm has been so perverted, that the *Sword* has been placed in unauthorised hands, and the earth has been drenched with human blood, shed without Divine Authority. The secret of the mischief has lain in substituting the Church for Israel; and this, again, has resulted from the corruption of a Church which has forgotten her own especial calling, and mistakenly deemed herself to be the Kingdom, and has vain-gloriously vaulted herself into a place in the Prophetic Word never designed for her.

Happily, expositors are beginning to discover the mistake, and to trace back to it the deplorable consequences which have ensued; though it may be doubted whether they can be said to have laid the axe to the root of the tree so long as they call the nation of Israel a "Church." The following extract from Delitzsch will lay bare the terrible results which have sprung from this mistaken application of the Word of God:—

"The New Testament spiritual Church cannot pray as the Old Testament state Church prays here. Under the delusion that it could be used as a prayer without any spiritual transformation, Psalms cxlix. has been the pass-word of the most horrible aberrations. By means of this Psalm Caspar Scioppius in his *Classicum belli sacri*, which, as Bakius says, is written not with ink but with blood, inflamed the Roman Catholic princes to the Thirty Years' religious war. And within the Protestant Church Thomas Munzer by means of this Psalm stirred up the War of the Peasants. One can easily see that the Christian cannot directly appropriate such a psalm, without disavowing the apostolic admonition: *ta hopla tees strateias heemon ou sarkika* [the weapons of our warfare are not carnal] (2 Cor. 10:4)."

The serious question arises, whether, in view of such consequences of a mistaken exegesis as are here disclosed, it would not be better to leave off altogether the habit of speaking of the Old Testament Nation as a CHURCH; and, instead of merely abstaining from *directly* appropriating such a psalm as this, would it not be more reverent and far safer to *abstain altogether* from appropriating it? Why appropriate it at all? It is not for us. Nevertheless, we can learn much from it. We can gather therefrom lessons which are by no means yet exhausted; and if some "Jew-baiting" communities would only listen to

## PSALM 149

Jehovah's voice ringing through it, they would not be surprised to hear their rulers calling out to them, with genuine concern, "Hands off!"

It may not be out of place to observe that there is enough in this psalm to prevent even the favoured nation itself from hastily taking up the "sword," though it were in self-defence. Let them make reasonably sure that Jehovah is again *favouring his people*, and intends to *adorn the humble ones with victory!* When Jehovah wills them to "thresh," he will not fail to say unto them "Arise!" Besides which, it has yet to be emphasised, that even upon Israel a restriction is placed which further safeguards the power of the "sword," as commissioned by this psalm. This restriction has already been respected by the qualifying term "ideal" in the phrase "ideal Israel": it is only to "ideal Israel" that the commission to use the "sword" is here prophetically given. Now, as the "ideal Israel" is necessarily a purified and godlike Israel—the real nation, indeed, but the real nation as morally qualified for the stern and critical task of punishing Gentile kings and nations,—it is important that this restriction to the mission of the "sword" be thoroughly grasped and tenaciously held.

Note then, first, that the restriction is well in evidence hereabouts in the Psalms. Recall how strongly it appeared at the close of the last psalm (148). The perfect tense there may perhaps be safely taken as the prophetic perfect of anticipation: *He hath uplifted a horn for his people*—the "horn" being a well-known symbol of royal power and prowess. This "horn" Jehovah will have given to "his people": say,—naturally, in a Hebrew psalm,—*"to his people Israel."* But in what moral condition are "his people" to be when this "horn" of power is restored to them? It is to be observed that the restoration is to be *a theme of praise for all Jehovah's men of kindness*. It follows, that it will be an event which will fill Jehovah's "men of kindness" with joy.

*His men of kindness!* but *who are they?* They are His *hasidhim*: THE RECEIVERS AND REFLECTORS OF HIS OWN DIVINE KINDNESS. It is not difficult to define them: our only misfortune is, that we have not a single word to denote them; and, in the last resort, *that* is doubtless our own fault; for if we had been awake to the immense importance—within the realm of the Old Testament—of the *idea*, the happy word to express it would surely have been agreed upon before now; and English readers

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

would not have been suffered to lose themselves amid such a variety of renderings of this Hebrew designation as "holy ones," "pious ones," "godly ones," "favoured ones," &c., &c. Surely the idea and the character embodying it, should by no means be allowed to escape us. Just here, the restriction implied is vital.

So, then, Jehovah's "men of kindness" will rejoice and give "praise" when a "horn" is again "uplifted" for "his people"; which presupposes their confidence that "his people" are *prepared* to wield the "sword" in strict accord with Jehovah's will. And the next line in Ps. 148 confirms this confidence; for by the very way in which it follows on, without a conjunction, such as "and" or "moreover," that line—the last of the psalm—is turned into *an expansion of the foregoing*; and so implies that "the sons of Israel," AS A BODY, will have become "men of kindness"; in other words, will have become Jehovah's "ideal nation"; the perception of which prepares us for the splendid climax—*a people near him*—morally near him, and not merely by outward privilege and profession: ONLY TO SUCH A PEOPLE, hath Jehovah here promised to raise up a horn of power and prowess.

All of which brings us, on a full-flowing tide, over the bar at the entrance of our present psalm, the redoubtable 149th: *Sing ye to Jehovah a song that is new*; and indeed it is "new," even to Israel,—so new and peculiar that no others than Jehovah's "ideal Israel" *have any right to sing it with self-appropriation*. The same restrictive peculiarity immediately reappears as the psalmist, in the second line, says: *his praise in the assembly of his men of kindness*. These peculiarly godlike men have now become an "assembly"; and, from what follows, we may infer that they are the whole national assembly of *humble ones* who have borne the sin and the curse and the shame of centuries: JEHOVAH'S IDEAL ISRAEL. These are the men to whom alone it is possible, without fanaticism, to have, at one and the same time, *the extollings of God in their throat, and a sword of two edges in their hand!*

With a remarkable—and indeed quite an unusual—maintenance of descriptive power the final stanza of this ominous psalm conducts us steadily up to its unique and amazing climax: *To execute—chastise—bind—execute the sentence written* (and we thank Dr. Driver for referring us to such appropriate parallels for showing what that "sentence" is) *is a stateliness for all his men of kindness!* thus, once more and finally, holding



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us to the Divinely imposed restriction of this unique commission to *such* men—to *these* men—and to *no others*. "A stateliness": a quite unusual and significant word, whose peculiar value the psalms have recently taught us. As "glory" is an attribute of "majesty," so is "stateliness" an attribute of the "glory" of "majesty" (Ps. 145:5). Such "stateliness"—such "magnificence," as the Sep. in some places has it—has Jehovah in reserve for "his men of kindness." Some day a relieved world will wake up to discover how Jehovah himself has displayed his own kindness in thus forcibly sweeping away centuries of oppression and wrong. Let all tyrants beware!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is a most interesting psalm, at least the sometimes tragic use made of it is of real interest, Rotherham feels it has been very much misused. What is the basic mistake?
2. "There is not Church in the Old Testament". How is this thought to be understood. Discuss.
3. Rotherham evidently believed the physical nation of Israel was to (will) be used by God. How? When? Why? Where?
4. Who are "His men of kindness"? What is their work?
5. In the analysis of this psalm we learn of a new song for Israel. When will they sing it? For what reason? Is there another way of interpreting this psalm? Discuss.

## P S A L M 1 5 0

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Expansion and Enforcement of the "Public Reader's Invitation" to the People to Join in the Responses in the Temple-Worship.

### ANALYSIS

1. "The Public Reader's Invitation"—*Hallelu-yah*, "Praise ye Yah," is first given in the Usual Way at the Head of the Psalm. 2. Then follow Ten Lines of Expansion: consisting of (a) a Ten-fold Repetition of the Invitation *hallelu*, "praise ye"; (b) a Ten-fold Statement of the Object of Praise—once by the familiar Divine Name EL, "the Mighty One," and nine

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

times by the use of the pronoun "him," referring back to "El" and virtually repeating it; (c) a Ten-fold use of the Hebrew preposition *beth*, "in" or "with"—employed four times to denote GROUNDS OR REASONS for praise, and six times to bring in ACCOMPANIMENTS of praise. 3. These ten steps thus lead up to the Eleventh Line, which constitutes THE CLIMAX OR GRAND IMPERATIVE OF THE PSALM; and consists of another form of the verb *ballel*, "to praise" (namely, the third person feminine imperfect or incipient) agreeing with the feminine noun *neshamah* (literally "breath," more freely "breather"), which—with its qualifying word "all" or "every"—should be rendered, "Every one who hath breath," "Let EVERY ONE WHO HATH BREATH [the 'subject' emphatically preplaced for emphasis] praise Yah. 4. The Twelfth Line of the psalm—whether, with M.T., consisting of one occurrence of the phrase *ballelu-yah*, or, after Briggs' conjecture, of three occurrences, to fill out the line—being, as it is, a bare Repetition of the Primary Invitation, makes no further demand on Exposition, as it can only enhance the General Effect. It is only by close adherence to the true character of (i) the Primary Invitation, and (ii) the Expanded Commentary thereon, that this twelfth line, in either form, is saved from being Superfluous.

### (P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Praise ye GOD for<sup>2</sup> his holiness,<sup>3</sup>  
Praise ye him for the spreading out<sup>4</sup> of his strength,
- 2 Praise ye him for his heroic deeds,  
Praise ye him for the abundance of his greatness;
- 3 Praise ye him with<sup>5</sup> the blast of the horn,  
Praise ye him with lute and lyre;
- 4 Praise ye him with timbrel and dance,  
Praise ye him with strings and pipe;<sup>6</sup>
- 5 Praise ye him with cymbals of clear tone,  
Praise ye him with cymbals of loud clang;
- 6 Let every one who hath breath praise Yah.  
Praise ye Yah. [Praise ye Yah. Praise ye Yah.]<sup>7</sup>

(Nm.)

1. Apparently doubled. See Exposition of 147.

2. N.B.: "in view of"="for."

3. So P.B.V. "Sanctity"—Br.

4. So Br.

5. N.B.: "In and through the accompaniment of"="with."

6. Or: "flute"; or "organ" in the simple sense of a collection of reeds.

See Exposition.

7. "Should be thrice repeated for measure"—Br.

PSALM 150  
PARAPHRASE  
PSALM 150

Hallelujah! Yes, praise the Lord! Praise Him in His Temple, and in the heavens He made with mighty power.<sup>1</sup>

2 Praise Him for His mighty works. Praise His unequalled greatness.

3 Praise Him with the trumpet and with lute and harp.

4 Praise Him with the timbrels and processional. Praise Him with stringed instruments and horns.

5 Praise Him with the cymbals, yes, loud clanging cymbals.

6 Let everything alive give praises to the Lord! *You* praise Him!

\* \* \* \* \*

Hallelujah!

EXPOSITION

As this psalm is unique and makes urgent demands on exegesis, the reader will not be surprised if this endeavour to interpret it extend beyond the length which the brevity of the psalm may have led him to anticipate. For clearness, and to enable MORE *and* LESS critical readers respectively to find their own, it will be convenient to divide the Exposition into two parts: I. A Critical Defence of the Title, Text and Translation; and II. A Practical Interpretation of the psalm as thus presented.

I. A CRITICAL DEFENCE OF THE TITLE,  
TEXT AND TRANSLATION.

1. As to the TITLE here presented, it is respectfully submitted: That this psalm is *not* a "Doxology," and that the continued classification of it as such diverts attention from its true character. As this conclusion rests mainly on Dr. Ginsburg's opinion that the phrase *hallelu-yah* was, originally, not one word but two, which together constituted the "Public Reader's Invitation" to the People to join in the Responses in Temple Worship (Ginsburg's Intro., pp. 375-381), it is necessary that this Expert Opinion be well kept in mind; since it is only when that opinion is accepted as sufficiently valid to form a basis of reasoning, that the character of this psalm as an Expansion and Enforcement of that Invitation can be expected to disclose itself. The thoroughness with which, on that assumption, it does

1. Literally, "in the firmament of His power."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

vindicate itself, is the sufficient justification of the ultimate conclusion reached as to the character of this psalm.

2. Next, as to TEXT, it is necessary to say: That the extraordinary symmetry of this psalm, coupled with the notorious confusion into which the Hebrew letters *beth* and *kaph* are known from the ancient versions to have not infrequently fallen, through infirmities incident to copying, conducts to the assured conviction that the NINE occurrences of the preposition *beth* in this psalm must have been originally TEN, and that the Syriac version is right in having preserved the ten intact. This strong conviction is similar to that of which a critic of modern hymns becomes conscious, when, in examining a new hymn-book, he observes a hymn, otherwise perfect in its rhymes, utterly breaking down in one particular verse. As he would exclaim, "Impossible and Incredible!" so any one with a fair amount of sensitiveness to symmetry of form and a passing acquaintance with the incidents of textual transmission, becomes irresistibly possessed by the persuasion that the one straggling *kaph* in this psalm is neither more nor less than a clerical error, however ancient, and the more so, that the irregularity serves no good purpose whatever, seeing that the difference between "in view of," "for" and "according to" cannot in the circumstances be made evident to the common mind.

3. In respect of TRANSLATION, two points claim attention: the rendering of the ten *beths*; and, that of the word *neshamah* in the climax of the psalm.

(a) Manifestly, the ten *beths* should be rendered as uniformly as possible: which at once throws out the "upon" (of A.V. and R.V.) before the two classes of "cymbals," as a perfectly gratuitous variation; seeing that Jehovah may be praised "with" as well as "upon" any musical instrument. Unfortunately we cannot have a perfectly uniform rendering of *beth*, simply because this Hebrew preposition is broader than our "with," easily looking in such two directions as "in view of" = "for" and "with" (the help or accompaniment of), but beyond these two meanings there is, in this psalm, no need to go; as will be seen as soon as we are prepared to deal vigorously with lines one and two, and (with Briggs), *without change of consonants*, say: *for his holiness, for the spreading out of his strength*. We shall then have four good, strong, uniform lines:

Praise ye GOD for his holiness,  
Praise ye him for the spreading out of his strength,

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Praise ye him for his heroic acts,  
Praise ye him for his abundant greatness.

Against the introduction—with many translations—of *place* in the first line, may be urged: that it is first, needless; secondly, feeble; thirdly, puzzling: Needless, inasmuch as the extension of Jehovah's praise through space (and place) is fully and grandly wrought out in Ps. 148; feeble, because, if we merely say "in his sanctuary," no mention is made of the beings who dwell in that sanctuary; and puzzling, because we are left in doubt *which* sanctuary is intended, the earthly or the heavenly, as to which expositors are very uncertain—at least they come to diverse conclusions. But by accepting the four lines as a four-fold reference to the attributes and activities of the Mighty One, an obviously stable foundation is laid on which His praise may rest. *Praise him in view of=for*—all these.

(b) As to the important noun *neshamah*, in the climax of the psalm, which—preceded by the little qualifying word *kol*, "the totality of," "the whole of," "all," or "every"—is literally "every breath," more freely "every breather": the one important question is, Does it mean "Every ONE who hath breath," or "Every THING that hath breath? In other words, Does it (poetically) include animals; or is it strictly and properly confined to mankind? It will probably become evident that it does include all mankind, and is not limited to Hebrew worshippers, even though Temple worship is all the time in view. If we conclude that it is confined to mankind, it will still be left over to ask, in the second part of our Exposition, WHY this peculiar phrase is employed to denote mankind, rather than simply "all nations," "all men," or "all flesh." In answer to the primary question here submitted, it may be said, with confidence: That the word under consideration is here confined to mankind—for the following reasons: (i) it stands alone, and is not one of a *series* which conceivably might leave this term over to mean animals: (ii) the whole context is charged to the full with the notion of human personality. *Praise ye!* eleven times repeated (including the Public Reader's Invitation), so that, if the eleven-fold appeal of the *ye* be to MEN, then the climax, which is the emphasised sum of all that has gone before, must still mean MEN, and cannot be poetically lavished on animals; (iii) other examples may be found in which "every breath" or "every breather" is limited to human kind; as for example Deu. 20:16, 18; Josh. 11:11, 14,

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confirmed by Isa. 57:16, wherein *neshahmoth*, the plural of the term before us, is clearly synonymous with the "souls" of men (not animals). We may, then safely rest in the translation: *Let every ONE who hath breath praise Yah.*

### II. A PRACTICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE PSALM AS THUS PRESENTED.

We at once find ourselves in a practical atmosphere, if we resume where just now we left off. Frankly admitting—as we have already admitted—that we are (metaphorically) within the Temple area, that we have just heard the "Public Reader" in the Temple Courts give the "Invitation" *Praise ye Yah*; and that we are now (in all probability) listening to a Levitical or Orchestral *prolongation* of the Reader's Invitation,—granting all this, we are constrained nevertheless to maintain that we have been brought under no restrictive influences which can rightfully cramp the terms "Every one who hath breath," so that they shall mean no more than "Every Hebrew."

In support of this protest we offer the following reasons:—  
(a) The psalmist avoids all the many current designations by which he could have restricted his appeal to Hebrews; such as "Men of Israel," "Sons of Zion," "Seed of Jacob," and the like: instead of which he says, simply and broadly, "Every one who hath breath." (b) Previous psalms have already familiarised us with a class of worshippers outside Hebrews; as where (Ps. 115:9-11, 135:19, 20)—after exhaustively classifying all Israel—we are taken outside Israel by the familiar New Testament designation, "Ye that revere God." (c) Other psalms, unquestionably prophetic (and therefore probably carrying us beyond the present Church dispensation into the coming age of the Kingdom) have thrown open the Temple Courts to all nations, or all the earth; and invited them to enter and bow down (Ps. 100:1-4; see "Exposition."). (d) The prophetic word from Isaiah's hands (56:7) distinctly predicts that "My house, a house of prayer shall be called, for all the peoples" (cp. Isa. 66:18-23). For these reasons it is plainly not permissible to restrict the description "Every one who hath breath" to any narrower limits than ALL MANKIND.

But why should this peculiar description have been selected, and not one of the more obvious phrases, such as "All nations," "All men," or "All flesh"? This we now proceed to indicate by submitting the following proposition: *The praises of Jehovah*

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*primarily call for Song; and for the production of song Breath is essential; hence the inherent fitness of couching the Invitation in these terms rather than any others.*

The primary appeal made by the songs of Israel is to the Human Voice, to articulate them. They are not mere sounds, but senses; they celebrate, among other things, the doings and perfections of Jehovah; they appeal to the mind of the listener through his ear. No artificial sounds can articulate them. *Song is essential to the praise of Jehovah; and Breath is essential to song.*

The present psalm, which may be described as the magnified appeal of Hebrew praise, is absolutely true to this master-thought. The Public Reader's appeal is not to musical instruments, but to musical men. He does, indeed, call for "music," because he calls for "praise" in Song; and mere brute sound is not Song; is not, cannot be, intelligent, simultaneous, harmonious, melodious Song. Therefore he appeals to men with minds, men capable of adoring purpose. But MEN standing first and foremost, first and last, in his call. He calls on them for "tuneful" *breath*. But they must *have* breath; and therefore the Orchestral Amplification rises to its climax on that clear note. Eleven times "Praise ye, (O men)": never once, "Praise ye (O instruments)"!

And this reduces all instrumentation to its right dimensions: in rendering the praises of Israel, instrumentation is always, everywhere, evermore secondary and subservient. To guide, prolong, sustain the HUMAN VOICE, is its only place here.

But in this, its legitimate, subservient relation to the human voice, instrumentation is not only permitted but *invited!*—Divinely invited. And there is this further to be said in passing: That no musical instrument can play itself, nor play at all until a human soul moves it to its subservient end.

According to this Divine Ideal of Sacred Song, it is Man who is sounding the high praises of Jehovah all the while: Man *with* the instrument, Man *in* the instrument. All good instrumental music throbs and thrills with human intelligence.

There is something unspeakably pathetic, and immeasurably instructive, in this final appeal to "Every one who hath breath." When a man's "breath" departs, his power of song in this world is at an end. When, amid the advancing infirmities of old age, his "breath" for song fails him, and he is compelled to excuse himself from complying with this Invitation, by pleading: "I

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would fain, O Divine Master, respond to thy call; but alas, I have no available breath,"—may we not believe that his excuse will be accepted? If he is compelled to lean on OTHERS, but still puts his own mind into the song which he has to leave others to sing,—will he not be accepted? If he has a HARP, and his right hand has not yet lost its cunning, and he throws his soul into the strings and by them climbs to Jehovah's throne in adoration,—will he not be accepted? The very pathos of old age illustrates and accentuates the principle. He who is aged and infirm is, with others, invited to sing; but, if he cannot, what then? He is invited to play; but if he cannot, what then? Is there in the Divine Code no such thing as a "Law of Liberty"? Happily, "to his own Master he standeth or falleth." Meanwhile, and all the while, the gracious Invitation goes on resounding through the ages, and to earth's remotest bounds,—*Let every one who hath breath praise Yah!*

Before we close, a particularisation of the "accompaniments" of praise here enumerated may be acceptable:—

- 1.—Horn, Heb. *shophar*: the curved horn, prob. at first a ram's horn, which "was used by watchmen, warriors, etc., as well as priests"—O.G., 348. To be distinguished from the straight silver trumpets for the use of the priests (Num. 10:1-10, the only instance of which in the Psalms is 98:6). It is remarkable that this is the only instrument still in use which goes back to Mosaic times.
- 2.—Lute, Heb. *nebhel*: prob. smaller than the lyre, and occasionally more elaborate (33:2, 144:9). In O.G. named also "portable harp, guitar." For uniformity of rendering, see under next word.
- 3.—Lyre, Heb. *kinnor*: prob. larger than the lute, and fitted by its deeper and louder tones to accompany the bass voices in the Temple worship (I Ch. 15:21). "Lyre" is the only name given it in O.G. Hence, throughout this translation of the Psalm, this distinction has been uniformly observed—"lute" for *nebhel* and "lyre" for *kinnor*.
- 4.—Timbrel, Heb. *toph*: the well-known tambourine or hand-drum, chiefly used as an accompaniment to



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“dancing”; and, therefore, favouring that translation of the next word.

- 5.—Dance, Heb. *mahol*: “dance” is the only meaning given in Fuerst, T.G., and O.G.: in the last of which it is followed by the words—“accompanied by Timbrel (*toph*) and sometimes other instruments.” Stainer inclines to “flute” (*Bible Educator*, ii., 70): in favour of whose opinion it may be said—that thereby absolute uniformity is secured for all six lines; and, if EIGHT of the items specified are instruments, and not mere accompaniments, why not the NINTH?
  
- 6.—Strings, Heb. *minnim*: so O.G.; regarded by Stainer as a generic name for stringed instruments (*Bible Educator*, ii., 72).
  
- 7.—Pipe, Heb. *‘ugabh*: in O.G., “reed pipe or flute,” or “a Pan’s-pipe” or “organ”—“made up of several reeds together.” Stainer evidently concludes that, although the *‘ugabh* may have been originally a simple collection of reeds, a syrinx, or Pan’s-pipe, yet it afterwards was developed into the parent of our modern organ, and was identical with the *magrepha* mentioned in the Talmud. “This organ,” says Steiner, “for it is entitled to the name . . . was capable of producing 100 sounds. These were brought under the control of the player by means of a *clavier* or key-board. Its tones were said to be audible at a very great distance” (*Bible Educator*, ii., 73).
  
- 8.—Cymbals of clear tone, Heb. *zilzelei-shama’*.
  
- 9.—Cymbals of loud clang, Heb. *zilzelei-teru’ah*: There is a general agreement among scholars in favour of substantially the above distinction. It is quite conceivable that the “clanging” cymbals may have found their place in Temple worship by serving to drown and overpower all other noises, and so secure universal silence throughout the Temple courts; in which case the “clear-sounding” cymbals could be appropriated to the service of beating time, and possibly of making other concerted signals.

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If the main position respecting the foregoing psalm is correct, several corollaries follow from it; one of them is this—*That we must look elsewhere than here for the actual response of the people.* The more sure we are that this psalm is none of it of the nature of a response, but all of it of the nature of a continued appeal for a response, the more urgently it becomes us to indicate the kind of thing which would constitute such a response—in other words, which would serve as an appropriate answer to this appeal. Fortunately, we have not to look far to discover what we seek. The refrain of Ps. 136 is just what we want. On the face of it, that refrain is a people's response. It is in itself, not a call for praise, but praise: what is therein said is evidently uttered in Jehovah's praise, and appears in no other light. Its brevity renders it adapted to a people's lips. Every one, having heard it, could remember it. Its frequent repetition indelibly engraved it on every recollection. Being known to all, and perfectly familiar, it was available on any occasion, at a moment's notice. All could join in it. Infant voices could lisp it; feeble voices could utter it; faltering voices could sustain it; uncultured voices could pronounce it. Calling only for faith and gratitude, and of course the pure intention of obedience to Jehovah's claims—it called for no more, as a condition for the appropriation of its God honouring sentiment. It was heart-searching enough to test the deeply tried, who would have to draw upon all their faith and patience and hopefulness, before they could sincerely affirm it; and at the same time it was comprehensive and emphatic enough to suit the bounding hearts and hopes of such as realised that they were laden with mercies.

How popular and general it became in the praises of Israel is evident from a comparison of such passages as I Ch. 16:24, 41, 2 Ch. 5:13, 7:3, 6, 20:21, Ezr. 3:11, Pss. 106:1, 107:1, 118:1-4, 29, 135:3-4, 136 throughout, Jer. 33:11. Some of these passages suggest that the Levites led the people in the rendering of this response, and nothing is inherently more likely. The people would need some signal as to the precise time when their reply should be given; and, it may be, the indication of some note on which they might pitch their voices. Moreover, this hypothesis—that the people's responses were led by the Levites—at once very simply disposes of a difficulty which might otherwise be raised as an objection to the general view of this psalm here given. But for this explanation, it might have been asked

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—“How can this psalm be a continued appeal to the people? If so, then the people are invited to play the various instruments of music: is not that very unlikely?” The sufficient answer is ready: “They are invited to do this by the hands of the Levites—their Divinely appointed Representatives and Helpers”: which explanation falls into line with the general teaching of the Psalms throughout—that the Levites were the tribal embodiment of the Ideal Israel. But none of these considerations would alter the character of the popular response itself: it would be and remain brief—direct—comprehensive—fundamental.

Perhaps Israel had other popular responses, worded differently—a little expanded or a little contracted; and it is quite possible that out of the Psalms themselves examples of such other responses may be discriminated and commended to our attention. Meanwhile, the above well-sustained example (from Ps. 136) may settle beyond reasonable question the difference between an Appeal for a Response—whether said or sung, whether coming from one or many voices; and the Reply to that Appeal in the form of the Response itself.

Another thing that follows from our main position respecting the character of this last psalm is this: that *instead of being considered as fixed here by way of a doxology*—a character we have seen it does not bear—*it should be regarded as well placed here, indeed, for convenience having to appear somewhere,—but as being by original intention MOVABLE, adapted to be lifted into any other position where its presence might be desired.* So that, whenever and wherever the Public Reader might give his Invitation, then and there, by means of this short psalm, A SINGER, A CHOIR, OR THE WHOLE ORCHESTRA MIGHT ENFORCE HIS INVITATION.

This alone would account for the twofold appearance of the original compound hallelujah in connection with these last five psalms; which critics have classified as, so to speak, Double HALLELUJAH PSALMS. The so-called “Double Hallelujah” may be taken either as a mistaken repetition or more probably as a double putting forth of one and the same Invitation; first to be said, and then to be sung; first to be uttered by one voice, and then to be uttered by many voices—without change of destination or alteration of significance, its destination being, both ways, *to the people*, and its significance being, both times, that of an Appeal—a Call—an Invitation for a Response. This dis-

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poses of all the "doublings" of the phrase *halleluyah* in this part of the psalter.

In fine, the peculiar character of the last psalm is alone sufficient to account for the appearance of *halleluyah* at the end of that psalm as well as at its beginning. The psalm itself being nothing else than an Invitation, though Expanded, there could be no possible reason to hinder the repetition of it in brief. It would still remain for the people to respond and say:—

For he is good,  
For to the ages is his kindness.

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With the disappearance of the Hebrew compound word *hallelu-yah* from the end of this psalm, and from all the previous places where it occurs, and the setting down in its stead of its exact English equivalent, is completed a process of thoroughness in translation in behalf of which a good defence can be made. No one doubts that *proper names* should be *transferred* in the process of translation; and therefore it is admittedly right—as indeed it is absolutely necessary—to pass on into English the abbreviated Divine Name *Yah*, a shortened form of *Yahweh* (commonly pronounced *Jehovah*); but when this is done, there is no more reason for reproducing the Hebrew word *hallelu* twice in this psalm than in the remaining nine (practically ten) times of its occurrence. Now as no one dreams of saying, in ver. 1, "*Hallelu* God," and then "*Hallelu* him" for nine times more in succession,—the inconsistency of retaining *Hallelu* at all becomes evident,—that is to say, becomes evident the moment it is admitted that *hallelu-yah* is a phrase and not a word, a phrase with a meaning, a meaning intended to serve a practical purpose. Not *then* to TRANSLATE it, is to convert it into a flourish, which may mean anything or nothing according to the fancy of the reader; and meanwhile it is to miss, one knows not how much guidance to the knowledge of the ancient Temple worship. If the foregoing Exposition of this mis-named "Doxology" has served its purpose, it has already corrected and safeguarded several phrases in the psalm itself; and has probably further opened the way to valuable conclusions which cannot at present be foreseen. For one thing, it has—even within the compass of this short psalm—emphasised the subserviency of accompaniments of worship, as towards worship proper, to a degree which could not have been attained in any other way. It is only when

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we know what the Public Reader's Invitation *means*, that we can see how his *meaning* is caught up, repeated, and emphasised by all that follows. Practically the appeal of the psalm might almost as well have been addressed to musical instruments, instead of being addressed mainly and sustainedly, throughout, to worshipful and musical men.

In this particular instance, as in so many others, fidelity may appear to entail loss; but let us rest assured that in all such cases, temporary loss means permanent gain. We may lose our blessed word "Hallelu-jah"; and, after it, several other idols may have gradually to disappear; but lasting advantage will more than compensate for any sacrifice, if we thereby learn more thoroughly than ever how all aids to public devotion may be transformed and uplifted by the devout intelligence and intentions of worshipful men.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. At the opening of several of the psalms is a little phrase addressed to the "Public Reader". Who is this person? Why address him?
2. If this psalm is *not* a doxology, what is it?
3. There seems to be some question as to the proper translation, or transmission of the text. What is it?
4. How much importance is there (i.e. to the average reader) in the technical discussion of the use of the Hebrew words? Discuss.
5. To the practical use and understanding of this psalm, we ask; "When was this psalm used? Where? If in the Hebrew Temple are all mankind," called upon to praise God?
6. There is a strong discussion of the use of the human voice in singing. How shall we understand the sentence; "all good instrumental music throbs and thrills with human intelligence."
7. What of the aged man who can neither sing nor play his praise to Jehovah?
8. There are eight (or seven) musical instruments defined by Rotherham—in one definition we have a justification for our present organ. Do you agree? Discuss.
9. What possible response was given to this psalm? How was it given?
10. What suggestion was made as to the possible frequent use of this psalm? How can we use it today?

