

## PSALM THIRTY-SEVEN

### PSALM 37

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Alphabetical Exhortation to Patience in Well-Doing, notwithstanding the Temporary Prosperity of the Lawless.

#### ANALYSIS

It is not easy to resolve this psalm into any other stanzas than those small ones formed by the Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet. The Chief Burden of the psalm is the Seeming Inequity of the Divine Treatment of the Righteous and the Wicked: for the removal of which a Time-Solution is mainly relied on (see "Exposition"), while various Other Qualifying Considerations are Suggested.

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(Lm.)—By David.

- 1 Do not burn with vexation because of evil-doers,  
be not envious of the workers of perversity;
- 2 For like grass will they speedily wither,  
and like fresh grass will they fade.
- 3 Trust in Jehovah and do good,  
settle down in the earth<sup>1</sup> and pasture with confidence;
- 4 So shalt thou find exquisite delight in Jehovah,  
and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.
- 5 Roll on Jehovah thy way,  
trust thou also in him,—and he will effectually work;
- 6 So will he bring forth as the light thy righteousness,  
and thy justice<sup>2</sup> as noon-day.
- 7 Be still<sup>3</sup> as to Jehovah, and wait longingly for him;  
do not burn with vexation at him who is making prosperous  
his way,  
at the man who is bringing wicked devices to pass.
- 8 Desist from anger and forsake wrath,  
do not burn with vexation at the doing of evil;<sup>4</sup>

1. Or: "land," and so throughout, vers. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34. All depends on the breadth of the outlook.

2. Or: "vindication."

3. Dr.: "resigned."

4. So w. Br.

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- 9 For evil-doers shall be cut off,  
but they who wait for Jehovah—they shall inherit the earth.
- 10 Yet a little then and the lawless one will not be,  
though thou attentively consider his place yet will he not be;
- 11 But humble ones shall inherit the earth,  
and find exquisite delight in the abundance of prosperity.
- 12 Plotting is a lawless man against a righteous,  
and gnashing at him with his teeth:
- 13 My Sovereign Lord will laugh at him,  
for he seeth that his day will come.
- 14 A sword have lawless men drawn out,  
and have trodden their bow;  
to bring down the humbled and needy,  
to slaughter the upright in life:<sup>1</sup>
- 15 Their sword shall enter their own heart,  
and their bows shall be broken.
- 16 Better the little of a righteous man  
than the abundance of many lawless;
- 17 For the arms of lawless men shall be broken,  
but an upholder of righteous men is Jehovah.
- 18 Jehovah knoweth the days of the blameless,  
and their inheritance to the ages<sup>2</sup> shall be:
- 19 They shall not be put to shame in the time of calamity,  
but in the days of famine shall they be satisfied.
- 20 For the lawless shall perish,  
and the enemies of Jehovah shall be cut off:  
Yea while in high esteem while exalted have they vanished,  
like smoke have they vanished.<sup>3</sup>
- 21 A lawless man borroweth and doth not repay,  
but a righteous man is gracious and giveth.
- 22 For such as are blessed of him shall inherit the earth,  
but such as are accursed of him shall be cut off.
- 23 Of Jehovah are a man's steps rendered firm,  
when in his way he taketh pleasure:
- 24 Though he fall he shall not be cast headlong,  
for Jehovah is upholding his hand.
- 25 Young have I been, and now am old,

1. Or: "behaviour." ML: "way." Some cod. (w. Sep. and Vul.): "heart."  
Cp. 7:10—Gn.

2. ML. "to concealed duration."

3. So in the main, w. Br., after Sep.

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- yet have I not seen a righteous man forsaken  
or his seed begging bread:
- 26 All day long is he gracious and bending,  
and his seed is for a blessing.
- 27 Depart from evil and do good,  
and settle down to the ages;<sup>1</sup>
- 28 For Jehovah loveth justice,  
and will not forsake his men of kindness.  
To the ages<sup>1</sup> have perverse men been destroyed,<sup>2</sup>  
and the seed of lawless men hath been cut off: — — — — —
- 29 Righteous men shall inherit the earth,  
and settle down to futurity thereon.
- 30 The mouth of a righteous man talketh to him<sup>3</sup> of wisdom,  
and his tongue speaketh of justice:
- 31 The law of his God is in his heart,  
his steps shall not slide.
- 32 A lawless man spieth upon a righteous,  
and seeketh to put him to death:
- 33 Jehovah will not leave him in his hand,  
nor condemn him when he is judged.
- 34 Wait thou for Jehovah and observe his way,  
and he will exalt thee to inherit the earth:  
on the cutting off of lawless men shalt thou gaze.
- 35 I have seen a lawless man ruthless,<sup>4</sup>  
and spreading himself out like a cedar of Lebanon;<sup>5</sup>
- 36 Then have I<sup>6</sup> passed by and lo! he was not,  
yea I sought him and he was not to be found.
- 37 Mark the blameless man and behold the upright,  
for there is a future for the man of peace;<sup>7</sup>
- 38 But transgressors have been destroyed together,  
the future of lawless men hath been cut off.
- 39 But the salvation of righteous men is from Jehovah,  
their stronghold in the time of distress;

1. *ML.*: "to concealed duration."

2. So it shd. be (*w. Sep., Vul.*); cp. v. 38—*Gn.*

3. *Or.*: "soliloquiseth."

4. "As a terrible one"—*Dr.*

5. So it shd. be (*w. Sep., Syr.*); cp. Hosea 14:6—*Gn.*

6. So it shd. be (*w. Aram., Sep., Vul.*)—*Gn.*

7. By general consent, this is the true construction of the sentence: "the man of peace" is the "subject," of whom something is affirmed. As to what that something is, see above rendering and the "Exposition."

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- 40 And Jehovah will help them and deliver them,  
will deliver them from lawless men and will save them,  
because they have taken refuge in him.

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 37

Never envy the wicked!

2 Soon they fade away like grass and disappear.

3 Trust in the Lord instead. Be kind and good to others;  
then you will live safely here in the land and prosper, feeding  
in safety.

4 Be delighted with the Lord! Then He will give you all  
your heart's desires.

5 Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him to help  
you do it and He will.

6 Your innocence will be clear to everyone. He will vindicate  
you with the blazing light of justice shining down as from  
the noonday sun.

7 Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him to act. Don't  
be envious of evil men who prosper.

8 Stop your anger! Turn off your wrath. Don't fret and  
worry—it only leads to harm.

9 For the wicked shall be destroyed, but those who trust  
the Lord shall be given every blessing.

10 Only a little while and the wicked shall disappear. You  
will look for them in vain.

11 But all who humble themselves before the Lord shall be  
given every blessing, and shall have wonderful peace.

12, 13 The Lord is laughing at those who plot against the  
godly, for He knows their judgment day is coming.

14 Evil men take aim to slay the poor; they are ready to  
butcher those who do right.

15 But their swords will be plunged into their own hearts  
and all their weapons will be broken.

16 It is better to have little and be godly than to own an  
evil man's wealth;

17 For the strength of evil men shall be broken, but the  
Lord takes care of those He has forgiven.<sup>1</sup>

1. Literally, "the righteous."

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18 Day by day the Lord observes the good deeds done by godly men,<sup>1</sup> and gives them eternal rewards.

19 He cares for them when times are hard; even in famine, they will have enough.

20 But evil men shall perish. These enemies of God will wither like grass, and disappear like smoke.

21 Evil men borrow and "cannot pay it back"! But the good man returns what he owes with some extra besides.

22 Those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the earth; but those cursed by Him shall die.

23 The steps of good men are directed by the Lord. He delights in each step they take.

24 If they fall it isn't fatal, for the Lord holds them with His hand.

25 I have been young and now I am old. And in all my years I have never seen the Lord forsake a man who loves Him; nor have I seen the children of the godly go hungry.

26 Instead, the godly are able to be generous with their gifts and loans to others, and their children are a blessing.

27 So if you want an eternal home leave your evil, low-down ways and live good lives.

28 For the Lord loves justice and fairness; He will never abandon His people. They will be kept safe forever; but all who love wickedness shall perish.

29 The godly shall be firmly planted in the land, and live there forever.

30, 31 The godly man is a good counselor because he is just and fair and knows right from wrong.

32 Evil men spy on the godly, waiting for an excuse to accuse them and then demanding their death!

33 But the Lord will not let these evil men succeed, or let the godly be condemned when they are brought before the judge.

34 Don't be impatient for the Lord to act! Keep steadily along His pathway and in due season He will honor you with every blessing,<sup>2</sup> and you will see the wicked destroyed.

35, 36 I myself have seen it happen: a proud and evil man, towering like a cedar of Lebanon, but when I looked again, he was gone! I searched but could not find him!

37 But the good man—what a different story! For the good

1. Literally, "knows the days of the upright."

2. Literally, "to possess the land."

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man—the blameless, the upright, the man of peace—he has a wonderful future ahead of him. For him there is a happy ending.

38 But evil men shall be destroyed, and their posterity shall be cut off.

39 The Lord saves the godly! He is their salvation and their refuge when trouble comes.

40 Because they trust in Him, He helps them and delivers them from the plots of evil men.

## EXPOSITION

While the artificial character of this psalm as an *alphabetical acrostic*, and its practical aim to encourage saints in well-doing, fully account for all that is discursive in it; it is obviously weighted with the great moral problem—How to account for the undeniable facts, that the lawless are often prosperous in life, whereas the righteous are not infrequently called to pass through adversity. How these facts can be reconciled with the gracious equity of God, is a problem which in all ages has perplexed observant and thoughtful minds; and many parts of Holy Scripture are devoted to endeavours to solve the problem; among them, the book of Job and several psalms are conspicuous. Among such psalms, this one and Pss. 49 and 73 are worthy of special mention; the present one being remarkable for its buoyant courage in confronting the difficulty; the 49th, for the beauty of its form in stating the problem and the unexpected and irregular way in which its solution is proposed; and the 73rd, for the revelation it makes of a soul's struggles before it successfully rises above doubt. They are indeed a remarkable triad of psalms, specially devoted to this very grave, but yet most fascinating theme.

This psalm boldly meets the difficulty by presenting *time* as the chief solution. Subsidiary mitigations, no doubt, are simultaneously presented, to console the suffering saint; and among them is discovered the enhanced delight found in Jehovah himself which significantly anticipates the same mighty consolation which comes out so triumphantly in Ps. 73 the third of the series. But the dominant exhortation here turns on the question of *time*: the burden of the advice tendered being this: "Wait! All will come right in the end. The triumph of the flourishing lawless will be short. When he has been *cut off*, thou, O patient wronged one, will be inheriting the earth." This is the note

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struck at the beginning of the psalm, and this carries us through up to the climax at its close: a climax which confessedly comes with all the greater force when the crowning words are adequately translated: *There is a future for the man of peace; But transgressors have been destroyed together, the future of lawless men hath been cut off.* This forms a worthy climax to the psalm, and adequately meets the difficulty calling for solution. Only grant that there is a *future* for the patient well-doer; and that, for the lawless, however long they may live and flourish, there is *no future* worthy of the name,—and the solution is felt to be complete.

It is true, indeed, that the edge of the psalmist's argument has been rather blunted by critics of note through their acceptance of the term "posterity," in place of *future*, in vers. 37 and 38. To such a weakening of the solution it may be permitted us to object, for two or three reasons: *first*, that the main current of the psalm points to survival in person rather than by proxy; *second*, that in the parallel use of the same word (*aharith*) in Ps. 73:17 it is impossible to accept "posterity" as an adequate translation, seeing that, there, the writer's resolve is to enter "the great sanctuary" for the purpose of considering, not the "posterity" of the lawless but their own *latter end* or *hereafter* or *future*, as the sequel to that passage conclusively shows; and *third*, that the prophetic word itself elsewhere—notably in Jer. 31:29, 30 and Eze. 18:1-4—expressly discounts the principle of punishment by proxy, so making it exceedingly unlikely that this far-seeing and forth-reaching psalm intends us to be content with either substitutionary punishment or substitutionary reward. Hence, as "posterity" is by no means the primary or customary meaning of *aharith*, we can confidently rely on the solid reasons above given for declining it; and for preferring the well-sustained rendering which concludes the psalm with such fine effect.

Will it be objected, that the rewards of the righteous appear in this psalm to be too earthly to be eternal, and the punishment of the lawless to be too summary to be final? Such objection may be safely dismissed as virtually demanding that no Old Testament rays shall penetrate the great Hereafter unless they flood it with all-revealing light. What if the heaven of the Old Testament, as well as that of the New, should prove to be a heaven upon earth? and what if the expansion of the hints here discovered should, after all, find room for all the details subsequently revealed? If we at all apprehend that God hath yet

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more light to break forth from his word, let us beware of closing up the very avenues by which that light may reach us!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "Never envy the wicked". This is well enough to say—how do we know we are envying, or not envying the wicked? Discuss.
2. The seeds of self-destruction are planted in the actions of the wicked—so what is the responsibility of the believer?
3. Waiting is the most difficult of our responses to God's will—why?
4. Anger—wrath—worry—fretting—all these lead to harm. Name and discuss the specific harm involved.
5. The promises to the godly are numerous notice verses: 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23—here are ten and we are only half-way through the psalm—so what?
6. There was a man in the Old Testament who faced and answered the basic problem of this psalm—what was his name and what was his answer?
7. Someone well said that "evil is mortal, and righteousness is immortal"—what are the implications of this truth?
8. God has a sense of humor—read verses 12 and 13 to see what makes God laugh—is He laughing at our problem? Cf. Psalms 2:9.
9. If the moral principle of retribution was not at work, history would have no meaning and the present-day utter pessimism would have real relevance—Discuss.
10. Read verses 32-40 to obtain a summary and final answer to the problem here discussed.

## PSALM 38

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer for Deliverance from Disease and from Enemies.

### ANALYSIS

Part I. *Against Disease.* Stanza I., vers 1, 2, Jehovah's Anger Depreciated. Stanza II., ver. 3-5, The Psalmist traces his Disease to his Sin. Stanza



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III., vers. 6-8, Describes Effect of Disease on Himself. Stanza IV., vers. 9-11, On his Friends.

Part II. *Against Enemies.* Stanza I., vers 12-14, Enemies' Perfidy—How Treated by Psalmist. Stanza II., vers. 15-18, Reasons for so treating it. Stanza III., vers. 19-22, The Character and Strength of his Enemies move the psalmist to Importunity in Prayer.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David—To bring to Remembrance.  
(Part I.)

- 1 Jehovah! do not in thy vexation correct me,  
nor in thy wrath chastise me;<sup>1</sup>
- 2 For thine arrows have sunk down in me,  
and thy hand hath sunk down upon me.
- 3 There is no soundness in my flesh by reason of thine  
indignation,  
no wholeness in my bones by reason of my sin;
- 4 For mine iniquities have passed over my head,  
like a burden that is heavy they are too heavy for me:
- 5 My weals stink they fester,  
by reason of my foolishness.
- 6 I am bent I am bowed very low,  
all the day have I gloomily walked;
- 7 For my loins are filled with shame,<sup>2</sup>  
and there is no wholeness in my flesh;
- 8 I am benumbed and crushed exceedingly,  
I have roared with the growl of a lion.<sup>3</sup>
- 9 Sovereign Lord! before thee is all my desire,  
and my sighing from thee is not hid.
- 10 My heart fluttereth<sup>4</sup> my strength hath forsaken me,  
and the light of mine eyes<sup>5</sup>—even they are not with me;
- 11 My lovers and my friends from before my stroke<sup>6</sup> stand aloof,  
and my neighbours at a distance remain.

1. Cp. 6:1.

2. "That which is contemned"—Br. (after ancient versions). Or: "burning"; so Dr., Del., Per. Leiser ("burning disease").

3. So *Gt.*—Gn.: and so Br.

4. "Palpitates"—O.G. "Is in a ferment"—Br. "Throbbeth violently"—Del.

5. Cp. Eze. 24:16.

6. Note the word: *nega'*—"esp. of a disease, regarded as sent by divine chastisement"—O.G. and note its occurrences in Lev. 13, 14; 2 S. 7:14, Ps. 38:11, 39:10, 89:32, Isa. 53:8. "The word is especially used of the plague of leprosy"—Kp.

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### (Part II.)

- 12 And they who seek my life<sup>1</sup> have laid snares,  
and they who study my hurt have threatened engulfing ruin;  
and deceitful things all the day do they mutter.
- 13 But I am as one deaf—I do not hear,  
and as one dumb who openeth not his mouth.<sup>2</sup>
- 14 Thus have I become as a man who cannot hear,  
and in whose mouth are no replies.
- 15 Because for thee have I waited,  
thou thyself wilt answer Sovereign Lord My God.
- 16 Lest mine enemies rejoice over me,—  
when my feet slipped against me they did great things.
- 17 Because I to stumble am ready,  
and my pain is before me continually;
- 18 Because mine iniquity must I declare,  
I am anxious by reason of my sin.
- 19 Since mine enemies without cause have become strong,  
and multiplied are they who hate me for false reason;
- 20 And they who repay evil for good  
are mine adversaries because I pursue good
- 21 Do not forsake me Jehovah,  
my God! be not far from me:
- 22 Oh haste thee to my help,  
Sovereign Lord! my salvation!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) To Jeduthun.<sup>3</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 38

O Lord, don't punish me while You are angry!

2 Your arrows have struck deep; Your blows are crushing me.

3, 4 Because of Your anger my body is sick, my health is broken beneath my sins. They are like a flood, higher than my head; they are a burden too heavy to bear.

5, 6 My wounds are festering and full of pus. Because of my sins I am bent and racked with pain. My days are filled with anguish.

1. U: "soul."

2. Cp. Isa. 53:7.

3. Prob. leader of Male Choir, having "thanks and confession" specially under his care. Other Jeduthun psalms are 61, 76. "Sheminith" prob. indicates the same choir. Cp. Intro. Chap., II., 3.

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7 My loins burn with inflammation<sup>1</sup> and my whole body is diseased.

8 I am exhausted and crushed: I groan in despair.<sup>2</sup>

9 Lord, You know how I long for my health once more. You hear my every sigh.

10 My heart beats wildly, my strength fails, and I am going blind.

11 My loved ones and friends stay away, fearing my disease. Even my own family stands at a distance.

12 Meanwhile my enemies are trying to kill me. They plot my ruin and spend all their waking hours planning treachery.

13, 14 But I am deaf to all their threats; I am silent before them as a man who cannot speak. I have nothing to say.

15 For I am waiting for You, O Lord my God. Come and protect me.

16 Put an end to their arrogance, these who gloat when I am cast down!

17 How constantly I find myself upon the verge of sin;<sup>3</sup> this source of sorrow always stares me in the face.

18 I confess my sins; I am sorry for what I have done.

19 But my enemies persecute with vigor, and continue to hate me—though I have done nothing against them to deserve it.

20 They repay me evil for good and hate me for standing for the right.

21 Don't leave me, Lord! Don't go away!

22 Come quickly! Help me, O my Savior.

## EXPOSITION

Our analysis suggests that this psalm is divisible into two parts; not because there are any outward signs of such division, but solely for the purpose of drawing attention to the fact, which becomes clear on examination, that there are two distinct strains of thought in the psalm, however closely they are conjoined. For three stanzas the prayer is solely for the removal of disease, without any allusion to enemies. Then, for three more stanzas, there is a sustained reference to enemies, with only a bare allusion to disease. In both parts of the psalm the

1. Implied.

2. Or, "Because of the pains in my heart."

3. Literally, "I am ready to fall."

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writer acknowledges that he has sinned; but this confession is naturally more frank and solemn in the former part than in the latter. The whole psalm may well have been indited by David, even as it is inscribed to him: the only surprising—but by no means incredible—thing is, as we are beginning to discover, that David was severely chastised for his great sin by the direct infliction, from Jehovah's own hand, of a loathsome disease, concerning which the history in Samuel and Chronicles is silent. However surprising such silence may at first sight appear, it is so far from being incredible that on reflection it seems natural, or at least excusable. No royal scribe would feel called on to record the damaging fact in the public chronicles; and it may well have been that even the faithful prophetic historian of the time felt relieved of any duty to insert in his narrative an account of an affliction endured in almost unbroken silence by the erring but still beloved monarch. Notwithstanding which, however, now that, after all these centuries, we look back on those distant times, and realise afresh the dishonour done by David to the name of Jehovah and to the sanctity of his ways,—we cannot fail to discover something more than poetic justice, that the terrible secret should long ago have come out; and THAT in just the very best way conceivable,—namely, by disclosure from the offending monarch's own mouth,—slightly veiled by poetic allusion rather than by blunt narration, and divulged amidst the solemnities of the worship of Him who is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity, yet still plainly confessed and sorely lamented. If anything were yet wanting to impart a finishing-touch of moral and aesthetic fitness to the manner of the revelation, it would be found in the reflection, which Dr. Thirtle has brought home to us, that we probably owe it to David's loving son Hezekiah that these Davidic confessions of Divinely inflicted disease ever saw the light. When once Hezekiah had himself groaned under a similar Divine infliction—though not perhaps for the like cause—and been again mercifully raised up from his couch of tears, then was prepared a joint-author of psalmody of sufficiently refined and sanctified culture to be entrusted with the delicate task of deciding that these snatches of leper-songs should find place in Temple worship. He, finding the leper-wail of Uzziah in the palace library, could be trusted to find place for it in his gallery of sufferers in Ps. 31, where it could serve to strike a preliminary note and thus prepare us—as the sixth

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psalm had in a measure prepared us—for the fuller and more personal confessions of the psalm now before us, and then for the further confessions of Ps. 39, in both of which the leper-wail is heard and leper-disfigurement is seen; after which the renewed confessions of Pss. 40, 41, 51 and others no longer surprise us. Henceforth, it may be surmised, we shall handle these reminiscences of an exciting creative age in Israel, with a tender reverence which only a measurably adequate appreciation of their spiritual origin could have inspired. After this, it seems but commonplace to observe, as before noted, that David's wail over a Divinely inflicted disease, as a direct punishment for his sin, is pointed with a franker and more explicit confession of his transgressions, than are his complaints of the treacherous friends who had now turned against him. Doubtless, it was due to his sin that they were permitted thus to wrong him, and it was well even in this connection, that he should *declare his iniquity* and be *anxious by reason of his sin*; but we can well understand that the royal transgressor felt that many of the wounds he was now receiving from his enemies were such as *they*, at least, had no right to inflict, of which infliction therefore he had good cause to complain. If these things are noted, the psalm will be ready to all the greater and more varied edification. We have only to add that the *Chief Musician's* assignment of this pathetic psalm to *Jeduthun*, as leader of the Male Choir, commends itself as most appropriate, and would probably hold good for the similar psalm that follows.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does this psalm tell us of God's punishment of David? Discuss.
2. The psalmist surely associates his sickness with his sin—why?
3. Can affluent America ever recognize her sin? Will it take physical sickness—pain—weakness—even poverty to bring us to repentance? Discuss.
4. David (or whoever is involved in the psalm) never lost hope—why?
5. The person-to-person relationship—i.e. as it relates to God and the psalmist is a very big part of all the psalms—haven't we depersonalized everything including God? Discuss.

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### PSALM 39

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Lament and Prayer of a Divinely Stricken One.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, How the Stricken One's Resolve to be Silent is Broken. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, Lament that Life, already Short, should be further Shortened. Stanza III., vers. 7-11, Prayer for Pardon and Healing, with a recognition of the Marring Effect of the Disease. Stanza IV., vers. 12, 13, Supplementary and Subdued Prayer for Help.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 I said—"Let me take heed to my ways—  
that I sin not with my tongue,  
Let me restrain my mouth—<sup>1</sup>  
while a lawless man is before me."
- 2 I was dumb with silence—  
I abstained from blessing;  
But my pain had been stirred—
- 3 hot was my heart within me:  
As I murmured there was kindled a fire—  
I spake with my tongue.
- 4 "Let me know O Jehovah mine end—  
and the measure of my days what it is:  
I would fain know why forsaken<sup>2</sup> am I.
- 5 Lo! as handbreadths thou hast given my days,  
And my life-time was as nothing before thee:
- 6 Only a vapour is any man though set firm,  
Only in semblance doth any man march to and fro,  
Only a vapour that he should make a commotion:  
He heapeth things up and knoweth not who shall carry them  
off!"
- 7 Now therefore for what have I waited Sovereign Lord"?<sup>3</sup>  
as for my hope thine it is!

1. *ML.*: "Let me put (so *Gt.*—*Gn.*) to my mouth a muzzle."

2. Same word as "rejected" in *Isa.* 53:3. Cp. *Thirtle*, *O.T.P.*, 186; and see *Ps.* 38:10, 11.

3. Some cod. (*w.* 2 ear. pr. edns., *Aram.* and *Syr.*): "Jehovah"—*Gn.*

## PSALM THIRTY-NINE

- 8 From all my transgressions rescue me,  
the reproach of the vile<sup>1</sup> do not make me.
- 9 I am dumb I will not open my mouth—  
for thou didst it!
- 10 Remove from off me thy stroke,<sup>2</sup>  
through the hostility of thy hand I am spent.
- 11 When by rebukes for iniquity thou hast corrected a man  
then hast thou consumed as a moth his comeliness.  
Only a vapour is any man!
- 12 Oh hear my prayer Jehovah!  
and unto my cry for help oh give ear!  
at my tears do not be silent;  
For a sojourner am I with thee,  
a settler, like all my fathers.
- 13 Look away from me that I may brighten up,  
ere yet I depart and be no more.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 39

I said to myself, I'm going to quit complaining! I'll keep quiet, especially when the ungodly are around me.

2, 3 But as I stood there silently, the turmoil within me grew to the bursting point. The more I mused, the hotter the fires inside. Then at last I spoke, and pled with God:

4 Lord, help me to realize how brief my time on earth will be! Help me to know that I am here for but a moment more.

5, 6 My life is no longer than my hand! My whole lifetime is but a moment to You. Proud man! Frail as breath! A shadow! And all his busy rushing ends in nothing. He heaps up riches for someone else to spend.

7 And so, Lord, my only hope is in You.

8 Save me from being overpowered by my sins, for even fools will mock me then.

9 Lord, I am speechless before You. I will not open my mouth to speak one word of complaint, for my punishment is from You.<sup>3</sup>

1. Or: "senseless"—Dr.

2. See note on 38:11 (same word here).

3. Literally, "for You have done it."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

10 Lord, don't hit me anymore—I am exhausted beneath Your hand.

11 When You punish a man for his sins, he is destroyed; for he is as fragile as a moth-infested cloth; yes, man is frail as breath.

12 Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my cry! Don't sit back, unmindful of my tears! For I am Your guest! I am a traveler passing through the earth, as all my fathers were!

13 Spare me, Lord! Let me recover and be filled with happiness again before my death.

## EXPOSITION

The first thing in this psalm to arrest our attention is its likeliness to the previous psalm; and then, the next thing, its unlikeness; which, indeed, is so great as to divert attention from its similarity. To describe this psalm, as some have done, as merely an Elegy on The Vanity of Life, is quite to miss its especial characteristic. First and foremost it is the Wail of one who has been Stricken of God with a plague on account of Transgression. The Vanity of Life is merely the background of the picture, to enhance the pity of it, that one who in any case had but a short life to live should have his *comeliness* disfigured and his life made shorter still. The plague—probably leprosy—which appeared in Ps. 38, re-appears here in Ph. 39: that is the striking but greatly overlooked fact. As will be seen, the same technical word (*nega'*) which was used in ver. 11 of the previous psalm, is again used in ver. 10 of this; and as, there, a descriptive confirmation was found (vers. 10 and 11) giving unmistakable effect to the suspicious word, so here an equally sure confirmation of it is discovered in the unquestionable allusion to his own marred looks in ver. 11. To catch this reference to his own lamentable bodily condition, is to feel a new point in his plea that he might have declared to him the *measure of his days*. He already knew the ordinary brevity of human life, and feels it so strongly that he employs it as a refrain; but, for that very reason, he was not likely, in an ordinary way, to make it the point of a special petition. But now, as the case is, he would be glad to know the worst. Hence it can be no longer open to question that, as in the previous psalm, so in this,—the petitioner has fallen under the punitive *stroke* of Divine displeasure.



## PSALM THIRTY-NINE

It is just when this similarity has been put beyond further question, that our apprehension of the wide contrast between the two psalms becomes keen and inquisitive. Is this *another* plague-stricken psalmist; or if the same, what has happened to impart such a different tone to his present effusion? The similarity being conceded, the contrast is so great as to become almost startling. There, enemies were in evidence: here, there are none. There, all was excitement and turmoil: here, all is as restful as it is sad. There, no general reflections on the brevity of life were indulged in: here, they abound, and are set forth so forcibly as to mislead the casual reader into the mistake of regarding this composition as a dirge to the note of "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!" Besides all which, there is a tone of resignation here, and an extreme moderation of request, which are in the greatest contrast with the previous psalm.

How is this contrast to be accounted for? Is the writer of this psalm *another man* than he that wrote the previous? But for the inscription, we should quite readily have come to that conclusion; and should have unhesitatingly fixed upon the leper-king Uzziah as the probable author. We should have called attention to the probable fact that Uzziah was smitten for life—which would have accounted for his resignation and for his seeming to say: "And if there may be no complete and early removal of the *stroke*, let there be at least a *brightening up* before I go hence." This, too would have given especial point to the seeming apprehension of the sufferer that he might, in his distress be overheard by an attendant apparently *sinning with his tongue*. The previous psalm, however, warns us against being hasty in concluding against the authorship of David, even here. According to that psalm, his wives withdrew from him, his lovers and friends stood aloof, his neighbours kept at a distance; and, under these circumstances, although David may not have been formally banished to a "several" house like that to which Uzziah had to retire, he may have been confined to his own apartments during his sickness, and may have had ample opportunities to *bridle his tongue* while uncertain attendants were *in his presence*. Then, moreover, it must be remembered that sick people are proverbially subject to moody fluctuations—fiery one day; subdued the next; besides which, time works wonders,—by giving space for reflection; and reflection, on a sensitive mind like David's, may have added to the wonder, by soon trans-

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

forming the high-spirited and resentful statesman of the 38th psalm, into the resigned and patient moraliser of the 39th; especially may this have in part come about by influences due to changing circumstances in the state: as, for instance, by a recrudescence of the bodily plague, after Absaloms' rebellion had become a thing of the past, when the sadder but wiser king had ample time and increased motive to dwell, as he had never done, on the vanity of human life. It is, in any case, significant, that, in his pathetic address on the consecration of the offerings for the building of Solomon's temple as recorded in 1 Ch. 29:15, the venerable monarch should, in fellowship with his people, have used language *precisely similar* to that which closes this psalm: language which we shall do well to keep in mind, as suggesting that Messianic hope did not always run high in Israel, and, indeed, by the very reaction of its occasional brilliance was apt to make it appear that only in this life had those ancients hope in Jehovah their God—that they were, indeed, for a brief span, *sojourners* and *settlers* with their God in the enjoyment of the good things of his house; and then departed into the land of forgetfulness.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There are so many books to help you in your study of the psalms. Many of them will ask you to divide the psalm into many divisions and sub-divisions—how would this psalm divide? What is the theme of this psalm?
2. What was it that stirred David so intently? Wasn't it the awful inequalities of life? Read verses one thru three with the thought of two or three of our present day problems. One might begin with the fantastic outlay of money for material advantages while the cause of Christ limps along for want of finance—or is this the problem? Discuss.
3. Are verses four through six the expression of what finally burst forth?—it hardly seems so. Discuss.
4. If we had the date of our death before us—would it help? If we could hold the two dates usually inscribed upon the tombstone—if we could hold these dates in our hand while we lived in the Spirit World of eternity—of infinity we might relax our feverish efforts. Is this the thought of verse four? Discuss.

## PSALM THIRTY-NINE AND FORTY

5. The brevity of life is described with some very graphic figures: (1) A hand breadth (2) A breath (3) A shadow. Discuss the meaning to life now.
6. The *only hope* of man is in the Lord. How eternally—presently—personally true this is! Discuss by reading verses seven through eleven.
7. David says of man that he is a “house guest” of God. Read verses 12 and 13 and discuss.

## PSALM 40

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Three Stirring Reminiscences of King David's History.

### ANALYSIS

Part I., Significant Memorials of David's Coronation. Stanza I., vers. 1-3, A highly Figurative Description of David's Deliverance from being an Outlaw to being King. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, Felicitations to All who Trust in Jehovah, prompted by David's Own Experience, awaken Glad Memories of the Past, and Adoring Anticipations of the Future. Stanzas III. and IV., vers. 6-9, 10, 11, David's Profound Apprehension of his Kingly Calling makes of him a Proclaimer of Jehovah's Righteousness to an ever-Enlarging Assembly.

Part II., A Significant fragmentary Memento of David's Sin, ver. 12.

Part III., King David in Trouble. Stanza I., vers. 13-15, Prayer against his Enemies. Stanza II., vers. 16, 17, Prayer in Favour of his Friends. In both stanzas the Note of Urgency is struck.

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(Lm.) By David—Psalm.<sup>1</sup>  
(Part I.)

- 1 I waited intently for Jehovah—  
and he inclined unto me,<sup>2</sup>
- 2 And brought me up out of the roaring<sup>3</sup> pit—  
out of the swampy mire;  
And set up on a cliff my feet—  
making firm my steps;

1. Some cod.: “Psalm—By David”—Gn.

2. M.T. adds: “and heard my cry for help.”

3. See Intro., Chap. III., “Earth.” According to a slightly different reading: “destroying.”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 3 And put in my mouth a new song—  
praise unto our God:  
Many will see and revere—  
and trust in Jehovah.
- 4 How happy the man  
who hath made Jehovah his trust,  
And hath not turned aside to vanities—<sup>1</sup>  
nor to such as are falling away to falsehood!
- 5 Many things hast thou done—  
thou Jehovah my God!  
Thy wondrous works and thy plans—<sup>2</sup>  
there is no setting in order:<sup>3</sup>  
I would tell and would speak—  
they are too numerous to be told.
- 6 Peace-offering and grain-offering thou didst not delight in—  
then was there a covenant for me,<sup>4</sup>  
Ascending-sacrifice and sin-bearer thou didst not ask—  
then didst thou command<sup>5</sup> me:
- 7 Lo! I am come—  
in the written scroll is it prescribed to me,
- 8 Thy pleasure I delight in—  
and thy law is in my deepest affections,<sup>6</sup>
- 9 I have heralded the good-tidings of righteousness<sup>7</sup> in a large  
assembly—<sup>8</sup>  
behold my lips!
- 10 I will not withhold O Jehovah thou knowest—  
thy righteousness  
I have not covered in the midst of my heart—  
thy faithfulness and thy salvation;  
I say—I have not concealed thy kindness and thy truth—  
from a large assembly:<sup>9</sup>

1. Or: "vain idols"—reading (w. Br. and O.G.) *h b l* instead of *r h b*.  
M.T.: "the proud."

2. M.T.: "for us"; but not in Sep.

3. M.T.: "unto thee"; and then render (w. Del. and Dr.): "there is none to be compared unto thee." But not in Sep.

4. So, in substance, Br., endeavouring to get behind, and account for, the divergence between M.T. ("ears hast thou digged for me") and Sep. ("a body hast thou fitted for me") quoted Heb. 10:5.

5. So Br., by a very slight change from M.T. For such use of *'amar*, see 105:31, 34, 2 Ch. 29:24.

6. M.L.: "in the midst of mine inwards."

7. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "righteousness."

8. Cp. 22:25, 35:18, and ver. 10 below.

9. Cp. ver. 9 above.

## PSALM FORTY

- 11 Thou Jehovah wilt not withhold thy compassions from me,  
Thy kindness and thy truth will continually preserve me.

(Part II.)

- 12 Surely there closed in upon me misfortunes—  
till they were without number,  
Mine iniquities overtook me—  
and I could not see,  
More numerous were they than the hairs of my head—  
and my heart failed me.

(Part III.)

- 13 Be pleased Jehovah to rescue me—  
Jehovah to help me oh make haste!  
14 Put to shame and abashed together be they who are seeking  
my life<sup>1</sup>  
Turned back and confounded be they who are taking pleasure  
in my hurt,  
15 Astounded as a reward of their own shame be they who are  
saying of me—"Aha! Aha!"  
16 Glad and joyful in thee be all who are seekers of thee,  
Let them say continually—"Jehovah be magnified" who are  
lovers of thy salvation.  
17 Since I am humbled and needy may my Sovereign Lord<sup>2</sup>  
devise for me!  
Since my help and deliverer thou art my God! do not tarry.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 40

I waited patiently for God to help me; then He listened and heard my cry.

2 He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out from the bog and the mire, and set my feet on a hard, firm path and steadied me as I walked along.

3 He has given me a new song to sing, of praises to our God. Now many will hear of the glorious things He did for

1. U.: "soul." M.T. adds: "to snatch it away." Not in 70:2.

2. Some cod. (w. 7 ear. pr. edns.): "may Jehovah"—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

me, and stand in awe before the Lord, and put their trust in Him.

4 Many blessings are given to those who trust the Lord, and have no confidence in those who are proud, or who trust in idols.

5 Our Lord my God, many and many a time You have done great miracles for us, and we are ever in Your thoughts. Who else can do such glorious things? No one else can be compared with You. There isn't time to tell of all Your wonderful deeds.

6 It isn't sacrifices and offerings which You really want from Your people. Burnt animals bring no special joy to Your heart. But You have accepted the offer of my lifelong service.<sup>1</sup>

7 Then I<sup>2</sup> said, "See, I have come, just as all the prophets foretold.

8 And I delight to do Your will, my God; for Your law is written upon My heart!"

9 I have told everyone the Good News that You forgive men's sins.<sup>3</sup> I have not been timid about it, as You well know, O Lord.

10 I have not kept this Good News<sup>2</sup> hidden in my heart, but have proclaimed Your lovingkindness and truth to all the congregation.

11 O Lord, don't hold back Your tender mercies from me! My only hope is in Your love and faithfulness!

12 Otherwise I perish, for problems far too big for me to solve are piled higher than my head. Meanwhile my sins, too many to count, have all caught up with me and I am ashamed to look up. My heart quails within me.

13 Please, Lord, rescue me! Quick! Come and help me!

14, 15 Confuse them! Turn them around and send them sprawling—all these who are trying to destroy me. Disgrace these scoffers with their utter failure!

16 But may the joy of the Lord be given to everyone who loves Him and His salvation. May they constantly exclaim, "How great God is!"

17 I am poor and needy, yet the Lord is thinking about me right now! O my God, You are my helper; You are my Savior; come quickly, and save me. Please don't delay!

1. Literally, "My ears You have dug."

2. This verse was quoted by Christ as applying to Himself. See John 4:34.

3. Literally, "Your righteousness."

## PSALM FORTY

### EXPOSITION

Not only is there no sufficient internal evidence to throw doubt upon the Davidic authorship of this psalm; but the assumption of the correctness of the superscription *By David* probably leads to a clearer insight into the bearing of the different parts, and a firmer grasp of the unity of the whole, than can by any other means be obtained. Who ever *waited* more *intently* for anything than David for the kingship of Israel? How could more suitable images be found to picture the trials through which he had to pass on his way to the kingdom, when endlessly harassed by King Saul, than those of the *swampy mire* and the *engulfing pit*? How can he better represent the completeness of his deliverance from these trying delays, than to represent him as having his feet at length *set high upon a cliff* and a *new song put into his mouth*,—his exaltation being seen and known of all men? Moreover the very figures employed strongly remind us of David's great song preserved in Psalm 18. Assuredly David could speak from experience of the *happiness* of *trusting in Jehovah*—he never turned aside to the *vanities* and *falsehood of idolatry*; and, when once finally delivered, how *many things* had he to tell of signal mercies in the past—things already done,—and *wonderful plans* yet to be carried forward into fulfilment! It is, however, when we reach the stanza (III.) regarding *sacrifices*, that we are most impressed. It was on this rock of sacrifice, that David's predecessor Saul struck his foot to his grievous injury: he could not trust Jehovah's *will* as prophetically made known to him through Samuel, and so he took the priestly law into his own hand, and brought on himself the severe reprimand of Samuel:—

Doth that which is pleasing unto Jehovah consist in  
ascending-offerings and sacrifices,  
So much as in hearkening unto the voice of Jehovah?  
Lo! to hearken is better than sacrifice,  
And to give heed, than the fat of rams.

We must surely be short-sighted not to discover in these ringing tones of remonstrance the very *motif* of the stanza before us: the which, indeed, sounds like a glorified revulsion from the sin of Saul. For a king after his own heart, Jehovah has other and nobler work to do, than the slaughter of animals in ritual worship. He has to set before priests and people the sublimer

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example of loving Jehovah's will supremely, and doing it; *delighting* in it, embedding it in *his deepest affections*, and heralding the good-tidings of it to such a *large assembly* as a king could easily command, whether at Hebron or at Jerusalem. This, indeed, had been prescribed to him in the *written scroll*: how he was to write out the law, that he might have it ever by him, and read therein daily, and revere Jehovah his God, and keep his statutes, and not be lifted up above his brethren (Deu. 17:18-20); and now he solemnly *covenants* that he will do it—that it will be his *delight* to do it; yea, moreover, he *proclaims* his delight in an *assembly* so *large*, that those who cannot hear his voice may at least witness the movements of his covenanting lips—*Behold my lips!* Moreover, the very *righteousness* which he pledges himself to proclaim is glorified on his covenanting lips; for it is no longer merely the obedience of Israel to the law, but the *faithfulness* of God to Israel. First and foremost, it is Jehovah's faithfulness to himself, in giving him the kingship at last, after so long keeping him waiting for it. And so law is turned into Gospel: David declares that the righteousness which he will herald, will be *good-tidings*. And so it will; and therefore his eagerness to proclaim it overflows into another stanza: that he may call Jehovah to witness that he will not *conceal* such a *righteousness* as falls nothing short of *kindness, faithfulness and salvation*. Sure the singer is: That if he *withhold* not his testimony to Jehovah's law and providence, so neither will Jehovah *withhold* his *compassions*, his *kindness*, his *truth*, his *preservation*. And if that does not amount to a Coronation Oath and a Kingly Covenant,—we may boldly ask what would. And before a *large assembly* too!

Thus freely have we woven into our Exposition the word *covenant* as shrewdly conjectured by Dr. Briggs to have been the word originally employed by the psalmist in the place where now the M.T. and the Sep. unfortunately differ; and, indeed, when the consonants of *krth* and *brth* (which are in question in the doubtful place in the text), are compared in Hebrew as coming extremely near to each other, there need be little surprise felt that such a transcriptional error should have crept in. At any rate, the word *covenant* bids fair to fill so effectively the place here assigned it, that still another covenant strain of thought is now in addition suggested, as extremely pertinent to this very juncture in David's life and this precise place in his writings: *then had I a covenant*. When David came to the



## PSALM FORTY

throne, then was granted to him the covenant concerning his seed—reaching out to and including the Messiah—which the prophet Nathan propounded according to 2 Sam. 7. As much as to say: The grand purpose of Jehovah, even in ordaining sacrifices, being to educate Israel to love and practise his will; and then, in providing an approved King, his purpose being still the same; there was vouchsafed to that King the covenant to bring forth out of his family the Messiah, who should still further throw animal sacrifices into the shade, and still further commend and advance the grand principle of doing and delighting in Jehovah's will, as his people's highest satisfaction and blessedness. So much for the first Part of our psalm.

Turning now to the second Part (ver. 12), which we have not hesitated to call a mere fragment,—it is obvious to observe what an important fragment it is, and what an essential link it furnishes in any comprehensive survey of David's reign. *Misfortunes closed in upon him*, even after he had become Israel's king:—wherefore? Alas! *his iniquities overtook him*; and the sad fact was that he had committed them. And they dimmed his spiritual vision—he *could not see*. It may be, that the larger offences brought to mind the smaller which had opened the door to the larger; and were in turn followed by the smaller though very grievous sins of persistence, impenitence, denial, prevarication, hardness of heart, disparagement of spiritual blessedness; until at length, now that remorse is setting in, they appear *more numerous than the hairs of his head*. And when to all things else the humbled man adds his confession that *his heart failed him*, we are probably to understand—not merely that his courage failed him, which may very well have been included, but—that his *mental powers* failed him, for such is the comprehensiveness of the Hebrew word for *heart*. And, perhaps, it is precisely to this dimming of spiritual vision, this failure of mental power, that we are to attribute that spiritual vacillation—that failure to hold steadfastly to Messianic hopes—which at the close of Ps. 39 struck us as so remarkable.

Happily, the humbled and forgiven soul returns to its God; and though troubles abound, and enemies appear, and base souls point the tongue and finger of scorn at the late offending monarch, yet prayer is once more brought into active exercise; and if there are men who rejoice in iniquity, there are also men who sympathisingly rejoice in the truth: the scoffers may, to their shame, cry "*Aha! Aha!*"; but the godly and considerate

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

exclaim, to the increase of holy joy, *Jehovah be magnified!* And so the *humbled and needy* king is encouraged to seek with new faith and hope for *speedy help* from the God of his *salvation*.

Satisfactory as it thus appears to trace each successive part of the psalm to David's own composing, it is by no means certain that David himself brought them together into one psalm as they now appear. In fact the selection of the pieces for permanent Temple worship, and the welding them into one, seem naturally to fall to Hezekiah, whose practised judgment would on the one hand suggest that Parts I. and III. required Part II. to unite them; and on the other hand recommend the detachment of Part III. as now Ps. 70 for occasional separate use.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The fortieth psalm above many others lends itself to what should be, and could be the testimony of every Christian. Discuss this possibility.
2. In what horrible pit had David found himself? There are two outstanding possibilities. Show how God delivered him. The deliverance was not by man's time, nor method.
3. David had often sung of God's deliverance—but this time it was to be a "new" song. Discuss the uniqueness of this song. Cf. Ps. 18.
4. There is no power like that of the personal testimony of deliverance from the power of sin. Men of the world have from the beginning "marvelled"—Does this have meaning for everyone? How did this especially apply to David?
5. We can catch a glimpse of the type of man God had in David—it would have been easy to listen to the promptings of pride that he, David, had done nothing amiss in the pursuit by Saul—and therefore the only language Saul could understand was to meet force with force—why didn't David thus respond? Discuss.
6. Read John 4:34, as related to this psalm—and also Rotherham's comments as they relate these verses (6-8) to David. Discuss their possible two-fold application.
7. "The Lord asks not for oblation, but for obedience". Read Hebrews 10:5-9 for an example. Why do we hesitate to obey? Is it too dull to obey and too exciting not to? Will we miss something if we do not disobey? Discuss this: The Devil's biggest and oldest lie.

## PSALM FORTY AND FORTY-ONE

8. The words of Scroggie are so good as related to the last section of this psalm—(11-17)—“If life were but one battle (and how we often wish it were) we could put off our armor when it was won, but as life is a campaign we can never afford to do that; we must be *ever* watchful, and *ever* prayerful, an *dever* hopeful.” (*Ibid* p. 235) Read these verses and discuss how the above comment applies.

## PSALM 41

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Regretting that Enemies and Friends should meanly Rejoice in his Sickness, the Psalmist nevertheless Perseveres in Prayer for Pardon and Recovery.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, The Blessings that Might have been Won by being Considerate to a Sick Man. Stanza II., ver. 4, The Sick Man Prays for Pardon and Healing. Stanza III., vers. 5-9, How both Enemies and a Particular Friend have turned against him in his Affliction. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, Prayer for Restoration Rises to Strong Assurance. *Doxology* (ver. 13).

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 How happy is he who is considerate towards the helpless!<sup>1</sup>  
in the day of calamity Jehovah will deliver him,
- 2 Jehovah will preserve him and keep him alive—  
he shall be called happy in the land.  
Do not then give him up to the desire<sup>2</sup> of his enemies!
- 3 Jehovah will sustain him on a bed of sickness:  
All his lying down hast thou transformed in his disease!
- 4 I have said—“Jehovah! be gracious unto me,  
heal thou my soul<sup>3</sup> for I have sinned against thee.”
- 5 Mine enemies keep saying—“It is bad with him!<sup>4</sup>  
when will he die and his name perish?”

1. “Or, perhaps, *the weakly*”—Dr. “The afflicted”—Del.

2. U.: “Soul.” Cp. Intro. Chap. III., “Soul.”

3. Or: “person.” “The soul is the man’s whole ‘self’; the living personality which results from the union of spirit and flesh”—Kp.

4. M.T. “me.” Only the difference (in the length of a stroke) between *yod* and *waw*.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 6 And if one hath come in to see me unreality<sup>1</sup> he speaketh,  
his own heart gathereth mischief<sup>2</sup> to itself:  
7 he goeth forth outside—he telleth everything.  
Against me whisper together all that hate me,  
Against me reckon they—"It is bad with him,—"<sup>3</sup>  
8 an infliction of the Abandoned One hath been fixed<sup>4</sup> on him;  
and now that he hath lien down he will not again rise!"  
9 Even the great man I used to salute—in whom I trusted—  
accustomed to eat my bread hath lifted against me a high  
heel!<sup>5</sup>  
10 But thou Jehovah be gracious unto me and raise me up,  
and I will repay them!  
11 By this I know that thou delightest in me.  
that mine enemy shall not shout over me.<sup>6</sup>  
12 But as for me in my blessedness<sup>7</sup> hast thou held me fast,  
and hast caused me to stand before thee to the ages.  
13 Blessed be Jehovah God of Israel,  
From antiquity even unto futurity!<sup>8</sup>  
Amen and Amen!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.  
(CMm.) For the sons of korah—"the patriarchs of song."<sup>9</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 41

God blesses those who are kind to the poor. He helps them out of their troubles!

2 He protects them and keeps them alive; He publicly honors them and destroys the power of their enemies.

3 He nurses them when they are sick, and soothes their pains and worries.<sup>10</sup>

1. That is: insincerity.

2. Or "trouble" ("naughtiness" Dr.)

3. M.T. "me." Only the difference (in the length of a stroke) between *yod* and *waw*.

4. Ml.: "molten," "cast."

5. Cp. 55:12, 20.

6. Cp. 55:23.

7. Or: "devotion," "whole-heartedness," "integrity": ml. "my wholeness," "entirety."

8. Ml.: "From the age (concealed duration in the past) even unto the age (concealed duration in the future)."

9. These two instructions transposed and brought here by readjustment of titles based on Thirtle. Cp. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

10. Literally, "You make all his bed in his sickness."

## PSALM FORTY-ONE

4 "O Lord," I prayer, "be kind and heal me, for I have confessed my sins."

5 But my enemies say, "May he soon die and be forgotten!"

6 They act so friendly when they come to visit me while I am sick; but all the time they hate me and are glad that I am lying there upon my bed of pain. And when they leave, they laugh and mock.

7 They whisper together about what they will do when I am dead.

8 "It's fatal, whatever it is," they say. "He'll never get out of that bed!"

9 Even my best friend has turned against me—a man I completely trusted; how often we ate together.

10 Lord, don't You desert me! Be gracious, Lord, and make me well again so I can pay them back!

11 I know You are pleased with me because You haven't let my enemies triumph over me.

12 You have preserved me because I was honest; You have admitted me forever to Your presence.

13 Bless the Lord, the God of Israel, who exists from everlasting ages past—and on into everlasting eternity ahead. Amen and Amen!

## EXPOSITION

By substituting the word "helpless" for "poor" in the first line of this psalm, we at once obviate the appearance of self-righteousness, which would have been seen and been in no wise welcome as a commencement to the psalm. It would have appeared to say, "I have always been considerate of the 'poor,' and therefore might have hoped for better treatment than I am receiving." The word "poor" would have seemed to refer to others than himself, and so the line would have looked like sounding his own praise. But the moment we substitute the equally correct rendering "helpless," then we detect a pathetic reference to himself as confessedly in a deplorably "helpless" bodily condition, and can credit the psalmist with a genuine feeling of regret that he had not received such commiseration under his "stroke" as would have called forth from him the blessings on his comforters which in this stanza he amplifies.

It must be admitted, however, that although this corrected keynote seems well fitted to introduce the psalm, yet the sound

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

of the keynote appears rather muffled by lines 4 and 6; because line 4 sounds like a wish weakly inserted amidst assurances strong enough to bear out the initial exclamation "How happy:" "How happy—because Jehovah will deliver him," &c., &c. Line 6 seems to disturb the stanza for an opposite reason: it is too strong: it is too much an announcement of prayer already answered: as a further reason for felicitating the considerate man it equally disturbs the stanza. One has only to think of Hezekiah as adapting the psalm to his own circumstances, and interpolating first line 4, and then, after his recovery, adding line 6,—to feel how naturally these disturbances might have occurred, and yet how unspeakably too precious they are to be removed for mere symmetrical reasons.

The emphasis on the pronoun "I" at the head of ver. 4 has, after the foregoing introduction, a welcome effect. It appears to stand out in anticipatory contrast with what his enemies have to say, as recorded in the following verse: as much as to imply—"Whatever mine enemies have to say about me, what before thee, O Jehovah, I have to say of myself, is this, That I have sinned, and implore the healing which thou alone canst bestow." This, indeed, is a welcome note to catch from the psalmist. His sin has many times of late come before us, and it materially contributes to our edification to observe that, however naturally he resents blows from enemies and friends which they might have spared him, yet at the same time, before God there is no equivocation, no sparing of himself. Before Jehovah, he lies in the dust crying for mercy.

The picture given of the visits of perfidious enemies coming to visit the psalmist with hypocritical professions of friendship on their lips, their malicious eyes closely noting everything that might be construed to the Royal Sufferer's disadvantage, and then their lips divulging every damaging appearance and incident to those outside waiting for the verdict,—is far too lifelike to need much comment. That a trusted counsellor—for doubtless it was Ahithophel—should have given his late Master an insidious blow—this was one of the hardest things to bear; and the thing which most tended to make David, as shamefully betrayed, a type of his Son and Lord (John 13:18 and 17:12).

We should be glad to think, with Dr. Briggs, that the purpose of retaliation expressed in ver. 11 was an interpolation; but there is just enough reason to suppose that, in his public capacity, David felt compelled to punish so glaring an offence, to make us

## PSALM FORTY-ONE

hesitate to omit a clause which the ancient versions with the Massoretic text retain; and therefore we are content to remind ourselves that *we* may not curse, but must overcome evil with good!

Before closing our comments on this series of psalms, satisfaction may be expressed that so able an expositor as Kirkpatrick admits how weak are the objections which can be urged against the belief that King David really did suffer the terrible infliction of bodily disease which sufficiently comes to light in these psalms. He says: "It is true that the narrative in 2 Samuel makes no reference to an illness such as here described; but that narrative necessarily passes over many details. Such an illness would account for the remissness in attending to his official duties, which Absalom's words to the suitors for justice seemed to imply (2 Sam. 15:3). It would account also for the strange failure of David's natural courage which his flight from Jerusalem at the first outbreak of the rebellion appears to indicate. Unnerved by sickness, in which he recognized a just punishment for his sins, David watched the growing disloyalty of his courtiers, and in particular of Ahithophel, without feeling able to strike and crush the conspiracy before it came to a head. Compare generally Psalm 55." Compare, further, the "Exposition" of Ps. 38, *ante*. In a word, it is impossible to over-estimate the moral gain to revealed truth rendered by restoring David to his proper place in these penitential psalms. Every one knows how grievously David sinned: nothing can blot out the sad story from the historical records of the time. Let everyone equally know how ignominiously he suffered; how severely he had to be chastised before he repented. Let us be permitted in these psalms to hear his groans, not indeed to our pleasure, but to our lasting profit. Our honour—the honour of our God—the honour of the whole history of Redemption—is bound up with the sincerity of David's repentance. Grant us, then, the melancholy and yet salutary opportunity of becoming witnesses to its genuineness and its depth. There is no gain, but much loss, to be had by transferring these penitential psalms bodily to the nation, as their primary subject. And therefore we hope that those critics who have been teaching us to date their origin in and after the exile, will show willingness to revise their conclusions; will not only admit how greatly transmissional and historical evidence is against them, but also how strongly exegetical considerations appeal to us to find their *authors* in men

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

whom we know, and in *occasions* clearly indicated for us by evidence which can be no longer overlooked.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read II Samuel, chapters eleven through sixteen. Also Psalms 32 and 51, to give adequate background for this psalm.
2. Certain circumstances almost necessitate a sickness on the part of David as a punishment for his sin with Bathsheba. Read I Samuel 15:3 to catch another detail.
3. Rotherham has a most clever way of relating this whole psalm to the personal experience of David. How does he relate verses one through three to David? Do you agree?
4. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee" (vs. 4). How full of meaning this verse is for everyone—notice: (1) Until we admit and confess our sin there can be no healing. (2) We must accept mercy—no justification or vindication or rationalization—just guilt and mercy. Mercy is the personal application of forgiveness. (3) Our soul needs healing much more than our bodies—The soul is the heart—the essential part of man—unless we are whole within we shall be sick without—make me clean—pure—whole within. (4) It is against the one who has made us; who died for us;—who loves us better than any other that we have sinned—Sin as here defined (or applied) is an action against nature—we have taken poison into our system—when will we begin to define sin as the "unnatural" thing to do? The laws of nature are the laws of God. The laws of moral conduct are the laws of nature (God)—we do not break them, we simply break ourselves by violating them. Present day doctors will agree that 75% or more of physical sickness is caused by the sin of the soul.
5. David was suffering the results of his sin—why complain about the attitudes of those who came to visit him? Discuss.
6. Verse nine is a prophesy—fulfilled in John 13:18. The writers of the New Testament were so saturated with the Old Testament, that at least 180 references or allusions are made to the psalms in the N. T.—97 of the 150 psalms are quoted. Every New Testament book but I Thess., II John, Philemon and Jude contain references to the psalms—is this an example or ideal for us? Discuss.



# THE PSALMS

## BOOK THE SECOND

### PSALM 42, 43

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Debarred Worshipper Mastering his Sorrow.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, A Debarred Worshipper, Nursing his Grief, nevertheless Strives to Rise Above it. Stanza II., vers. 6-11, Deeply Feeling his Personal Condition, the Sufferer Encourages Himself by Recalling a Past Deliverance, and begins to Pray Hopefully, though Sorely Dismayed by Outward Troubles. Stanza III. (43), vers. 1-5, Looking his Public Troubles in the Face, the Psalmist Prays for a Triumphant Deliverance.

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#### (Lm.) An Instructive Psalm.

- 1 As a hind cometh longing up to channels of water  
so my soul longeth for thee O God!
- 2 Athirst is my soul for God—for a GOD who liveth,—  
when shall I enter in and see<sup>1</sup> the face of God?
- 3 My tears have served me for food day and night,  
through its being said unto me all the day—"Where is thy  
God?"

1. So it shd. be—G. Intro., 458; and so it is in some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Aram., Syr.)—Gn. "It is probable that in the original it was 'see the face of Yahweh' "—Br.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 4 These things would I fain remember and pour out upon my  
my soul—  
how I used to pass over in a throng—  
used to lead them in procession unto the house of God,  
with the sound of jubilation<sup>1</sup> and thanksgiving—  
a crowd keeping festival!
- 5 Why shouldst thou despair O my soul and groan upon me?  
Wait thou for God, for yet shall I thank him,—  
as the great salvation<sup>2</sup> of my<sup>3</sup> person<sup>4</sup> and my God.<sup>5</sup>
- 6 Over myself<sup>6</sup> my soul keeps despairing<sup>7</sup> therefore will I  
remember thee,—<sup>8</sup>  
from the land of Jordan and the Hermons—from Mount  
Mizar,—
- 7 Deep unto deep calling out to the sound of thy waterfalls:  
all thy breakers and thy billows over one passed.
- 8 By day may Jehovah command his kindness and by night  
his song,  
with me a prayer to the God of my life.<sup>9</sup>
- 9 I would fain say to God—"O my Cliff! wherefore hast thou  
forgotten me?  
wherefore should I gloomily walk through the oppression of  
an enemy?"
- 10 Like<sup>10</sup> a shattering in my bones have mine adversaries  
reproached me,  
through their saying unto me all the day, "Where is thy  
God?"
- 11 Why shouldest thou despair O my soul and why groan upon  
me?  
Wait thou for God, for yet shall I thank him,—  
as the great salvation<sup>11</sup> of my person and my God.

(Nm.)

1. Or: "of a ringing cry."
2. Pr. "intensive."
3. M.T.: "his"—clearly in error for "my"; cp. vers. 11 and (43) 5.
4. So O.G. 447a. Or: "the health of my countenance"; or: "the victory of my presence." The same alternatives apply to vers. 11 and (43) 5.
5. "Should probably be added"—Dr. To the same effect—Del.
6. Stands emphatically at the beginning of the sentence.—Kp., Del.
7. Frequentative. "Is cast down" blunts the point.
8. That is, "what I learned of thee."
9. Specially fitting, if the writer was thinking of an occasion when God saved his life. Some cod. however read: "to a living God"—Gn.
10. So some cod. M.T.: *beth*, "With the effect of"; or "At the cost of"—O.G. 90a, "3."
11. Cp. ver. 5.

## PSALM FORTY-TWO AND FORTY-THREE

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 42

As the deer pants for water, so I long for You, O God.

2 I thirst for God, the living God. Where can I find Him to come and stand before Him?

3 Day and night I weep for His help, and all the while my enemies taunt me. "Where is this God of yours?" they scoff.

4, 5 Take courage, my soul! Do you remember those times (but how could you ever forget them!) when you led a great procession to the Temple on festival days, singing with joy, praising the Lord? Why then be downcast? Why be discouraged and sad? Hope in God! I shall yet praise Him again! Yes, I shall again praise Him for His help.<sup>1</sup>

6 Yet I am standing here depressed and gloomy; but I will meditate upon Your kindness to this lovely land where the Jordan River flows and where Mount Hermon and Mount Mizar stand.

7 All your waves and billows have gone over me, and floods of sorrow pour upon me like a thundering cataract.<sup>2</sup>

8 Yet day by day the Lord also pours out His steadfast love upon me, and through the night I sing His songs and pray to God who gives me life.

9 "O God my Rock," I cry, "why have You forsaken me? Why must I suffer these attacks from my enemies?"

10 Their taunts pierce me like a fatal wound; again and again they scoff, "Where is that God of yours?"

11 But O my soul, don't be discouraged! Don't be upset! Expect God to act! For I know that I shall again have plenty of reason to praise Him for all that He will do! He is my help! He is my God!

## PSALM 43

(Nm.)

1 Vindicate me O God and plead my cause against a nation without kindness,  
from a man of deceit and perversity wilt thou deliver me!

1. Literally, "for the help of His countenance."

2. Literally, "deep calls to deep at the noise of Your waterfalls."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 For thou art my protecting God—<sup>1</sup> wherefore hast thou rejected me?  
wherefore should I gloomily wander<sup>2</sup> through the oppression of an enemy?
- 3 Send forth thy light and faithfulness—let them lead me, let them bring me into thy holy mountain<sup>3</sup> and unto thy habitations!
- 4 So would I enter in unto the altar of God—unto the God who gladden my youth,<sup>4</sup>  
so will I thank thee with a lyre Jehovah<sup>5</sup> my God!
- 5 Why shouldst thou despair O my soul and why groan upon me? Wait thou for God, for yet shall I thank him,—  
as the great salvation<sup>6</sup> of my person and my God.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the sons of korah—"the patriarchs of song."

Cp. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 43

O God, defend me from the charges of these merciless, deceitful men.

2 For You are God, my only place of refuge. Why have You tossed me aside? Why must I mourn at the oppression of my enemies?

3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth—let them lead me. Let them lead me to Your Temple on Your holy mountain, Zion.

4 There I will go to the altar of God my exceeding joy, and praise Him with my harp. O God—my God!

5 O my soul, why be so gloomy and discouraged? Trust in God! I shall again praise Him for His wondrous help; he will make me smile again,<sup>7</sup> for He is my God!

1. Ml.: "My God of stronghold."

2. Or: "march to and fro." "Go mourning"—Del. "Why go I about in dark attire"—Dr.

3. Cp. 2 Ch. 3:1, 33:15, Isa. 30:29, Jer. 26:18, Mi. 3:12.

4. So the Sep.—a beautiful and suggestive reading.

5. So Sep., preferred by Kp. and others.

6. Cp. 42:5.

7. Literally, "He is the help of my countenance."

## PSALM FORTY-TWO AND FORTY-THREE

### EXPOSITION

The crowning feature of this (double) psalm is its lofty and intense spirituality: A soul athirst for God; moved by strong desire for fellowship with God—to be conscious of his nearness, to be face to face with him; assured that such a realisation will be as satisfying as for a thirsty animal to drink of the cooling stream.

The next thing noticeable in this (double) psalm, is the beauty of its form—in three stanzas, each with a refrain repeated in identical words; and easily detected when this structure is observed, a gradual advance from sheer sorrow, to circumspect petition, and then to bold entreaty.

Perhaps the third thing to arrest our attention is, the psychological wonder of a Sufferer striving to master his sorrow and to rise above it.

Probably the surest way to observe these three leading features with interest and profit is to institute an investigation into the probable authorship of the psalm.

David has been thought of: though we are no longer under any obligation to presuppose that he wrote it, inasmuch as this psalm is really an "orphan" psalm, since undoubtedly "the sons of korah" were singers, or a class of singers, and not authors. Nevertheless, it is an interesting fact, that David has been regarded as the probable writer of this pathetic composition; several circumstances combining to give this hypothesis an air of probability—chiefly his intense love for the worship of Jehovah's house in Jerusalem, and his flight from the holy city on occasion of Absalom's rebellion. That David crossed over the Jordan, and then turned north, ascending the high lands of Gilead as far as Mahanaim, and so came into full view of Mount Hermon on the north is another circumstance rather favourable to this conclusion. The objections to this view are: *first*, That, even so, David did not go far enough north to get among the "waterfalls" of the Upper Jordan; and, *second*, That he was surrounded by faithful friends, all the time, and not by enemies who would keep mocking him with the taunt, "Where is thy God?"—to which we may add, *third*, That, formidable as was Absalom's rebellion, David would scarcely refer to it as "the oppression of an enemy." These considerations preclude our deciding for David. Some would add, that the very absence of David's name from the head of the psalm should, among other

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

reasons, count for something, why David could not have penned this psalm,—seeing the many evidences of care to place his name wherever it had any right to stand.

Under these circumstances, some have thought of an unknown Levite as author, on account of the memory, so vividly preserved by the writer, of having headed processions to the Temple in happier days. This conjecture has little else to support it; and, in short, it can scarcely be said that any Levite occupied so important and central a position as this psalm requires. The desperate suggestion that this psalm may have been written by King Jehoiachin on his way to Babylon, may safely be dismissed; since the writer, at any rate, hoped soon to return to the holy city; and we must not go out of our way to court failure for the hope of the psalm.

It is time to say: That for no man, as author of this psalm, can such numerous and strong reasons be advanced as for King Hezekiah, notwithstanding one or two apparent reasons to the contrary. Let us look at the reasons for and against.

In favour of this conclusion the following weighty reasons may be alleged:—First, the writer appears to be suffering from two chief causes: one personal to himself, and one of a more public character. He is apparently suffering from some personal disease, which amounts to a disfigurement of his *face* or disablement of his *person*. Hence the force of his description of God as *the health of his countenance*; or *the salvation of his person*, or *the triumph of his presence*. And then there is an *enemy*, under whose oppression he has to groan, whose taunts he has to bear. Now the significant thing is: That in Hezekiah both these causes of suffering met: He was struck for death with leprosy, and the Assyrian army was at the gate of Jerusalem:—the Assyrian, a mighty and oppressive nation indeed— well answering to the description, “A nation without kindness,” whose foul-mouthed representative the villain Rabshakeh was, who mercilessly hurled his taunts against Hezekiah, and deceitfully perverted facts to degrade Hezekiah in the eyes of his own people. To these leading reasons in favour of the authorship of Hezekiah, there are several others to be added: Such as his “tears”—mentioned here, and mentioned in the history; his “lyre”—of which also we read both here and in the history; his enthusiastic participation in the worship of the Temple, in reference to which it may safely be said that the very word in the 4th verse (of

## PSALM FORTY-TWO AND FORTY-THREE

Psalm 42) "passed over" or "crossed over" is exquisitely adapted to describe the king's procession from the Royal Palace to the Temple, since there was a splendid viaduct connecting the two. It is extremely unlikely that such a combination of reasons for any other author can be found.

The one objection that may be urged can easily be obviated. The writer, it may be said, was not merely a "debarred" worshipper but a *banished* worshipper; since he prays to be led back into the holy mountain, proving that he was away from Jerusalem. Standing alone, that objection might have been plausible, though not conclusive; seeing that the language is perfectly consistent with mere enforced banishment from Mount Moriah—"the mountain of the house" (Cp. 2 Ch. 3:1, 35:15, Isa. 2:2, 30:29, Jer. 26:18, Mi. 3:12), and we know that Hezekiah regarded it as an *ascent* to visit Jehovah's temple (Isa. 38:22). From that holy place, while his plague was upon him, he was debarred. Perhaps a still stronger objection to the claims of Hezekiah to be regarded as the author of this psalm, will be framed upon the assumption that the writer was far away from Jerusalem when he penned it—that, in fact, he was still among the *waterfalls* of the upper Jordan. But this assumption is quite to mistake that allusion—quite to lose grip of the fact that that allusion was a memory; a memory not recalled while he was in the north, but a memory of a thrilling experience which befell him when he was in the north. To be sure of this, we have only to adhere to an accurate rendering of 42:6: "*Over myself—over my own deplorable bodily condition, my soul keeps despairing—keeps falling into fits of despondency: therefore—because of this, that I may repress altogether this tendency to hopelessness, I will remember—I will recall an incident which befell me when I was a young man visiting the Upper Jordan: I will remember thee—in thy 'marvellous kindness' which was then 'made wonderful to me' by rescuing me from drowning in the rapids of the Upper Jordan. A storm came on; the waters, rolling down the mountain sides, caused a 'spate'; the waterfalls were roused to activity; the lakes into which their waters descended answered to each other, deep calling unto deep. I was in personal peril, all thy breakers and thy billows passed over me—all seemed lost, when I found myself landed on a cliff; the flood that engulfed me, saved me, it carried me to a safe spot—my feet*

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

were on a rock: the waters abated, and I was saved! Yea, *O my Cliff, O thou God of my life, the gladdener of my youthful days,—thus will I remember thee*, and fortify myself against these fits of despondency." The beauty of the poet's picturesque reference can with difficulty be suppressed, however slovenly the translator's rendering, however dull the expositor's imagination. Nevertheless, it may perhaps be remarked, without presumption, that, for lack of a correct historical point of observation, the psalmist's graphic allusion has been deplorably enfeebled. The words have been inexactly rendered; the incident has been represented as part fact and part figure, to the enfeebling of both, instead of being first taken as a connected whole in its literal completeness, and then employed as a whole in its metaphorical application to the sufferer's now present bodily condition—as by no means excluding hope; the preposition *mem*, "from," has been assumed to bind the writer *to be at the Jordan when he remembers*, instead of leaving him free afterwards to *recall the incidents from the Jordan*: and thus, in fine, one of the most beautiful things in the Psalms has dwindled into very small dimensions indeed, and become unavailable for any practical purpose. Whereas, on the other hand, the treating of the whole thing as a memory, throws into delightful vividness both the singular designation of Jehovah as the writer's Cliff, and the peculiarly touching allusion to Jehovah as the *gladdener of his youth*. And thus, in fact, we are getting back not only Hezekiah's name into the authorship of the Psalms; but, as a consequence, we are recovering precious snatches of his autobiography.

Thus refreshed by our study, let us turn back again and make the first thing noticed, also the last thing to abide in our hearts. This we may do by the trite observation that we do not *thirst* for things of which we have no knowledge. To thirst for God as a living God, we must first know him to be such; and know the incomparable satisfaction to be thence derived. Hezekiah knew the living God of Israel: he had seen his face—only figuratively, representatively, adumbratively, it may be. But there was divine reality in it. The cloud of glory was there—behind the veil: the fire consumed the sacrifices: the Urim and Thummim gave responses: the prophets brought messages. The character of God gave the soul perfect satisfaction—his might gave protection—his promises imparted hope—his



## PSALM FORTY-TWO AND FORTY-THREE

pardon inspired love. These things, Hezekiah had known and enjoyed; and, though for the present there was a hiding of Jehovah's face, the memory of the brightness and blessedness of its revelation was not lost. What he had once enjoyed he desired to enjoy again—desired with an intensity of desire and keen sense of need which only the figure of *thirst* could represent. We, too, must know God in order to thirst for him. May the blessed sense of nearness to him abide with us in all the freshness and force of the fuller revelation of himself which he has made in Christ Jesus our Lord!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you agree with the reasons of Rotherham for rejecting David as the author of this psalm? Discuss.
2. Discuss the arguments in favor of attributing this psalm to Hezekiah. (It would seem that Hezekiah is the master-organizer of many psalms—why is Rotherham so strong in this preference?)
3. Whoever wrote this psalm, his deep desire for God is a marvelous example for us. This is in a special way a psalm for all sometimes apathetic Christians. Read verses one through five for the attitude that will return us to our first love.
4. Suppose at sometime in our experience we were prevented from assembling—we were physically hindered from holding religious services—would the words of the psalmist in verses 4 and 5 relate to us? Discuss.
5. What is your estimate of Rotherham's interpretation of verses 6 and 7 as that of: "I will recall an incident which befell me when I was a young man visiting the upper Jordan."—? Discuss.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why are these two psalms here inseparably considered?
2. What were the charges made against the psalmist by the "merciless deceitful men"?
3. In what sense has God ever "tossed" anyone aside?
4. How can the highly figurative language of "send forth thy light and faithfulness"—have any bearing on our needs? Discuss.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 44

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel Suffers for God.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-8, The Psalmist, Encouraging himself by Jehovah's Past Favour in Giving Israel their Land, Emboldens himself to Expect Further Victories. Stanza II., vers. 9-16, Sudden Reverses Confound Israel, and cause the Psalmist to feel the Deepest Shame. Stanza III., vers 17-22, Expostulation based on Israel's Fidelity. Stanza IV., vers. 23, 24, and V., vers., 25, 26, Impassioned and Plaintive Appeals for Divine Interposition.—Psalm probably written by David on a defeat of Israel by Edom (inferred from a comparison of 2 Sam. 8:13 with I K. 11:15, and the inscription to Ps. 60), and Adapted to a Later Occasion by Hezekiah.

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#### (Lm.) An Instructive Psalm.

- 1 O God! with our own ears have we heard—  
our fathers have told us,  
the work thou didst work in their days—  
the days of aforetime:
- 2 Thou thyself with thine own hand didst dispossess nations  
and plant them,  
didst afflict peoples—  
and spread them out.
- 3 For not by their own sword possessed they the land,  
nor did their own arm win victory for them;  
But thine own right hand and thine own arm,  
and the light of thy face, in that thou didst take pleasure in  
them.
- 4 Thou thyself art my king, my God,  
the commander<sup>1</sup> of the victories<sup>2</sup> of Jacob.
- 5 By thee at our adversaries will we thrust,  
in thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.
- 6 For not in mine own bow will I trust,  
nor can mine own sword give me victory.

1. So Sep., Syr., Br. and others.

2. Or: "great salvation" (pl. intensive).

## PSALM FORTY-FOUR

- 7 For thou hast saved us from our adversaries,  
and them who hate us hast thou put to shame.
- 8 In God have we boasted all the day,  
and unto thy name unto the ages will we give thanks.
- 9 But nay! thou hast rejected and confounded us,  
and art not going forth with our hosts;
- 10 Thou turnest us back from the adversary,  
and they who hate us have plundered at will:
- 11 Thou dost give us up like sheep to be devoured,  
and amongst the nations hast thou scattered us:
- 12 Thou dost sell thy people for no-value,  
and hast not made increase by their price:
- 13 Thou dost make us a reproach unto our neighbours,  
a mockery and derision to them who are round about us:
- 14 Thou dost make us a by-word among the nations,  
a shaking of the head among the peoples.
- 15 All the day is mine ignomy before me,  
and the shame of my face hath covered me:
- 16 At the voice of him who reproacheth and revileth,  
At the face of the foe and avenger.<sup>1</sup>
- 17 All this hath come upon us yet had we not forgotten thee,  
neither had we dealt falsely with thy covenant:
- 18 Our heart had not turned away backward,  
neither had our steps declined from thy path:—
- 19 That thou shouldst have crushed us down in the place of  
jackals,  
and covered us over with deep darkness.
- 20 If we had forgotten the name of our God,  
and had spread forth our palms to the GOD of a foreigner
- 21 Would not God have searched into this,  
since he knoweth the secrets of the heart?
- 22 Surely for thy sake have we been slain all the day,  
we have been accounted as sheep for slaughter.
- 23 Oh arouse thyself!—wherefore shouldst thou sleep Sovereign  
Lord?<sup>2</sup>  
oh awake! do not reject altogether.
- 24 Wherefore thy face shouldst thou hide?  
shouldst forget our humiliation and our oppression?
- 25 For our soul hath sunk down to the dust,

1. Cp. 8:2.

2. Some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns): "Jehovah"—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

our body<sup>1</sup> hath cleaved to the earth.

- 26 Oh arise as succour for us,  
and ransom us for thy kindness' sake.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For lilies = Passover. For the sons of korah =  
"patriarchs of song."

Cp. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 44

O God, we have heard of the glorious miracles You did in the days of long ago. Our forefathers have told us how You drove the heathen nations from this land and gave it all to us, spreading Israel from one end of the country to the other.

3 They did not conquer by their own strength and skill; but by Your mighty power and because You smiled upon them and favored them.

4 You are my King and my God. Decree victories for Your people!

5 For it is only by Your power and through Your name that we tread down our enemies;

6 I do not trust my weapons! They could never save me.

7 Only You can give us the victory over those who hate us.

8 My constant boast is God. I can never thank You enough!

9 And yet for a time, O Lord, You have tossed us aside in dishonor, and have not helped us in our battles.

10 You have actually fought against us and defeated us before our foes. Our enemies have invaded our land and pillaged the countryside.

11 You have treated us like sheep in a slaughter pen, and scattered us among the nations.

12 You sold us for a pittance. You valued us at nothing at all.

13 The neighboring nations laugh and mock at us because of all the evil You have sent.

14 You have made the word "Jew" a byword of contempt and shame among the nations, disliked by all.

15, 16 I am constantly despised, mocked, taunted and cursed by my vengeful enemies.

1. Ml.: "belly." Heb. *betan*. Cp. 31:9.

## PSALM FORTY-FOUR

17 And all this has happened, Lord, despite our loyalty to You. We have not violated Your covenant.

18 Our hearts have not deserted You! We have not left Your path by a single step.

19 If we had, we could understand Your punishing us in the barren wilderness and sending us into darkness and death.

20 If we had turned away from worshiping our God, and were worshiping idols,

21 Would God not know it? Yes, He knows the secrets of every heart.

22 But that is not our case! For we are facing death threats constantly because of serving You! We are like sheep awaiting slaughter.

23 Waken! Rouse Yourself! Don't sleep, O Lord! Are we cast off forever?

24 Why do You look the other way? Why do You ignore our sorrows and oppression?

25 We lie face downward in the dust.

26 Rise up, O Lord, and come and help us. Save us by Your constant love.

## EXPOSITION

It is quite possible that, in the course of adaptation and transmission, this valuable psalm has suffered some disturbances of its outward form as regards both metre and stanza. It is doubtful, however, whether successful attempts can now be made to restore the original symmetry which may well have existed. For example, it is not unlikely that the psalm was a trimeter throughout, including the opening lines, which now appear as pentameters. But it would not only take a bold hand to reduce the lines to a severer metre, but that bold hand might strike off accretions which are equally authentic with the original verse, as may appear when once the principle of joint-authorship is admitted. If Hezekiah's harp could adapt itself to those grand pentameters which open the psalm as we now have it—and, we may add, which appear to have offered themselves to the ancient Greek translators—who are we, and what know we of any rigidity in harping exigencies, that we should deliberately lop off syllables which, at all events, are very ancient. Similar caution must stay our hand from undue meddling with the stanzas. They are slightly irregular, as it is, undoubtedly; but

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

we may justly refuse to mutilate the psalm, especially when the very lines we should sacrifice might prove of the highest value in bringing the historical occasion of its production into clear perspective.

That this psalm was written by David, notwithstanding the absence of his name from the inscription, at once becomes in the highest degree probable by merely comparing it with Ps. 60, which bears witness to the occasion which gave it birth. Then, when we ponder the weighty fact that, when this psalm was written, Israel was *free from the taint of idolatry*; and come to realize, for *that* reason, our choice lies between a very early and a very late date—the time of David, on the one hand, and the time of the Maccabees, on the other; we shall perhaps find, at every step, how reasons multiply for preferring the early date. The very changes which literary criticism plausibly suggests, and the adaptations to after occasions which historical criticism more strongly claims, all required time before they originally appeared. Public texts are not modified in a day: especially where copies are few, and for the most part are jealously preserved in royal libraries. So that, if we assume that changes had already been made in the days when the Septuagint was executed, it is but reasonable to allow those changes ample time in which to appear—which requires us rather to push back authorship than to draw it forward. Besides all which the more the Davidic authorship of this psalm is candidly examined, the more does it commend itself.

Let us now recall the undoubted fact, that the work of Joshua was left for David to complete. What more natural, then, than that David should strengthen himself in God for the arduous work that remained, by steeping his spirit in remembrances of the work Divinely done now so long ago? Those brave ancestors drew the sword, indeed; but it was their God who gave them the victory: *Not by their own sword possessed they the land; but thine own right hand—thine own arm—the light of thy face*—these were the sources of strength by which Joshua and his men had gone on from victory to victory. And David realises that it still is so:

Thou thyself art my King my God,  
The commander of the victories of Jacob.

It is David all over:—the intense personal faith—the fellowship with his brethren: in swift alternation, first the man, then his

## PSALM FORTY-FOUR

people, then himself again: *our adversaries, our assailants; mine own bow, mine own sword.* The stripling who before Goliath strengthened himself in his God, and boasted of him, do so still.

In God have we boasted all the day.

And unto thy name unto the ages will we give thanks.

Then comes the sudden reverse, the astounding fact of disaster: in the portrayal of which some otherwise excellent critics have failed to see David. In particular, they think that the language of the second stanza indicates something more than temporary defeat. Thus Perowne says: "The language of the psalm is altogether too large to be applied to a sudden attack. It describes a more serious and lasting calamity." But it is respectfully submitted that this estimate of the poet's language results from some failure to apprehend the psychological elements in the situation. David was nothing if not intense. He believed his mission to be Divine. If *his God* failed him, no general could save him. If Jehovah failed him *once*, he might fail him *again*: if he continued to fail him, all would be lost. The present reverse was evidently most serious: David's men had been slain and captured and sold as slaves. The small surrounding nations were on the watch, ready to join in the fray as soon as they deemed it safe. The larger nations at a distance were being kept well-informed and ready to point the finger of contempt at valiant little Israel. Then see how the profoundly moved monarch took it all home to himself:

All the day is mine ignominy before me,

The shame of my face hath covered me;

At the voice of him who reproacheth and revileth,

At the face of the foe and avenger:

using the very language of the 8th psalm. Moreover, the 19th verse, graphic as it is, describes rather one terrible defeat than a long series of reverses. One can see the individual battle-field, whereupon the defeat happened: the carcasses of David's men consumed by *jackals*: calamitous enough to David—who was only used to victory, and only expectant of it—to make him feel how *deep* was the *darkness* which for the moment *covered* Israel: "for the moment!" yes, but that moment was equal to days of mortal agony. Intensifying the agony and turning it into

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

temporary despair, was the mystery of it: there had been no unfaithfulness on the national *covenant*—no drawing back to idolatry.

And so was learned the lesson, to be learned again and again through the ages, that Israel may be called upon to suffer even where Israel has not sinned. It is comparatively a new lesson, leading up to a higher level than that hitherto frequented by mortal feet; but it is a lesson which God's saints are to be privileged to learn; and, therefore, so beloved a man as David must have his share. By-and-by, one of his descendants will be called upon to drink more deeply of the cup of undeserved—and therefore Divine—suffering; and, finding this psalm in the royal library, will be able to appreciate its teaching, and will be moved to add to it a few words growing out of an experience of which David has had little or no share: words pointing to the peculiar combination of sorrows due to the fact that when *the soul hath sunk down to the dust* under the weight of public calamity, *the body* also *hath cleaved to the earth* under a loathsome though only temporary and comparatively undeserved disease; imparting an additional pathos to the plea that God would arise to *succor* and *ransom* by a new display of his well-known *kindness*. On the whole, we may deem this to have formed a grand passover psalm, in the musical execution of which *the patriarchs of song* could most appropriately take a conspicuous share.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Consider this outline of the psalm: (1) *Praise* for past deliverance. vs. 1-3; (2) *Hope* for the future deliverance. vs. 4-8; (3) *Disappointment* at present defeat. vs. 9-16; (4) *Innocence* claimed of guilt for present trouble, vs. 17-22; (5) Prayer for help. vs. 23-26.

(As adapted from G. Scroggie)

Does this outline have any similarity to our experience? Who hasn't followed this same pattern? Discuss.

2. Supposing this did happen to David—When and where? Discuss. Read Psalm 60 for a suggestion.
3. Why would anyone feel this psalm was written in the Maccabean period? Read verses thirteen and fourteen for a suggestion. Discuss.



## PSALM FORTY-FOUR AND FORTY-FIVE

4. Read verses 22 through 26, and discuss the two-fold application.
5. Read verses 10-14, and notice the use of the term "thou". What circumstances are attributed to God?

## PSALM 45

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Royal Marriage.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, The Psalmist bespeaks Attention to his Poem. Stanza II., ver. 2, The King's Surpassing Beauty and Gracious Discourse bring down upon him an Abiding Divine Blessing. Stanza III., vers. 3-7, The King is Suddenly Summoned to War: his Throne, Sceptre, Character and Anointing. Stanza IV., vers. 8, 9, Ready for the Marriage Ceremony. Stanza V., vers. 10-12, Address to the Bride. Stanza VI., vers. 13-15, The Queen and her Attendants brought into the King's Palace. Stanza VII., vers 16, 17, Final Words to the Queen and to the King.

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(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—a Song of Love.

- 1 Astir is my heart with a theme that is good,  
Recite I my poem concerning a king:  
My tongue be the pen of a scribe that is skilled!
- 2 Beautiful beautiful! thou art, beyond the sons of men!  
a gracious charm hath been set on thy lips;<sup>2</sup>  
Therefore hath God blessed thee to the ages.
- 3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh O hero!  
in thy majesty and thy state:

1. The same word as that used of the Queen in ver. 11, but here reduplicated.

2. "Graciousness is shed over thy lips"—Dr. "Over his lips there is poured, viz., from above, *hen*, charm or graciousness, inasmuch, as even without his having to speak, the very form of his lips and every one of their motions awaken love and trust; but it is self-evident that from such lips, full of *charis* ('grace'), there must also proceed *logoi tees charitos* ('words of grace'), Lk. 4:22, Ec. 10:12"—Del.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 4 Tread the bow<sup>1</sup> succeed ride on!  
for the sake of truth and the humiliation of righteousness,<sup>2</sup>  
And thy right hand will teach thee fearful things.
- 5 Thine arrows are sharp—peoples under thee fall:—<sup>3</sup>  
in the heart of the foes of the king.
- 6 Thy throne O God is to the ages and beyond,  
A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom;
- 7 Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness:  
Therefore hath God thy God<sup>4</sup> anointed thee  
with the oil of gladness above thy partners.
- 8 Myrrh and aloes—cassias—are all thy garments,  
out of the palaces of ivory tones of strings have delighted  
thee.
- 9 Kings' daughters are among thy female servants,<sup>5</sup>  
stationed<sup>6</sup> is the queen at thy right hand in gold of Ophir.
- 10 Hearken O daughter and see, and bow down thine ear,—  
and forget thine own people and the house of thy father;
- 11 And the king will long for thy beauty,  
for he is thy lord!<sup>7</sup>
- 12 Homage to him will the daughters of Tyre with gifts render,  
thine own face will the rich men of the people appease.
- 13 All glorious! daughter of a king!<sup>8</sup>  
pearls<sup>9</sup> in chequer work of gold her clothing!
- 14 On tapestry of divers colours is she conducted to the king:<sup>10</sup>  
virgins in her train her companions are brought to her,
- 15 with gladness and exulting are they conducted to her,  
brought into the king's palace to her.<sup>11</sup>

1. So, following the Sep.

2. Or: "righteousness with humility"—nearly with Del. Or: "the afflicting of righteousness"—Br.

3. "The poet has the field of battle present to him as if he were an eye-witness"—Del.

4. Doubtless for an original "Jehovah thy God"—So Del.

5. So the majority of MSS. which Ginsburg had consulted—G. Intro. 268.

6. In Sep. *parastao*, as in Eph. 5:27. See Exposition.

7. Thus the Sep. See Exposition.

8. In this exclamatory form, this clause may be a father's fond note of comparison; as if—"any king's daughter."

9. *Peninim*, "pearls," by some critics preferred to *penimah* "within," which just here seems premature and disturbing.

10. Perowne has offered strong reasons for this rendering.

11. The foregoing three lines have been conformed to Dr. Briggs' "restored" Heb. text. The assonance of their endings has a pleasing effect.

## PSALM FORTY-FIVE

(To the Bride.)

- 16 Instead of thy<sup>1</sup> fathers be thy<sup>1</sup> sons!  
thou wilt make them rulers in all the earth.

(To the Bridegroom.)

- 17 I will memorialise thy name through all succeeding  
generations,  
Therefore peoples will thank thee to the ages and beyond.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the sons of korah along with maidens.<sup>2</sup>

8.1.11

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 45

My heart is overflowing with a beautiful thought! I will  
write a lovely poem to the King for I am as full of words as the  
speediest writer pouring out his story.

- 2 You are the fairest of all;  
Your words are filled with grace;  
God Himself is blessing You forever!  
3 Arm Yourself, O Mighty One,  
So glorious, so majestic!  
4 And in Your majesty  
Go on to Victory,  
Defending truth, humility, and justice.  
Go forth to awe-inspiring deeds!  
5 Your arrows are sharp  
In Your enemies' hearts;  
They fall before You.  
6 Your throne, O God, endures forever.  
Justice is Your royal scepter.  
7 You love what is good  
And hate what is wrong.  
Therefore God, Your God,  
Has given You more gladness  
Than anyone else.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. These pronouns (which are pointed as masculine in M.T.) shd. be  
feminine (w. Syr.)—Gn.

2. Cp. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

8 Your robes are perfumed with myrrh, aloes and cassia. In your inlaid palaces of ivory, lovely music is being played for your enjoyment.

9 Kings' daughters are among your concubines.<sup>1</sup> Standing beside you is the queen, wearing jewelry of finest gold from Ophir.

10, 11 "I advise you, O daughter, not to fret about your parents in your homeland far away. Your royal husband delights in your beauty. Reverence him, for he is your lord.

12 The people of Tyre, the richest people of our day, will shower you with gifts and entreat your favors."

13 The bride,<sup>2</sup> a princess, waits within her chamber, robed in beautiful clothing woven with gold.

14 Lovely<sup>3</sup> she is, led beside her maids of honor to the king!

15 What a joyful, glad procession as they enter in the palace gates!

16 "Your sons will some day be kings like their father. They shall sit on thrones around the world!

17 I will cause your name to be honored in all generations; the nations of the earth will praise you forever."

## EXPOSITION

Two things at the outset may be taken for granted: first, that the ultimate Hero of this psalm is the Messiah; and, second, that if we can find a Type of the Messiah in fair measure answering to the terms of the psalm, it will be a gain to allow that type to speak to us of the Antitype—as far as it may: this limitation being intended to remind us of the caution thrown out in dealing with Ps. 2, to the effect that we must not assume that the Spirit of Prophecy may not leave the type behind, and reach forth to greater things than any shadow can express. Adequately to fill up the terms of the psalm must be our governing aim: using the type as a help, and not becoming enslaved to it.

In the present instance the *type* and the *writer* are associated in a remarkable way. Dr. Thirtle has suggested (O.T.P., 49f, 318) that Hezekiah is the type; and instantly our deepest interest is excited. By all means Hezekiah, provided that the

1. Literally, "honorable women."

2. Literally, "The king's daughter."

3. Literally, "embroidered work."

## PSALM FORTY-FIVE

requirements of the psalm are thereby fairly met: much rather Hezekiah than Solomon, Joram, Jehu, or any of the rest whose names have been mentioned as probable; for, of these, we either know too little to feel drawn to them, or else what we do know renders them decidedly unacceptable for the honour of adumbrating the Messiah in a psalm of such pure and lofty idealism as this. Hezekiah, by all means: subject to necessary conditions. The one objection to his name, probably will turn out to be a commendation. We know that Hezekiah married a wife named Hephzibah, and Jewish tradition has it, that she was daughter to Isaiah the prophet. Hezekiah's trusty friend. Delightful, indeed, to think of the good King Hezekiah as marrying Isaiah's daughter. But then the psalm, it is thought, indicates that the Bride, in this marriage, is of Gentile descent. Nor can it be denied that to such a bride the advice would be peculiarly appropriate. *Forget thine own people, and the house of thy father.* Still, this indication alone can scarcely be said to be decisive; since "people" may mean, less widely, tribe, clan, or general circle of relatives; as to which it may be said that, not being of the royal family, the spirit of the advice would still be appropriate. Moreover, this measure of inferiority in the type may be regarded as sufficient to hint at a larger measure of inferiority in the Antitype: the non-royal element in the ancestry of Hezekiah's bride being regarded as enough to suggest the non-Israelitish strain in the Bride of the Messiah. Leaving these suggestions for the consideration of the thoughtful, it may be frankly admitted that the name of Hezekiah has an undeniable fascination—if for this reason only: The Jewish tradition that the Hephzibah who became Hezekiah's wife was Isaiah's daughter, naturally raises the question whether Isaiah himself was not the author of this psalm. Who so likely as he, to have been delighted with the restored monarch's "beauty"? Who so likely, to have admitted by implication, that the Queen's beauty was less striking than the King's? Who so likely and so fitting to have addressed the Bride in the *fatherly* terms with which the writer of the psalm is credited: *Hearken, O daughter?* And, finally, if some commentators have concluded that Isaiah wrote the psalms immediately succeeding this, why may he not have written this also, when for this task he presumably had such a mighty impulse and such supreme qualifications? Isaiah's genius as a poet was transcendent; but is not this magnificent epithalamium worthy of it? And, to go for a moment deeper than to poetic genius,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

from whose pen could so appropriately have come the surprising words of the psalm, *Thy throne, O God*, as from his who declared that the Messiah's name should be called *El gibbor*—"God hero"? (Isa. 9:6, 10:21).

It is easy to admit that Hezekiah does not completely fill up the terms of the psalm: *who, as type does?* But this at least may be maintained: That, on the whole, Hezekiah goes further than Solomon, and much further than Jehoram, Jehu, or any of the rest, to fill the outline required. Suffice it, that there is nothing incongruous in the type, as such, so long as we think of the good king, Hezekiah.

That every possible type comes short of fully answering to the large terms of the psalms,—that, no matter who may be fixed on as probable, it must finally be allowed that he falls behind the description in almost every particular,—THIS is the contention herewith most earnestly made, and for the consistent maintenance of which the preliminary caution was submitted, against being bound down by types when interpreting the prophetic word. Allowance must ever be made for the possible bearing away of the prophet under the mighty afflatus of the Divine Spirit of wisdom and knowledge. In interpreting the Holy Scriptures, we have to reckon, not only upon their sight of things present, but also upon their foresight (Gal. 3:8) of things to come; and, therefore, if we are to expound them congenially, we must be prepared to see with their eyes. If it be said, that if God is at all to speak to man, then we must presuppose his condescension to the employment of human speech, with its limitations,—it may be said in reply: Granted; and yet the impress of a new genius and a new spirit on the old forms may at any time appear; and though types may be accepted as a species of Divine-human alphabet, to which we must needs submit our minds, and which we have no right to suppose that the Spirit of Prophecy will discard or wholly transcend, yet may we venture to challenge any man's claim to confine to a *single type* the reachings forth of that Spirit towards the Antitype. For anything we know to the contrary, there may yet lie in the future an August Union in consummation of the tenderness and purity of Divine Love, which it may tax all the purest Royal Marriages in Israel only faintly to foreshadow. Still, we are glad of the types: without them we could not hope to spell out the revealed mind of God. In the present instance, for the foreshadowing of royal magnificence, we might prefer Solomon; for

## PSALM FORTY-FIVE

proved skill as an archer, we might prefer Jehu; for the yet higher qualities of faith and suffering nobleness—yea and possibly of deferred marital blessedness—we might greatly prefer Hezekiah: all we protest against is a crude and over-stringent typology. Let our Divine Father speak to us as he pleases.

But what, precisely, have we here, in the psalm now before us? Let us make sure of our facts, as far as we can.

First and foremost (Stanza I.) we have a poet deeply moved by his theme; and if he knows that his mind has ever travailed in birth with grand and godly conceptions almost too big for utterance, he is conscious that it is so now.

Next (Stanza II.) we have an observable inversion of the usual delicacy of male preference for female beauty: here it is the King's surpassing beauty which throws its radiance over all the canvas; the queen's beauty being only incidentally alluded to later on. Either the poet is a sycophant; or he has before him a King most wonderful. Nor is it beauty of form and feature alone which attracts his admiration. To beauty of appearance is added the worthy concomitant consisting in graciousness of discourse: charming the ear and delighting the mind at the same time that the eye rests upon the pleasing vision of his person. That is all: no more is said for the present. These two things, the poet feels, must please God as well as man. *Therefore hath God blessed thee to the ages.* The first and most natural sense of the word *therefore* is, that these qualities satisfy God and evoke his abiding benediction. Such a king he will delight to bless for so long a time that the poet cannot see beyond it. Short is this stanza, but it is complete; and the refrain marks that it is so.

A surprise now awaits us (Stanza III.) in the sudden summons of the beautiful and eloquent king to make ready for war. Had the poet merely clad his hero with armour, and bade him ride in his chariot for display and for impressive suggestion of what on occasion he might be trusted to achieve,—we could have admired the poet's art, and been ready to pass on to the next scene. But it is far otherwise. An occasion for war has arisen. The king has to vindicate his *faithfulness* to the implied obligations of his kingship. *Righteousness* has been *humiliated* within his domain, and *for this cause* he is summoned to interpose. An enemy has arisen on whom avengement must be inflicted, involving *fearful* punishment. No plan of campaign can be assigned the avenging monarch: his own skilled *right hand* will

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teach him what to do, first and last. No companion warriors are named, yet the king's arrows are sharp and their execution is so widespread that *peoples* fall under them; and the overthrow of the king's foes is so sudden that the description is broken, that the reader may behold it. As intimated, not only is the issue of the battle seemingly immediate; but the summons to wage this war is inferentially unexpected. So, at least, the poet's art suggests; since, to permit of this royal campaign, the royal marriage is postponed. This may, in exegesis, mean little; but it may mean much, and the poet's skill will be best vindicated should it appear to have been carefully designed. The foreseen issue of this war furnishes the poet with an occasion to speak the praises of the Warrior's *throne, sceptre, and character*; and then to crown this view of the King with another logical refrain, longer and larger than the first. *His throne* is an abiding throne, says the poet; and he takes pains to negative the thought of its overthrow or removal or disuse, by adding a word to his time reference: *to the ages and beyond* shall that throne stand! It may be naturally inferred, that it is the King's promptitude and prowess in making the war for the vindication of down-trodden righteousness, already noticed, which occasion the poet's reflection on the stability of his throne. And the same may be said of the notice of his sceptre. But this is now distinctly traced to the King's character: *He loveth righteousness and hateth lawlessness*—the which, indeed, is thrown into the form of direct address, and stated in the complete tense which is fitted to comprehend an abiding quality with its recent manifestation. *Therefore*—because of this, the triumphant hero is *anointed with the oil of gladness above his partners*. It is a Divine anointing: Jehovah his God has bestowed it. It is a festive gift: causing joy to its recipient. This joy is superlative in degree: *above thy partners*—whoever these may be, which is not yet declared. Placed where this anointing is: after the war—before the marriage: it looks in both directions. The Hero is made supremely glad, inasmuch as he has been able to deal so decisive a blow to lawlessness: being so made glad, he is ready for his Bride.

The marriage approaches (Stanza IV.). Again the King most wonderful comes into view, not now clad in armour, but with flowing robes redolent of sweetest spices, as though woven of nothing else. In the near distance music is heard: reminding



## PSALM FORTY-FIVE

him of the happy occasion, in response to which his heart leaps for joy. *King's daughters* are proud to serve as menials in his household. And now the *Queen*, his Bride, is *stationed at his right hand*, place of highest honour; clad in gold-decked raiment. The poet recites these facts in language addressed to the King: *thy garments—delighted thee—thy servants—thy right hand*. This prepares us for a marked change of address, which is thereby rendered impressive.

For hearken! the venerable poet (Stanza V.), who may be regarded as at once giving away the Bride and solemnising the nuptials, presumes to *address* the Queen. His address is familiar, for he calls the Bride *daughter*; but his words are few, and much to the point—if the Lady whom he accosts has either been brought from a foreign land or promoted from a lowly station: one caution, one inference, one sanction. One caution: let the Bride be supremely devoted to her husband, comparatively *forgetting* all else. One inference: *thus will the king long for thy beauty*. One sanction: *he is thy lord*—he owns thee, thou art his, he will be within his rights. No more. That short line from the Septuagint is splendidly eloquent in its stern reticence. Nothing can be added without spoiling it. How the harpist would deal with so short a line, is a minor question: we recall several such short lines, left short for emphasis (1:1, 4, 8:1, 9, 150:6); or the musician by a simple *repeat* could expand this line into a tetrameter, a measure which is characteristic of this psalm. Let the *bowing down in homage* be reverently (with the Septuagint) handed on for the *daughters of Tyre*, and so help to form a well-balanced line to match the respectful suit for the Queen's favour pressed by the *rich men* of the honoured nation to whom the King is related.

After this address to the Queen, it is at least poetically correct to conceive of all eyes as now (Stanza VI.) directed to *her*, and to have her resplendent appearance made the subject of admiring exclamations. Ere the King finally disappears in his palace, and the Queen is conducted to him, and her companions follow in her train, appropriate good wishes are by the poet addressed to them both (Stanza VII.): first, as Dr. Ginsburg has pointed out, to the Queen; to whom is assigned the privilege, in the event of the fulfillment of the good wishes, of furnishing rulers for *all the land*, or as better suiting the wide

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

outlook of the psalm, *all the earth*, a wish not more notable for its delicacy than for its boldness; and then, finally, the address passes over to the King—good wishes for whom take the form of a positive intention, as the avowed motive on the poet's part. It might have passed as an obvious and natural compliment, to have merely said, that he, the poet, hoped to *memorialise his hero's name to all succeeding generations*: but, when he goes on to foretell that the *thanks* of all coming time will, by virtue of this marriage-song, be tendered to his hero by peoples or nations, then we feel that the poet is either guilty of extravagance or is assuming the *role* of a prophet. Only by assuming that he is a prophet, and that the Messiah is his ultimate theme, can we acquit him of such suspicion. Shall we lower our estimate of holy men of God, or shall we elevate our conceptions of their message? This question brings us to the crux of the interpretation of this psalm.

The foregoing survey of the actual contents of the psalm will have served its purpose, if it should now be deemed needless to urge with any prolonged tenacity any question concerning the Types: it is time that all our interest should converge on the Antitype. No mere type can stay the psalm from collapsing on our hands. It is a good start, in quest of the Antitype, to find Jewish expositors frankly admitting that Messiah himself is THE hero of the psalm (The Targum paraphrasing ver. 2 thus: "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, exceeds that of the children of men; a spirit of prophecy is bestowed on thy lips)"—Kp.; but it is a sorry finish, to find any of them protesting, that no other Messiah than Hezekiah need be looked for by their nation ("Rabbi Hillel" saying, "Israel shall have no more Messiah: for they have had him in the days of Hezekiah"—Talmud, quoted by Thirtle, O.T.P., 277). In truth, the key to the psalm is in the Christian Expositor's hands; and it is merely a question of degree, how far his use of the key can be pronounced satisfactory. All Christians are agreed in finding in Jesus of Nazareth the King most beautiful, most wonderful, of whom this psalm speaks. He is, indeed, most beautiful in their eyes: they admire and love him with a passionate devotion which has led myriads of them to die for his sake. So far the solution is perfect. But Christian Expositors have been driven against two rocks which have well-nigh shattered their exegesis. In the first place, they have wrong-

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fully applied the war-picture, which delays the marriage, to the gracious delivery—by their King's heralds to the nations of the wooing message of his love, which they rightly call their "gospel." Had they restricted this feature of their exegesis to the apostolic prediction of their Messiah's personal onslaught on "The Lawless One" by direct interposition from heaven (2 Thes. 2), and resolutely thrown forward the alleged fulfillment of that prediction into the future when "that Wicked One" shall incontestably have appeared, this rock would have been avoided, and we should have been spared the humiliation of being chargeable with such a gross misapplication of terms as that which *confounds the Messiah's sudden overthrow of his enemies on a fearfully vast scale, with the gently elective process by which he wins individual friends and disciples from among the nations.* The second rock on which Christian exegesis has been well-nigh wrecked, is the double error of failing to regard the Church, considered as Messiah's Bride, in the light of an absolutely spiritual incorporation, to be rendered spotless before being presented beside her Lord; and concomitantly with that, failing to regard "the Marriage of the Lamb" as a future consummation, consisting of the blessed union with its Head, in immortal glory, of the Corporate Body, the completed Ecclesia. This rock also escaped, there is nothing to hinder the triumphant sailing of Christian Interpretation into the harbour of an invincible application of this psalm to its true prospective realisation. Kirkpatrick well says that "Such poems as this . . . are ennobled and consecrated by being thus made the vehicle for lofty thoughts and the type of spiritual mysteries (Eph. 5:23ff)"; but the way in which some expositors excuse themselves just where, as it might be supposed, the type ought to be regarded as profoundly significant, probably proves neither more nor less than the loss of the correct prophetic point of view from which to interpret a psalm like the present. Let all thoughts of the Messiah's Bride, as realisable in the Church, be resolutely held fast to the following most obvious and most necessary restrictions—that by "the Church," in such a connection, we mean the Church *collective*, and therefore no mere individual soul, the Church *final*, and therefore no temporary organization, and consequently the Church *immortal*, freed from all the desires of earth, from whose communion with her Lord is banished every thought of fellowship other than the heavenly and

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spiritual communion in the high interests of the kingdom of God; only let these restrictions be observed, and there need be no shrinking from the broad and bold expectation, that the consummating crisis which lies between this Dispensation and the next will be fruitful in blessedness to the nations of the earth, in providing them with "rulers" worthy and capable of sharing with the Messiah the honour and responsibility of reigning over all the earth in righteousness, and ruling it in justice (Isa. 32:1). Patience, dear suffering souls. Keep the word intact—and wait!

Nothing now remains but to add: That the provision of an Elect Assembly—consisting chiefly of Gentiles—as the Bride of the Messiah, is indeed a Sacred Secret, unrevealed in the olden prophetic days (Eph. 3:3-7, 5:32; Col. 1:26, 27); and, therefore, that had it been plainly disclosed in this psalm—the sagacity at least of the Apostle Paul, to whom we are indebted for our knowledge of it, would have been shown to be at fault. But such a thought cannot be entertained, inasmuch as a fair treatment of the psalm leaves it absolutely true that it contains nothing beyond a *veiled allusion* of the Queen's gentile descent, with no reference at all to her corporate character. We thank the authors of the Targum for suggesting, on ver. 10, that Messiah's Bride was to be a "congregation," and not an individual. But, as Christians, we cannot but be content to follow the guidance of our beloved Apostle Paul in his identification of the one pure Bride designed for the Messiah (Eph. 5:25ff)—for whom in an especial sense he gave up his life. And again we have to thank the ancient Greek Translators for providing our Apostle with a word (*pareste*), of which he has not failed to make good use in his triumphant note to the Ephesians (*para-stese*) which we have been very dull in not sooner discerning to mean this: "that HE might *present—with himself—all glorious—the ecclesia.*" "*With himself*" (*heauto*); for so, assuredly, should it be rendered, seeing that *there it is*, in the psalm, before our eyes: the King, with the Queen *placed at his right hand*. Dull, indeed, must we have been, if we have not before seen this, and have not found our exact Pauline parallel in Col. 3:4:—

As soon as the Christ shall be made manifest—our Life!

Then ye also, together with him, shall be made manifest in glory. In view of these fruitful suggestions, we can afford to wait and see how near to mortal view the Queen will be brought, before

## PSALM FORTY-FIVE

we permit ourselves to be entangled in any small questions as to how far literal and how far figurative the language may be which describes *the daughters of Tyre* as *bowing down in homage* to our King, and *the rich men of the people* (of Israel) as seeking a smile on the fair face of his Queen. Enough has already been fulfilled in the King, in pursuance of this magnificent psalm, and enough has been suggested as already in preparation with regard to the Queen, to make us patiently expectant of the solving and harmonising effects of complete accomplishment. To be of any use beforehand, the general drift of prophecy should be plain; but it must be left to fulfillment to solve questions of detail. In deference to the severe "beauty of holiness" demanded in the Messiah's Ecclesia, we may well expect that the first exclamation, on occasion of her unveiling will be—*All glorious!* and that the discovery of the Divine Fatherhood of the Ecclesia will occasion a second acclaim—*Daughter of a King!* After which it will be fitting that the Hallelujahs of heaven should burst upon the World's astonished ear, and that Earth should respond with a loud "AMEN!"

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please notice carefully the outline of this psalm—whatever understanding of this psalm we obtain, it will be based on the outline—it is progressive as well as cumulative : (1) The bridegroom. vs. 1, 2; (2) The battle. vs. 3-5; (3) The throne. vs. 6-9; (4) The bride. vs. 10-14; (5) The beautiful home and rule. vs. 15-17. Who is the bride and groom? Discuss.
2. Our hearts should overflow with the beautiful thought here described. Apply this psalm to Christ, and His bride the Church. Since we are that bride, there is much to learn. Discuss.
3. The king or groom is presented in verses one and two—His battle and His throne are described in verses three through nine. Please apply these qualities to our Lord and make present day application.
4. The bride of Christ or the Church could be described in verses ten through fourteen. Please make two or three comparisons for our learning and application.
5. There are several hymns that discuss the beauty of this psalm. Name and discuss at least two of them.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 46

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Trust in God, Joyfully Maintained in Face of Peril,  
Speedily Rewarded.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Trust in God held fast in presence of National Troubles that are likened to the Catastrophes of Nature. Stanza II., vers. 4-7, With His secret Water-supply and her God Himself in her midst, the Besieged City is kept Glad and Safe, and is Speedily Delivered. Stanza III., vers. 8-11, An Invitation to View Jehovah's Doings in Forcibly bringing Wars to an End; and a Divine Warning, bringing Hope to the Nations of the Earth. A *refrain* celebrates Israel's Confidence in her God.

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#### (Lm.) Song.

- 1 God for us is a refuge and strength,  
a help in distresses most willingly found.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Therefore we will not fear though the land should roar,<sup>2</sup>  
and the mountains stagger into the midst of the seas:
- 3 Seas<sup>3</sup> may roar the waters thereof foam,  
mountains may shake at the swelling of the stream,—  
(Jehovah of hosts is with us,  
a lofty retreat for us is the God of Jacob.<sup>4</sup>)
- 4 His channels make glad the city of God,  
the Most High hath kept sacred<sup>5</sup> his habitations:
- 5 God is in her midst—she shall not stagger,  
God will help her at the approach of the morning:
- 6 Nations have roared—kingdoms have staggered,  
he hath uttered his voice—earth melteth:—
- 7 Jehovah of hosts is with us,  
a lofty retreat for us is the God of Jacob.

1. *ML.*: "letting himself be found exceedingly."

2. So *Br. M.T.* "show change."

3. Prob. omitted by oversight in *M.T.* Cp. *Br.*

4. The refrain of vers. 7, 11, prob. omitted here by oversight. So *Del.*, *Kp.*, and others. *Per.* thinks the omission designed.

5. So it should be (*w. Sep. & Vul.*)—*Gn.*

## PSALM FORTY-SIX

- 8 Come view the doings of Jehovah,<sup>1</sup>  
who hath set desolations<sup>2</sup> in the earth:  
9 Causing wars to cease unto the end of the earth,  
the bow he breaketh and cutteth asunder the spear.  
waggons he burneth with fire,  
10 "Desist and know that I am God,—  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."  
11 Jehovah of hosts is with us,  
a lofty retreat for us is the God of Jacob.  
(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For the sons of korah.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 46

God is our refuge and strength, a tested help in times of trouble.

2 And so we need not fear even if the world blows up, and the mountains crumble into the sea.

3 Let the oceans roar and foam; let the mountains tremble!

4 There is a river of joy flowing through the City of our God—the sacred home of the God above all gods.

5 God Himself is living in that City; therefore it stands unmoved despite the turmoil everywhere. He will not delay His help.

6 The nations rant and rave in anger—but when God speaks, the earth melts in submission and kingdoms totter into ruin.

7 The Commander of the armies of heaven is here among us. He, the God of Jacob, has come to rescue us.

8 Come, see the glorious things that our God does, how He brings ruin upon the world,

9 And causes wars to end throughout the earth, breaking and burning every weapon.

10 "Stand silent! Know that I am God! I shall be honored by every nation in the world!"

11 The Commander of the heavenly armies is here among us! He, the God of Jacob, has come to rescue us!

1. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.): "God." Cp. 66:5—Gn.

2. "Wastes," "horrors"—O.G.

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### EXPOSITION

The three psalms now coming before us are nearly connected, and yet differ considerably from each other. Ps. 46 immediately reflects some historical event—possibly the invasion of Judaea in the days of Jehoshaphat as recorded in 2 Ch. 20, but more probably the later invasion by Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah, as narrated in 1 Kings 18, 2 Ch. 32, Isa. 36. Ps. 47, while doubtless suggested by the same event, is an ideal prediction and prophetic celebration of Jehovah's reign over the earth through Israel; and Ps. 48, which again reflects the past deliverance of the Holy City, is probably as much prophetic as it is historical; and strongly presses forward towards the final establishment of Jerusalem as the Metropolis of the World.

The spirit of Ps. 46 is that of stout-hearted trust in God. God is nearer than any enemy, and more powerful to relieve from danger than the enemy is to inflict it. The images employed in the psalm are bold, being formed by depicting such convulsions of nature as are seldom or never witnessed, yet are easily conceived. The terrible *roar* of the *land* in an earthquake, when *the mountains* are seen *staggering into the midst of the sea*, and the resentful sea is witnessed dashing its mighty waves on the *mountains* that overhang the shore: such is the scene which the poet's art presents as a figure of disturbed nations. At first this picture is presented without express application; amid even these convulsions, *God is our refuge* and *lofty retreat*. In the second stanza the national application is made prominent. They are *nations* that *roar*, *kingdoms* that *stagger*: still our trust is in the mighty God who governs nature, holding its tremendous forces in check, and who in like manner controls kings and peoples. But before this application is made, a contrast in natural images is introduced, which is the more effective because a literal realisation in the holy city is assumed to be well known to those who sing this anthem of deliverance. The God of the mighty sea is also the God of the springs which supply water to the holy city. These springs have lately been captured by Hezekiah through the formation of channels and enclosing walls which direct all the water to the city itself, while concealing and denying the supply from the enemy. The springs form the city's Divine supply; the wit and wisdom which have utilised them to the utmost and conserved them with so much care, being regarded as God's gifts, it could be well said that



## PSALM FORTY-SIX AND FORTY-SEVEN

*his channels make glad the city*; and not only glad, but patient, bold and defiant (Isa. 37:22) in presence of the besieger. Louder than the roar of nations is the *voice* of God; at the resounding of which *earth melteth* and the courage of her most valiant sons becomes weak as water. The minds of the singers of this song are left to supply the rest. Assyria has been overthrown in the land. The scene is one of terrible devastation. We are invited to view it, and to learn its great lesson. Wars will cease when Jehovah inflicts such *wastes* and *horrors* on those who wage them, that they will be compelled to stay the carnage. He will say *Desist* in such manner that they will *know* that He who speaks is God and must be obeyed. Then will he be *exalted among the nations*: "scattering those who in war take delight" (Ps. 68:30) and giving the nation rest and peace.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There seems to be a close association in the next three psalms—what is it?
2. Read again the paraphrase of verses one and two, and see the very real relevance of this psalm to our present day dilemma.
3. Allow the term "Jerusalem" in this psalm to mean the church, or "the city of our God". What then would be the river flowing through the city? Discuss.
4. Read Romans 8:31-39, and compare with verses two and three. Discuss.
5. Read the verses of the hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, and compare with this psalm.

## P S A L M 47

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel Invites the Nations to Rejoice in the  
Universal Kingship of Her God.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Invitation Itself, announcing the Central Fact of Jehovah's World-wide Sovereignty. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Israel Claims her God-given Supremacy over the Nations. Stanza III. and IV., vers. 5, 6;

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and 7, 8, God's Ascension to his Holy Throne calls for Thoughtful Praise, with Instrumental Accompaniment. Stanza V., ver. 9, Gentile Nobles Gather Themselves Together, with the Hebrew Nation, in Acknowledgment of the Ownership and Enthronement of Abraham's God.

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### (Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 All ye peoples! clap the hand,  
shout to God with the voice of jubilation;<sup>1</sup>
- 2 For Jehovah Most High fear-inspiring  
is a great king over all the earth.
- 3 He subdueth peoples under us,  
and races of men under our feet:
- 4 He chooseth for us our inheritance,  
the pride of Jacob whom<sup>2</sup> he loved.
- 5 God hath ascended with a sacred shout,  
Jehovah with the sound of a horn.
- 6 Make melody unto God make melody,  
make melody to our king make melody.
- 7 For God is king of all the earth,  
make melody with contemplation:
- 8 God hath become king<sup>3</sup> over the nations,  
God hath taken his seat<sup>3</sup> on his holy throne.
- 9 The nobles of the peoples have gathered themselves together  
with the people of the God of Abraham;  
For to God belong the shields of the earth:  
very high hath he ascended.<sup>4</sup>

(Lm. To the Chief Musician—accidentally omitted.)

(CMm.) For the sons of korah.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 47

Come everyone, and clap for joy! Shout triumphant praises to the Lord!

1. Or: "of a ringing cry."

2. Or: "which."

3. "The verbs express not merely a fact but an act. God was King, but He has given fresh proof of it. He has caused Himself to be acknowledged King, and taken His seat upon His throne to judge and rule (103:19). Cp. Rev. 11:15"—Kp. Similarly—Dr.

4. *Niphal*, conjugation of '*alah*—the verb used in *kal* in ver. 5, the relation with which should be shown. Cp. for same form of verb 97:9: also, for force of cong. *niphal*, Num. 9:17, 21, 22, and in particular Eze. 9:3.

## PSALM FORTY-SEVEN

2 For the Lord, the God above all gods, is awesome beyond words; He is the great King of all the earth.

3 He subdues the nations before us,

4 And will personally select His choicest blessings for His Jewish people<sup>1</sup>—the very best for those He loves.

5 God has ascended (into heaven)<sup>2</sup> with a mighty shout, with trumpets blaring.

6, 7 Sing out your praises to our God, our King. Yes, sing your highest praises to our King, the King of all the earth. Sing thoughtful praises!

8 He reigns above the nations, sitting on His holy throne.

9 The Gentile rulers of the world have joined with us in praising<sup>3</sup> Him—praising<sup>3</sup> the God of Abraham—for the battle shields of all the armies of the world are His trophies. He is highly honored everywhere.

## EXPOSITION

The scope of this psalm is our surest guide in the settlement of questions which mere verbal criticism cannot set at rest. Ought we to render, in the second stanza,—“He subdued,” “He subdueth,” or “He will subdue”; “He chose,” “He chooseth,” or “He will choose”? The mere circumstance that the tenses here used are imperfects, with an incipient, initialling, or repeating force will not determine this point—strange as this may seem to those who are accustomed only to Western grammars. In such cases, the known facts, or the main scope, are our best guides. Now it cannot be overlooked that this psalm is first and last an invitation to the nations of the earth to rejoice in the newly assumed Divine Sovereignty over the whole earth. This at once strongly impresses on the psalm a future reference: not only a *then* future but a *still* future reference. For if it is difficult to see how the overthrow of the Assyrians under Sennacherib could form the basis of an invitation to all nations to come and acknowledge themselves under Jehovah and at the same time under the feet of Israel; still more difficult must it be to discover such a ground of joyful submission, in the action of Israel when in the time of the Maccabees she took up arms against foreign nations. Briggs sees and frankly admits this difficulty; and his words are worth quoting. Against the witness of the Heb., Greek, and

1. Literally, “the pride of Jacob.”

2. Implied.

3. Implied.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Latin, in support of the pronouns *under us*, *under our feet*, and in favour of a conjectural emendation, "under Him," "under His feet," he truly says: "The triumph of the people of Israel . . . certainly would have been no ground for the rejoicing of foreign nations . . . which in fact had no realisation until the Maccabean times. Then the victories were so exclusively national and hostile to other nations, that no one would have thought of asking them to share in Israel's triumph." But the remarkable thing is that even this purely conjectural change in the text, leaves the broad outlook of the psalm untouched: it still remains an enthusiastic invitation to all nations to acknowledge with gladness the newly assumed, or newly proclaimed, sovereignty of the God of Abraham over all the earth. And though "under Him," "under His feet," may look less repugnant to the nations than the present authentic reading, yet will the broad testimony of the prophets as illustrated by such passages as Isa. 14:2, 60:12, Mi. 4:8, remain unsilenced as a standing protest in favour of Hebrew supremacy in the coming kingdom, and against tampering with the witness of this psalm. Such supremacy, we must indeed suppose, will ultimately be so obtained as to make reasonable Israel's invitation to the nations of the earth to clap their hands over the new assumption of world-wide sovereignty by Israel's God. All we have any right to say, in face of the inviolable Scriptures of God, is: That, if Israel has never yet been in circumstances to tender such an invitation with any chance of its being accepted, then, in the providence of Him who is "excellent in counsel and wonderful in working," she will yet have it put in her power to sing this psalm with such sincerity and force of appeal that it shall evoke a willing response from the nations. Under the influence of considerations such as these, we may very well content ourselves to represent Israel as saying with the abiding force of a recurrent truth: *He subdueth—He chooseth*. "I am inclined, therefore," says Perowne, "with Ewald, Hengst., and Bunsen, to take both verbs as *presents* (which the previous context seems to require), either as referring to a recent act of God, or (as Delitzsch) to a continued act—'God is ever choosing Israel's inheritance anew, inasmuch as He shows Himself to be the true and mighty Protector thereof.' The *present* may be used, as in 104:2, where the act of creation is spoken of as present, because its results are present. Comp. Is. 14:1, where Israel's restoration is described as another choosing."

## PSALM FORTY-SEVEN

The same breadth of outlook which has assisted us in the interpretation of the second stanza of this psalm, may perhaps throw light on the reference of the third, and help us to just thoughts regarding the *ascension* there spoken of: To what throne hath God ascended? On what occasion—one or many? Instead of urging either of these questions at present, it may be better to confine ourselves to two elementary facts: first, that no argument can be based upon the difference between “gone up” and “come up”—it is *either*, and therefore the neutral word “ascend” is better; second, that a form of the Hebrew word *‘alah*, “to ascend,” is used both in ver. 9 of this psalm and in Ps. 97:9, “Very high hath he ascended above all messengers divine”; which forcibly suggests that the ascension intended is not so much local, as relative to other beings—God’s manifest placing of inferior rulers beneath himself. This of itself subordinates the mere question of locality to more important considerations. The grand *fact* celebrated is Divine rule manifestly supreme; the *act* particularised is the assumption of proclamation or demonstration of that rule. The event forms an epoch in history. It takes place at a particular time. It can be joyfully celebrated. All nations can be called upon to celebrate it. That is what is done in this psalm. Therefore the psalm is unfulfilled. Fulfilment will settle all questions of detail. Meanwhile, side-lights of probability may fall on the general question of Divine Ascension from other sources. Cp. Exposition on Ps. 2, and see Intro., Chap. III., “Kingdom.”

There is but one other matter of interpretation here needing attention: The Massoretic text of the second line of ver. 9, says Kirkpatrick, “must be rendered ‘To be the people of the God of Abraham’ . . . ‘Unto the people’ is scarcely legitimate . . . The consonants of the word ‘*am*, ‘people,’ are identical with those of ‘*un*, ‘with’ . . . It is a natural conjecture that we should restore the preposition and render:

*The princes of the peoples are gathered together,  
Along with the people of the God of Abraham.*

The title (God of Abraham recalls the promises of blessing to the nations through Abraham (Gen. 12:2f, etc.) . . . Princes are called (the shields of the earth) as the protectors of their people. Jehovah is their overlord, and they come to acknowledge their dependence. The title *shield* is often applied to God, and sometimes to the kings and princes of Israel (Hos. 4:18, Ps. 89:18).”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It would be well here to quote the wise words of W. G. Scroggie as to the two views of the Kingdom: "Two distinct views are taken by students of the Scriptures of the Messianic Kingdom. One is, that it is now in progress of realization in the world through the Church; and the other is, that it is to be realized in the future in the world through restored Israel. In the one view, it is entirely spiritual, and in the other, it is also temporal. The Scriptures and the course of events must decide which of these is the right view. (Ibid. p. 268) It is not difficult to determine which view is held by Rotherham. What is your view?
2. There *will* be a time when all people will recognize the sovereign rule of God. There *will* be a time when all nations (—or at least some out of each) will clap their hands for joy at this rule and reign of God?—When will this be?
3. Despite whatever reading we give this—(or what commentator we read) this psalm does sound like the universal triumph and rule of God—how?—when?
4. Is there some way in which this psalm could be given a spiritual application to the church today?
5. Will the church of our Lord ever conquer all nations to the extent here described? Discuss.

## PSALM 48

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Jehovah Worthy to be Praised in his Holy City, whose History rebounds to the Honour of her Shepherd-King, who will yet Lead Israel against Death.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Jehovah's Greatness in his Holy City calls forth Praise for Himself and World-wide Gladness at the Elevation of his Earthly Dwelling. Stanza II., vers. 3-7, The Deliverance of His City Dramatically Described. Stanza III., vers. 9-11, A Thoughtful Recognition of the Leading

## PSALM FORTY-EIGHT

Characteristics of Jehovah's Dealings with His People. Stanza IV., vers. 12-14, A Challenge to Verify the Story and Note its Great Lesson.

(Lm.) A Song—A Psalm.

- 1 Great and highly to be praised in the city is our God,
- 2 His holy mountain is beautiful for elevation the joy of all the earth.  
Mount Zion on the northern ridge<sup>1</sup> is the city of a king,
- 3 Jehovah hath striven<sup>2</sup> in her citadels hath let himself be known as a lofty retreat.<sup>3</sup>
- 4 For lo! the kings met by appointment—crossed over together,
- 5 They themselves saw—forthwith were amazed—dismayed—alarmed;
- 6 Trembling seized them there—anguish as of a woman in travail;<sup>4</sup>
- 8 “As we had heard so have we seen<sup>5</sup>—Jehovah establisheth her to the ages.”
- 9 We have pondered O God thy kindness in the midst of thy temple,
- 10 As is thy name O God so is thy praise to the ends of the earth:
- 11 With righteousness is filled thy right hand let Mount Zion be glad,  
Let the daughters of Judah exult because of thine acts of vindication.
- 12 Go about Zion and encircle her, count her towers,—
- 13 Apply your heart to her rampart distinguish her citadels;  
That ye may tell to the generations following:—
- 14 That such a God is our God to the ages and beyond,  
He will lead us against death!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For the sons of korah.

1. “The temple being on the north-eastern corner or back of Mount Zion”—Br.

2. So, taking *rb* as Heb. verb.

3. Nearly thus Br. The chief departures from the M.T. are different groupings of the Heb. words, securing a better balance of clauses and lines.

4. M.T. adds, as ver. 7: “With an east wind thou shatterest the ships of Tarshish.” Doubtful, as interrupting the sense! unless as a marginal note.

5. M.T. again adds: “In the city of Jehovah of hosts, in the city of our God.” Yet seems to stand interruptingly in the midst of what otherwise commends itself as the speech of the panic-stricken kings.

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
PARAPHRASE  
PSALM 48

How great is the Lord! How much we should praise Him.  
He lives upon Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

2 What a glorious sight! See Mount Zion rising north of the city<sup>1</sup> high above the plains for all to see—Mount Zion, joy of all the earth, the residence of the great King.

3 God Himself is the defender of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

4 The kings of the earth have arrived together to inspect the city.

5 They marvel at the sight and hurry home again,

6 Afraid of what they have seen; they are filled with panic like a woman in travail!

7 For God destroys the mightiest warships with a breath of wind!

8 We have heard of the city's glory—the city of our God, the Commander of the armies of heaven. And now we see it for ourselves! God has established Jerusalem forever.

9 Lord, here in Your Temple we meditate upon Your kindness and Your love.

10 Your name is known throughout the earth, O God. You are praised everywhere for the salvation<sup>3</sup> You have scattered throughout the world.

11 O Jerusalem,<sup>4</sup> rejoice! O people of Judah, rejoice! For God will see to it that you are finally treated fairly.

12 Go, inspect the city! Walk around and count her many towers!

13 Note her walls and tour her palaces, so that you can tell your children!

14 For this great God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide until we die.

EXPOSITION

As critically revised above, this psalm as a whole does not seem of very difficult interpretation. It naturally follows the previous psalm, by detaining the reader's thoughts *on the palace*

1. Literally, "on the sides of the north."

2. Literally, "God has made Himself known in her palaces for a high tower."

3. Literally, "Your right hand is filled with righteousness."

4. Literally, "Mount Zion."



## PSALM FORTY-EIGHT

where "the nobles gather themselves together with the people of the God of Abraham"; and this naturalness reacts, so as to account for the informal way in which it is here first named as "the city." But being now *the joy of all the earth*, it is to be expected that "the nobles" should delight to visit her, and when they approach should be struck with her *beauty*, though chiefly attracted by her King. Moreover, the fourth line of this fourth stanza, at once forges for itself a link with Ps. 46. Jehovah had indeed *striven* in *her citadels* by the "devastations he had wrought in the earth" from thence, thereby proving himself a *lofty retreat* for his beleaguered people.

This naturally brings on the second stanza, the extreme graphic beauty of which, of course, every eye can see. It should, however, be remarked in all candour, that the scene there depicted is highly idealised—that is, assuming that the reference is to the historical fact of the miraculous overthrow of the hosts of Sennacherib. For though the proud Assyrian monarch might call his "generals kings," it scarcely follows that a Hebrew bard would so name them, unless he were being guided to make his language fit a later and larger scene. It looks very much as though those *ships of Tarshish* had brought the confederate kings to the holy land, in which case the panic into which they are thrown is the more readily understood. In passing, it may be noted they do not "hasten away," as some render the last word in ver. 5; for they cannot get away, but are arrested on the spot—*there!* as the poet graphically declares. They have just time in their *anguish* to gasp out that opposition to the holy city is hopeless. All of which may excuse the conclusion that this wonderful picture of consternation is as much prophetic as it is historic.

After the storm comes the calm: after the shrieks of anguish comes the voice of praise. Worshippers in the temple have quiet and impulse to *ponder* well the mighty doings of their God. Jehovah has fulfilled *his name* so undeniably in the sight of all nations as to call forth *praise to the ends of the earth*. This again imparts a prophetic tone to words which, though poetically justifiable as suggested by the Assyrian overthrow, are large enough to prompt comparison with predictions yet unfulfilled. The *righteousness* with which Jehovah's *right hand* is *filled* being *vindictory*, gives cause why *Mount Zion* should be *glad* and the *daughters*, or cities, of *Judah* should *exult*.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

The time being now one of peace, with no enemy near to threaten, dwellers in Zion, and visitors with them, can deliberately *go about Zion, count her towers*, and, recalling her chequered history, can learn the lessons of the past and hand them on to the future: language singularly inappropriate had it been spoken of a heavenly Zion, rather fantastic if referred to ecclesiastical Zions, but very forcibly rooting itself in the past, as a mould of the chief ideas suggested, if connected with the thrilling events which signalised the reign of King Hezekiah. Death, as a king of terrors, gazed both on the nation and, by a special and concurrent providence, on her king—Israel's God as a Shepherd led both king and people through the valley against the monster—and he fled, overcome! Of course not, then, finally; for Hezekiah died afterwards, and the nation has been invaded and carried into captivity since. But in little—in shadow—in outline—in prophecy—Jehovah *led them against death!* Significant words. They will find an echo in the very next psalm; or rather perhaps a clearer note will there be struck; and if Isaiah wrote this psalm, then about this time he is elsewhere renewing the theme (Isa. 25:6-9, 26:19).

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It is almost essential that the reader have several commentaries on the Psalms to give him more than one viewpoint—We respect and admire Rotherham's scholarship and exposition, but then there is C. H. Spurgeon who says of this Psalm: "It would be idle dogmatically to attribute this song to any one event of Jewish history. Its author and date are unknown. It records the withdrawal of certain confederate kings from Jerusalem, their courage failing them before striking a blow. The mention of the ships of Tarshish may allow us to conjecture that the Psalm was written in connection with the overthrow of Ammon, Moab, and Edom in the reign of Jehoshaphat; and if the reader will turn to II Chron. XX., and note especially verses 19, 25, and 36, he will probably accept the suggestion. Verses 1, 2, 3, are in honour of the Lord and the city dedicated to his worship. From 4-8 the song records the confusion of Zion's foes, ascribing all the praise to God; 9, 10, 11 extolling Zion, and avowing Jehovah to be her God for evermore."

## PSALM FORTY-EIGHT AND FORTY-NINE

2. If we do not consider Mount Zion as the church, how shall we apply verses 1 through 3? Discuss possibilities, but forget not: when there is no application of the scripture text to the heart of the reader there is no eternal value in it!
3. How shall we represent "the kings of the earth" who came to inspect the city? Please be specific—an idle thoughtless answer is a refusal to take the interest in God's Word it deserves!
4. Will this idealized picture of the triumph of the city of our God ever become a reality? Has it already occurred?
5. If we were to consider Mount Zion as the church, verses 12 through 14 might suggest a very careful walk through the pages of the New Testament. How do you apply these verses?

## P S A L M 49

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Death and Redemption: Oppressed Saints Comforted  
and Oppressors Rebuked.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-6, An Introduction, consisting of the Proem and the Problem. Stanza II., vers. 7-12, Answer first, Personality more Precious than Possessions. Stanza III., vers. 13-20, Answer second: The Unrelieved future of the Oppressor in Contrast with the Redeemed Future of the Psalmist. The *Refrain* Charges Home the Byword.

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(Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 Hear ye this all ye peoples,  
give ear all ye dwellers in this passing world;<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Both sons of the low and sons of the high,  
together both rich and needy.
- 3 My mouth shall speak forth wisdom,  
and the soft utterance of my heart be understanding:
- 4 I will bend to a by-word<sup>2</sup> my ear,  
I will open on the lyre mine enigma:—<sup>3</sup>

1. Or: "age"—"aion not kosmos"—O.G.

2. See vers. 12 and 20. "An aphorism"—Del.

3. Or: "hard question," "riddle": Sep. "problem."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 5 Why should I fear in the days of evil,  
when the iniquity of my circumventors encloseth me,
- 6 who are trusting in their wealth,  
and in the abundance of their riches do boast themselves?
- 7 But<sup>1</sup> no man can really effect a ransom  
and give unto God his ransom-price—
- 8 of such worth is the ransom of men's self<sup>2</sup>  
it has failed to the ages—
- 9 That one should live on continually,  
should not see the pit.
- 10 For one must see that wise men die,  
together with foolish and brutish they perish;  
they leave to successors their wealth:
- 11 Graves<sup>3</sup> are their houses to the ages,  
their habitations to generation after generation,—  
Though their names had been given to landed-estates!
- 12 A man who will not understand his own worth  
Bringeth on him the by-word—No better than brutes!<sup>4</sup>
- 13 This is their way—in their folly!  
and this their future—<sup>5</sup> who with their present portion<sup>6</sup> are  
so pleased.
- 14 Like a flock to Hades are they assigned—  
Death will tend them!  
So let them descend smoothly to the grave,<sup>7</sup>  
and their image<sup>8</sup> be for Hades to consume out of his dwelling.
- 15 But God will ransom my soul,  
out of the hand of Hades will he surely<sup>9</sup> take me.
- 16 Do not fear when a man groweth rich,  
when the splendour of his house increaseth;
- 17 For when he dieth he can take nothing,  
his splendour cannot descend after him:—

1. So—'ak, "but," instead of 'ah "brother"—in some cod.—Gn. Better here, since the problem is whether a man can really redeem at all—even himself. Not at the hands of God, though from man he may (Exo. 21:29, 30).

2. ML: "their soul."

3. So *Gt.* (k-b-r-m or k-r-b-m)—Gn.

4. ML: "Brutes they resemble."

5. With Br. substituting *th* ( ) for *h* ( ): thus bringing this psalm into verbal relation w. 37:37, 38 and 73:17.

6. ML: "their mouth." Cp. O.G. 805, 5b.

7. So *Gt.*—Gn.

8. Or.: "form."

9. Cp. O.G. 472, 1, e; 474, "note."

## PSALM FORTY-NINE

- 18 Though his own self<sup>1</sup> while he lived he used to bless,  
and thank it because it was doing well for itself.  
19 He will enter<sup>2</sup> as far as the circle of his fathers,—  
never more can they see daylight!  
20 A man who will not understand his own worth  
Bringeth on him the by-word—"No better than brutes!"<sup>3</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 49

Listen, everyone! High and low, rich and poor, all around the world—listen to my words,

3 For they are wise and filled with insight.

4 I will tell in song accompanied by harps the answer to one of life's most perplexing problems:

5 There is no need to fear when times of trouble come, even though surrounded by enemies!

6 For they trust in their wealth and boast about how rich they are!

7 Yet not one of them, though rich as kings, can ransom his own brother from the penalty of sin! For God's forgiveness does not come that way!<sup>4</sup>

8, 9 For a soul is far too precious to be ransomed by mere earthly wealth. There is not enough of it in all the earth to buy eternal life for just one soul, to keep it out of hell.<sup>5</sup>

10 Rich man! Proud man! Wise man! You must die like all the rest! You have no greater lease on life than foolish, stupid men. You must leave your wealth to others!

11 You name your estates after yourselves as though your lands could be forever yours, and you could live on them eternally!

12 But man with all his pomp must die like any animal!

13 Such is the folly of these men, though after they die they will be quoted as having great wisdom!

14 Death is the shepherd of all mankind. And "in the morning" those who are evil will be the slaves of those who are good. For the power of their wealth<sup>6</sup> is gone when they die; they cannot take it with them.

1. U.: "his sould." Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

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

3. Ml.: "Brutes they resemble."

4. Implied from text.

5. Literally, "so that he should not see the Pit."

6. Literally, "their beauty shall be for Sheol to consume."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

15 But as for me, God will redeem my soul from the power of death, for He will receive me.

16 So do not be dismayed when evil men grow rich and build their lovely homes.

17 For when they die they carry nothing with them! Their honors will not follow them.

18 Though a man calls himself happy all through his life—and the world loudly applauds success—

19 Yet in the end he died like everyone else, and enters eternal darkness.

20 For man with all his pomp<sup>1</sup> must die like any animal!

## EXPOSITION

This psalm is one of great beauty and power. Its *breadth* is at once evidence; since it appeals to men everywhere, of all sorts and conditions: *peoples—low, high, rich, needy*. Its *elevation* is clear; inasmuch as it implies that the present order of things is temporary—a mere *passing world*, during which *the days* may be *evil*, and the wealthy *iniquitous, overbearing and boastful*; but beyond which *God* may interpose in *redemption*. Its *insight* is penetrating; for it pierces through to man's *true worth*, which *money* cannot measure. Its *structure* is simple: one stanza, containing proem and problem, and two stanzas of argument, crowned each by an identical refrain. Its *unity* is complete; rendering the psalm, to a large extent, self-interpretive. But, withal, its chief characteristic is, that it is *parabolic, enigmatic and ironical*: its sarcasm is as biting as it is benevolent. It has its surface meanings, and its deeper intentions. It plays upon words. Its *wise men* are only *clever*: they *perish*, or at least they pass into the *land of shadows*. They are *brutes* in behaviour; yet, if they were really only brutes, they would not thus be blamed. They think much of themselves; and yet how little! if they would only think more of themselves, they would not think so little of their poor neighbours. Such is the style; and it is this which makes successful translation and exegesis difficult. The more difficult these are, however, the more need is there that the unity of the psalm should be held fast, and the interpretation be made as self-consistent as possible.

1. Literally, "but without insight." It is uncertain whether this phrase was part of the original text.

## PSALM FORTY-NINE

The *proem* or exordium, so far from being an afterthought of a later date, strikes the key-note of the psalm. It is the utterance of a man who is conscious of having something weighty to say, and is inwardly compelled to give it expression. He has glimpses of a coming better time, or he would not speak of the present as a *passing age*; esteems his solution radical, or he would not propound it for the consideration of all classes. He bespeaks attention to a *by-word*, and warrants our expectation of finding one in the sequel. He promises to *open* his *enigma*, by the help of his harp; and therefore justifies us in looking for a real solution of his problem—his music should at least do something to calm the troubled breast.

The *problem* itself is stated in terms sufficiently explicit to reveal its bearings. It is not the brevity of life which perplexes the psalmist, for of that he makes no mention. Nor are the inequalities of life what chiefly trouble him; but mainly the iniquitous scheming and vainglorious boasting of those who have the larger share of this world's goods. They plot and they plunder; they do as they please, and boast that so they will continue to do. Such neighbors are as formidable as they are unscrupulous. They may well be feared. And if the writer nevertheless asks *why he should fear*,—it can only be because he has good reasons for not being afraid of the injuriousness which he is powerless to arrest. It cannot be merely that these boasters will *soon* be in the graves; for the same, in the ordinary course of things, may be said of those who are suffering such wrongs.

The *solution* strikes home, though it takes the form of a paradox. The injurious boasters do not really think enough of themselves: it is for their adventitious wealth that they have such an inordinate affection. If they more highly esteemed their essential *selves*, they would more highly esteem their poor neighbours. If they would but think of it, they themselves are *so precious*, that not all their wealth can bribe God to add to their life a single day—how much less to extend their life indefinitely? And is not every other man essentially *as precious* as they? They deem themselves *wise*, and they *are* very *clever*; but—as any one can see—*clever* people *die* as well as the *foolish* and *brutish*. And the clever rich afford contrasts, when they die, which their poor neighbours do not occasion: the large mansion, and the

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

little grave—how different they appear! and the tenants of these “long homes” have left their *names* on *broad acres*! Ah! if these, whose helpless relics are thus *housed*, had only risen to the high level of esteeming themselves aright, they would have esteemed all others as essentially their equals; and would have scorned to brow-beat them with the *brute-force* of wealth. But now the scorners are scorned. These men lowered themselves to do as the brutes; they intimidated and trampled on the weak. They forgot that they themselves were men!

The poet returns to the charge. His sarcasm bites more bitterly. Look on their late *way* of self-gloriousness—as the folly of it; and look on the *end* of the way—the *future* at which they have arrived. They are My Lord Hades’ *small cattle*, under the care of his *shepherd—Death!* Begrudge them not ease, comfort, plenty, on the road to such an inglorious end. Let them down *gently*. Let them take with them their *good looks*—which will soon enough fade!

“But who art thou, O scornful poet? What of thyself? Shalt not thou, too, soon become weak as we?” might not these shades of the rich reply? The poet’s answer is ready:—“God,” saith he, “will do for me, what your money could not do for you,”—and the words are suited to the time of waiting for Messiah’s first advent,—*God will ransom my soul—my person—my essential self.—from the hand of Hades will he surely take me.* The words have just that measure of ambiguity which fits them to their time; but they have all the point and force needed to adjust them to their context. They are ambiguous so far as this: That they may denote either the fore-stalling of the grasp of Hades by TRANSFORMATION; or the rescuing out of the hand of Hades by RESURRECTION. But they have all the point and force which the context requires. “*God*” will place me in such a position of realised immortality, that I shall *live on continually, and not see the pit*,—which is what riches have never yet accomplished. And, looking forward, as I do, for such Divine redemption,—*I will not fear* the worst that *iniquitous circumventors* can do unto me during the *days of evil*.

But this final stanza is not yet complete. Having given conclusive reason why *he* should not fear, the poet counsels others to be equally bold: *Do not fear!* But as, in his first reply, he descended from argument to irony, so does he, in this his second



## PSALM FORTY-NINE

answer: only, as the argument is stronger now than then, so is the irony keener and more prolonged. *Then* the argument was drawn from *the inherent worth of man*; now it is derived from *the redeeming purpose of God*. And, accordingly, we are here treated to an exquisite picture of the rich man's pampering and flattering of his superficial self, which is terminated only by the fall of a curtain of thick darkness—suited to those pre-messianic times, when the future of the wicked was as yet unrevealed. The "shade" of the once great man may penetrate as far into the dark vault of Hades as to bring him into *the circle of his fathers*; but—no more at present can be said: silence reigns—and the familiar *by-word* is once more heard. The clever but foolish tyrant has brought it on himself—*no better than brutes!*

In finally reviewing the psalm, one is struck with its numerous points of contact with other scriptures. Kirkpatrick well says: "The theme of the psalm is akin to that of Psalms 37 and 73." It "reminds us of the parables of Rich Fool (Luke 12:16ff) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19ff)." Moreover, this psalm "contains numerous parallels of thought and language to the Books of Job and Proverbs." "There seems to be an allusion in ver. 11 to the vast estates which are condemned by Isaiah and Micah." See Isa. 2:9, 11, 17, 3:14, 15, 5:8, 15, 59:9-15; Mi. 2:1, 2, 3:1-3. But perhaps the most significant reference should be to Mat. 6:26.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This should be a very vital and interesting psalm to every American because it discusses money and its influence. With this theme in mind read back through the psalm.
2. There are two answers to the problem of the use and abuse of money: one in verses 7-12, and the other in 13-20. State these answers in your own words.
3. Why is there a tendency to bow down before the worldly rich? Let a man be known as a millionaire and the attitude of people changes toward him—why?
4. Does verse eleven suggest that there is a vast difference between the two homes of the rich man? What are they?
5. There is here described a strange and awful flock and shepherd—who are they?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 50

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Judgment on Israel Pronounced amid the Solemnities  
of an Audible and Visible Divine Manifestation.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-7, Preparations for Judgment: consisting of a Divine Announcement and Appearing, and a Summons to Heaven and Earth to Declare the Righteousness of the Judge, who now Opens his Address to His People. Stanza II., vers. 8-15, Formalists Admonished to Supplement their Offerings by Gratitude, Faithfulness, and Prayer in the Day of Distress. Stanza III., vers. 16-23, Secret Deserters Denounced for Hypocrisy and Lawlessness. *First Refrain*, a Summons; *Second Refrain*, an Admonition; *Third Refrain*, a Proclamation.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Jehovah<sup>1</sup> hath spoken and called the earth,  
from the rising of the sun unto the going in thereof
- 2 Out of Zion the perfection of beauty  
God hath come shining forth.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 A fire before him devoureth,  
and around him it stormeth exceedingly:
- 4 He calleth to the heavens above and unto the earth,—  
in order to minister judgment to his people.
- 5 "Gather unto me my men of kindness,  
the solemnisers of my covenant over a peace-offering,"
- 6 And let the heavens declare his righteousness,  
for God himself is about to judge.
- 7 "Hear O my people and let me speak,  
O Israel and let me admonish thee:—  
God thy God<sup>3</sup> am I

1. M.T.: "El, Elohim, Jehovah," as in Josh. 22:22; but prob. (w. Br.) due to accidental repetition; and the subsequent restoration of the displaced name "Jehovah."

2. M.T.: "Let our God come and not keep silence"—wh. has the appearance of an added pious wish. Yet see Dr., Tenses, 58.

3. Prob. an elohistic substitute for "Jehovah thy God." Cp. 45:7.

# PSALM FIFTY

- (who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.)"<sup>1</sup>
- 8 "Not concerning thy peace-offerings will I reprove thee  
nor concerning thine ascending-offerings before me  
continually;<sup>2</sup>
- 9 I will not take out of thy house a bull,  
out of thy fields he-goats;
- 10 For mine are all the beasts of the forest  
the cattle on the mountains in their thousands,<sup>3</sup>
- 11 I know all the birds of the heavens<sup>4</sup>  
and that which moveth in the plains is with me:<sup>5</sup>
- 12 If I were hungry I would not tell thee  
for mine is the world and the fulness thereof:
- 13 Shall I eat the flesh of mighty oxen  
or the blood of he-goats shall I drink?
- 14 Sacrifice unto God a thank-offering,<sup>6</sup>  
and pay to the Highest thy vows;
- 15 And call unto me in the day of distress,  
I will rescue thee and thou shalt glorify me."
- 16 But to the lawless one<sup>7</sup> saith God:—  
"What hast thou to do with telling my statutes  
and taking up my covenant on thy mouth?
- 17 Since thou hast hated correction  
and cast my words behind thee?
- 18 If thou sawest a thief thou didst run<sup>8</sup> with him  
and with adulterers hath been thy chosen life:
- 19 Thy mouth hast thou thrust into wickedness  
and thy tongue weaveth deceit:
- 20 Thou wouldst sit down—against thine own brother wouldst  
thou speak  
in thine own mother's son<sup>9</sup> wouldst thou expose a fault:—
- 21 These things hast thou done and I have kept silence,  
thou deemest I should really be like thyself.

1. Prob. a copyist's abbreviation, words in brackets understood by pious Jew.—Br. Cp. 81:10, Exo. 20:2.

2. Or: "And thine ascending-offerings are continually before me"—(w. Del., Dr., Per., R.V., text, Leeser, Kp.).

3. Some read [omitting one letter]: "mountains of God," as in 36:6—O.G. 49.

4. So Sep.

5. "In my mind"—Dr. (comparing Job 10:13, 13:11.)

6. So Br. "Thanksgiving"—Del., Per., Dr.

7. Cp. 1:1 note, 25:5.

8. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "wast pleased."

9. Felt to be still more mean in polygamous society.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 22' I will convict thee and set it forth to thine eyes,  
pray consider this ye forgetters of God.<sup>1</sup>  
23 He that sacrificeth a thank-offering<sup>2</sup> glorifieth me.  
and him who is consistent<sup>3</sup> in behaviour<sup>4</sup> will I cause to view  
with delight the salvation of God."

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 50

The mighty God, the Lord, has summoned all mankind from east to west!

2 God's glory-light shines from the beautiful Temple<sup>5</sup> on Mount Zion.

3 He comes with the noise of thunder,<sup>6</sup> surrounded by devastating fire; a great storm rages round about Him.

4 He has come to judge His people. To heaven and earth He shouts.

5 "Gather together My own people who by their sacrifice upon My altar have promised to obey<sup>7</sup> Me."

6 God will judge them with complete fairness, for all heaven declares that He is just.

7 O My people, listen! For I am your God. Listen! Here are My charges against you:

8 I have no complaint about the sacrifices you bring to My altar, for you bring them regularly.

9 But it isn't sacrificial bullocks and goats that I really want from you!

10, 11 For all the animals of field and forest are Mine! The cattle on a thousand hills! And all the birds upon the mountains!

12 If I were hungry, I would not mention it to you—for all the world is Mine, and everything in it.

13 No, I don't need your sacrifices of flesh and blood!

14, 15 What I want from you is your true thanks; I want

1. M.T. adds: "Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

2. So. Br. "Thanksgiving"—Del., Dr.

3. Or: "whole-hearted." Gt.: *tam*, instead of *sham* or *sam*—Gn.

4. ML: "way."

5. Literally, "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty."

6. Literally, "comes, and does not keep silence."

7. Literally, "who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

## PSALM FIFTY

your promises fulfilled. I want you to trust Me in your times of trouble, so I can rescue you, and you can give Me glory!

16 But God says to evil men: Recite My laws no longer, and stop claiming My promises,

17 For you have refused My discipline, disregarded My laws.

18 You see a thief and help him, and spend your time with evil and immoral men.

19 You curse and lie, and vile language streams from your mouths.

20 You slander your own brother.

21 I remained silent—you thought I didn't care—but now your time of punishment has come, and I list all the above charges against you.

22 This is the last chance, for all of you who have forgotten God before I tear you apart—and no one can help you then.

23 But true praise is a worthy sacrifice; this really honors Me. Those who walk My paths will receive salvation from the Lord.

## EXPOSITION

This impressive psalm includes many things which require and will repay careful consideration. It is clear that the Judgment it describes is held on Israel as a nation. This being the case, it is the more remarkable that *earth* and *heaven* are summoned to interest themselves in the proceedings: thus teaching the momentous character of the issues involved, the Divine Equity and Grace in desiring that whatever can be said in Israel's favour shall be advanced, and the Divine Determination that right shall be done. That the Divine Glory comes shining forth *out of Zion*, intimates that the issues to be tried are connected with Jehovah's settlement as King in Israel, and grow out of the worship established in Jerusalem. That the Divine Majesty comes forth with *fiery tempest* and *raging storm* betokens that God's holy anger with his people is roused, and therefore that the time is one of national degeneracy. The summons to *gather* Israel does not perhaps imply that the greater Dispersions have yet taken place, so much as simply that the gathering is to be national, one of the whole people, on the largest scale possible, so that all classes may be reached, and a general verdict on the nation be pronounced. The description of the nation in the summons as *the men of Jehovah's kindness* is probably de-

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

signed to remind the people of what by their national calling they ought to be (Cy. Intro., Chap. III., "Kindness"); and though, in a suitable context, the further description of the people as *those having solemnised Jehovah's covenant over a peace-offering*, might very well have directly pointed to Moses and the Elders who so accepted the covenant at Mount Sinai, according to the sublime account in Exo. 24,—yet it would seem less imaginative, and more pointedly practical, rather to think of some recent confirming of the Sinai Covenant, such as we read of in the history of Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Ch. 29:10, 34:31). To go no further than Hezekiah, we can easily see from the very opening of Isaiah's prophecies, how easy it was for Israel to sink from national reform into national formalism. And, truth to tell, heavy as are the charges against Israel which follow in this psalm, they do not go beyond the corrupt state of things which at that time characterised the people as a whole. The voluntative moods of the verbs which open the climax to this stanza (*let me speak, let me admonish*) may usefully remind us of the patience of Jehovah in listening so long in silence to the calumnious speeches of men; while the assertion by Jehovah of his relation to Israel as her Redeemer may remind us of the reasonableness of all Divine demands, seeing that they are based on privilege already bestowed (cp. Isa. v.: "my vineyard—what more could I have done to it?").

The great lesson of the second stanza appears to be, that stated and especially national worship is apt to degenerate into formalism; and, what is still worse, may lead worshippers to feel as though by its regular maintenance they were conferring a favour upon the Object of their worship. Hence the indignant protests of Jehovah of his independence of any material service which men can render him (cp. Acts 17:24, 25). What he desires is men's gratitude; and as *thank-offerings* are personal and spontaneous, and so more certain expressions of gratitude than stated public offerings, they are here preferred—especially where they have been promised by *vows*; in which case faithfulness as well as thankfulness is involved. It seems to be further taught that thankful returns for the more common of special blessings, laid a basis for the outcry of the soul to God in the severer trials of life. Thus may days of sunshine prepare us for days of storm; and pervading thankfulness may slowly generate the confidence in God needful to draw us near to him in times of *distress*. *Deliverance then* will prompt the soul to a public *glorifying* of the Deliverer.

## PSALM FIFTY

In a soil of formalism the germs of apostacy may take root. Men may become so accustomed to repeating "the commandments," that they may keep up the appearance of piety even when the practice of profanity is seducing them into rebellion and unutterable meanness. This appears to be the underlying thought of Stanza III. The Apostle Paul might have had this stanza in mind when he wrote, "Thou that proclaimeest—Do not steal! Art thou stealing?" (Rom. 2:21). Presuming on God's silence as though it were indifference, is a sure way to become *forgetters of God*; and to forget Him is to be startled and *convicted* when he pleases to speak. The climax of the third stanza seems to fold back on the whole foregoing psalm: the *thank-offering* counselled at the end of the second stanza, is now invested with the dignity of a standing proclamation of habitual truth; and whereas thankfulness appeared in vers. 14, 15 as only the beginning of a course which would end in glorifying God, it is now (ver. 23) said to be in itself a rendering of glory to the Divine Majesty. There is frequently a difficulty in suitably rendering in English the small Hebrew word *tam*, which Ginsberg here prefers to *sham* ("there") or *sam* ("put" or "place"). It means "wholeness," "completeness"; and so in some contexts may be translated "wholehearted," "devoted," "perfect." Perhaps, here, "consistent," "all-of-a-piece" sufficiently represents it. Taking the word *derek*, "way," as here equivalent to "way-of-life," "behaviour," and connecting the two, we get the simple and practical conception—which admirably folds back over this third stanza—*him who is consistent in behaviour*: who does not profess one thing and practise another, who does not uphold the national covenant in words and then deliberately break its great and vital commands one after another,—*him will I cause to view with delight the salvation of God*: a very remarkable ending. It is not: "he is already saved"—from the point of view of Hebrew twilight and imperfection, that could hardly be said. Besides, there may be a forward glance towards a great national deliverance. We know of some who were spared to view with delight *the salvation of God* when the Assyrians were overthrown; and who doubtless rang out the words, "Lo our God is this! We waited for him that he might save us,—This is Jehovah! We waited for him. Let us rejoice and exult in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9). And even the Christian may remind himself that as yet he is only "saved in hope"—that he yet "waits for the redemption of the body,"

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and "for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19). But to return for a moment to *him who is consistent in behaviour*, it is clear that he need not be a work-monger, or a self-righteous person; but that there are such things as "works meet for repentance"—that, though sincerity cannot save, yet there can be no saving without sincerity; that, in short, though the kingdom of heaven can only spring from the word of the kingdom, which is the seed, yet the very heart to receive that seed is the "noble and good" heart that feels its emptiness and poverty.

Into what historical situation does this psalm, by its terms and tenor, fit itself? It is the first of the psalms attributed *To Asaph*; but who was he? Was there a seer of that name in Hezekiah's days as well as one in David's? Dr. Thirtle (O.T.P., 91) thinks there was; but the evidence he submits does not appear conclusive. Yet he may be right; and the more we reflect on the inner elements of the situation revealed by this psalm, the more it identifies itself with the state of things known to have existed in Hezekiah's days. In David's time there may have been some formalism; but we have no ground to think there was any apostasy, even incipient; nor—to be quite candid—is formalism just the sin we should have charged on Israel in the days of David. But, in Hezekiah's time, there was not only rampant formalism, as Isaiah so pungently witnesses, but there was that sort of lawlessness which wavered in its adherence to the worship of Jehovah? That "villain" Rabshakeh doubtless appealed to faltering hearts in Israel. His bold plausibilities and blasphemies and insinuations were bearing fruit in some restive and resilient hearts. Gross corruption and practical atheism had eaten out the moral life of some places in Israel, as the fourteenth psalm disclosed to us. The *day of distress* was near; and some would soon need all the comfort derivable from the promise of *deliverance*. The day of secret apostasy had come. These elements constitute a situation which strikingly suits this psalm.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the theme or title of this psalm? Who is to be judged—by relating ourselves to Israel we shall learn *much* from this psalm.
2. Who is the judge? What are the two charges? (see verses 7-15 and 16-21).



## PSALM FIFTY AND FIFTY-ONE

3. Read verses 1-3 as introducing the judge. Vs. 4-6 as the opening of the judgment.
4. Who are the spectators at this trial?
5. Do you conclude that the first charge in this trial is *Formalism*? Just what is involved in this?—Is this a serious flaw?
6. God *wants* expressions of worship, but He *does not* need them for Himself—why are they given?
7. Read verses 14 and 15 as a description of the true worship of God. Cf. John 4:24.
8. To see just how far hypocrisy can go, read carefully verses 16-21. It is possible to speak against stealing and at the same time be a thief! Discuss the psychological development of this tragic condition.
9. What commandments of the ten commandments were taught against and then performed by the very ones who taught against them.
10. God did nothing while such open rebellion was practiced—how did these people interpret the silence of God? Cf. Rom. 2:1-4.

## PSALM 51

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Prayer of a Penitent.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Petitions for Pardon and Cleansing sustained by Confessions, Condemning Self and Vindicating God. Stanza II., vers. 5-9, In Further Pleading for Pardon, the Psalmist Confronts his own Deep Need and God's Just Requirements, passing on to Consenting Petitions and Petitions pure and simple. Stanza III., vers. 10-14, Petitions for Renewal, against Banishment and Deprivation, for Restoration and Upholding; urged, with Alternating Hopes and Fears. Stanza IV., vers. 15-19, Assured that Only his Divine Lord can open his Lips, the psalmist Depreciates Accustomed Sacrifices as Inadequate to meet his Own Desperate Case, but prays for Such Prosperity in behalf of Jerusalem as shall make Right Offerings Acceptable.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David—When Nathan the prophet went unto him, when he had gone in unto Bathsheba.

- 1 Be gracious unto me O God according to thy kindness,  
in the multitude of thy compassions blot out my  
transgressions;
- 2 Thoroughly wash me from mine iniquity,  
and from my sin make me pure.
- 3 For my transgressions I myself acknowledge,  
and my sin is before me continually:
- 4 Against thee only thee have I sinned,  
and that which is wicked in thy sight have I done,—  
That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest,  
be clear when thou enterest into judgment.
- 5 Lo! in iniquity was I born,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Lo! truth thou hast desired in the inward parts,  
and in the hidden part thou wouldst cause me to know  
wisdom.
- 7 Thou shalt<sup>1</sup> cleanse me from sin with hyssop that I may be  
pure  
thou shalt<sup>2</sup> wash me that I may be whiter than snow.
- 8 Thou shalt<sup>3</sup> satisfy<sup>3</sup> me with joy and gladness,—  
the bones thou hast crushed will exult.
- 9 Hide thy face from my sins,  
and all mine iniquities blot out.
- 10 A heart that is pure create<sup>4</sup> for me,<sup>5</sup>  
and a spirit that is steadfast renew.<sup>6</sup>
- 11 Do not cast me away from thy presence,  
and thy Holy Spirit do not take from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,  
and with a generous spirit shalt thou uphold me.
- 13 I would fain teach transgressors thy ways,  
and sinners unto thee would return.

1. Literally, "purge me with hyssop." See Exodus 12:22, Hebrews 9:18-22.

2. These verbs "thus give utterance to the psalmist's faith that God can and will restore him—Kp. We might almost call these "consenting petitions."

2. So *Gt.* Cp. 90:14—*Gn.*

4. Does not imply creation out of nothing—Br.,—true: "always used strictly of the creative power of God"—Pe.,—equally true. "The whole spiritual being of the man had fallen into chaos"—Pe. Yet in chaos are the elements which "the creative power of God" can turn into kosmos.

5. M.T. adds: "O God."

6. Or: "make anew." M.T. adds: "within me."

## PSALM FIFTY-ONE

- 14 Snatch me away from the guilt of bloodshed<sup>1</sup> O God,<sup>2</sup>  
my tongue will ring out thy righteousness.
- 15 Sovereign Lord! my lips shalt thou open,  
and my mouth will declare thy praise.
- 16 For thou wilt not delight<sup>3</sup> in peace-offering,<sup>4</sup>  
Ascending-sacrifice will not please:<sup>5</sup>
- 17 The peace-offerings of God are a spirit broken,—  
a heart broken and crushed<sup>6</sup>  
thou wilt not despise.<sup>7</sup>
- 18 Do good in thy favour unto Zion,  
thou shalt build the walls of Jerusalem:
- 19 Then wilt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness,<sup>7</sup>  
then shall ascend on thine altar young bulls.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 51

*(Written after Nathan the prophet had come to inform David of God's judgment against him because of his adultery with Bathsheba, and his murder of Uriah, her husband.)*

O loving and kind God, have mercy. Have pity upon me and take away the awful stain of my transgressions.

2 Oh, wash me, cleanse me from this guilt. Let me be pure again.

3 For I admit my shameful deed—it haunts me day and night.

4 It is against You and You alone I sinned, and did this terrible thing. You saw it all, and Your sentence against me is just.

5 But I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

1. Ml.: "from bloods." "Guilt of" seems necessarily implied; as neither "killing" nor "being killed" can be meant as something impending.

2. M.T. adds ("for emphasis"—Del.) "thou God of my salvation." Too long a line for Br., who conjectures "Yahweh" instead of "O God." The additional words are in both Sep. and Vul.

3. As futures, these verbs readily lend themselves to the restriction: "in my case."

4. M.T. adds: "that I should give it."

5. M.T. adds: "O God."

6. How natural, that friends of the injured should "despise" a repentance which, however sincere, could never be the restoration of innocence and life.

7. M.T. adds: "ascending-sacrifices and entire-offerings."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

6 You deserve honesty from the heart; yes, utter sincerity and truthfulness. Oh, give me this wisdom.

7 Sprinkle me with the cleansing blood<sup>1</sup> and I shall be clean again. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 And after You have punished me, give me back my joy again.

9 Don't keep looking at my sins—erase them from Your sight.

10 Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires.

11 Don't toss me aside, banished forever from Your presence. Don't take Your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me again the joy of Your salvation, and make me willing to obey You.

13 Then I will teach Your ways to other sinners, and they—guilty like me—will repent and return to You.

14, 15 Don't sentence me to death. O my God, You alone can rescue me. Then I will sing of Your forgiveness,<sup>2</sup> for my lips will be unsealed—oh, how I will praise You.

16 You don't want penance;<sup>3</sup> if You did, how gladly I would do it! You aren't interested in offerings burned before You on the altar.

17 It is a broken spirit You want—remorse and penitence. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not ignore.

18 And Lord, don't punish Israel for my sins—help Your people and protect Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

19 And when my heart is right,<sup>5</sup> then You will rejoice in the good that I do<sup>6</sup> and in the bullocks I bring to sacrifice upon Your altar.

## EXPOSITION

The lesson of the First Psalm is, Blessed is the man who has not sinned. The lesson of the Thirty Second, is, Blessed is the man who, though he has sinned, has been forgiven. The lesson of this psalm is, That the removal of sin by pardon and purification is so difficult, that none but God can accomplish it. This ultimate lesson is here so taught as to make it deeply impressive.

1. Literally, "purge me with hyssop." See Exodus 12:22, Hebrews 9:18-22.

2. Literally, "righteousness."

3. Literally, "a sacrifice."

4. Literally, "Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem."

5. Implied.

6. Literally, "then you will delight in the sacrifice of righteousness."

## PSALM FIFTY-ONE

There is in this psalm no cheap promise of amendment—in fact no promise at all, until, by every form of supplication, God himself has been importuned to grant deliverance from the condemnation and stain and power of sin.

Of all the one hundred and fifty Psalms, this is pre-eminently *the Penitential Psalm*. There are others; but this is the chief. In fact, throughout all the Bible, this prayer for pardon stands pre-eminently. It is all prayer, and its prayer is so personal, so comprehensive, so sustained, that it naturally serves for all time as a fund of feeling and storehouse of words, to help all petitioners who are craving for pardon at the hands of Infinite Love. It includes no fewer than seventeen distinct petitions, two of which are repeated, so as to total nineteen; and these are urged with great fulness and urgency of pleading. Many of the petitions are winged with considerations which at once embolden the petitioner and present pleas for a favourable answer: *according to thy kindness—in the multitude of thy compassions—that I may be pure—that I may be whiter than snow*; coming down to physical results, *the bones thou hast crushed will exult*; going out to the good of others, *sinner unto thee would return*.

The STRUCTURE of the psalm is worth notice. After the historical *occasion*, which the whole psalm sustains, the petitioner leads off with four petitions, the first general, then three specific, touching *transgressions, iniquity, sin*. These are followed by frank *confession*, the psalmist condemning himself, and vindicating his Divine Judge, before whom he feels himself to be arraigned; succeeded by two *discoveries* (*lo! lo!*) both of which form an aggravation of the condition of the suppliant—he comes of a corrupted stock, and has to do with a God whose requirements are exacting. He is thus driven back to *petitions* for Divine mercy and help as his only hope, three of which are “consenting petitions”—*thou shalt cleanse, wash, satisfy*, which have all the appearance of being a laying hold of promises expressed or implied, and an accepting of the Divine method of restoration; the two remaining petitions being the bare imperatives of urgency—*Hide, blot out*.

Having devoted two stanzas (twenty lines) mainly to entreaties for pardon, the psalmist now goes more deeply into the need for renewal. His need is for a *heart*—mind, inner man—that is *pure* from the trail and stain of sin; and for a *spirit*—a directing inward energy—that is *constant* in its action, in holding him unwaveringly to the higher ends of life. The supply of a

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need so deep must come from God: the offender has no hope in himself. Hence his prayer: *create, renew or make anew*. The precise nature of such Divine action need not preplex us. It may be said, that to re-create a man is a greater work than to create him. And yet, if creation itself does not necessarily include the production of new material, but rather the new disposal and fashioning of the old, as the history of *bara'* plainly shows (see especially Num. 16); much more must it be so in re-creation, which is the new fashioning of the same man, and not the making of another independent being. Personal identity *must* remain. But herein lies the supreme wonder of the new creation—that with the preservation of personal identity, should be harmonised the new fashioning of its moral character. To remember the sin of the past, and yet no longer to feel its fascination: this is indeed a wonderful thing. To own responsibility for the past, and yet no longer to dread capital punishment: this is another wonder, equally great. Both wonders demand the creative energy of God for their production.

Probably this is no mere academical discussion; although, it must be owned, that the succeeding deprecatory petitions of the psalmist form links with a better past than with most men can be assumed to have existed; for it is much to be feared that heaven does *not* lie about *all* human beings in their infancy. The psalmist, at any rate, knew what it was to live in God's *presence*; hence his prayer not to be *cast away from* it: knew what it was to possess God's *Holy Spirit*; hence his cry not to be *bereft* of it: knew by experience *the joy of God's salvation* hence his entreaty to have it *restored* to him. And doubtless this happier past colours all he has yet to say: suggests the *generous* care for others which flows therefrom, which *would fain teach transgressors* the right way, and would work for them with a hope of inducing them also to *return*. But now suddenly starts up a spectre—the horrible spectre of conscious *blood-guiltiness*. It is as though in the realm of the spirit could be seen a Blood-Avenger in hot pursuit. *Snatch me away*, he cries, to God himself. Nothing so vivid could have sprung to a brave man's lips as to any of the ordinary dangers of war; and of any feeling of revenge, moving to the shedding of any other man's blood, there is certainly no trace in this psalm. Hence we are psychologically compelled to endorse the avowed occasion of the psalm which stands at its head. It is not surprising that the psalmist should reveal his assurance that such a display of Divine mercy would

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be sure to result in a public outburst of thankfulness,—an assurance well vindicated by the composition of Ps. 32, which was evidently written after this; but the wonder is, that God's *righteousness* should be signalised as the Divine attribute to be celebrated. Had he here written, "My tongue will ring out thy COMPASSION," we should not have been surprised; but *righteousness*! that is another matter, and demands thought; for the great demonstration of Divine rectitude, even when forgiving offenders, had not then been displayed (Rom. 3:25, 26). Still, of course, it is *right* that God should exercise his *right* to forgive. He will not, cannot, exercise it wrongfully. It is well that we should at least see how thorough was this offender's repentance.

The *opening* of David's *lips* is instructive; for they had doubtless been significantly closed, first in obstinacy (32:3), and then in shame. Now that they are opened once more, it is to good purpose. The Levitical sacrifices were never intended to cover wilful and flagrant sin. David ought to have been cut off from among his people. His double crime richly deserved it. But then, who could set the law in motion against him? He could only be left in the hands of that Heavenly Lord whose vicegerent he himself was; and if He, in loving severity, had already been chastising him, as from several psalms (such as 32, 38, 39) we have seen reason to believe was the case,—who are WE that we should wish to stay the hand of Divine Mercy? Admitting all this, it is fitting that we should see how little disposed the Royal Penitent was to daub with untempered mortar his own desperate case; which he would have been doing, had he piled up animal sacrifices to atone for his awful guilt. Of unspeakably more worth than they, for the purpose of restoring fellowship with God, was that offering which David had left him to render,—the presentation of a *broken spirit*,— of a *broken and crushed heart*. These, *men* might *despise*—excusably despise, but David's merciful God would know how to value them, as being in fact beyond all price. It is any great wonder that, for such a truly humbled spirit, there should come a rebound? that the feet of a man thus uplifted out of the abysses of degradation and despair should already show signs of being consciously placed on a rock (40:2)? Hence we need not restort, with many critics, to the hypothesis of a later origin for the conclusion of this psalm. With Dr. Briggs, we prefer to regard the psalm as a consistent whole; only, unlike him, we cannot for a moment think that in the first instance this penitent suppliant was a nation: the

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conscience of a nation, though not to be despised, is a very conglomerate product, compared with an individual conscience with such exquisitely delicate folds in it as this which quivers and groans and is made glad in this psalm. In any case, the walls of Jerusalem were as yet unfinished, as the history plainly shows (1 K. 3:1); and it seems like a natural outburst of patriotism that the true worth of the Temple ritual should now at length come into the view of the better self of that King David whom we otherwise know to have been so profoundly interested in the orderly ritual worship of Jehovah his God.

There are still a few words and phrases scattered throughout this precious psalm, which will repay us for a parting recognition. The reader is presumably familiar with the words *transgression*, *iniquity*, *sin* here used, as "meaning respectively, (1) defection from God or rebellion against Him: (2) the perversion of right, depravity of conduct: (3) error, wandering from the right way, missing the mark in life"—Kp. The phrases to express the removal of sin are also worthy of note: (1) *blot out*, twice employed (vers. 1, 9), which regards sin as a debt recorded in God's book which needs to be erased or cancelled—who then can cancel it but God? (2) *wash*, which it is remarkable properly applies to clothes, yielding the profound suggestion, that no mere skin-deep cleansing meets the sinner's case; but that, as garments become ingrained with filth, so the very fibers of our minds become defiled, so that a process of much treading and rinsing is needed to detach and remove sin therefrom—again who can thus "wash" but God? (3) *cleanse*, for which we lack a literal rendering in English, seeing that the Hebrew word is an intensification of the verb "to miss the mark," or "lose," or "sin," and we have no such word as *unsin*, which Edersheim suggests. (4) To render *pure*, physically, ceremonially, morally—the Levitical association of this and the foregoing with the removal of leprosy, being another profound suggestion, calling to mind the corroding and contaminating and generally loathsome nature of that which has to be removed. (5) But perhaps the association of *hyssop* with the process of "unsinuing," is most striking of all—far more significant than would at first sight appear. Hyssop is "a well-known aromatic plant which grows on walls (1 K. 5:13); and when bound in bunches serves as a brush or fan in sacred sprinklings (Exo. 12:22; Lev. 14:4-6, 49, 51)." Its significance lies in the fact that, when employed in ceremonial sprinkling, it was always closely or remotely connected with blood-shedding;



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closely, when dipped in blood (Exo. 12:22) or in blood and water (Lev. 14:6, 7, 49-52), remotely though not less really when dipped in the water of separation (Num. 19); when thus remotely then even the more impressively, as furnishing the singular idea of sacrifice perpetuated any length of time, and individually applied to any person or thing. It is surely remarkable, that in this very psalm in which the penitent declares the inapplicability of animal sacrifices to his case, he should nevertheless employ terms so intimately bound up with the sacrificial system. This, at least, may be said: that when a Christian intelligently rejoices that his "heart has been sprinkled from an evil conscience," his gladness is intensified by the realisation of an individual bringing home to him of an offering made once for all away in the past whose efficacy has not yet been lost. This survey of the sacrificial and cleansing terms employed in this psalm, especially as bringing leprosy into view, may perhaps throw a welcome sidelight on the word "righteousness, which rather puzzled us when we came across it in our general survey of this psalm. "Righteousness," as faithfulness to promise, we can easily understand; but had God then ever promised the forgiveness of deadly sin to David? In literal explicitness—no: by gracious construction of his plighted word—yes! In his covenant with David by the mouth of Nathan the prophet concerning David's descendants (2 Sam. 7) Jehovah had promised never to remove his kindness from David as he had removed it from Saul. If his sons should commit iniquity—alas! the father himself has done that now: Jehovah would correct them with the rod of men—David is even yet smarting under that rod: and with the stripes, the plague-strokes, or leprosy-strokes, of the sons of common men—even these we have already seen have not been withheld from David. What a mercy! David himself has thus been brought within the very terms of the covenant formulated for his sons. And now, if God will only answer David's outcry for mercy: that mercy will be the *righteousness* which fulfills the Divine word to the letter:—

*My tongue will ring out thy righteousness!*

Righteous in smiting—righteous in sparing: a covenant-keeping God is Jehovah "the Becoming One," who thus "becometh" the gracious interpreter of his own covenant; so as to treasure up unlooked-for grace, and, when unveiling it, shewing it to be at the same time unsullied *righteousness*.

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One thought more. David—as we have seen—had enjoyed the presence of the Holy Spirit, or he could not have prayed, *Take it not from me*. Was that Spirit, not hallowing, as well as illuminating and revealing? Can we really enter into the undercurrent of this psalm, without perceiving that a hallowing Divine Presence had lain at the roots of the writer's spiritual life; without recognising that this anxious petitioner is craving, not only again to sing psalms, but also and mainly to live a pure life? By how much soever this is clear, by so much also must it be clear that the Evangelist spoke *comparatively* when he said (Jn. 7:39) that the Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified. If then the inward presence of the Holy Spirit meant so much to David, how much more, as a dynamic working out righteousness, ought it not to be to ourselves unto whom the ages have reached forth their gifts!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the one essential lesson of this psalm?
2. Rotherham says there are no fewer than seventeen distinct petitions in this psalm. Find them and list them—how many of them express your own need?
3. There are qualities in our Lord which give us boldness at the throne of grace. Name three mentioned in this psalm.
4. As to the structure of this psalm: there are four petitions—a “frank confession”, and two “discoveries”, and finally three more petitions called “consenting petitions”, and then two imperative petitions. Please, please for your own soul's development: work out this structure for yourself.
5. In this tragic sin there is a desperate need for “renewal”—what two elements of man must be re-created? How is this to be done? Please note the wonder of it all.
6. David lost two or three wonderful possessions that he sadly missed and wanted back—name at least two of them.
7. David was “blood guilty”—what does this mean?
8. Oh, that we could believe with David that God is the one who sees and knows all we do and therefore cannot be unfair in judgment—how shall we develop this capacity?
9. Define: “transgression”; “blot out”; “wash”; “cleanse”.
10. Define: “pure”; the use of “hyssop”; “righteousness” as used of God to David.

## PSALM FIFTY-TWO

### PSALM 52

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Doeg the Edomite Denounced.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers 1-5, Doeg Remonstrated with, Described, and Threatened.  
Stanza II., vers. 6-9, The Laugh of the Righteous over him.

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(Lm.) Instructive-psalm—By David—When Doeg the Edomite entered and told Saul and said to him, David entered the house of Ahimelek.

- 1 Why wilt thou boast thee in wickedness O mighty man all the day?<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Engulfing ruin thou devisest—thy tongue is like a whetted razor.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 Thou lovest evil rather than good—falsehood than righteousness.
- 4 Thou lovest all devouring words—O<sup>3</sup> deceitful tongue!
- 5 God also will pull thee down—for ever snatch thee away, will pluck thee up tentless—and uproot thee out of the land of the living.
- 6 So will the righteous both see and revere—and over him will laugh:—
- 7 “Lo! the mighty man<sup>4</sup> who made not God his stronghold, But trusted in the abundance of his riches—was strong in his wealth!”
- 8 But I am like a luxuriant olive-tree in the house of God. I have put my trust in the kindness of God to the ages and beyond.
- 9 I will thank thee to the ages that thou didst effectually work,
  1. M.T.: “the kindness of God all the day.” Sep.: “lawlessness all the day.”
  2. M.T. adds: “O thou worker of deception”—Dr.
  3. So Per.; others—“a” or “the deceitful tongue.”
  4. Vocalised as in ver. 1.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

I will proclaim<sup>1</sup> thy name that it is good, before thy men of kindness.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For Dancings.<sup>2</sup>

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 52

*Written by David to protest against his enemy Doeg (I Samuel 22), who later slaughtered 85 priests and their families.*

You call yourself a hero, do you? You boast about this evil deed of yours against God's people.<sup>3</sup>

2 You are sharp as a tack in plotting your evil tricks.

3 How you love wickedness—far more than good! And lying more than truth!

4 You love to slander—you love to say anything that will do harm, O man with the lying tongue!

5 But God will strike you down and pull you from your home, and drag you away from the land of the living.

6 The followers of God will see it happen. They will watch in awe. Then they will laugh and say,

7 "See what happens to those who despise God and trust in their wealth, and become ever more bold in their wickedness."<sup>4</sup>

8 But I am like a sheltered olive tree protected by the Lord Himself. I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.

9 O Lord, I will praise You forever and ever for Your punishment.<sup>5</sup> And I will wait for Your mercies—for everyone knows what a merciful God You are.

### EXPOSITION

It would be a fair inference from the superscription of this psalm alone, that there *was* a man of the name of Doeg, bearing the character here described, when David wrote this psalm. But seeing that, in I Sam. 21:7, 22:9-19, we find a man of that name, evidently capable of the baseness here attributed to him, there is

1. *Gt.*: "utter" or "proclaim." *M.T.*: "wait on."

2. So Thirtle, reading *meholoth* instead of *mahalath*.

3. Literally, "the lovingkindness of God continually."

4. Literally, "strengthened himself in his wickedness."

5. Literally, "because You have done it."

## PSALM FIFTY-TWO

no excuse for declining the identification. By some, indeed, it has been regarded as a matter of surprise, that the psalmist should go no further than notice Doeg's mischievous tongue, and should not also have alluded to his atrocious cruelty in slaying the priests of Nob. This difficulty is removed by pushing the writing of the psalm just far enough back to make way for the easy supposition—which the very wording of this superscription favours—that Doeg privately gave Saul the information about David, before he publicly proclaimed it in the presence of all Saul's servants. He *entered* and told Saul, before he openly proclaimed it. Doeg was overheard; and David informed of this private communication. That hypothesis exactly meets the case. It is to be observed from David's words to Abiathar on receiving from him the news of the massacre (1 Sam. 22:22) that he already knew enough of Doeg's character, to be at once apprehensive when he met him at Nob that he would go and tell Saul. The spirit of prophecy at once seized David and moved him to write as he here does. To the known facts may be added two expressions in the psalm itself slightly confirmatory of its superscriptional origin. Doeg was a foreigner, but had *not* come, like Ruth (2:12), to take *refuge* under the wings of the God of Israel. The tabernacle was at this time at Nob, which "was thè nòrthern summit of Olivet, a mountain which derived its name from the olives and olive-yards with which it once was clothed"—Per. Hence with peculiar aptness the psalmist says: *But I am like a luxuriant olive-tree in the house of God.*

Of the psalm itself, there remains little to be said. By its pointed denunciation of a particular man, it comes into line with Isaiah's denunciation of Shebna (Isa. 22) and Jeremiah's denunciation of Passhur (Jer. 20) and of Hananiah (Jer. 28).

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Since this is a psalm given over to a denunciation and description of one man—it will be essential that the reader know him. Read I Samuel 21:7—22:22.
2. Why not mention the slaughter of the priests?
3. What specific punishment did God promise Doeg?
4. Why is the reference to the olive tree especially appropriate?
5. Doeg can teach us a good lesson—what is it?

# STUDIES IN PSALMS

## PSALM 53, 54

### PSALM 53

(Lm.) An Instructive-psalm—By David.

(N.B.—For Title, Analysis and Exposition of this psalm, see Psalm 14, with which this psalm is practically identical—this being an Elohist recension of that.)

- 1 Said a vile person in his heart—"No God here!"  
their conduct is corrupt their practice abominable there is  
no well-doer!
- 2 God out of the heavens looked down over the sons of men,  
to see whether there was one that shewed understanding in  
seeking after God:—
- 3 "The whole have turned aside drawn back<sup>1</sup> together become  
tainted:  
there is no well-doer there is not so much as one!"
- 4 Have not<sup>2</sup> the workers of iniquity<sup>3</sup> learned anything?—  
devourers of my people!  
they have devoured food God<sup>4</sup> have they not invoked!
- 5 There dreaded they a dread, when God scattered them,  
their plan was put to shame, when God rejected them.<sup>5</sup>
- 6 Oh that out of Zion were granted the deliverances<sup>6</sup> of Israel!  
When God<sup>7</sup> restoreth the prosperity<sup>8</sup> of his people  
let Jacob exult let Israel be glad.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) With stringed instruments.

1. So Br., uniting the two verbs found, the one in 14:3 and the other in 53:3.

2. In some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "none of": cp. Ps. 14:4—Gn.

3. "Naughtiness"—Dr.

4. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.): "Jehovah"—Gn.

5. So Br., as in 14:5, 6:

There dreaded they a dread—there was no dread!

for God had scattered the bones of the besieger.

Thou hadst put him to shame for God had rejected them.

6. Or: "great salvation" (pl. intensive). In some cod. (w. Sep., Syr.): "salvation" (sing.). Cp. Ps. 14:7, G. Intro., 148.

7. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr.): "Jehovah." Cp. 14:7—Gn.

8. So Br., also O.G. 986, esp. Ps. 126:1, 4.

## PSALM FIFTY-THREE AND FIFTY-FOUR

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 53

Only a fool would say to himself, "There is no God." And why does he say it?<sup>1</sup> Because of his wicked heart, his dark and evil deeds. His life is corroded with sin.

2 God looks down from heaven, searching among all mankind to see if there is a single one who does right and really seeks for God.

3 But all have turned their backs on Him; they are filthy with sin—corrupt and rotten through and through. Not one is good, not one!

4 How can this be? Can't they understand anything? For they devour My people like bread and refuse to come to God.

5 But soon unheard-of terror will fall on them. God will scatter the bones of these, your enemies! They are doomed, for God has rejected them.

6 Oh, that God would come from Zion now and save Israel! Only when the Lord Himself restores them can they ever be really happy again.

## P S A L M 54

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Prayer Prompted by the Hostile Action of the Zephites.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers 1, 2, Prayer for Salvation and Vindication; supported by a *Refrain*, ver. 3, describing the psalmist's Enemies. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, Coming Help Welcomed and its Effects Anticipated. Stanza III., vers. 6, 7, Willing Sacrifice Promised and Thanks Formulated.

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(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By David—When the Ziphites entered and said to Saul, "Is not David hiding himself with us?"

1 O God by thy name save me,  
yea by thy heroic strength shalt thou vindicate me.

1. Implied.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 O God hear thou my prayer,  
Do give ear to the sayings of my mouth.
- 3 For aliens<sup>1</sup> have arisen against me,  
and ruthless ones have sought my life:<sup>2</sup>  
they have not set God before them.<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Lo! God is bringing help to me,  
my Sovereign Lord is among the upholders of my life.<sup>4</sup>
- 5 Let him turn back the mischief upon my watchful foes,  
in thy truth exterminate them.
- 6 Willingly will I sacrifice unto thee,  
I will thank thy name<sup>5</sup>—"For he is good ;
- 7 For out of every distress hath he rescued me,  
and on my foes hath gazed mine eye."

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm). With stringed instruments.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 54

*Written by David at the time the men of Ziph tried to betray him to Saul.*

Come with great power," O God, and save me! Defend me with Your might!

2 Oh, listen to my prayer.

3 For violent men have arisen against me—ruthless men who care nothing for God are seeking my life.

4 But God is my helper! He is a friend of mine!

5 He will cause the evil deeds of my enemies to boomerang upon them. Do as You promised and put an end to these wicked men, O God.

6 Gladly I bring my sacrifices to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good.

7 God has rescued me from all my trouble, and triumphed over my enemies.

1. Some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Aram.): "insolent men." Cp. Ps. 86:14—Gn.

2. U.: "soul." Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

3. "Whoever at that time in Israel feared God more than man could not have made himself the instrument of the blind fury of Saul. God had already plainly enough acknowledged David"—Del.

4. U.: "soul."

5. M.T.: "Jehovah"—not in Sep.

6. Literally, "Your name."

7. Literally, "The Lord is of them that uphold my soul."



## PSALM FIFTY-THREE AND FIFTY-FOUR

### EXPOSITION

It is easy to see how psalm-collectors would be unwilling to let these little personal snatches of song die, and equally obvious how in after times these minor compositions could be adapted to occasions bearing some similarity to those which gave them birth. The wonder is, not that they found their way into the psalm-books of Israel, but that they were ever originated under the romantic circumstances which their superscriptions set forth. Yet it would be an irreparable loss to the history of revelation if we were to allow our wonder to land us in scepticism. Rather ought we to say:—This is the sort of man David was—at least in his unsullied youth and young manhood, while yet waiting for the kingdom: hunted, fleeing, hard-pressed, deceived by men who acted as spies and informers, circumvented at the royal headquarters by hirelings and foreigners and envious old companions now turned traitors; yet all the while maintaining his faith in his Divinely given destiny, cast down by fresh troubles, cheered by new mercies; discovering in a loving message from Jonathan, or in the arrival of a few fresh adherents tokens that *God was bringing him help*, that his *Sovereign Lord was among the upholders of his life*—not, of course, as one upholder among many, but chief mover and upholder of them all.

As for these officious Ziphites, we know too little of them to say much. The inhabitants of a little town fifteen miles to the southeast of Hebron,—though within the bounds of Judah, may very well have included some influential men of *alien* birth or at least of *insolent* disposition; and as for *tyrants*, there may have been several at Court, like Doeg and Cush, deserving of that name; among whom the writer may have mentally included the arch-tyrant Saul himself, though not more pointedly alluding to him.

The more thoroughly we enter into David's especial circumstances, the more easily shall we be able to see how naturally—nay almost inevitably—he could only conceive of the removal of such enemies from a kingdom over which he was to reign, by looking forward to their *extermination*. Even Israel as a nation might afterwards feel justified in appropriating the same language, without excusing Christians from the supreme duty of forgiving their enemies. “The ‘salvation’ for which the psalmist prays is a temporal deliverance, which can only be effected at

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

the expense of the implacable enemies who are seeking his life; and it will be a vindication of God's faithfulness and a proof of His righteous government at which he cannot but rejoice"—Kp.

"The perfect tense" *hath rescued, hath looked*, "looks back from the hour of thanksgiving upon an answered prayer"—Kp. as also Per.; and therefore in the above rendering these clauses have been included in the quotation marks.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Give some possible explanation as to why psalm 53 and 14 are practically identical.
2. The paraphrase of 53:1 seems to suggest that the reason some deny God is because an admission of Him would interfere with the kind of life they want to live—is this a common cause for infidelity? Discuss.
3. Are we to understand from 53:2, 3 that among the aborigine races of the world that there is not one earnest sincere seeker after God among them? Discuss.
4. Verse 5 of the 53rd psalm is difficult of interpretation—it is different than the 5th verse of the 14th. Read the K.J. translation—How do you interpret it?
5. David was in a very real personal, physical peril at the hands of the Ziphites—is God to be called upon on such occasions or does He not feel we should use our own so called "common sense" and get out of such positions of peril? Discuss.
6. Here is a quote from an ecclesiastical commentary: "The church has taken a clear view in appointing this one of the Psalms (the 54th) in commemoration of the passion of Jesus. It is seen with greatest effect as a simple prophecy of Christ"—there surely is a danger in so interpreting this psalm or any other portion of scripture. What is the danger? Discuss.

## PSALM 55

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Bitter Complaint of the Treachery of an Intimate Friend.

## PSALM FIFTY-FIVE

### ANALYSIS

(Of the Psalm as Reconstructed.)

Stanza I., vers. 1-7, Invocation of God under great Nervous Excitement, leading to a Desire to Escape like a Dove. Stanza II., vers. 8, 16-19, Refuge sought in Prayer for Personal Deliverance and for the Punishment of Traitors. Stanza III., vers. 12-14, 20, 21, Vivid Delineation of Treacherous Friend. Stanza IV., vers. 9-11, 15, 23a, b, Graphic Picture of Civic Disorders and Terrible Imprecations on the Authors of them. Stanza V., vers. 22, 23c, The Psalmist Admonishes Himself and Regains his Confidence in Jehovah.

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(Lm.) An Instructive-psalm—By David.

- 1 Do give ear O God to my prayer—  
and do not hide thyself from my supplication:
- 2 Do attend to me and answer me—  
I may wander<sup>1</sup> in my murmuring<sup>2</sup> and may moan—
- 3 At the voice of an enemy—  
because of the pressure<sup>3</sup> of a lawless one;  
For they keep dislodging<sup>4</sup> on me trouble—<sup>5</sup>  
and in anger bear me a grudge.
- 4 My heart continues writhing within me—  
and terrors of death have fallen upon me:
- 5 Fear and trembling ever and anon enter me—  
and there overwhelmeth me a shudder and I say:—
- 6 "Would that I had pinions like a dove—  
I would fly away and settle down:
- 7 Lo! afar would I flee—  
I would lodge in a wilderness."
- 8 I would await a deliverer for me—<sup>6</sup>  
from rushing wind from storm:
- 16 I unto God would cry—  
and Jehovah should save me;
- 17 Evening and morning and noon—  
would I murmur and moan:—<sup>7</sup>

1. Or: "shew restlessness."

2. Or: "soliloquy."

3. *Gt.*: "outcry." O.G. 734 prefer "pressure."

4. Or: "letting fall."

5. Or: "iniquity."

6. So Sep. On marginal notation of verses, see Exposition.

7. M.T. adds: "that he might hear my voice."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 18 "Ransom thou in peace my soul—  
that none may approach me;<sup>1</sup>  
for in multitudes have they come—  
who are against me."
- 19 May GOD hear who aforetime sat enthroned,  
and may he humble them<sup>2</sup> who have no reliefs—<sup>3</sup>  
since they revere not God.
- 12 For it is not an enemy who keeps reproaching me—  
or I might bear it;  
Nor one who had been hating me who against me hath  
magnified himself—  
or I could hide myself from him;
- 13 But thou a man mine equal—  
mine associate and mine intimate,—
- 14 So that together we were wont to find sweet counsel—  
in the house of God used we to walk in the throng.
- 20 He hath thrust forth his hand against them who were wont  
to salute him—  
hath violated his covenant:
- 21 Smoother than curds was his face—<sup>4</sup>  
yet war was in his heart;  
Softer were his words than oil—  
yet they were drawn swords!
- 9 Confuse Sovereign Lord divide their tongue,  
for I have seen Violence and Strife in the city;
- 10 Day and night they go round on her walls,  
and Trouble<sup>5</sup> and Mischief are in her midst,—
- 11 Engulfing ruin is in her midst,  
and there depart not from the broad place (within her gate<sup>6</sup>)  
Oppression and Deceit.
- 15 Desolations<sup>7</sup> on them! let them go down to hades alive<sup>8</sup>!  
for wicked doings have their dwelling place within them.

1. Cp. O.G. 897b.

2. So nearly—Gn. and Dr. (note).

3. Or: "changes."

4. So Br. after Sep.

5. "Naughtiness"—Dr.

6. Where the court of justice usually sat, and where Justice and Truth should have been conspicuous.

7. Or (dividing one word into two): "May death pounce on them." Then, as if recalling that wish to make it stronger: "Let them go down," etc.

8. Cp. Num. 16:30, 33.

## PSALM FIFTY-FIVE

- 23 But thou O God! bring them down to the well of the pit:  
men of bloodshed and deceit let them not live out half their  
days!
- 22 Cast on Jehovah thy lot, and he will sustain thee:  
he will not suffer to the ages that a righteous man be shaken.  
I therefore will trust in thee O Jehovah!<sup>1</sup>

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the dove of the distant terebinths.<sup>2</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 55

Listen to my prayer, O God; don't hide Yourself when I cry  
to You!

2 Hear me, Lord! Listen to me! For I groan and weep  
beneath my woe.

3 My enemies shout against me and threaten me with death.  
They surround me with terror and plot to kill me. Their fury  
and hatred rise to engulf me.

4 My heart is in anguish within me. Stark fear overpowers  
me.

5 Trembling and horror overwhelm me.

6 Oh, for wings like a dove, to fly away and rest!

7 I would fly to the far off deserts and stay there.

8 I would flee to some refuge from all this storm.

9 O Lord, make these enemies begin to quarrel among them-  
selves—destroy them with their own violence and strife.<sup>3</sup>

10 Though they patrol their walls night and day against  
invaders, their real problem is internal—wickedness and dis-  
honesty are entrenched in the heart of the city.

11 There is murder and robbery there, and cheating in the  
markets and everywhere one looks.

\* \* \* \* \*

12 It was not an enemy who taunted me—then I could have  
borne it; I could have hidden and escaped.

13 But it was you, a man like myself, my companion and  
my friend.

1. In Sep.: "kyrie."

2. See Intro., Chap. I., Obs. 3, "Fourthly."

3. Literally, "for I have seen violence and strife in the city."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

14 What fellowship we had, what wonderful discussions as we walked together to the Temple of the Lord on holy days.

\* \* \* \* \*

15 Let death seize them and cut them down in their prime, for there is sin in their homes, and they are polluted to the depths of their souls.

16 But I will call upon the Lord to save me—and He will.

17 I will pray morning, noon and night pleading aloud with God; and He will hear and answer.

18 Though the tide of battle runs strongly against me, for so many are fighting me, yet He will rescue me.

19 God Himself—God from everlasting ages past—will answer them! For they refuse to fear Him or even honor His commands.

\* \* \* \* \*

20 This friend of mine betrayed me—I who was at peace with him. He broke his promises.

21 His words were oily smooth, but in his heart was war. His words were sweet, but underneath were daggers.

\* \* \* \* \*

22 Give your burdens to the Lord. He will carry them. He will not permit the godly to slip or fall.

23 He will send my enemies to the pit of destruction. Murderers and liars will not live out half their days. But I am trusting You to have me.

## EXPOSITION

The abrupt transitions observable in this psalm seem to have been noticed by all expositors, by some of whom dislocation has been suspected and transpositions accordingly proposed. It is comparatively easy to *translate* fragments, though always with risks due to losing the thread; but, in the present case, as soon as a resolute attempt was made at continuous *interpretation*, the irresistible conclusion was brought home that some ACCIDENT must have happened in the early history of this psalm, as violent as that which may be expected to result from the tearing out of a leaf and its re-insertion in the wrong place. Such readers as cannot be induced to believe that such an accident might happen, can restore the psalm to its traditional form by following the marginal notation of verses; and by the same means open-minded critics can trace and test the endeavour here made to

## PSALM FIFTY-FIVE

present the psalm in an intelligible and profitable shape. Perfect success is not claimed for the result; but it is hoped that the candid will at least benefit by the endeavour now made—an endeavour reluctantly begun and cautiously executed.

The problems confronted by the exposition of this psalm on its merits, become absorbingly interesting in proportion as they are understood. It is possible that David wrote this psalm? and if he did, what light is thrown on the events of his reign, additional to that which is obtainable elsewhere? For some, indeed, the bare fact of the ascription of this psalm *To David* will be conclusive evidence that he wrote it. Others there are, who, while regarding that fact as presumptive evidence of the Davidic authorship, are not at all disinclined to the testing of such presumption by internal evidence; and at least are prepared to give a candid consideration to any difficulties which can be legitimately shewn to stand in the way of such conclusion. There seems to be a general consent that *if* David wrote the Psalm, then AHITHOPHEL, his counsellor, must have been the treacherous friend who is so vividly portrayed in it. But then it is said by some, that a king could never have so emphatically called his servant his *equal*. Surely those who raise this objection underestimate the generosity of David's nature; and assuming, as we must, that David's counsellor was an exceedingly able man, and believing, as we well may, that he had until lately readily promoted the public interests which he knew lay near his master's heart, it is easy to think that the more David's' kingly position put a distance between himself and many of his subjects, the more would his heart be drawn out to the gifted man whose counsels he had learned to prize. The difficulty then may be dismissed as imaginary. A far more plausible objection may be based on the unlikelihood that David could ever have written of Jerusalem in such terms as are here employed of the city in which the psalmist finds himself—especially considering David's undoubted responsibility for the condition of the city. "It is difficult to believe, says Kirkpatrick with great force, "that Jerusalem can have been such a hotbed of discord and disorder and iniquity as the psalm describes; and still more difficult to imagine that David should use the language of this psalm in regard to a state of things for which he was largely responsible." The great responsibility of David in such a case no one can question. Whether, *if* such a deplorable state of things existed, David would have been likely so frankly to confess it, is a

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

psychological problem depending for its solution on the play of some of the most subtle capabilities of the human heart. If we can imagine, as we readily may, that the unhappy king was now in a state of mind predisposed to make a clean breast of everything, and at least to look the ugliest facts full in the face; then, even though he is not now consciously weighing his own responsibility, but rather inclining to dwell on the responsibility of others, we may credit him with the *rising courage* to abate nothing of the truth, and therefore to give frank expression to his convictions, however appalling. Besides, all that was noblest in David's ideals of what Jerusalem ought to be, and all that he had to be most proud of in his past endeavours to bring her up to those ideals, would now tend to make him—if otherwise in a likely state of mind—a severe critic of Jerusalem's present condition. So that the only serious question we have to confront is whether Jerusalem's moral condition was in *as bad a way* (or nearly as bad, allowing something for unconscious exaggeration, due to morbid apprehensions) as is so forcibly set forth in this psalm. Alas! it may. The evidence is growing upon us—that it may. The connected study of foregoing psalms has been gradually preparing us to perceive the alarming possibility—that it may. What are the principal factors of the situation? They are these. David has for years been the chief judge in Jerusalem; and he has now for a good long while been neglecting his judicial duties. His people have grown used vainly to look for him in the gate of the city. Grievances and wrongs have been unredressed. Justice delayed has been justice denied. Unvisited offences have fast begotten others, and worse. The chief judge absent, his subordinaes have grown remiss. Even Kirkpatrick admits that "David's administration of justice seems to have been lax or inadequate (2 Sam. 15:2ff.). A well-grounded admission! *How long* has this royal remissness been working out its consequences? We cannot exactly say; but we have several baleful influences to reckon with, for the play of which allowance must be made: the adultery—the murder—the impenitence: indisposing for attention to duty; the leper-stroke—the pain—the disfigurement—the shame, naturally and inevitably increasing and prolonging such indisposition. And then the habit of neglect would breed excuse for further neglect. All these influences would be additional to those absences from home on warlike expeditions, which would all tend indefinitely to prolong David's absence from his post as judge in Israel. So that it is a natural surmise, that David's



## PSALM FIFTY-FIVE

neglect of his judicial functions in Jerusalem had extended to many months' complete absence from his post in the gate of the city; and that, during those weary months, civic disorders had been growing apace. He awakes at length to the stern realities of Jerusalem's internal condition; institutes inquiries, receives information, compares the notes of his informants; and this is what he sees; and, being a poet, this is the graphic picture drawn by his muse: *Violence, Strife, Trouble, Mischief, Engulfing Ruin, Oppression, Deceit*, walking abroad, stalking through the city, circumambulating her walls, by day, by night—causing a rapid and awful moral deterioration and even devastation. Alas! in the circumstances, it is not too bad to be true; but it is a terrible revelation. Instead, therefore, of being content, with Kirkpatrick, with a "negative conclusion," by saying we cannot tell who wrote this psalm, much rather are we entitled to revert to David's terrible fall, and to discover here, drawn by his own hand, this further effect of his sin.

Further: it just like *him*,—not as though he were essentially a revengeful man, but as undoubtedly a passionately devoted lover of Zion and an inborn hater of perversity,—that, on surveying the picture his own hand has drawn, he should break out in terrible imprecations on those who had done so much to degrade the city of his love! *Desolations on them!*

But is it fully as much like him, to have—if not whined like a whipt cur—at least mournfully cooed like a timid, disconsolate *dove*? This too is life-like—under the circumstances, the peculiarities of which should not for a moment be forgotten. Months of suffering and shame have wrought havoc on his personal condition. He is fitful, moody, morbidly imaginative. He is so conscious of his disturbed mental condition, that, when he begins to compose this psalm, he anticipates he shall *wander*. *The voice of an enemy*, which he overhears, alas! is the voice of an old friend. He can perceive, acting on his old friends, *the pressure of a lawless one*, and enigmatic phrase, most apt and illuminating when understood as an allusion to the as yet absent Absalom,—whose name, we have before noted David's reluctance to mention. Ahithophel has set the ball of calumny rolling. One damaging fact after another has been whispered in conclave; so that, to David's heated imagination, his enemies are rolling down *boulders* upon him! No wonder, then, that for a few moments, he longs for the strong *pinions of a dove* in the vain

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

hope of leaving all trouble behind him—at least till the *tempest* of rebellion has passed. For a few moments only! For although the timid spirit of the dove still lingers on him, after he has in his own imagination finished his flight far away, yet his *cooing* soon turns to *cursing*, especially when fired with dark memories of Ahithophel.

It has been too hastily concluded, from 2 Sam. 15:31, that David could not have known of his counsellor's treachery when he wrote this psalm. That, however, is not in evidence. He may have been well aware of that some time before Absalom's Insurrection had become an accomplished fact.

The suicide of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23) comes into a most suggestive relation to ver. 23 of this psalm; and, on the whole, the ancient Jewish expositors seem to have had a truer insight into this relation than modern Christian interpreters. "The Talmud and Midrashim occasionally refer to him (Ahithophel). In the latter he is classed with Balaam as an instance of the ruin which overtakes wisdom that is not the gift of Heaven; and in the former (*Baba bathra*, b 7) the great lesson of his life is said to be, 'Be not in strife with the house of David, and break off from none of its rule'"—Hastings' "Bible Dictionary," Vol. I., p. 57.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The "abrupt transitions" of this psalm are worked out in the paraphrase—how does Rotherham account for such change of thought? Do you agree? Discuss.
2. Spurgeon interestingly remarks "The Spiritual eye ever and anon sees the Son of David and Judas, and the chief priests appearing and disappearing upon the glowing canvas of this psalm." See if you can exercise your spiritual eyes.
3. To what period in David's life is this psalm usually referred? (Read II Sam. 15-18) Who is David's close friend who became his bitter enemy?
4. In what area of rule was David evidently sadly remiss? How does this relate to the psalm?
5. David fled Jerusalem from Absalom with out resistance—why? If the conditions described here prevailed in Jerusalem who was at fault?
6. Rotherham becomes increasingly convinced that David did indeed write this psalm—what led him to this conclusion?

## PSALM FIFTY-FIVE AND FIFTY-SIX

7. The psalmist longs to fly away "like a dove"—is this a healthy attitude? Discuss.
8. Why did Ahithophel commit suicide? How does this relate to the psalm? (Cf. vs. 23 and II Sam. 17:23)
9. Read verse 17 of this psalm and pause to ask yourself—"when did we lose the holy habit of regular private worship"? The early church practiced it—Discuss.
10. There is a marvelous provision and promise in verse 22—what is it?—how can we make it ours?

## P S A L M 56

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song by David in Captivity.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, In a few words, David Describes his Captive Condition, and Composes a *Refrain* of Praise. Stanza II., vers. 5-11, After a Fuller Description of his Captors, the Prisoner prays for their Subjugation because of their Iniquities, Asks that His Own Sufferings may be recorded, Anticipates Future Victory over his Enemies, and Repeats and Enlarges his *Refrain*. Stanza III., vers. 12, 13, The Captive, Remembering his Vows, Promises to Fulfil them; and Anticipates Freedom for his Spared Life.

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(Lm.) By David—A Tablet—

When the Philistines seized him in Gath.

- 1 Be gracious unto me O God, for mere man hath crushed me:  
all the day a warrior keeps on oppressing me.
- 2 They who are watching me have crushed me all the day.  
for multitudes are warring on me loftily.
- 3 What day I am afraid I unto thee will direct my trust.
- 4 In God will I boast as my theme,<sup>1</sup>  
In God do I trust without fear,—  
What can flesh do unto me?

1. The M.T. and versions have "his" word or theme; but as the difference in Heb. is merely the length of a single fine stroke, "my" is preferred here, as better preparing for the omission of the pronoun in ver. 10.

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- 5 All the day my words<sup>1</sup> do they wrest,  
against me are all their plots:  
6 For mischief they gather, lie hid,  
they themselves mark my footprints,<sup>2</sup>  
as they have waited for my life.  
7 Because of iniquity there is no<sup>3</sup> deliverance for them:—  
in anger bring down peoples O God!  
8 My wandering thou thyself hast recorded:  
put thou my tears in thy wine-skin,  
are they not in thy scroll?  
9 Then shall my foes turn back—on the day I proclaim.<sup>4</sup>  
this I know for God is for me!  
10 In God will I boast as a theme,  
In Jehovah will I boast, as a theme;  
11 In God do I trust without fear:  
What can a son of earth do unto me?  
12 Upon me O God are thy vows,  
I will pay back thankofferings to thee;  
13 For thou hast rescued my soul from death,  
wilt thou not (rescue) my feet from thrusts<sup>5</sup>?  
that I may walk to and fro before God in the light of the  
living?<sup>6</sup>

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

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 56

Lord, have mercy on me; all day long the enemy troops press in. So many are proud to fight against me; how they long to conquer me.

3, 4 But when I am afraid, I will put my confidence in You. Yes, I will trust the promises of God. And since I am trusting Him, what can mere man do to me?

5 They are always twisting what I say. All their thoughts are how to harm me.

6 They meet together to perfect their plans; they hide beside the trail, listening for my steps, waiting to kill me.

1. Or: "affairs."

2. Ml. "my heels"—perh. "to trip me up."

3. So *Ge.*, and so Baethgen, in O.G. 812b.

4. That is: Either proclaim myself King, or proclaim war against them.

5. Ml.: "from thrusting": i.e., by an enemy to trip me up. See 116:8.

6. "In the light of the land of the living." Cp. 116:9—Br.

## PSALM FIFTY-SIX

7 They expect to get away with it. Don't let them, Lord. In anger cast them to the ground.

8 You have seen me tossing and turning through the night. You have collected all my tears and preserved them in Your bottle! You have recorded every one in Your book.

\* \* \* \* \*

9 The very day I call for help, the tide of battle turns! My enemies flee! This one think I know: God is for me!

10, 11 I am trusting God—oh, praise His promises! I am not afraid of anything mere man can do to me! Yes, praise His promises.

12 I will surely do what I have promised, Lord, and thank You for Your help.

13 For You have saved me from death and my feet from slipping, so that I can walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

## EXPOSITION

Nothing is lost, but much is gained, by letting this bright little psalm into the niche provided for it by its superscription. It can still be regarded as subsequently employed in national worship, with the obvious gain of bringing up afresh into the memories of the people the story of their beloved hero-king. Any analogies between the chequered experiences of the nation and those of David, would leave intact those snatches of Davidic autobiography thus preserved, which become increasingly precious when dovetailed into each other so as to furnish an inner history, illuminative of the outer facts with which we are already familiar in the study of David's life.

It has been assumed by critics, with good reason, that David's first sojourn with the King of Gath, as narrated in 1 Sam. 21, 22, though half voluntary in the impulse to risk it as a method of escaping from Saul, was nevertheless in the experience of it a species of "durance vile," which sufficiently answers to the circumstances assumed by the psalm to be existent. But, in truth, there need be no feverish anxiety on our part to reach absolute certainty in our attempts to fix on the particular seizure of David by the men of Gath, presupposed by this psalm. After the slaying of Goliath by the young Bethlehemite, it must always have been a tempting thing to the Gittites to get that famous but yet perhaps personally unknown stripling into their hands,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and to wreak on him some of the vengeance, the chief volume of which nevertheless was pent up for bursting on the more formidable head of King Saul. We cannot therefore be sure that David individually did not find himself more than once a captive in Gath.

It is more to the point to open our eyes to perceive the realistic fitness of the language of this psalm to apply to such a captivity. We no sooner do this, than we see the whole thing set vividly before our eyes. With his living faith in Jehovah, these stalwart Gittites are, in David's sight, no more than *mere men*. Nevertheless, for the time, they *have crushed him*. *All the day* long a *warrior-guard* annoys and vexes him, needlessly making him feel how irksome are his chains. Outside are *watchers*, taking good care he shall not escape. *Multitudes* of warlike men, carrying, *loftily* their heads, are ready to slay him. Is he *afraid*? He takes up his harp, and directing his trust to Jehovah, improvises thus: *In God will I boast, as my theme*. How much of his language his warders understand at its full value, we know not, but he holds on: *All the day my words do they wrest*; and so on, gathering strength, he proceeds. If they do attend, and can decipher his words; one while, they may well tremble as he alludes to their *iniquity*, or laugh him to scorn as he foretells their *turning back* before his face in the yet coming days when he shall *proclaim* war against them; another while, they may almost relent, as they catch him confessing his *tears*. Again, he rings out his Refrain, made more strong and more bold; nor forgets to promise how in happier times he will make good his *vows*.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Twice David was in Gath—but neither time seems to fit this psalm. How shall we explain the circumstances here described?
2. "But when I am afraid, I will put my confidence in you." If we had our confidence in the Lord, would we be afraid? Discuss.
3. There are three natural divisions to this psalm—review the *Analysis* and show how these divisions are progressive and accumulative.
4. ". . . You have collected all my tears and preserved them in Your bottle! You have recorded everyone in Your book"

## PSALM FIFTY-SIX AND FIFTY-SEVEN

(vs. 8). This verse offers tremendous insight into the nature of God. Discuss.

5. Supposing God does *not* deliver us from our enemies? Does this mean our enemies are in the right? That we are wrong? That there is no God? Discuss.

## P S A L M 57

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Reminiscence of David's Early Troubles when Pursued by Saul,  
Subsequently Adapted to Brighter Times.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Prayer for Deliverance from Outward Trouble, marked by Resignation during its Continuance. Stanza II., vers. 6-11, Further Reference to the Trouble speedily gives place to Joyful Praise. A *Refrain*, vers. 5, 11, of Comprehensive Beauty Lights up the Whole Psalm.

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(Lm.) By David—A Tablet—

When he fled from the face of Saul into a cave.

- 1 Be gracious unto me O God be gracious unto me,  
for in thee hath my soul taken refuge:  
yea in the shadow of thy wings do I take refuge,  
until the storm of ruin shall pass.
- 2 I will cry unto God Most High—  
unto GOD who is carrying through my cause for me.
- 3 He will send out of the heavens to save me,  
he hath given to reproach<sup>1</sup> one who would trample upon me.  
God will send forth his kindness and his truth.
- 4 My soul is in the midst of lions,  
I must lie down amidst such as consume the sons of men:  
their teeth are spears and arrows,  
and their tongue is a sharp sword.
- 5 Be exalted above the heavens O God!  
above all the earth be thy glory!
- 6 A net made they ready for my steps  
bowed down was my soul:

1. So Sep.

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- ' They digged before me a pit,  
they fell into the midst thereof.
- 7 Steadfast is my heart O God, steadfast is my heart:  
I would fain sing and would play!
- 8 Oh awake my glory! oh awake lute and lyre!  
I would fain waken the dawn!
- 9 I will thank thee among the peoples Sovereign Lord,  
I will celebrate thee in psalm<sup>1</sup> among the races of men;
- 10 For great unto the heavens is thy kindness,  
and unto the skies<sup>2</sup> thy truth.  
Be exalted above the heavens O God!
- 11 above all the earth be thy glory!
- (Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) "Do not destroy."

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 57

O God, have pity, for I am trusting You! I will hide beneath the shadow of Your wings until this storm is past.

2 I will cry to the God of heaven who does such wonders for me.

3 He will send down help from heaven to save me, because of His love and His faithfulness. He will rescue me from these liars who are so intent upon destroying me.

4 I am surrounded by fierce lions—hotheads whose teeth are sharp as spears and arrows. Their tongues are like swords.

5 Lord, be exalted above the highest heavens! Show Your glory high above the earth.

6 My enemies have set a trap for me. Frantic fear grips me. They have dug a pitfall in my path. But look! They themselves have fallen into it!

7 O God, my heart is quiet and confident. No wonder I can sing Your praises!

8 Rouse yourself, my soul! Arise, O harp and lyre! Let us greet the dawn with song!

9 I will thank You publicly throughout the land. I will sing Your praises among the nations.

10 Your kindness and love are as vast as the heavens. Your faithfulness is higher than the skies.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Or: "make melody unto thee."

2. Or: "fleecy clouds."



## PSALM FIFTY-SEVEN

11 Yes, be exalted, O God, above the heavens. May Your glory shine throughout the earth.

### EXPOSITION

It is with confidence submitted that the early portion of this psalm abundantly sustains its ascription *To David*. The latter part was probably added at a later period: hence its duplicate appearance as the early portion of Ps. 108,—a conclusion confirmed by the unshadowed brightness of vers. 7-10. The singular reappearance of trouble in ver. 6, after the first occurrence of the joyful refrain in ver. 5, raises some doubt as to the preservation of this part of the psalm. But, for the moment, it seems fitting to give ourselves up to the undisturbed persuasion that in vers. 1-4, not excluding ver. 6, we have a genuine Davidic fragment. It is just like David; and, by several delicate strokes, exactly reflects the peculiar position he occupied in those early days when he was harassed by Saul. He is not in a fighting mood; but is hunted, seeks refuge, is prepared to wait for deliverance. His cause is in God's hands, who (ver. 2) will *carry through his cause for him*: an expectation which finds fitting use for the unusual word *gmr*, which has given the critics trouble—it is exactly the happy word. Then, too, ver. 3 vividly reminds us of Ps. 18:16; and the allusion to Saul himself in ver. 3b is so unmistakable, and yet so delicate, as to sustain the conviction that it was conceived just to suit such a reference; 3c being almost as vivid an assurance that the breastplate of the high-priest would not fail him (Cp. I Sam. 23:9-12); while the *spears* and *tongues* of Saul's warriors, in the midst of which he now was, formed a closely compacted series of dangers, which David was the last man to underrate. Even the awkwardly recurring danger of ver. 6 is too apt not to have originally belonged to the Davidic representation. Although it may, plausibly, be alleged that this part of the psalm fitted the troublous days before Nehemiah's arrival at Jerusalem, yet that does not stop us from saying that here, in David's own unique situation and experience, we discover the actual genesis of the words. Their subsequent adaptation to a different set of circumstances, bearing some resemblance to the original, was a comparatively easy matter.

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With respect to the latter half of the psalm—namely, the joyful portion of it,—it is quite natural to conclude it to have been of later origin than the former half. This, however, is no reason why David himself should not have written it, after his position was secured. Or Hezekiah may have penned it. Even Isaiah may have supplied it. It is of small importance; and the evidence is perhaps too scanty to warrant a conclusion. This may be said: That ver. 9 reminds us of 18:49 and vers. 5 and 11 are similar to vers. 1 and 9 of Ps. 8. We may be sure that in the earlier days of David's reign over all Israel, a great joy filled his heart; and congenial influences would predispose him to just such an outburst of song as here delights us: when the sweet singer would anticipate the *dawn*, *awaken* it with song to the accompaniment of *lute* or *lyre*, give expression to his messianic hopes for the *nations* of the earth, and mount to the *skies* in his grateful recognition of the *kindness* and *faithfulness* of his God.

With all those memories and hopes of his noble ancestor to inspire him in the dark days of Sennecherib's invasion, HEZEKIAH could most appropriately commit this psalm to his *Chief Musician* with the injunction to associate it with the sentiment *Do not destroy*.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The subjective element is such a strong factor in the thought that only half of this psalm belongs to the pen of David. Discuss the reason for the use of the subjective element.
2. Read these words from Spurgeon concerning this psalm: "When he fled from Saul in a cave. This is a song from the bowels of the earth, and, like Jonah's prayer from the bottom of the sea, it has a taste of the place. The poet is in the shadow of the cave at first, but he comes to the cavern's mouth at last, and sings in the sweet fresh air, with his eye on the heavens, watching joyously the clouds floating therein". How could two men read the same psalm and come to so wide a difference in understanding? Discuss.
3. This is one of the "golden psalms"—the title also contains the admonition: "destroy not".—What golden truth can you discover in this psalm? (As an example consider the twenty-one times God is referred to in the eleven verses of this psalm.) If this psalm was destroyed what would we lose? Be specific.

## PSALM FIFTY-EIGHT

### PSALM 58

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Significant Warning to Corrupt Judges.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Corrupt Judges Apostrophised, Described in their Evil Doings and Training, in the Harm they Do and the Hopelessness of Trying to Reform them. Stanza II., vers. 6-9, 11, the Judgment which has Overtaken them, by the Advent of a Righteous King. (A Maccabean cry for vengeance, ver. 10.)

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(Lm.)—By David—A Tablet.

- 1 Do ye indeed ye mighty ones<sup>1</sup> speak righteously?  
with equity do ye judge the sons of men?
- 2 Nay! ye all<sup>2</sup> do work perversity,  
throughout the land it is violence that your hands weigh out.
- 3 Lawless men have been estranged from birth,  
they have gone astray from nativity speaking falsehood:
- 4 They have poison like the poison of a serpent,  
like a cobra deaf and stopping his ear;
- 5 That will not hearken to the voice of whispers,  
when the wise one is casting his spells.
- 6 God hath broken<sup>3</sup> their teeth in their mouth,  
the incisors of young lions hath Jehovah knocked out.<sup>4</sup>
- 7 Let them flow away like water let them disperse of  
themselves,  
are they luxuriant as grass? so let them fade!<sup>4</sup>
- 8 Like a snail that melteth away as it goeth:  
there hath fallen fire they have not viewed the sun:
- 9 Before they perceive it they have become like brambles,  
while they are yet green<sup>5</sup> in hot anger he sweepeth them away.<sup>6</sup>

1. So *Gt.*; cp. *Exo.* 15:11—*Gn.*

2. So it shd. be (w. *Syr.*)—*Gn.*

3. Tenses changed by mere change of vowel-points.

4. So w. *Sep.* and *Br.* in this and following lines.

5. *ML.*: "living."

6. *M.T.*: (prob. Maccabean addition):—

10 Let a righteous man rejoice that he hath seen an avenging,  
His feet let him bathe in the blood of the lawless one.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

11 A son of earth then may say—Surely there is fruit for a righteous man!

Surely there are messengers divine who are judging<sup>1</sup> in the land!

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

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 58

Justice? You high and mighty politicians don't even know the meaning of the word! Fairness? Which of you has any left? Not one! All your dealings are crooked: you give "justice" in exchange for bribes.<sup>2</sup>

3 These men are born sinners, lying from their earliest words!

4, 5 They are poisonous as deadly snakes, cobras that close their ears to the most expert of charmers.

6 O God, break off their fangs. Tear out the teeth of these young lions, Lord.

7 Let them disappear like water into thirsty ground. Make their weapons useless in their hands.<sup>3</sup>

8 Let them be as snails that dissolve into slime; and as those who die at birth, who never see the sun.

9 God will sweep away both old and young. He will destroy them more quickly than a cooking pot can feel the blazing fire of thorns beneath it.

10 The godly shall rejoice in the triumph of right;<sup>4</sup> they shall walk the blood-stained fields of slaughtered, wicked men.

11 Then at last everyone will know that good is rewarded, and that there is a God who judges justly here on earth.

## EXPOSITION

So little excuse is there for discrediting the superscription of this psalm by *David*, that we no sooner accept for it the proffered historical setting, than we become conscious of a powerful appeal to our sense of the fitness of things. There is nothing inherently improbable in the supposition, that, when David began to reign,

1. Plural in Heb., warranting reference to 82:1, 97:7, also Exo. 21:6, 22:8, 9, 28.

2. Literally, "you deal out the violence of your hands in the land."

3. Or, "Let them be trodden down and wither like grass."

4. Literally, "when he sees the vengeance."

## PSALM FIFTY-EIGHT

he found occupying the position of judges throughout the land, men utterly unfit for it: wealthy, overbearing, careless; accustomed to falsehood from their youth up. Carry forward the state of things known to have existed from the time of "the judges"; recall how little the sons of Eli and of Samuel did to inculcate a high standard of national righteousness; notice how conspicuous by their absence are any efforts by King Saul to elevate the practical godliness of the nation; then remember how, as we have lately seen (Ps. 55), a comparatively short period of royal remissness, somewhere after this time, brought forth an enormous crop of noxious weeds in Jerusalem itself—and the conclusion will no longer seem far-fetched, if we assume that, when David came to the throne, he discovered judicial conditions so corrupt as to cause to flame out his known passion for righteousness. We know, from Ps. 101, the purity he deemed essential to his court; and, from Ps. 82, the estimate formed by his Chief Singer Asaph of the enormous wrongs easily inflicted on the helpless by a lax administration of justice. Hence we need feel no surprise to find him, in this psalm, equal to the occasion of giving corrupt judges notice, in solemn psalmody, of the drastic treatment which their perversion of righteousness might expect at his hands: no surprise to discover what a mighty instrument he was thus employing to create a purified and elevated public sentiment, likely to aid him in subsequent detailed endeavours to make Israel a law-abiding and holy people.

From this point of view, survey this psalm; and how fitting an instrument it appears for the forwarding of these noble ends. It grips these high-placed evil-doers with a will; sets their wrong-doing plainly before their faces; shows them that their characters have been thoroughly reckoned up; warns them that little is expected of them by way of reform—even the *spell* of a psalm is unlikely to save them from the consequences of their inborn and long-practised depravity. Such is the purport, under poetic guise, of the first Stanza of this psalm. The warning is veiled; but men must be stupid as well as stubborn if they cannot see through it.

The King, however (Stanza II.), has them in his power; and he knows it. They may yet be as fierce as lions; but in setting over them his righteous servant David, *God has* already, in effect, *broken their teeth in their mouth*; yea, let the young magnates, who are prepared to exceed their fathers in high-handed injustice, know, that *Jehovah hath* already *knocked out*

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

their *terrible incisors*! The best thing they can do, is to disappear *like water* that drieth up; *like grass* for which the sun is too hot, whose luxuriating hours are done; *like snails* crawling away and wasting as they go. Otherwise, if they will not be admonished, let them beware lest they be suddenly made like unto *thorns*; yea, even though they be like *green brambles*, lest the *fierce fire* and *strong wind* of Divine wrath scorch and scatter them as in a storm of retribution!

Is it terrible? Yea, but it is just? Is it unmerciful? Nay, for they are thus publicly warned. The tempest will clear the air, and bring about health and peace. Justice is the foundation of grace. The common *man* has to be cared for. Well-doers must be encouraged—must have given back to them the conviction, that *there is fruit for a righteous man*: that, as there are visible *representatives of God judging in the land*, so there is an invisible God judging on the earth and in heaven.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If we relate this psalm to David who are the judges here described? . . .
2. Does verse three teach “hereditary total depravity”? If not what does it teach?
3. W. Graham Scroggie divides this psalm into three parts: (1) The sin, vs. 1-5; (2) The sentence, vs. 6-9; (3) The satisfaction (of the righteous at the overthrow of the wicked) vs. 10, 11. List and discuss the various characteristics and cause for the sin of injustice as set forth in verses one through five.
4. The sentence of David against such corrupt leaders is indeed “terrible”; is it “just”—even “merciful”? Discuss.
5. We must not, we cannot, we will not read vindictiveness into the justice of God—why not? What then shall we say? Discuss—especially as related to verses ten and eleven.

## PSALM 59

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Beleaguered Psalmist Prays for Rescue and Avenging.

## PSALM FIFTY-NINE

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, In Praying for Rescue, the Psalmist Describes the Character and Conduct of his Enemies, and Protests his Own Innocence. Stanza II., vers. 6-9, Further Describing his Enemies, he Anticipates a Divine Mockery of the Nations, and Rises to a *Refrain* of Praise for Divine Protection. Stanza III., vers. 10-13, In his Confidence, he Prays for the Monumental Preservation, and Ultimate Destruction of his Enemies, to the Praise of Jehovah as Universal Ruler. Stanza IV., vers. 14-17, With the Disappointment of his Enemies, he contrasts His Own Anticipated Joy, and Repeats his *Refrain* of Praise.

(Im.) By David—A Tablet—when Saul sent,  
and they watched the house to kill him.

- 1 Rescue me from my foes, O my God,  
from them who rise up against me shalt thou set me on high:
- 2 Rescue me from the workers of iniquity,<sup>1</sup>  
and from the men of bloodshed save me.
- 3 For lo! they have lain in wait for my life,<sup>2</sup>  
mighty ones keep gathering against me,—  
not for transgression of mine; nor for sin of mine O Jehovah!
- 4 Without iniquity of mine do they run and station  
themselves,—  
oh rouse thyself to meet me and see:
- 5 Yea thou Jehovah of hosts God of Israel<sup>3</sup>  
oh awake to visit all the nations,—  
do not be gracious unto any mischievous traitors.
- 6 They return at even they growl like a dog they surround the  
city.
- 7 Lo! they pour forth with their mouth,  
swords are in their lips,—  
"For who can hear?"
- 8 But thou Jehovah wilt laugh at them,  
thou wilt mock at all nations,<sup>4</sup>
- 9 O my<sup>5</sup> Strength! unto thee will I make melody,<sup>6</sup>  
for God is my lofty retreat.

1. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.).

2. U.: "soul." Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

3. M.T. (as rendered by Dr.): "And thou, Jehovah God of hosts, the God of Israel." Br. has simply: "Thou Yahweh, Sabaoth."

4. Cp. 2:4.

5. So some cod. *read* (w. Sep. and Vul.)—Gn.

6. So it shd. be. Cp. ver. 17—Gn. M.T.: "over thee will I keep guard"—Dr.; "upon thee will I wait"—Del.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 10 My God of kindness will come to meet me,  
God will let me gaze on my watchful foes.
- 11 Do not slay them lest my people forget,  
cause them to wander by thy hosts<sup>1</sup> and prostrate them,—  
our Shield! Sovereign Lord!
- 12 The sin of their mouth is the word of their lips,  
let them then be captured in their pride,—  
both for the oath and for the deception they recount.
- 13 Bring to a full end in wrath, bring to a full end that they  
may be no more:  
that (men) may know there is a God in Jacob  
who is ruling to the ends of the earth.<sup>2</sup>
- 14 Then let them return at even let them growl like a dog let  
them surround the city.
- 15 They will be suffered to prowl about for food,  
and if not satisfied then let them whine!
- 16 But I will sing thy strength,  
I will ring out in the morning thy kindness;  
For thou hast become a lofty retreat for me,  
and a place to flee to when I am in a strait.
- 17 O my strength! unto thee will I make melody,  
for God is my lofty retreat my God of kindness.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the "lily of testimony" = The feast of weeks.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 59

(Written by David at the time King Saul set guards at his home to capture and kill him. I Samuel 19:11)

O my God, save me from my enemies. Protect me from those who have come to destroy me.

2 Preserve me from these criminals, these murderers.

3 They lurk in ambush for my life. Strong men are out there waiting. And not, O Lord, because I've done them wrong.

4 Yet they prepare to kill me. Lord, waken! See what is happening! Help me!

5 (And O Jehovah, God of heaven's armies, God of Israel,

1. Or: "army," "force"—earthly or heavenly.

2. "That the God of Jacob ruleth the ends of the earth"—Sep.



## PSALM FIFTY-NINE

arise and punish the heathen nations surrounding us.) Do not spare these evil, treacherous men.

6 At evening they come to spy, slinking around like dogs that prowl the city.

7 I hear them shouting insults and cursing God, for "No one will hear us," they think.

8 Lord, laugh at them! (And scoff at these surrounding nations too.)

9 O God my Strength! I will sing Your praises, for You are my place of safety.

10 My God is changeless in His love for me and He will come and help me. He will let me see my wish come true upon my enemies.

11 Don't kill them—for my people soon forget such lessons—but stagger them with your power and bring them to their knees. Bring them to the dust, O Lord our shield.

12, 13 They are proud, cursing liars. Angrily destroy them. Wipe them out. (And let the nations find out too that God rules in Israel and will reign throughout the world.)

14, 15 Let these evil men slink back at evening, and prowl the city all night before they are satisfied, howling like dogs and searching for food.

16 But as for me, I will sing each morning about Your power and mercy. For You have been my high tower of refuge, a place of safety in the day of my distress.

17 O my Strength, to You I sing my praises; for You are my high tower of safety, my God of mercy.

## EXPOSITION

Most of this psalm answers well to the historical occasion named in its superscription; and though, both in form and in substance, it suggests subsequent and adaptations and additions, yet these are comparatively unimportant, and need not divert us from the fruitful reflections which spring from the origin of this striking composition as a whole.

The writer is beset by enemies: just such enemies as we know David had in the court of King Saul—*workers of iniquity, men of bloodshed, foreigners* who had taken the *oath* of allegiance to Israel and yet could boast of the *deception* they had practised in accepting it; probably, like Doeg, the Edomite, rich and powerful, with ready access to the ear of Saul, and more willing than

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

David's fellow-Hebrews to become the tools of that fickle and jealous monarch. Such men, in David's intensely patriotic eyes, would appear like unclean *dogs*, ravenous, cruel, dangerous.

At the hands of these enemies, the writer is now in imminent danger. They have been *lying in wait* for him, keep *gathering together against* him, saying *false and cruel things* about him, thereby converting their *tongues* into *swords*; they not only gather against him, but *watch*, one or two by day and a larger number by night, *surrounding the city*, so as to guard every avenue of escape. So far, a graphic picture of the way in which Saul's emissaries would seek David for the purpose of *killing* him.

There is surely little cause for wonder that so much importance should be attached to the active use of their *tongues* in hunting for David. For though scouts and watchers when thus on duty would naturally do that part of their work in silence and by stealth; yet the most effective part taken by these men, would be their use of their tongues when they had Saul's ear, and when rallying their own and David's fellow-servants to join in the pursuit and the waylaying. No doubt there would be times of actual watching, when their policy would be silence; but there would be times of discovery that they had lost their prey, when volleys of cursing would be *poured forth by their mouth*; and when compelled to return to their master with the confession that the young Bethlehemite had escaped them, it is likely that their crestfallen looks and abject words made them appear not a little like curs *whining* as if in fear of a beating. And, if David could foresee their shame overtaking them, he might very well say: *If not satisfied, then let them whine!* Whether it be supremely dignified or not, at least it is life-like! So far, both the conditions presupposed by the psalm, and the movements evident therein, are unmistakably such as suit the crisis named in the superscription.

But, in two places of the psalm, it must be admitted to be open to question whether we have an original sentiment, or a later addition. These two places are at vers. 5 and 8 respectively. At the former point, there is the outburst of the prayer—*Awake to visit all nations*; and at the latter, there is the positive assurance—*But thou, O Jehovah, will laugh at them, Thou wilt mock at all nations*. Here it may, plausibly, be contended, we have traces of a later time. And it may be so. It may be, that it is too soon yet for the antagonism of Gentile nations to Jehovah

## PSALM FIFTY-NINE

and of His antagonism to them to be thus anticipated. Such a forecast would more naturally become the later times of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib came against Israel with his Assyrians; or of Jeremiah, when Nebuchadnezzar was coming with his Babylonian hosts; or, still more, the troublous times of the return from the Exile when the little Gentile nations around Israel were so persistent and so malicious in their conspiracies and attacks on Israel. These outbursts in the psalm against Gentiles may very plausibly be attributed to such a later time. And there we might be content to leave the problem; especially as not raising any real objection against the Davidic authorship of the main body of the psalm, when the known habit of adapting psalms to later occasions has due allowance made for it.

On this point we should not have lingered, but for the desire of protesting that even this concession to the probability of a later date for a few lines in this psalm cannot be compelled. It is probable—no more. It may have been given to David himself, thus early in his prophetic career, to catch glimpses of later events in the history of Israel: to be led on to catch such glimpses from nothing more developed than the antagonism and treacheries of a few Doegs among the retainers of Saul.

Worthy of observation is that unique prayer in ver. 11 of this psalm: *Do not slay them, lest my people forget, cause them to wander*. On the one hand this reminds us of Pharaoh, who instead of being at once slain, was preserved to permit him to develop all the obstinacy that was in him—to the brighter manifestation of the glory of Jehovah; and, on the other hand, it quickens our inquisitiveness to learn from later prophecies whether or not the restored Israel of the future may not be similarly *kept in mind* by the monumental sparing of enemies who would otherwise be summarily destroyed (cp. Dan. 7:12).

“They—let them whine; but I will sing”: a contrast, almost harsh in its sharpness; yet how suggestive. Ours be the faith in the Right, and in the God of Rightness, that by detestation of all meanness, and the wholehearted love of nobleness, we may know how to escape the *whine* and ensure the *song*.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What particular experience of David forms the background for this psalm? (Cf. I Sam. 19:11-18) Discuss the problem of verses five and eight where mention is made of “nations”.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

2. Consider carefully the *Analysis* of this psalm and then read this from Scroggie: "In structure the Psalm is highly artificial. There are two main divisions, 1-9 and 10-17. Each of these ends with a refrain in which the Psalmist speaks of God as his *strength* and *high tower* (9, 17). Each of these main divisions has two stanzas divided by a *Selah* (5, 13) and the second stanza in each division begins in the same way (6, 14). The two main divisions closely resemble one another, but each has its characteristics" (*Ibid.* p. 55). Discuss the structure of this psalm.
3. Discuss the import of the description the psalmist gives of his enemies—as in verses one through five and verses six through nine?
4. What is meant by the little phrase in verse eleven "slay them not lest my people forget"? Discuss its application to our day.
5. When does God laugh? (Cf. vs. 8) What kind of laugh is it? Discuss.

## PSALM 60

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Outcry of Anguish, Expostulation and Entreaty,  
under a Severe Reverse.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Lamentation over a Defeat. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Prayer for Victory, based on an Ancient Oracle. Stanza III., vers 9-12, In Order to Victory, Divine Guidance and Presence Besought.

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(Lm.) A Tablet—By David—To instruct—When he waged war with Aramneharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned and smote of Edom in the Valley of Salt twelve thousand.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 O God thou hast rejected us—hast broken out upon us,  
Thou hast been angry—wilt thou not take us back?<sup>2</sup>
- 2 Thou hast shattered the land—hast split it open,  
Heal thou the fractures thereof—for it hath tottered.

1. Cp. 44, text and Exposition.  
2. So O.G. 998b.

## PSALM SIXTY

- 3 Thou hast sated<sup>1</sup> thy people with hardship,  
hast let them drink reeling as wine.<sup>2</sup>
- 4 Thou hast given to them who revere thee a signal,  
in order to take flight before the bow!<sup>3</sup>
- 5 That thy beloved ones may be rescued  
oh give victory with thy right hand and answer me.<sup>4</sup>
- 6 God spake in his sanctuary:—<sup>5</sup>  
“Let me exult let me apportion Shechem,  
And the vale of Succoth will I measure out:
- 7 Mine is Gilead and mine Manasseh:  
But Ephraim is the defence of my head,  
Judah is my commander’s staff:<sup>6</sup>
- 8 Moab is my wash-bowl,  
Unto Edom will I cast my sandal:<sup>7</sup>  
Over Philistia will I<sup>8</sup> raise a shout of triumph.”
- 9 Who will conduct me to the city entrenched?  
who will lead me as far as Edom?
- 10 Wilt not thou O God (who hast) rejected us?  
yea wilt thou not O God go forth in our hosts?
- 11 Grant to us help out of distress!  
since unreal is a victory<sup>9</sup> by man.
- 12 In God we shall do valiantly,  
he himself therefore shall<sup>10</sup> tread down our adversaries.
- (Lm. To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For stinged instruments.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 60

*(Written by David at the time he was at war with Syria, with the outcome still uncertain; this was written when Joab, captain of his forces, slaughtered 12,000 men of Edom in the Valley of Salt.)*

1. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*
2. So *O.G.* 947.
3. As if with the irony of astonishment.
4. *Written* “us”; but *read* “me.” Some cod. (w. 4 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.), both write and read “me”—*Gn.*
5. Or: “holiness.”
6. Sep.: “my king.”
7. Thus assigning to both Moab and Edom a menial position.
8. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*
9. Or: “deliverance,” “salvation.”
10. A consenting petition: “We are willing to accept his terms, and give him the glory.” Cp. Exposition on 51:7, 8.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

O God, You have rejected us and broken our defenses; You have become angry and detested us. Lord, restore us again to Your favor.

2 You have caused this nation to tremble in fear; You have torn it apart. Lord, heal it now, for it is shaken to its depths.

3 You have been very hard on us and made us reel beneath Your blows.

4, 5 But You have given us a banner to rally to; all who love truth<sup>1</sup> will rally to it; then You can deliver Your beloved people. Use Your strong right arm to rescue us!

6, 7 God has promised to help us! He has vowed it by His holiness! No wonder I exult; "Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh—still are Mine!" He says. "Judah shall continue to produce kings, and Ephraim great warriors.

8 Moab shall become My lowly servant, and Edom My slave. And I will shout in triumph over the Philistines."

9, 10 Who will bring me in triumph into Edom's strong cities! God will! He who cast us off! He who abandoned us to our foes!

11 Yes, Lord, help us against our enemies, for man's help is useless.

12 With God's help we shall do mighty things, for He will trample down our foes.

## EXPOSITION

By reference to Ps. 44, text and notes, it will be recalled that this psalm as well as that was written in the interval of suspense that occurred between the alarming raid of Edomites while the main portion of David's army was in Syria, and the effective relief obtained by Joab's sanguinary defeat of these their troublesome neighbours. The exact circumstances have to be inferred from a few known facts; but, notwithstanding the disadvantage under which we thus labour, this psalm offers a few outstanding features, which are not a little impressive and instructive. It is needless to speak of the temporary alarm, almost amounting to panic, which is so often caused in the history of warfare, by reverses which are serious enough at the time, but soon overcome and forgotten. It is not often that their effect is so vividly described as in the opening stanza of this psalm: this raid from the south seemed for the time like the driving home of a wedge

1. Literally, "that it may be displayed because of the truth."

## PSALM SIXTY

splitting open the whole fabric of the nation; like the administering of a poisoned draught stupefying the senses of the people. It is seen at a glance how both weal and woe are ever closely associated with Jehovah's providence over Israel. It is specially observable how the psalmist bases his plea for restored success to his arms on the records of the past. As we have had repeated occasion to remark, David's wars were first and foremost a resumption and continuance of those of Joshua. Here is an old record, dating from the conquest, from which the inferiority of Edom's assigned relation to Israel is clearly foretold. And is *Edom* thus to seize a favorable chance to overrun the whole land? This can never be tolerated: *Who will conduct me to the fortified city among the rocks?* We cannot say whether Joab, in his terrible slaughter of Edomites, exceeded his commission, or made more than necessary reprisals, but this we can see—that David, at least, desired, from the outset of this southern expedition, to act in unreserved submission to Divine guidance. To the student of prophecy it is enough to say, Watch *Edom*, for developments not even yet complete! To the humble saint, who cannot well grasp national and world-wide problems, it may suffice to address the watch-words: *Who will conduct me? Vain is a victory by Man! In God we shall do valiantly.* May no readers of these lines have *adversaries* other than those whom *God himself will tread down!*

"Shechem at the foot of Mt. Gerizim, the chief gathering-place in the time of Joshua, stands for the country west of the Jordan: cp. Josh. 24:1. The Valley of Succoth, in the valley of the Jordan on the eastern side, near the Jabbok . . . stands for the country east of the Jordan . . . Gilead, as distinguished from Manasseh, must indicate with it the two chief divisions east of the Jordan, as Ephraim and Judah, the two chief divisions on the west. Accordingly Gilead here is for the southern portion assigned to Reuben and Gad, Nu. 32:1-29, and Manasseh for the northern portion, or the land of Bashan. . . . Moab was the troublesome neighbour of Israel, occupying the region east of the Dead Sea. He is to be so reduced that he becomes the wash-basin which is carried by a slave to pour water over his master's hands or feet. . . . Edom, the troublesome neighbour of Judah on the south-east, was also so reduced as to become another slave to whom the master kicks off the sandals when he would have them removed to wash his feet"—Br.

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. At what possible time did verses one through three apply to the nation of Israel?
2. From the superscription of this psalm we could assume that David fought against the Syrians in the far north. Read II Sam. 8:13, 14; I Kings 11:15, 16 and I Chron. 18:12, 13. While David was away from Jerusalem the Edomites took advantage of his absence and invaded Palestine. News came to David—he sent Joab to defend the homeland. In the interval David wrote this psalm. What did Joab do? Read verse nine and notice the faith of David. Discuss.
3. What is “the banner” given to them that fear thee? Cf. vs. 4.
4. Moab and Edom were to be treated in a strange way—“Moab is my washpot” and “Upon Edom will I cast my shoe”. What is the meaning of these figures of speech?
5. Has God ever led in war or has He merely used it as a rod of correction after man initiated it?

P S A L M 61

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Psalmist, in Banishment, Prays for Restoration.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Prayer for Restoration based on Past Mercies. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Prayer for Long Life, grounded on Public Blessings, and closing with a Promise of Perpetual Praise.

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(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Do hear O God my piercing<sup>1</sup> cry,  
oh attend unto my prayer:
  - 2 From the end of the land unto thee will I cry when my heart  
fainteth,  
into a rock too high for me (to climb) shalt thou lead me.
1. “Plaintive”—Del.; “ringing”—Dr.



## PSALM SIXTY-ONE

- 3 For thou hast been a refuge for me,  
a tower of strength from the face of the foe.  
4 I would fain be a guest in thy tent to the ages,  
I would take refuge in the hiding-place of thy wings.  
5 For thou O God hast hearkened to my vows,  
thou hast given a possession to the reverers of thy name.  
6 Days unto the days of a king shalt thou add,  
his years as of generation after generation:  
7 He shall be enthroned to the ages before God,  
Kindness and Truth appoint thou to preserve him.  
8 Thus will I make melody of thy name to futurity,  
that I may pay my vows day by day.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For Jeduthun.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 61

O God, listen to me! Hear my prayer!

2 For whatever I am, though faraway at the ends of the earth, I will cry to You for help. When my heart is faint and overwhelmed, lead me to the mighty, towering Rock of safety.

3 For You are my refuge, a high tower where my enemies can never reach me.

4 I shall live forever in Your tabernacle; oh, to be safe beneath the shelter of Your wings.

5 For You have heard my vows, O God, to praise<sup>1</sup> You every day, and You have given me the blessings You reserve for those who reverence Your name.

6 You will give me<sup>2</sup> added years of life, as rich and full as those of many generations, all packed into one!

7 And I shall live before the Lord forever. Oh, send your lovingkindness and truth to guard and watch over me,

8 And I will praise Your name continually, fulfilling my vow of praising You each day.

## EXPOSITION

No better origin in David's life for this sweet little psalm need be sought, than when the psalmist was at Mahanaim; Absalom's rebellion having been crushed, and the King waiting

1. Implied from verse 8.

2. Literally, "to the days of the king."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

to return to Jerusalem. It is only a snatch of song, revealing but a glimpse into the experiences of the Monarch; but it is striking, and well worthy, not only of preservation, but of occasional use in the liturgy of the Temple.

Far from home, far from the services of the Sacred Tent, the petitioner cries out to be permitted to return. He is occasionally depressed, but finds solace in his harp, whereon he formulates his plea. He recalls past mercies, and the memory of them emboldens his present requests. To be again Jehovah's *guest* and to realize the sense of *nestling* under His protection, is his foremost wish.

Reverting to the past, he remembers that those past mercies had been granted in answer to *vows* previously made; and, in particular, that to his brethren as well as to himself, the Sanctuary had been granted as a priceless *possession*. Continued *life* then comes into the field of his desire; and, at this point, he is carried away in what we may describe as a Messianic Ecstasy; asking for such a prolonged continuance of *days* as far transcended ordinary human existence. What mortal, though crowned, could reasonably expect to live *generation after generation*? to be *enthroned age-abiding before God*? It may be that, as some interpret, David was thinking rather of his dynasty (according to 2 Sam. 7) than of his own person. But the mind soon tires of the thought of a mere dynasty abiding, while the members who in succession sustain it, are all, one after the other, swept away by death. At all events it is a welcome and instructive relief to find the ancient Targum-writing Rabbis discovering, in the prospect of the dynasty, the brighter prospect of a Final Holder of dynastic promises—the Messiah? Thus on ver. 8: "Very pathetic is the paraphrase of the Targum (= *interpretation* or *translation*). 'So will I pay my vows in the day of the redemption of Israel, even in the day when King Messiah is anointed to reign'"—Kp.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read II Samuel, chapter eighteen and discuss this psalm with the background of David's exile in Mahanaim.
2. David's faith—confidence—love for God is beautifully expressed in this psalm. To David God is: (1) "A rock that is higher than I"; (2) "A refuge for me"; (3) "A strong

## PSALM SIXTY-ONE AND SIXTY-TWO

tower"; (4) "a refuge in the covert of thy wings"; (5) "I shall dwell in Thy tent". Discuss these figures as they relate to us.

3. There is a prophecy in verses six through eight—what is it?

## P S A L M 62

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Restful Resolution, Exposing the Treacherous and Encouraging the Timorous, traces both Power and Kindness to God the Judge of All.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Counselling himself to be Patient, the Psalmist Remonstrates with False Friends. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Again (by *Refrain*) Counseling Himself to be Patient, he seeks to Restore the Confidence of the People. Stanza III., vers. 9-12, exposing False Grounds of Confidence, he traces all Power and Kindness to the Supreme Judge.

(Lm.) A Psalm—By David.

- 1 Surely<sup>1</sup> unto God be thou still<sup>2</sup> my soul,  
for<sup>3</sup> from him is my salvation:
- 2 Surely he is my rock and my salvation my lofty retreat,  
I shall not be greatly shaken.<sup>4</sup>
- 3 How long keep ye rushing at a man,  
continue crushing all of you,—<sup>5</sup>  
as at a leaning wall as at a bulging fence?
- 4 Surely from his dignity have they counselled to thrust him  
out,  
they delight in falsehood:  
With his mouth doth each of them bless,  
but inwardly they curse.
- 5 Surely unto God be thou still my soul,  
for from him is mine expectation:

1. Or "only"; and so in vers. 2, 4, 5, 6, 9.

2. M.T.: "silence (is) my soul."

3. So some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.); cp. ver. 5—Gn.

4. "Be shaken"—Br.

5. According to another vocalisation; "All of you shall be crushed."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 6 Surely he is my rock and my salvation my lofty retreat,  
I shall not be shaken.
- 7 On God depend my safety<sup>1</sup> and mine honour,  
my rock of strength and my refuge are in God.<sup>2</sup>
- 8 Trust in him all ye congregation<sup>3</sup> of the people,  
pour out before him your heart,—  
God is a refuge for us.
- 9 Surely mere breath<sup>4</sup> are men of low degree,  
falsehood men of high degree:  
in balances going up they are of breath<sup>5</sup> altogether.
- 10 Do not trust in extortion nor on robbery set vain hope,  
as for wealth when it beareth fruit do not regard (it).
- 11 One thing hath God spoken,  
Two things (there are) which I have heard:—  
that power belongeth unto God,
- 12 and thine Sovereign Lord is kindness;  
for thou repayest each one according to his doing.<sup>6</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 62

I stand silently before the Lord, waiting for Him to rescue me. For salvation comes from Him alone.

2 Yes, He alone is my Rock, my rescuer, defense and fortress. Why then should I be tense with fear when troubles come?

\* \* \* \* \*

3, 4 But what is this? They pick on me at a time when my throne<sup>1</sup> is tottering; they plot my death and use lies and deceit to try to force me from the throne.<sup>7</sup> They are so friendly to my face while cursing in their hearts!

5 But I stand silent before the Lord, waiting for Him to rescue me. For salvation comes from Him alone.

6 Yes, He alone is my rock, my rescuer, defense and fortress—why then should I be tense with fear when troubles come?

1. Or "salvation."

2. Or (taking *beth* as *beth-essential*): "is God."

3. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn.

4. Or: "a mere vapour."

5. Or: "of vapour."

6. Cp. Job 34:11, Prov. 24:12, Jer. 32:19, Eze. 7:27, Mt. 16:27, Ro. 2:6, 2 Cor. 5:10, Eph. 6:8, Col. 3:25, 1 P. 1:17, Rev. 22:12.

7. Implied.

## PSALM SIXTY-TWO

7 My protection and success<sup>2</sup> come from God alone. He is my refuge, a Rock where no enemy can reach me.

8 O my people, trust Him all the time. Pour out your longings before Him, for He can help!

9 The greatest of men, or the lowest—both alike are nothing in His sight. They weigh less than air on scales!

10, 11 Don't become rich by extortion and robbery. And don't let the rich men be proud.

12 He is loving and ~~kind and rewards~~ each one of us according to the work we do for Him.

## EXPOSITION

Successfully to adjust this unique psalm to the life of David requires some alertness of apprehension in regard to psychological possibilities. If, however, we assume that the great sin of his life is in the past; that the sore smiting has been borne; that the deep repentance has been felt; that assured pardon has come; and that, in the strength of renewed spiritual health, the mind of this man of God has now become attuned to public duty: if we then further assume that the first consternation on discovery of Absalom's unfaithfulness, has driven the King to his God, with strong crying and tears, and that thus the monarch's soul has been calmed to face the situation as best he may;—we can possibly *then* bring, into the realm of the conceivable, the peculiar emotions evident in this psalm. The psalmist is being schooled to calm trust. He has poured out his complaint, wrestled with his fears, and he has tested the sweetness of fellowship with God in his present and prospective troubles; yet not so assuredly, but that he feels the need of again and again girding up the loins of his mind, and fully settling it that now, at length, there is no becoming attitude of mind Godward other than one of *silence*, the *silence* that is resolved to distrust no longer—so that instead of repeating petitions identical with those already offered, he is determined calmly to await the issue. This resolve is what we see crystallising itself into the remarkable introductory refrain to this psalm. The piling up of epithets—*my rock, my salvation, my lofty retreat*—shows the mind actively at work upbuilding its confidence; needless to say, these epithets are strikingly Davidic. But duty has to be faced; and, to this end,

2. Literally, "glory."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

is confidence carefully husbanded. The king must make no mistakes about the real situation: his own position has for some time appeared weak in the eyes of his faltering friends,—a little more, and the *leaning wall* will sway over and go down; and there are those who are ready to give a concerted *rush* at it and overthrow it. It is *his dignity* from which they would *thrust* him, that they may set up another in his place. In some given conclave, he learns that he has not a true friend left. Some, in that conclave, who still maintain the appearance of friendliness, are showing treachery in act: *With his mouth doth each of them bless, but inwardly they curse.* So ends the first stanza.

But there is another danger: the *people* are wavering! The first need is to let them see that *the king* does not waver; and therefore, after repeating his self-assuring refrain with its inspiring array of Divine epithets, he deliberately declares his *expectation* to be firm as a rock. Would *the congregation of the people* share this *trust*? let them seek it as the psalmist has done, by *pouring out their heart* before *God* so as to find in him a *refuge*. It will be noticed that the prelude to this stanza is made stronger than when it was set before the first: *then* the psalmist was sure he should not be *greatly shaken*, now he is confident that he shall not be *shaken*! This is, at least, very life-like!

Finally, the writer of this psalm strongly asserts the stability of Divine order in contrast with human rebellion against it. What is man in opposition to God. *Mere breath* or worse; Whether of *low degree* or of *high degree* in these *balances* he kicks the beam. And man is mere man when he resorts to *extortion* and *robbery*; moreover David by this time was *wealthy*; and though we have no reason to think that he unworthily *regarded* his riches, yet can it easily be conceived that base promises were being quietly circulated, as to the gains to be secured by a transfer of allegiance from David to Absalom. There may be some flavour of Wisdom Literature in the noble moralising with which this psalm is concluded; but that literature did not grow up in a day, and David may well have been a link in the chain of writers that, starting from Samuel, gave it birth; as we were reminded by certain sententious sayings in Ps. 18. Certainly, nothing could seem to be more fitting for imparting a strong finish to this psalm, than to be oracularly reminded that *power belongeth unto God*, to bestow as he pleases. David had

## PSALM SIXTY-TWO AND SIXTY-THREE

not sought power; through prophetic channels it had sought him (1 Sam. 16) and been confirmed to him (2 Sam. 7). It is especially life-like, as if with a bright gleam of Davidic inspiration, that the thought of *power* bestowed should be coupled with an appreciation of the *kindness* that moved to the gift (cp. 2 Sam. 7:15 w. Isa. 55:3); and, if any little stroke were wanting to make it seem the more natural, it might be found in the irregularity of suddenly passing from speaking of God to the speaking to God; and *thine, Sovereign Lord, is kindness!* It appears to come warm from a heart accustomed to sun itself in "the kindness of God" (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kindness") Remarkable, too, it is, that *judgment* should be logically linked with *kindness*—of course it is "vindicatory righteousness" (cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Righteousness") which is chiefly prominent in such cases. Still, it is a precious association of ideas; and it is extremely satisfactory that it is, as clothed with such an association, that the closing words of this psalm meet with such an extended response, as our numerous references reveal, throughout the Bible.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Once again read the historical setting of David's experience in exile—II Sam. 18:1-33. How shall we relate this psalm to this period of time.
2. Who is pictured as a "leaning wall" or a "tottering fence?"
3. David is waiting in silent exile while God works out His will through the rebellion of David's beloved son Absalom. What quality of character would be developed by this experience?
4. Anxiety and worry are the root of many ills—name several. The antidote is found in this psalm—apply it!
5. Men trust in so many false gods—name several as noticed in verses nine and ten.

## P S A L M 63

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Banished Soul, Athirst for God, Anticipates  
Satisfaction and Vindication.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, The Psalmist Avows and Describes his Longing for God. Stanza II., vers. 2, 3, He Traces it back to Sanctuary-worship. Stanza III., vers. 4-8, He Promises himself a Life of Glad, Satisfying and Trustful Devotion. Stanza IV., vers. 9, 10, His Enemies, he foresees, are Doomed to Destruction. Stanza V., ver. 11, His Own Joy Anticipates that of Others over the Divine Silencing of Falsehood.

(Lm.) A Psalm—By David—

When he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

- 1 O God! my GOD art thou—I earnestly seek thee:<sup>1</sup>  
thirsty for thee is my soul faint for thee is my flesh,  
in<sup>2</sup> a land that is dry and weary for want of water.
- 2 Thus in the sanctuary gained I vision of thee  
to see thy power and thy glory.
- 3 Because better is thy kindness than life  
my lips shall extol<sup>3</sup> thee.
- 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live,  
in thy name will I uplift mine open hands:
- 5 As with fatness and richness shall my soul be satisfied,  
and with lips of jubilation<sup>4</sup> shall my mouth utter praises.
- 6 If I remember thee on my couch  
in the night-watches will I talk to myself of thee.
- 7 Because thou hast become a succour to me  
therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I tarry.<sup>5</sup>
- 8 My soul hath come clinging to thee,  
on me hath laid hold thy right-hand.
- 9 Since they unto ruin seek for my life<sup>6</sup>  
they shall enter into the lowest parts of the earth:<sup>7</sup>
- 10 He shall be given<sup>8</sup> over to the power of the sword,  
the portion of jackals shall they become.
- 11 But the king will rejoice in God:

1. Or: "I long for thee."

2. Some cod. (w. Syr.): "like"—Gn.

3. Or: "laud"—as in 117:1, 145:4.

4. "Uttering ringing cries"—Dr.

5. So Gt., Gn. M.T.: "ring out my joy."

6. U.: "soul."

7. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Hades."

8. Ml.: "they will give him"—perh. "they," the unseen agents of providence, as in Lk. 12:20.



## PSALM SIXTY-THREE

every one who sweareth by Him will glory,  
for the mouth of such as speak falsehood shall be stopped.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 63

*(A Psalm of David when he was hiding in the wilderness of Judea.)*

O God, my God! How I search for You! How I thirst for You in this parched and weary land where there is no water! How I long to find You!

2 How I wish I could go into Your sanctuary to see Your strength and glory!

3 For Your love and kindness are better to me than life itself. How I praise You!

4 I will bless You as long as I live, lifting up my hands to You in prayer.

5 At last I shall be fully satisfied; I will praise You with great joy!

6 I lie awake at night thinking of You—

7 Of how much You have helped me—and how I rejoice through the night beneath the protecting shadow of Your wings.

8 I follow close behind You, protected by Your strong right arm.

9 But those plotting to destroy me shall go down to the depths of hell.

10 They are doomed to die by the sword, to become the food of jackals.

11 But I<sup>1</sup> will rejoice in God! All who trust in Him exult, while liars shall be silenced.

## EXPOSITION

This is a psalm to be experienced rather than expounded. Apart from experience it seems unreal. It has but little framework to sustain it, though what little there is helps us to get to the inner sense. The king is in banishment, passing through a dry and weary land—probably the northern border of the wilderness of Judah, on his way to the Jordan. Had his mind been moving on a lower level than at present, he would naturally

1. Literally, "the king."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

have lamented his absence from the sanctuary, and longed to return. But, for the time, he is borne up to a higher altitude. He has brought with him *a vision* of God, obtained in *sanctuary-worship*, but outliving it. He has brought with him an assurance, that "the God of vision" there, is still with him here; ready, even under these altered circumstances, to verify the foregoing vision, by revealing his *strength* to sustain him here in the wilderness, and his *glory* to bring him home again.

God's *kindness* has been seen in his life, but it is felt to be *better than life*; and therefore shall call forth abiding praise. He has begun a life of praise, and banishment cannot silence his praise: he will keep on praising *as long as he lives*. His *lips* shall make the welkin ring: here, in the open, he will solemnly *lift up his hands* in prayer, and so find a new and larger sanctuary under the spacious dome of heaven.

Such worship will not be barren. *His soul* will be *fed to satisfaction*, and *his lips* in *jubilant strains* will break forth anew. The night may come on, and its shadows close him in as he reclines on his tent-bed; but he will not be alone. Should he awake in the night, and inviting theme of meditation will await him, even the inspiring theme of his ever-present God of kindness—a theme he can never exhaust; it will move him to soliloquy, perchance entice him to song.

A sense of safety will encompass him. He will be *under the shadow* of *Divine wings*, and there will he *tarry*. He thus speaks, not as to an absent God: *My soul hath come clinging to thee*. Not in vain, does he thus come: *On me hath laid hold thy right hand*.

This is the glory of the psalm: that the worshipper brings his sanctuary with him—his thoughts, his feelings, his trust are filled with God. To this extent it is a psalm for all time—for every dispensation—for every place—in assembly or out of it—at home or abroad—in prosperity or adversity. It may be an ecstasy, but it is real, and bears abiding fruit. Such an ecstasy would appear all the more astonishing were we to suppose that it was experienced on occasion of his restoration from his terrible fall; and yet it is in that direction that the time-indication points. The psalmist may soon have to descend to a lower level, but the mountain heights will leave precious memories behind. The valley cannot swallow up the mountain.

In truth, the last two stanzas of this psalm may in a general way serve a useful purpose. As Bp. Perowne well says: "We

## PSALM SIXTY-THREE

pass all at once into a different atmosphere. We have come down, as it were, from the mount of holy aspirations, into the common everyday world, where human enemies are struggling, and human passions are strong. Yet this very transition, harsh as it is, gives us a wonderful sense of reality. In some respects it brings the psalm nearer to our own level."

Still, we must remember, that "the common everyday world" of the psalmist was not quite the same as ours. Our lives are not in continual danger, as was his life; nor are we warranted to assume that the doom of our enemies will be their consignment to the lowest hades, the finding of their way thither through the terrors of the battlefield. Nevertheless, our own joy is enhanced by *the joy of every righteous king who rejoices in God*; and whether, like our Lord, we accept of an oath-taking which we cannot prevent, and "swear not at all" of our own free will, or like the ancient Hebrews and the Apostle Paul sometimes voluntarily solemnly swear by God,—this at least may furnish us with a prospect to *glory in: that the mouth of such as speak falsehood shall sooner or later be stopped*, and truth be triumphant.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The longing of David's heart for God is such an example for all men of all time. Discuss how such a desire is developed.
2. Into what "sanctuary" did David go? How did he there behold the strength and glory of God? What part of the meeting house is the sanctuary?
3. Please discuss in a very practical sense how the steadfast love of God is better than life. Read verse three.
4. Have we ever in our so-called "more enlightened age" found the complete satisfaction in God that David did? Discuss.
5. The ability to meditate is so sadly lacking—or is it? We can meditate on the means of making money, or exercise this capacity in lasciviousness. There is a deeper need than that of meditation. Discuss.
6. Confidence and satisfaction in God—these two qualities were very real to David; they should be even more so to the Christian. How can this psalm help to develop these qualities?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 64

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Prayer against the Evil Tongues of Conspirators,  
who are Destroyed by Their Own Weapon.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4a, Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies, whose Chief Weapon is described. Stanza II., vers. 4b-6a, Plotting to Employ the Weapon with Crushing Effect. Stanza III., vers. 6b-9, Sudden Overthrow of the Enemies by their Own Instrument to the Astonishment of Onlookers and the Glory of God. *Refrain*, calling for Joy and Praise.

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(Lm.) A Psalm—By David.

- 1 Hear O God my voice in my complaining,<sup>1</sup>  
from dread peril by the foe shalt thou guard my life:
- 2 Thou shalt hide me from the council of evil-doers,  
from the conspiracy<sup>2</sup> of the workers of iniquity:<sup>3</sup>
- 3 Who have sharpened like a sword their tongue,  
have made ready their arrow—a bitter word:
- 4 to shoot in secret places at the blameless.  
Suddenly they shoot at him without fear:
- 5 They strengthen for themselves a wicked thing,  
they recount the hiding of snares:<sup>4</sup>  
they say—"Who will look at them?"<sup>5</sup>
- 6 They devise acts of injustice—have hidden<sup>6</sup> a plot.  
It is plotted—each one draweth near with deep mind;
- 7 And God shooteth at them—suddenly have appeared their  
wounds,
- 8 yea he maketh stumble each one—against themselves is their  
tongue!

1. Or: "soliloquy."

2. Cp.=Br. on 2:1.

3. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.).

4. Or: "lures."

5. That is: the snares, well-concealed as they are. Some transpose the Heb. words, and render: "They say to themselves—Who will see?"

6. So some cod. Others: "completed"—Gn.

## PSALM SIXTY-FOUR

- 9 All looking on them wag the head<sup>1</sup> and all men fear,  
and declare the doing of God his work<sup>2</sup> they ponder.  
10 Glad be the righteous man in Jehovah when he hath taken  
refuge in him,  
Now may glory all the upright in heart.  
(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 64

Lord, listen to my complaint: Oh, preserve my life from the conspiracy of these wicked men, these gangs of criminals.

3 They cut me down with sharpened tongues; they aim their bitter words like arrows straight at my heart.

4 They shoot from ambush at the innocent. They meet in secret to set their traps. "He will never notice them here," they say.

6 They keep a sharp lookout for opportunities of crime. They spend long hours with all their endless evil thoughts and plans.<sup>3</sup>

7 But God Himself will shoot them down. Suddenly His arrow will pierce them.

8 They will stagger backward, destroyed by those they spoke against. All who see it happen will scoff at them.

9 Then everyone shall stand in awe and confess the greatness of the miracles of God; at last they will realize what amazing things He does!

10 And the godly shall rejoice in the Lord, and trust and praise Him.

## EXPOSITION

It is easy to see that at times David suffered severely from false and venomous tongues. This method of assailing him was naturally most employed before the power of suppression came into his hands; also when for the time he had lost it, or it was already slipping from him. Doeg (52) represents the former period of exposure to this weapon, and Ahithophel (55, 62) the latter. Probably the former period was the more extended,

1. Or: "take flight"—O.G.

2. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "works." (pl.)—Gn.

3. Literally, "And the inward thought and the heart of everyone is deep."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and offered the more numerous occasions of defamation to David's detractors. It is possible to say how soon the earlier crusade of the tongue against David began: probably as soon as Saul showed himself ready to listen to evil reports concerning him, and therefore while yet Jonathan stood between his father and the young Bethlehemite; and therefore Jonathan may naturally have been an unknown and unsuspected instrument Divinely made ready for putting evil tongues to shame. We cannot, of course, dogmatise, where we are without detailed information; but it is, to say the least, quite conceivable, that when the detractors had succeeded in gaining Saul's ear, and had been pouring into it carefully and maliciously concocted stories to David's hurt, the appearance of his son on the scene, with newer and more authentic information, might have served to blow to the winds the cobwebs of venomous slander, and for the time being at least bring down on the slanderers' heads the wrath of the monarch thus baulked of his prey. Some such climax as this seems to be required to give a realistic verisimilitude to this remarkable psalm. One can almost see the conspirators *drawing near to Saul with plots hidden in their inscrutable minds*, suddenly dismayed as by an *arrow from God*, by the unexpected appearance and report of a man whom with all their cunning, they had left out of their account. Their surprise and confusion would naturally *turn their tongues against themselves*, and complete the failure of their *deep-laid plots*. Coming to the young harpist's knowledge, what more natural than that he should embalm the memory of these early God-given triumphs in song! The difficulty perhaps is, to people those early days with the needful factors of such experiences. And yet, human nature must then have been very different from what it is now, if there were not several Doegs among Saul's retainers; and if, under every appearance to the contrary, David had not several rivals at heart. There were probably several aspirants for Merab's hand and for Michal's; and, young as he was, the son of Jesse was probably well advised by his native good sense and caution when he suspected foul play, as he appears to have done, in being incited to aspire to wed one of the king's daughters (1 Sam. 18:23).

From some such point of view as that suggested by these reminiscences, we can reperuse this psalm with added interest. Unused to the wicked ways of the world, the youthful courtier may well have felt keenly those early slanders as so many

## PSALM SIXTY-FOUR AND SIXTY-FIVE

*sharpened swords*—as envenomed *arrows*. But even slanders must be made colourable; and so, to give effect to the *bitter word*, there must be invented a *wicked thing*. A plausible story must be worked out of incidents false and true: the unsuspecting object of envy must be entrapped unawares into sayings and doings which can easily be made to appear suspicious; and so the *bitter word* is let fly as part of a *plot*. Sayings and doings are interwoven with sufficient cunning to fit the story to do fatal damage; until, by God, they are suddenly exploded, and the slanderers are held up to infamy. Such decisive victories of truth have many a time—in David's history, in Israel's history, and in our own—made *righteous men glad in Jehovah*, and sustained in just *glorying the upright in heart*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham offers a reasonable supposition for the time and place of the writing of this psalm. Discuss his position.
2. This is a psalm about the power of the tongue. Please notice the graphic descriptions of David's evil speaking enemies. Do we have such today?
3. What is the difference between slander and gossip? Discuss.
4. What specific requests to God does David make concerning these evil talkers? Are we justified in asking the same for those who speak against us?
5. David has not only a complaint but a confidence. Can we always be confident that the innocent or the righteous will not be slain with the tongue of the wicked? Discuss.

## P S A L M 65

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel's Temple-Song of Praise, on behalf of Herself and all Nations, chiefly in Grateful Acknowledgment of Seedtime and Harvest.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Preparations for Worship. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, The God of Israel is the God of All the Earth. Stanza III., vers. 9, 10, Praise for Seedtime. Stanza IV., vers 11-13, Praise for Harvest.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

(Lm.) Psalm—By David—Song.

- 1 To thee is recited a song of praise<sup>1</sup> O God in Zion,  
and to thee in Jerusalem<sup>2</sup> shall be rendered the vow:
- 2 Thou hearer of prayer! unto thee all flesh shall come.
- 3 Reports<sup>3</sup> of iniquities have been too strong for me.  
As for our transgressions thou thyself shalt<sup>4</sup> put a propitiatory cover over them.<sup>5</sup>
- 6 How happy the man thou dost choose and bring near,  
he shall inhabit thy courts:  
We would be satisfied with the blessedness of thy house,  
the holiness<sup>6</sup> of thy temple.
- 5 By fearful things in righteousness shalt<sup>7</sup> thou answer us  
O God of our Salvation,—  
who art the trust of all the ends of the land and of the sea  
far away,<sup>8</sup>
- 6 who settest fast the mountains by thy<sup>9</sup> strength being girded  
with might,
- 7 who stillest the noise of the seas the noise of their billows  
and the tumult of populations;
- 8 Thus are moved to reverence the dwellers in the uttermost  
parts by thy signs:  
The goings forth of morning and evening thou makest ring  
out their joy.
- 9 Thou hast visited the earth and given it abundance  
full oft<sup>10</sup> dost thou enrich it,—  
The channel of God is full of water;  
Thou preparest their grain when thus<sup>11</sup> thou preparest the  
land:<sup>11</sup>

Kp. 1. So Br. "For thee praise waiteth"—Per. "Praise beseemeth thee"—

2. So in some MSS. of Sep. and P.B.V.

3. "Instances"—Del. "Manifold"—Dr.

4. For "consenting petitions," cp. 5:17, 8 note.

5. "Thou wilt cancel them"—Del. "Is always used in a fig, sense of covering morally. . . . In the Levitical law the priest is usually the subject; and then the meaning is that he *covers up* sin by means of a propitiatory rite upon ground of which God consents to overlook it; in this sense, it is the word which is often reduced to *make atonement* (Lev. 1:1, 4:20, 26, 31, &c.)"—Dr., Glossary, I.

6. Or: "holy place."

7. Or: "dost," w. Del. and Dr.

8. "The most distant sea"—Del. "Read perhaps, *and of isles (or coasts) afar off* (Isa. 66:19)"—Dr.

9. So Sep.

10. Cp. 129:1, 3.

11. Ml.: "her"—the land. Cp. O.G. 466, 2a.



## PSALM SIXTY-FIVE

- 10 The furrows thereof drenching settling the ridges thereof,  
with myriad drops dost thou soften it  
the sprouting thereof dost thou bless.  
11 Thou hast set a crown on thy year of bounty,  
and thy tracks drop fatness;  
12 They drop on the pasture of the wilderness,  
and with exultation the hills do gird themselves;  
13 Clothed are the mountains<sup>1</sup> with the flock,<sup>2</sup>  
the valleys also cover themselves with corn:  
they shout to each other for joy, yea they sing.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. PSALM 65

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 65

O God of Zion, we wait before You in silent praise, and thus fulfill our vow. And because You answer prayer, all mankind will come to You with their requests.

3 Though sins fill our hearts, You forgive them all.

4 How greatly to be envied are those You have chosen to come and live with You within the holy tabernacle courts! What joys await us among all the good things there.

5 With dread deeds and awesome power You will defend us from our enemies,<sup>3</sup> O God who saves us. You are the only hope of all mankind throughout the world and far away upon the sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

6 He formed the mountains by His mighty strength.

7 He quiets the raging oceans and all the world's clamor.

8 In the farthest corners of the earth the glorious acts of God shall startle everyone. The dawn and sunset shout for joy!

9 He waters the earth to make it fertile. The rivers of God will not run dry! He prepares the earth for His people and sends them rich harvests of grain.

10 He waters the furrows with abundant rain. Showers soften the earth, melting the clods and causing seeds to sprout across the land.

11, 12 Then He crowns it all with green, lush pastures in the wilderness; hillsides blossom with joy.

1. So, conj., w. Br.; and in antithesis to the "valleys" (*harim* for *karim*).

2. =small cattle, sheep and goats.

3. Literally, "will answer us in righteousness."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

13 The pastures are filled with flocks of sheep, and the valleys are carpeted with grain. All the world shouts with joy, and sings.

### EXPOSITION

It is difficult to say which feature of this psalm is most worthy of admiration: whether the beauty of its twin-pictures of seed-time and harvest; or the broad and sympathetic setting which turns these in combination into a song for all nations; or the quiet presuppositions which place Israel at the head of the nations in rendering this tribute of praise. When we have satisfied our powers of discriminations in tracing these features of the psalm, we have still to congratulate the joint-author that he had such gems at his disposal as the two snatches of song for the ever recurring seasons to which he here gives such an appropriate setting; and still more that, having them in his repertoire, he had so signal an occasion as we assume he had for weaving his materials into such a complete and beautiful whole.

To begin at the end of these points of observation, we can assume, with the general concurrence of commentators so far as our observation extends, that the occasion for which this psalm was prepared for temple-service was a no less remarkable occasion than the first full harvest reaped in Palestine after the Assyrians had been either destroyed in the land or driven from it as it was foretold by Isaiah that they should be (Isa. 37:30). Surely never was a harvest-song composed with so many grateful hearts bursting with eager joy to waft to heaven its strains. Assuming this as the occasion, we instinctively think of King Hezekiah as the poet-musician who acted as co-author in constructing this psalm and adapting it for actual use in the temple at Jerusalem. Just as naturally do we think of David as the composer of the seed-time and harvest gems, here so happily brought together; and we do so for the two good reasons,—first, that David's name is at the head of the psalm; and, second, that he, rather than Hezekiah, was a son of the soil, born on the land, familiar from boyhood with its hills and glens, its pastures and its prairies, its waggon-tracks and its sheep-walks, its sowing-seasons and its harvest-times, its want of water and its bountiful supplies; he, rather than his descendant of princely birth, had enjoyed many a quiet opportunity of admiring the mountain and

## PSALM SIXTY-FIVE

hills as enrobed in the flocks which were spread over them, and of hearing valley answering to valley with voices calling forth and answering his own songs; he, moreover, having elsewhere given his night-view (8) and his day-view (19) of the heavens, and glimpses of flocks peacefully resting beside still waters (23); and being, as we know, skilled with his harp, and therefore fond of it, and therefore oft sweeping its strings, what more likely in the nature of things than that he should have left behind him these hitherto unused fragments, which we are the more entitled to call "fragments," if, according to Dr. Briggs, the one consists of "five tetrameters," and the other is "a trimeter heptastich"—just the polished gems that Hezekiah knew how to appreciate and on fitting occasion to employ. The setting is not David's. Other times, other manners. The temple has now been reared; and by the best minds (Isa. 56:7) has come to be regarded as "a house of prayer for all nations." And so, while *Zion* and *Jerusalem* are placed in the forefront of this psalm, there is an immediate reference to Jehovah as a *hearer of prayer to whom all flesh shall come*. But Hezekiah had been born in a decadent reign, and had known what it was to be slighted as prince (35), to be thwarted as king (Isa. 22); and therefore no wonder that, before his enthusiastic gratitude (Isa. 38) for recovery from sickness and deliverance from Sennacherib could find full and fitting public expression, he should feel his praise a little *belated* and should complain that *reports of iniquity* from all parts of the land (14, 53) *had been too strong for him*; and that, in fact, his own *transgressions* and those of his people only *God himself* could *effectually remove*. Thinking thus of *propitiation*, he thinks of the priests—*chosen, brought near, inhabiting the temple-chambers*; and prays that he and his people may be *satisfied with the blessedness of God's house, the holiness of his temple*. By characteristic features judged, this first Stanza is certainly from the pen or by the suggestion of King Hezekiah.

And now see how again the psalm widens out. It can take in, as familiar, the thought of chastisements to be *revered*, because hard to bear, like his own and his people's, yet administered in *righteousness*; and there are more such answers to come (Isa. 39:6, 7). Nevertheless, the *God of Israel's salvation* is exalted; and the more, in humble submission to him, King and people realise their national calling as "a kingdom of priests" (Exo. 19:6) the more are they qualified to fear and to rejoice

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with the nations of the earth—in common alarms and common reliefs. And so the psalmist—this co-author, as he plainly is—looks out on nature and up to nature's God with a feeling of real fellowship with the peoples dwelling in *the ends of the land and of the sea far away*; he looks on the same strong *mountains*, and hearkens to the same surging and thundering *seas* as they do. Just like Hezekiah to have added, *and the tumult of populations*. Moreover, on this common ground, their *signs* are ours, and ours are theirs; and they, in their measure and way, *revere* the same great manifestations of Divine power as do we. And so we help them to express the reverence we all feel. But, besides the common *signs*, inspiring *fear*,—the storm, the flood, the earthquake, the popular *tumults*,—there are the common blessings of life, the sweet and gentle ministries of nature, which with us they share. They rise with the lark, refreshed; and sing as do we; they return to their homes after their toil is done and sing in their homes like ourselves. It is the good God who gladdens all. Wars make terrible upheaving and pour out an awful roar; but the music of morning and evening is more constant as well as more sweet. "Therefore praise we thee, in thy temple, O Jehovah;—for ourselves, for the nations who, with less clear vision, behold thy glory and thy love."

That the first stanza of this psalm distinctively celebrates "seed-time" rather than "harvest," though still of course with a view to harvest, becomes evident as soon as candidly examined with this idea in mind. It begins with the early rains that prepare for the seed, and culminates with the sprouting of the seed when sown. There it stops; which it scarcely could have done had not seed-time been, so far, its one dominant topic. That seed-time has harvest in view, is a matter of course; but very beautifully does the main thought turn back on the preparing of the land; and this is pictured in a few graphic touches as the detailed way in which the grain itself is prepared. You see the plough at work, scooping out furrows and turning up ridges by one and the same process: and the Divine Co-operator dealing with both according to need and capacity. The *furrows* are naturally receptive of the streams which flow in abundance from those upper and invisible *channels of God* which are *full of water*; and what they thus receive, they hold and convey to the roots of the young plants. The turned-up *ridges* need to be *settled* down and closed well in upon the precious seed which they

## PSALM SIXTY-FIVE

have received. The same rain that does the one does the other: fills the furrows, settles the ridges. Divine agriculture is economic of means, various in adaptations. But soon the surface becomes encrusted, and might imprison the tender blade, did not the gentler after-showers with their myriad drops come to soften the soil and make it easily permeable. And so, as eyes of wonder look on, and discreet judgment calculates how many dangers have been passed as the green crop carpets the earth, Devotion exclaims, *The sprouting thereof thou dost bless.*

It is harvest, however, that is set as a crown on the head of the year of bounty: harvest largely viewed as presenting in perfection the result of earlier processes. The very thought of a crown gives a glimpse of the golden grain. As if in special recognition of the latter rains, securing a full harvest, the laden clouds are conceived as the chariot of God leaving in its tracks fruits of fatness and plenty. The refreshed pastures of the open lands—the wilderness or prairie land—will shew the tracks of the chariot of God. The hills made vocal with the tuneful voices of harvesters seem to lift up a loud voice of *exultation*. The mountains, nearly to their summits, are well-nigh hidden by their robe of goats, sheep and lambs: the *vales*, running between the hills are clad with a rich mantle of *corn*; and happy voices, shouting and echoing and ringing and singing, celebrate the Divine Coronation of the year.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There seems to be two writers for this psalm—discuss who they are and the portion written by each.
2. Scroggie suggests that this psalm could be divided into three divisions: (1) God's Grace, vs. 1-4; (2) God's Greatness, vs. 5-8; (3) God's Goodness, vs. 9-13. Please read these verses and see if you agree on this division.
3. What are the indications of God's grace or favor as seen in vs. 1-4?
4. God's greatness is seen in His concern and in His works as observed in verses five through eight. Mark these out for yourself from these verses.
5. The *Harvest Song* of verses 9 through 13 contains an expression of God's goodness. This does *not* say that "mother nature" did all these things. Mark the use of the pronoun "Thou".

# PSALM 66

## DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Invitation to All the Earth to Join in Israel's Song of Praise.

## ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Invitation based on Display of Divine Power.  
Stanza II., vers. 5-7, Examples of God's Ancient Doings, leading up to his Abiding Rule. Stanza III., vers. 8-12, Renewed Invitation based on Recent Deliverance. Stanza IV., vers. 13-15, Individual Resolve to Fulfil Personal Vows. Stanza V., vers. 16-20, a Record of Personal Experience.

### (Lm.)—Song—Psalm

- 1 Shout unto God all the earth,
- 2 celebrate in psalm<sup>1</sup> the glory of his name,  
establish ye the glory of<sup>2</sup> his praise.
- 3 Say unto God—"How fear-inspiring are thy works!<sup>3</sup>  
through the abounding of thy power will thy foes come  
cringing unto thee<sup>4</sup>;
- 4 All the earth will bow down to thee and make melody unto  
thee,  
will celebrate in psalm thy name.
- 5 Come and see the doings of God,<sup>5</sup>  
Fear-inspiring is he in act towards the sons of men:—
- 6 He turned the sea into dry land,  
through a stream passed they on foot,—  
there let us be glad in him!
- 7 Ruling in his might to the ages  
his eyes over the nations keep watch:  
as for the rebellious let them not show exultation against him!
- 8 Bless O ye peoples our God,<sup>6</sup>  
and cause to be heard the sound of his praise:

1. Or: "make melody unto."

2. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Syr.)—Gn.

3. Or: "doings."

4. Or: "feign obedience unto thee." Cp. for same significant word,  
18:44 (2 S. 22:45), 81:1.

5. Cp. 46:8.

6. Some cod. (w. Aram., Syr.) simply: "God"—Gn.

# PSALM SIXTY-SIX

- 9 Who hath set our soul<sup>1</sup> among the living,  
and not suffered to slip our foot.<sup>2</sup>
- 10 Surely thou hast tried us O God,  
hast refined us like the refining of silver:
- 11 Thou didst bring us into the net;  
didst lay a heavy load<sup>3</sup> on our loins,
- 12 didst let mere men ride over our head,—<sup>4</sup>  
we came into fire and into water;  
and then thou didst bring us forth into a spacious place.<sup>5</sup>
- 13 I will enter thy house with ascending-sacrifices,  
I will render unto thee my vows,—
- 14 What my lips uttered,  
and my mouth spake in the strait I was in:
- 15 Ascending sacrifices of fatlings will I cause to ascend unto  
thee,  
with the perfume of rams:  
I will offer cattle with he-goats.
- 16 Come hearken and let me tell all ye that fear God  
what he hath done for me:—<sup>6</sup>
- 17 Unto him with my mouth did I cry,  
with high praise under my tongue,—<sup>7</sup>
- 18 Iniquity<sup>8</sup> had I cared for in my heart  
my sovereign Lord had not heard,—
- 19 In truth God hath heard,  
hath attended to the voice of my prayer.
- 20 Blessed be God—  
who hath not turned away my prayer (from before him<sup>9</sup>),  
nor his kindness from being with me.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) With stringed instruments.

1. Some cod. (w. 7 ear. pr. edns.): "souls" (pl.)—Gn.
2. Some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns.): "feet"—Gn.
3. Or: "constraint"—Br. and others.
4. Some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns., Sep., Vul.): "heads" (pl.)—Gn. Cp. Isa. 51:23.
5. So it may be (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.). Cp. 18:19—Gn.
6. Ml.: "my soul," but undoubtedly Br. is right: "The *naphshi* is as usual a poetic expression for the person, and does not refer to the soul as distinguished from the body." Notwithstanding, the definition of Dr. is apt: a pathetic circumlocution for the personal pronoun"—Dr. PP. Glos. I.
7. "Ready to burst forth in speech"—Br.
8. "Naughtiness"—Dr.
9. Cp. 88:2, 13, 102:1, 119:170. This personification of prayer, as coming in before God, helps to explain the one application of the verb rendered *turned away* to both *man's prayer* and *God's kindness*.

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
PARAPHRASE  
PSALM 66

Sing to the Lord, all the earth!

2 Sing of His glorious name! Tell the world how wonderful He is.

3 How awe-inspiring are Your deeds, O God! How great Your power! No wonder Your enemies surrender!

4 All the earth shall worship You and sing of Your glories.

5 Come, see the glorious things God has done. What marvelous miracles happen to His people!

6 He made a dry road through the sea for them. They went across on foot. What excitement and joy there was that day!

7 Because of His great power He rules forever. He watches every movement of the nations. O rebel lands, He will deflate your pride.

8 Let everyone bless God and sing His praises,

9 For He holds our lives in His hands! And He holds our feet to the path!

10 You have purified us with fire,<sup>1</sup> O Lord, like silver in a crucible.

11 You captured us in Your net and laid great burdens on our backs.

12 You sent troops to ride across our broken bodies.<sup>2</sup> We went through fire and flood. But in the end, You brought us into wealth and great abundance.

13 Now I have come to Your Temple with burnt-offerings to pay my vows.

14 For when I was in trouble I promised You many offerings.

15 That is why I am bringing You these fat he-goats, rams and calves. The smoke of their sacrifice shall rise before You.

16 Come and hear, all of you who reverence the Lord, and I will tell you what He did for me:

17 For I cried to Him for help, with praises ready on my tongue.

18 He would not have listened if I had not confessed my sins.

19 But He listened! He heard my prayer! He paid attention to it!

20 Blessed be God who didn't turn away when I was praying, and didn't refuse me His kindness and love.

1. Implied.

2. Literally, "You caused men to ride over our heads."



## PSALM SIXTY-SIX

### EXPOSITION

Instead of speaking of this psalm as "composite" (w. Br.), it would probably be more accurate to term it *various*, passing from scene to scene, from the remote past to the recent past, and from the nation to the individual; but threaded through with a clear and strong principal of unity; namely, the inspiring occasion that gave it birth. The overthrow of the Assyrians, and simultaneously therewith the recovery of King Hezekiah from sickness, form a cluster of events worthy of being the occasion to inspire this beautiful and significant psalm. It is indeed Israel's song of praise; but all nations are invited to join in singing it, and to make Israel's joys their own. The spirit of prophecy which inspired the predictions of Isaiah, Micah, and others, pulsates strongly throughout this song, imparting to it an outlook and an onlook adapted to justify it more effectively than a mere foreglance at immediately following events in Israel could have done. Its companion psalms are notably the 46th and 47th; and its ultimate sphere of fulfilment is nothing less than that manifest dominion of Jehovah, under the person of the Returned Messiah, which is the burden of prophecy, and which alone, from among all known or foretold combinations of events, supplies the conditions needed for the complete realisation of this psalm. Never during the Monarchy prior to the Exile, never during the stand made by the Maccabees after the Exile, and—needless to say—never since, has there been such a conjunction of events as could induce Israel's foes, or Jehovah's foes, to come cringing unto Him, while Earth as a whole was singing and harping to his name. Least of all, with any show of New Testament sanction, can cringing foes, feigning an obedience they dare not withhold, be regarded as possessing the essential qualifications for membership in the Christian Church. No: in its ultimate outlook, this is a song for the Coming Kingdom; while nevertheless the inspiration to compose it, and begin singing it, sprang, under God, from the significant deliverance in Hezekiah's days, a deliverance adumbrative of a larger deliverance from Antichrist's dread domination.

But, clear as is the general outlook of the psalm, there meet us in the study of it a few minor difficulties which it were to be wished could be removed; though possibly, since they may be due to accidents of transmission, they may for the present have to remain unresolved. In any case it will repay us to endeavour to

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

trace the changeful current of thought as it passes from stanza to stanza: before attempting which however, it may frankly be admitted that the stanzical division itself cannot probably be placed beyond question, without resorting to drastic changes and excisions for which we are by no means prepared; though happily the *Selahs* (פֶּה פֶּה), and the evident changes of person in the speaker, go some way to supply the defect. Submitting our division of the psalm as tentative and practical only, we proceed.

In Stanza I., an invitation is boldly given to *all the earth*, to join in the public worship of God, by the employment of the *teru'ah*, or sacred shout, the *lute* or *lyre* as leading in song, and therefore in accompanying words; and so, by shouting and harping and singing (implied) *to the glory* of God's name, to *establish the glory of his praise* on a basis of worldwide faith and unison. Words are then suggested for use in such worship by the formula: *Say unto God*; and the tenor of the words which follow shows two things: *first* that some fearful manifestation of *Divine Power* has recently been witnessed in the earth; and *second*, that, while *foes* will come crestfallen in submission, the *earth* as a whole will, to all appearance, join heartily in the praise.

In Stanza II., the *mighty deeds of God* are still the theme; but now, by examples from history, the past is called on for its testimony; which it renders by (probably *two*) conspicuous specimens, the one at the *Red Sea*, and the other at the *Jordan*. It cannot, indeed, be dogmatically affirmed that there are *two events*, rather than a duplicated narration of the one great event when Pharaoh was overthrown; but, in favour of including both passages through water, may be urged: that thereby the entire transfer of the nation into the promised land is comprehended; and more especially that thereby a point of connection is provided for the following line, which has given critics some trouble: *There let us be glad in him*. If the one journey out of Egypt into Canaan has been covered by the two lines preceding, then this line may be taken to apply to the Holy Land itself. *There*—namely in the land so reached, equivalent to “*HERE*, in our own land, into which we were so miraculously brought; *HERE*, in our own land in which we again realise that we are a free people now that the invading Assyrians have disappeared, *let us be glad in him*: with the old joy renewed.” Otherwise, if both the preceding lines refer to the transit through the Red Sea, then the line

## PSALM SIXTY-SIX

following ought to have read, as in most English versions: *There were we made glad in him*; which would indeed have brightly suggested the song of Miriam, but is strongly represented by Perowne as an ungrammatical rendering of the Hebrew word. It is barely possible that, in the ancient risks of copying, the whole line has been accidentally brought back from (say) the end of ver. 12, where slightly modified into "Here let us be glad in thee"—"Here," in this *spacious place*, it might well have stood; but, meantime, the previous suggestion is submitted to thoughtful readers: *There*—in the land so miraculously given to us (and now afresh made our own)—*let us be glad in him*.

However this small difficulty may be disposed of—and small relatively it certainly is—it is evident that the transit through *sea and stream* (or through the *sea* regarded as the same as the *stream*) is but a stepping-stone to the larger thought of the *age-abiding rule* of God. His work for Israel was not then ended, when he so brought Israel into this delightful land: he continues to care for Israel, and therefore *His eyes over the nations still keep watch*: first, for Israel's sake; but second, also to their own good; for only the *rebellious* among them have need to beware of *exalting themselves against* Israel's God.

In Stanza III., we perceive the inspiring spirit going forth to the non-Israelitish nations with new and stronger impulse, in order to impress upon them this lesson: that Israel's history is theirs, Israel's deliverances are ultimately fraught with blessing for them. Hence, now, this recent Divine interposition is brought forward and elaborated in seven lines of graphic life and power, which need no detailed comment. They are Hezekiah's reading of the event of the Assyrian invasion—the reading also of all the godly in Israel—in respect of the disciplinary improvement it was hoped would follow from that invasion and that deliverance. It was hoped that the nation was *refined as silver is refined through the fire*; and so undoubtedly, in a measure, it was. Nor did Israel only profit: even Gentile nations are still being instructed by those thrilling and exemplary events.

And now at length, in Stanza IV., there steps into view an INDIVIDUAL, whom we instantly recognize as Hezekiah himself. We know that Hezekiah's heart was set on going up to the house of Jehovah, when his sickness should be ended (Isa. 38:22); we know also the liberality of the provision of sacrifices which he made on other occasions (2 Ch. 29:20-35); and therefore we

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

instinctively feel that the resolution which is amplified in this stanza is like him and worthy of him. The most liberal offerings which he could now make would not be more than commensurate with his abounding gratitude.

And, finally, in the last stanza of the psalm, we are invited to hear him tell the story of his prayer in his sickness. He does not indeed tell us all. He makes no mention of the nature of his sickness. That is was nothing less than leprosy, we have already learned incidentally from various sources: *that*, however, he does not here divulge. Nevertheless, his language betokens that his complaint was of grave import, moving him to earnest supplication; and two additional touches enhance the interest of this his personal reminiscence: there was faith in his outcry, *and* no allowance of *iniquity* marred his prayer. There was faith; for this, cherished in a warmth of rising gratitude, is what is implied by the highly poetic representation: *With high praise under my tongue*—prayer *on* the tongue, praise *under* it! And there was a sincere renunciation of evil (2 K. 20:3, 2 Ch. 32:26, Isa. 38:3). Had he cloaked iniquity, or still tolerated in his heart an inclination towards it, his prayer would not have been heard. But his prayer *has* been heard—the leprosy has been removed; and so the happy event confirms the clear consciousness of renunciation of sin.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Isa. 36:1—38:22. In these chapters of Isaiah we probably have the historical setting for this psalm. Particularly notice Isa. 37:20, as compared with the first four verses of this psalm. Verses 16-20 compare well with Hezekiah's sickness and recovery as related in Isa. 38:1-22.
2. There are two distinct parts—one choral, vs. 1-12; the other solo, vs. 13-20 (both to be sung in the Temple). Notice the change of pronouns "we" and "our" in 1-12. "I" and "my" in 13-20. What is the purpose of the five "Selahs" used in this psalm?
3. We could well outline the first half of the psalm: (1) The God of all, 1-4; (2) The God of Israel, 5-7; (3) The God of Israel is the God of all, 8-12; (After Graham Scroggie). Answer the following questions on this section: (a) All the earth *should* praise God—will there ever be a time when it will be a reality? When? How? (b) Why mention the

## PSALM SIXTY-SIX AND SIXTY-SEVEN

crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan? (c) The God for all is revealed in these verses (8-12) as one who: (1) disciplines (2) delivers. Show where these two thoughts are developed.

## PSALM 67

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer for Blessing on Israel as a Means of  
Blessing to All Nations.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Priestly Prayer urged with a view to the Enlightenment of All Nations. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, The Peoples will Give Thanks for Governance and Guidance. Stanza III., The Fruitfulness of the Earth, and Divine Blessing on Israel, securing the Universal Reverence of the Divine Benefactor.

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(Lm.) Psalm—(By David)<sup>1</sup>—Song.

- 1 May God be gracious unto us and bless us,  
may he light up his face among<sup>2</sup> us.
- 2 That men may know throughout the earth thy way,  
among all nations thy victory.<sup>3</sup>
- 3 Peoples will thank<sup>4</sup> thee O God!  
peoples all of them will thank thee,
- 4 Populations will rejoice and ring out their joy:  
when<sup>5</sup> thou shalt judge peoples in equity,  
and populations throughout the earth thou shalt lead.<sup>6</sup>
- 5 Peoples will thank thee O God!  
peoples all of them will thank thee:
- 6 Earth hath given<sup>7</sup> her increase:

1. So in some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn.

2. So Per.; ml. "with."

3. Or: "salvation"; but cp. Pss. 96-98.

4. Cp. 6:5n.

5. Or: "because."

6. As in Exo. 15:13, Pss. 5:8, 23:3, 27:11, 73:24. So Kp. and Br. "Guidest"—Per.

7. As if on some recent occasion (65); but may be prophetic perfect of certainty: "shall have given."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

God our own God<sup>1</sup> will bless us.

7 God will bless us—

and all the ends of the earth will revere him.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 67

O God, in mercy bless us; let Your face beam with joy as You look down at us.

2 Send us around the world with the news of Your saving power and Your eternal plan for all mankind.

3 How everyone throughout the earth will praise the Lord!

4 How glad the nations will be, singing for joy because You are their King<sup>2</sup> and will give true justice to their people!

5 Praise God, O world! May all the peoples of the earth give thanks to You.

6, 7 For the earth has yielded abundant harvests. God, even our own God, will bless us. And peoples from remotest lands will worship Him.

### EXPOSITION

The most marked characteristic of this psalm is its clear and quiet blending of Primary Blessing on Israel with Consequent Blessing on All Nations. The leading position of Israel is clearly indicated. The pronouns *us* and *they* (implied) at once strike the keynote of the relationship assumed to exist between the one nation and the many. "*In the Messiah*," there is neither Jew or Gentile: *under* the Messiah, there are both—blended but not confounded. Let the reader note how in this psalm the people who speak of themselves as "*us*" occupy the foreground. With a clear reminiscence of the blessing which Aaron and his sons were authorized to bestow on the sons of Israel (Num. 6:22-27) the fulfilment of that prayer-blessing is here first sought for Israel as the people on whom Jehovah had thus "*put his name*," and which formula He himself had promised to make good. Then immediately an outspread of blessing, proceeding from the one nation to the many, is besought: *That men throughout the*

1. Prob. an elohistic substitute for "Jehovah our God." See Table of Divine Names, *ante*.

2. Literally, "govern the nations."

## PSALM SIXTY-SEVEN

*earth may know thy way*, as exemplified in the long recorded history of Israel; and *thy victory* first *over* them and then *for* them *over* their enemies. Only in that long history, as prophecy enables us to complete it, can that *victory* be traced. Then, for a whole stanza the psalm is engrossed with the nations, so introduced. Not only for what they behold in Israel will they *thank* God, but also and more immediately for immeasurable benefits brought home to themselves: they themselves will be *judged*, that is *governed, in equity*; and He who governs them will *guide* them as a shepherd *leads* his flock (as a comparison of the references will show). When Israel gets her blessing, *the nations*, as nations, will get theirs; yea *all of them* will get it, as the poet is careful to repeat. He who thus *governs* and *guides* the nations will assuredly *lead* them to peace and industry and honesty, and thereby also to plenty: *Earth will give her increase*—no doubt a covenant promise to Israel (cp. Lev. 26:4, Ps. 85:12, Eze: 26, 27) but a promise doubtless overflowing to the teeming *populations* of earth. The blessings previously named—*governance, guidance*—rise up from the political into the spiritual realm, probably to a large extent annihilating the distinction between them; but this—like the “daily bread” petition in the prayer given by Jesus to his disciples—is undisguisedly temporal, as why should it not? Why should not national blessing *come down*: as do the dews of heaven and the showers that water the earth; as does redemption, that delivers first the soul from the bondage of sin, and then the body from the bondage of decay (Rom. 8:20); as will the Heavenly Jerusalem itself, so that “the Tent of God” may be “with men” (Rev. 21:3)? Therefore do we feel at home with one plainly temporal blessing in this comprehensive prayer. Yet—as here we are not on Church ground but on Kingdom ground—we are once more reminded that Israel is here the intercessor; and the circumference of blessing for the whole earth is set around the centre of the covenant-nation. “Jehovah our God” *will bless us: will bless us AND all the ends of the earth will revere him.*

What then is Jehovah’s *way*; and, especially, wherein will consist the *victory* which will yet thrill all nations and tune their hearts as well as their harps to this song? His *way* is seen in his dealings with the nation of Israel: trace it! Note their birth as a people; their enslavement in Egypt; their deliverance; their journeyings in the wilderness; their settlement in Canaan; their degeneracy; their captivities; their partial restorations; their

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

treatment of their Messiah; their present long-continued banishment from their beautiful land; their sorrows, so heavily pressed on them; their sufferings, so often cruelly unjust; and, applying to the mind's eye the telescope of the prophetic word, note the issue of all this in national regeneration and restoration:—THERE, along that chequered course, is to be seen Jehovah's *way*, as nowhere else! And the *victory*—where and what is that? In psalms yet lying ahead of us, will it be repeatedly seen; but perhaps nowhere more brightly and suggestively than in the shortest psalm of this priceless psalter, the 117th. One word therein goes straight to the root of this matter of Jehovah's *victory*: it may be a victory over the jealousies and oppressions of Gentile nations, it may be a victory over the beleaguering forces of Antichrist; but it will be, first and last and foremost, a *victory* over the Hebrew nation itself. And when Israel can say to the nations, concerning Yahweh their God, *His kindness hath prevailed over us*, then those who listen to the story will no longer be slow to believe that *His faithfulness is age-abiding*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Did God intend for the nation Israel to be evangelistic—i.e. in telling other nations of their God? How does this psalm relate?
2. Someone referred to this psalm as “the Lord's prayer of the Old Testament”—why would this be appropriate?
3. Rotherham was sure this psalm's promise would be fulfilled—but how and when? Discuss.
4. What is the result of disobedience to the great commission? What was it for Israel? What will it be for us?

## P S A L M 68

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Glimpses of Jehovah's Visible Reign over Israel and the Nations.

### ANALYSIS

(See Headlines inserted in text.)



# PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

(Lm.) By David—Psalm Song.

(DIVISION I.—THE KING: HIS PROWESS AND PERFECTIONS.)

- 1 God ariseth his foes are scattered,  
yea they who hate him flee from his presence:<sup>1</sup>
- 2 As smoke is driven about are they driven,<sup>2</sup>  
As wax is melted at the presence of fire  
the lawless perish at the presence of God;
- 3 But the righteous are glad they exult in the presence of God,  
and shew their joy with gladness.
- 4 Sing ye to God harp ye his name,  
raise ye (a song)<sup>3</sup> to him that rideth through desert plains:  
in Yah consisteth his name<sup>4</sup> then exult in his presence.
- 5 The father of the fatherless and the advocate of widows  
is God in his holy habitation:—
- 6 God who causeth the lonely to dwell in a home,<sup>5</sup>  
bringeth forth prisoners into prosperity;  
Howbeit the stubborn remain in a sunburnt land.

(DIVISION II.—THE MARCH: FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN.)

- 7 O God! when thou didst go forth before thy people,  
when thou didst march through the desert
- 8 Earth quaked yea the heavens dripped  
at the presence of the God of Sinai,  
at the presence of the God of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

(DIVISION III.—THE LAND:

THE HOME OF THE HUMBLD PEOPLE.)

- 9 A copious rain dost thou shed abroad O God on thine  
inheritance,  
when exhausted thou thyself hast restored it:
- 10 Thy living host hath dwelt therein,  
thou dost provide in thy bounty for the humbled one,<sup>7</sup> O God.

(DIVISION IV.—THE CONQUEST:

ENEMIES IN FLIGHT; ABUNDANT SPOIL.)

- 11 The Sovereign Lord giveth the word,<sup>8</sup>  
the herald bands are a mighty host.

1. Cp. Num. 10:35.

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

3. "Lift (a song)." "Cast up a highway"—O.G. 699b.

4. So O.G. 88, 7a. Cp. ver. 18.

5. *Gt.*: "who bring back lonely ones home"—Gn.

6. The Sep. has been followed in re-arranging these two clauses.

7. Or: "humiliated one."

8. "Will make the summons resound"—Del.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 12 Kings<sup>1</sup> of armies they flee! they flee!  
and she that stayeth<sup>2</sup> at home divideth the spoil.
- 13 When ye rest on the camping ground<sup>3</sup>  
the wings of the dove are covered with silver,  
and her pinions with green-shimmering gold.
- 14 When the Almighty scattereth kings therein  
it snoweth on Zalmon.<sup>4</sup>

### (DIVISION V.—THE MOUNTAIN:

#### UNLIKELY CHOICE; POSSESSION TAKEN.)

- 15 A mountain of might<sup>5</sup> is the mountain of Bashan,  
a mountain of peaks is the mountain of Bashan:—
- 16 Why steal ye envious glances ye mountains ye peaks  
at the mountain which God hath coveted for his seat?  
Surely Jehovah will dwell (there) evermore!
- 17 The chariots of God are in myriads thousands on thousands,<sup>6</sup>  
the Sovereign Lord hath come from Sinai into the  
sanctuary:—<sup>7</sup>
- 18 Thou hast ascended on high hast captured a body of captives,  
hast accepted gifts consisting of men<sup>8</sup> yea even the  
stubborn;<sup>9</sup>  
that thou mayest dwell (there) O Yah Elohim!

### (DIVISION VI—THE PEOPLE: WHOSE DAILY BURDEN GOD

#### BEARETH, WHOSE SAFETY HE SECURETH, WHOSE LIVES

#### HE PRESERVETH, WHOSE BLOOD HE AVENGETH.)

- 19 Blessed be the Sovereign Lord!  
day by day he carrieth a load for us:  
GOD himself is our salvation.

1. Some cod.: "Messengers"—Gn.

2. "The beautiful one," as in Jer. 6:2—Br.

3. *ML.*: "between the ash-heaps," *i.e.*, where encampments have been.

*Cp.* *O.G.* 1046.

4. So *O.G.* ("meaning obscure"). "Zalmon"—snow-capped mt.; prob. *E.* of Jordan—*O.G.* 854. "The point of the comparison lies either in the booty being abundant as snowflakes and in brilliancy like the dazzling snow, or in the white, pale corpses"—*Del.*

5. *ML.*: "A m. of God."

6. So *Kp.* and others. "Innumerable, inconceivable thousands"—*Del.*

7. So *Gt.*—*Gn.* "The sense is perfectly plain when we resort to the primitive orthography"—*G.* Intro. 162.

8. Or: "mankind." "Among men"—*Del.*, *Per.*, *Dr.* and others (as of tribute); but *Michaelis*, *Ewald*, *Cornill*, as in text above; and see *Exposition*.

9. As in ver. 6, and *Deu.* 21:18, 20.

# PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

- 20 GOD himself is for us a GOD of saving deeds,<sup>1</sup>  
and to Jehovah Sovereign Lord belong escapes in view of  
death.<sup>2</sup>
- 21 Surely God will shatter the head of his foes,  
the hairy crown that goeth on in his guilty deeds.
- 22 Said Adonai—"From Bashan will I bring back,  
I will bring back from the depths of the sea:
- 23 That thou mayest bathe thy foot in blood,  
the tongue of thy dogs from foes hath its portion."
- (DIVISION VII.—PROCESSION, CONGREGATION, AND  
SONG: ALL NATIONS INVITED TO SING.)
- 24 Men hath seen thy goings O God,  
the goings of my GOD my king into the sanctuary:
- 25 In front are princes<sup>3</sup> behind are harpers,  
in the midst of damsels sounding timbrels:—
- 26 In assemblies bless ye God,  
the Sovereign Lord among the elect<sup>4</sup> of Israel.
- 27 There is Benjamin the Diminutive—ruling them,<sup>5</sup>  
the princes of Judah their throng,<sup>6</sup>  
the princes of Zebulun the princes of Naphtali.
- 28 Command O God<sup>7</sup> thy strength,  
the strength O God which thou hast wrought for us.<sup>8</sup>
- 29 Because of thy temple over Jerusalem  
unto thee shall kings bear along a gift.
- 30 Rebuke thou the beast of the reeds,  
the herd<sup>9</sup> of mighty oxen among the calves of the peoples;  
trampling in mire the favoured ones, refined as silver:<sup>10</sup>  
Scatter thou<sup>11</sup> the people who in war take delight.

1. "Deliverances"—Dr.

2. So O.G. 426: ("lit. 'for' that is 'in view of' death,") Cp. esp. Ps. 48:14, and Isa. 26:18.

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

4. So it shd. be—Gn.

5. "The conqueror"—Br.

6. "A heap of them"—Br. "Their motley company"—Del.

7. So some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. And so Br. M.T.: "God hath commanded."

8. Cp. Isa. 26:12.

9. U.: "congregation."

10. Line as conjecturally emended by Br.: wit hwhich compare 66:10.

11. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "He hath scattered."

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- 31 There come high messengers<sup>1</sup> out of Egypt,  
the Ethiopian hasteneth his hands unto God.<sup>2</sup>
- 32 Ye kingdoms of the earth! sing ye unto God;  
harp ye tse Sovereign Lord:<sup>3</sup>
- 33 To him who rideth on the ancient heaven of heavens:<sup>4</sup>  
lo! he uttereth his voice a voice of strength.
- 34 Ascribe ye strength unto God,  
over<sup>5</sup> Israel is his majesty,  
and his strength in the skies,<sup>6</sup>
- 35 Fear-inspiring is God out of his sanctuary.<sup>7</sup>  
The GOD of Israel it is who giveth strength and abundant  
might to the people.  
Blessed be God!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.      (CMm.) For lilies=passover.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 68

Arise, O God, and scatter all Your enemies! Chase them away!

2 Drive them off like smoke before the wind; melt them like wax in fire! So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

3 But may the godly man exult! May he rejoice and be merry!

4 Sing praises to the Lord! Raise your voice in song to Him who rides upon the clouds!<sup>8</sup> Jehovah is His name—Oh, rejoice in His presence.

5 He is a father to the fatherless; He gives justice to the widows; for He is holy.<sup>9</sup>

6 He gives families to the lonely, and releases prisoners

1. Meaning doubtful.

2. "'As for Cush, his hands will run out to God,' in the gesture of supplication . . . a prediction of the conversion of Egypt and Ethiopia in accordance with Isa. 19:19 seq., 43:3, 45:14, 60:5 seq., Zp. 8:10." Rather: a pred. that Egypt and Eth. will be represented in the coming kingdom.

3. "Praise ye the Lord with stringed instruments"—Del.

4. Ml.: "on the heavens of the heavens of aforetime (or antiquity)."

5. Or: "On." Cp. Isa. 4:5.

6. Or: "fleecy clouds."

7. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn.

8. Or, "deserts."

9. Literally, "in His holy habitation."

## PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

from jail, singing with joy! But for rebels there is famine and distress.

7 O God, when You led Your people through the wilderness,

8 The earth trembled and the heavens shook. Mount Sinai quailed before You—the God of Israel.

9, 10 You sent abundant rain upon Your land, O God, to refresh it in its weariness! There Your people lived, for You gave them this home when they were destitute.

11, 12, 13 The Lord speaks. The enemy flees. The women at home<sup>1</sup> cry out the happy news: "The armies that came to destroy us have fled!" Now all the women of Israel are dividing the booty. See them sparkle with jewels of silver and gold, covered all over as wings cover doves!

14 God scattered their enemies like snowflakes melting in the forests of Zalmon.

15, 16 O mighty mountains in Bashan! O splendid many-peaked ranges! Well may you look with envy at Mount Zion, the mount where God has chosen to live forever.

17 Surrounded by unnumbered chariots, the Lord moves on from Mount Sinai and comes to His holy temple high upon Mount Zion.

18 He ascends the heights, leading many captives in His train. He receives gifts for<sup>2</sup> men, even those who once were rebels. God will live among us here.

19 What a glorious Lord! He who daily bears our burdens also gives us our salvation!

20 He frees us! He rescues us from death.

21 But He will crush His enemies, for they refuse to leave their guilty, stubborn ways.

22 The Lord says, "Come," to all His people's enemies;<sup>3</sup> they are hiding on Mount Hermon's highest slopes and deep within the sea!

23 His people must destroy them. Cover your feet with their blood; dogs will eat them.

24 The procession of God my King moves onward to the sanctuary—

25 Singers in front, musicians behind, girls playing the timbrels in between.

1. Literally, "among the sheepfolds."

2. Implied from Ephesians 4:8.

3. Literally, "I will bring back from Bashan."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

26 Let all the people of Israel praise the Lord, who is Israel's fountain.

27 The little tribe of Benjamin leads the way. The princes and elders of Judah, and the princes of Zebulon and Naphtali are right behind.<sup>1</sup>

28 Summon Your might; display Your strength, O God, for You have done such mighty things for us.

29 The kings of the earth are bringing their gifts to Your temple in Jerusalem.

30 Rebuke our enemies, O Lord. Bring them—submissive, tax in hand.<sup>2</sup> Scatter all who delight in war.

31 Egypt will send gifts of precious metals. Ethiopia will stretch out her hands to God in adoration.

32 Sing to the Lord, O kingdoms of the earth—sing praises to the Lord.

33 To Him who rides upon the ancient heavens, whose mighty voice thunders from the sky.

34 Power belongs to God! His majesty shines down on Israel; His strength is mighty in the heavens.

35 What awe we feel, kneeling here before Him in the sanctuary. The God of Israel gives strength and mighty power to His people. Blessed be God!

## EXPOSITION

The interpretation of this magnificent psalm is beset with difficulty; owing in part to its highly dramatic character, and in part to its subtle allusions to ancient history and song. Neither time nor space permits of even a statement of the differences of opinion to which it has given rise among expositors. The only thing which can here be attempted, is, if possible, to do something towards reducing those differences by earnestly endeavouring to hold fast to sound principles of exegesis, and by paying due regard to correct readings and renderings.

The first thing to be sought is the scope of the psalm as a whole: what is this theme? what its keynote? To set this forth has already been aimed at by the "Descriptive Title": "Glimpses of the visible reign of Jehovah over Israel and the Nations." That the reign is that of Jehovah, no one can doubt. That his

1. Implied.

2. Literally, "Everyone submitting himself with pieces of silver." An alternate rendering of verse 30 could be, "Trample upon those who lust after the tribute of smaller nations, and who delight in aggressive wars."

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reign is first over Israel and then over the kingdoms of the earth, is plainly evident when the whole psalm is connectedly read. That the reign at first appears to be a visible dominion, will not be denied—so long as Israel only is taken into account. It is only when *the kingdoms of the earth* outside Israel come into view that the applicability of the term “visible” is likely to be questioned. It is therefore at once submitted, that only by the extension of the idea of visibility or *open manifestation* to the whole psalm, is consistency preserved and the entire trend of Prophecy duly regarded. Under this Divine Reign, there are *kingdoms*, recognised as such: in the Ecclesia of the Messiah, in other words in the Church of Jesus Christ, there are no kingdoms. In this psalm from first to last, Israel stands out peerlessly distinct from the other kingdoms of the earth: in the Church of the New Testament this distinction disappears. *Therefore* the Kingdom here is *not the Church*; and the essential idea intended to be conveyed by the qualifying term “visible” or “manifest” is seen to be needed to preserve the unity of the psalm. Only thus can the several seemingly disconnected glimpses afforded by this psalm be brought into relation as an organic whole. This conclusion, it is believed, will be found well sustained by a rapid survey of the seven divisions into which the psalm naturally falls.

DIVISION I.—As soon as the unity of the psalm is perceived, the dominate note of its first division is heard. The idea is not formally stated, but is incidentally—because dramatically—conveyed. It is helped out in clearness by a very slight modification of the language of Num. 10:35, out of which its first couplet is framed. The words of Moses are a prayer—“Arise, O Jehovah.” The words of the psalmist are either a prediction—“God will arise;” or, more probably, a generalised statement of fact—“God ariseth”: as much as to say—“When God ariseth, then are his foes scattered.” Who then is he whose mere *arising* disperses his enemies? The answer fills vers. 1-3: behold then his prowess! But note also his mercy, hidden behind his majesty: God is love, and, even in the Old Testament, this cannot be concealed. Therefore must come into view the mighty movement of tenderness which prompts God to arise and scatter his foes, the oppressors of his people. *In Yah=Jehovah=The Becoming One=consisteth his name.* Therefore must he *become—the father of the fatherless, the advocate of the widow*: a song to be sung,

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only with deep emotion by a people in *prisons* and in *exile*; and yet with searchings of heart, seeing that *the stubborn* may be left, for further chastening, *in a sun-burnt land*. Thus simply, yet broadly and grandly, is Israel's King portrayed. His character gives character to his reign. Here the whole psalm rests on stable foundations. No matter what *desert plains* may lie between Israel and her own land, here is a psalm fitted for the banished ones to sing.

DIVISION II—Visible reign: therefore manifest interposition when needed. It was needed and granted, to bring Israel out of Egypt. When Jehovah *went forth before his people*, in the pillar of cloud and fire, it was the *march* of a Divine Conqueror. Only unbelief hid this at any time from view. The poet sees it all now, and deftly expresses it: by one stroke revealing majesty; and then, by another, depicting tenderness: *Earth quaked, the heavens dripped*, how refreshing must the latter have been in the desert! That is all—all the stanza, all the "Division." But it is enough. Israel's God is no mere tribal Deity; but the Lord of earth and heaven. Creation subserves Redemption. The Unseen knows how to make his presence seen.

DIVISION III—The mention of an occasional *dripping* in the desert, suggests an even more essential dripping: the ever-recurring showers in the land to which the people came. This was Jehovah's *inheritance*, which, for needed discipline, was occasionally *exhausted* by drought, and was then *restored* by *copious rains* to its accustomed fruitfulness: the inheritance *wherein dwelt a living host* of animals and men, for all of whom *provideth* in his *bounty* Israel's God. Thus *provideth* he for the *humbled* people, once a family of slaves. The God of Redemption and Creation is also the God of providence.

DIVISION IV.—Here we must pick our path with care. It cannot perhaps be dogmatically determined whether the *original* "conquest" under Joshua here comes into view, or whether a *re-conquest* of a portion of it as under Deborah and Barak, may not be intended. The allusions to Deborah's song (Judges 5) are fairly evident; and it is possible that one such incident may stand for all similar interpositions. Still, the opinion may be hazarded that, while some of the language is taken from the song of the prophetess, it is here generalised to suit the entire conception of both conquering and re-conquering the land of Israel's inheritance. This conclusion is favoured by the turn given to ver. 13, which no longer seems framed to apply as a



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well-merited reproach to home-loving cowards like Reuben (Judges 5:16), but rather to be intended as a simple congratulation on the abundance of spoil falling to the lot of the gentle "dove" of Israel when her enemies disappear before the manifested presence of her God. However this may be, and it is wise not to magnify the difficulty of following the allusion—the chief point evidently is, that success, whether in conquest or reconquest, depends upon the commanding *word of the Sovereign Lord* of the land. When he *gives the word* ("maketh the summons resound"), whether the mandate be regarded as past, present, or future, then decisive results follow: *herald bands*—probably not *women* as some venturously interpret, seeing that the word for *herald band* both here and in Isa. 40:9 may be feminine merely as a linguistic matter of course, and especially seeing that this very passage appears to give the hint that, in war, the place for woman is to *stay at home*—the *heralds*, whoever they may be, convey the King's word to his ready hosts; concerning whom it may be "taken as read" that they make their onset, but that victory so speedily follows that the next thing to be actually noted is, concerning the opposing *Kings*, that *they flee—flee!* Joshua's conquests were rapid; and there may lie concealed in the future flights more rapid still. The Almighty—if we hearken to prophecy—has not yet made an end of *scattering Kings therein*. The reference to the *falling of snow in Zalmon* is probably merely a proverbial way of depicting the fate of the hapless kings so scattered.

DIVISION V.—It would be uncandid not to admit some difficulty here respecting the original text. The Sep. shows a considerable divergence from the Massoretic Hebrew; and Dr. Briggs, in his own drastic way, has reconstructed the two stanzas of which this Division is constituted, so as to show a rather wide departure from what is familiar to us in this part of the psalm. The best way will be to give Dr. Briggs' result intact; and then say why we hesitate to follow him implicitly, and to point out how valuable a remainder survives criticism. Vers. 15-18, as revised and abbreviated by Dr. Briggs, appear thus:—

O mount of Yahweh, fertile mountain!  
 O mount of summits, fertile mountain!  
 Mount Yahweh desired for his throne!  
 Yahweh thou didst ride in thy chariot from Sinai  
     into the sanctuary.

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Thou didst ascend up on high. Thou didst lead  
captives captive.

Thou didst accept gifts, to dwell among mankind.

In the first place, we are predisposed to admit that in many places where Dr. Briggs substitutes "Yahweh" for "Elohim" in this Elohist Book (Psa. 42-47) he is right; and that doubts as to particular passages become mere questions of detail, since no one denies that *both* Divine names *may* in many instances appear side by side. This matter affects the present passage thus: that whereas *mountain of Elohim* may mean no more than *mighty mountain*, *mountain of Yehweh* would naturally apply solely, in this connection, to Mount Zion. Now, since the Sep. goes on to speak of the mountain in question as "fertile mountain," as in Dr. Briggs' rendering above,—it is impossible not to feel that the ancient translators may have read, in their Hebrew exemplar, D SH N, "fertile," where we now read B SH N, "Bashan." To that extent there is legitimate room to doubt what was the true, most ancient text. In the second place, to other of Dr. Briggs' changes, we can only say—That as he goes behind all known texts and resorts to conjecture, we must reserve our consent till we see more difficulty than we do at present in the M.T. as needfully emended in a word or two. In the third place, it is especially satisfactory to find Dr. Briggs practically confirming Dr. Ginsburg's conclusion in favour of the beautiful and significant phrase *From Sinai into the sanctuary*—of which anon: most of all satisfactory is it to discover that the great *ascension* passage is left in substance intact, including in it such helpful accuracies as *captives* for "captivity," and the dwelling among *mankind* as the great object of the ascension—though, to that result, we come by a different route, which enables us to retain the clause *yea even the stubborn* ("rebellious") with a grip which nothing can at present induce us to relinquish. These explanations made, we attempt a brief survey of the passage.

The essential thing contained in the earlier part of it is, Jehovah's choice of Jerusalem as his fixed abode. The unquestioned clearness with which this is asserted, and the concurrence of O.T. testimony confirming it, may well make us chary of admitting that the present lapsed condition of Jerusalem is more than temporary. Nevertheless, we shall be well advised if we open our eyes to the magnitude of the Divine movement which is expressed in the solid line, *The Sovereign Lord hath come*

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from Sinai into the sanctuary. That he came escorted by *myriads* of angelic *chariots* may safely remain in the background; not, indeed, as in anywise incredible, but as not elsewhere distinctly asserted, and as in any case a generalised expression of a journey from Sinai to Zion which certainly did not *at once* take place, seeing that it was centuries after the entry into the land that the hill of Zion was captured. But the transition of the Divine Manifestation from Sinai into the sanctuary remains unquestioned; appealing strongly to what may be called the theological imagination, as a crystallised expression of a profound truth:—Sinai, the dark mountain of thunder and terror and law; Zion, the sunny mount of grace and praise. They are, indeed, in line with each other in historical continuity; but, in other ways, they are almost at opposite poles of Divine O.T. Manifestation. At the one end, Angel hosts: at the other, Levitical choirs. At the outset, Moses trembling in fear; at the close, David with his harp in an ecstasy of adoration and praise. It is true that *Sinai came into the sanctuary*, and that, accordingly, the Dispensation remained that of Sinai still; and further true that, to the last, Jerusalem, Hagar-like, was and is “in bondage with her children.” The “grace” and the “truth” did not and could not come by Moses. Nevertheless, Moses became witness to a grace he did not himself minister; and Jerusalem, with its Davidic ministry of praise, had given to it the function not only of pointing back to Sinai, but of pointing onward and upward to its heavenly counterpart; so that, indeed, the towers and palaces and temple of Jerusalem are ever pointing to the sky; and Jehovah’s home below becomes the counterpart of his home above; as in this very psalm, before we are well aware of it, we behold Jehovah *riding upon the ancient heaven of heaven*; and seem ourselves, in his strength, to mount up to *the fleecy clouds*.

Suddenly, however, we are brought back to earth, to recognize that we are slowly learning by types. *Thou* (O God, O Sovereign Lord—where note the abrupt direct address, *Thou*) *hast ascended on high*. In the first instance the language, as all admit, is used of the ascent of the ark to its resting place in Jerusalem, at which point Ps. 15, 24, and in some measure 47, come into line, comparison with which renders needless further comment here. But the very next clause—*hast captured a body of captives*—once more usefully revives the whole question of prophetic typology, or typological prediction. Expression has

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already been given, in the Exposition of Psalms 2, 24 and 45, to the conviction that types should be regarded as hints rather than programmes—as pencilled sketches rather than architect's plans; so that we never need conclude that, because a certain future is feeble in the type, therefore it must have either a small place or no place at all in the antitype. It is of the essence of types that they should be comparatively feeble. What, indeed, was the ascent of the ark up to Jerusalem, compared with the ascent of the Messiah into heaven? Therefore would it seem to be little better than trifling to ask, with any anxiety, whether David or Joab seized a "body of captives" when the ark was carried up the hill, or whether the captives presumably taken when Jebus was captured, were in evidence, as the spoils of a conqueror, when the ascent was made. It is surely abundantly sufficient that the ark was triumphantly carried up into its destined place in spite of all the difficulties that had to be surmounted: the custom of conquerors may answer for the rest. It is customary with conquerors to *capture a body of captives*; customary, for them to *accept presents consisting of men, yea even the stubborn*. And therefore, the very feebleness of any known facts that happened in David's day to fill out the language of the psalm at this point, may well make us conclude that something far transcending the type is here forthshadowed. Hence we turn with relief to the teaching of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4, and discover with delight how wonderfully well the great facts connected with the Messiah's ascension to the right hand of God in heaven, do something more than justice to the comprehensive language used in the psalm: "more than justice," in that the verbal departure of the apostle from the psalmist at a single point melts away into higher harmony when set in the light of the great fulfilling facts. The Messiah both received *gifts consisting of men*—his Apostles, his Church, all mankind—and, in turn, gave gifts to men, which gifts themselves were men, namely apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers! Critics truly affirm that the Hebrew itself cannot mean "gave gifts to men"; but it is submitted that all of them should have done what some have done; and, instead of being content with the phrase: "among men"—which leaves it very questionable what to do with the *rebellious* or *stubborn*—seeing that it is not very likely that Yah Elohim would "dwell" peacefully "*among them*,"—should have gone just the one step further, —on the strength of the *beth-essential*, as it is called, which is

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well exemplified in ver. 4 of this very psalm,—by saying, here, *gifts consisting of men, yea even the stubborn*; especially considering how clear and solemn a N.T. truth it is that “the Father hath given all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22), and that Jesus “died and lived again that he might be lord of both dead and living” (Rom. 14:9). Surely, right thoroughly does the New Testament pledge itself to fill the Old Testament to the full, seeing that it can suggest how really and grandly the Messiah, out of “the wicked spirits” darkening the lower “heavenly places” (Eph. 6), *captured a body of captives* when on his way to the central throne to *accept gifts consisting of men*, so “spoiling principalities and powers” (Col. 2) in demonstration of what more in that direction he will yet achieve when the time shall arrive for him to make his great and warlike descent into this lower sphere, and so further prepare the way for the final consummation, when “the tent of God” shall permanently “be with men.”

DIVISION VI.—If the reader will accept these Divisional summaries, not as exhaustive descriptions of contents, but as interpretive hints of special features, helping out the main theme of the psalm, it will be found that the point here made plain is, WHAT PEOPLE it is which, here and elsewhere through the psalm, comes into peculiarly close relationship to God: *carrieth a load for US—OUR salvation—is for US a God of saving deeds*. It is by taking into account in their entirety *all* the characteristics of this people, that we arrive at anything like certainty as to that people’s identity. All worshippers of the one true and living God—all saints among the Gentiles—all members of Christian churches the world over—may not unnaturally deem themselves to be included, so long as the Divine bearing of *daily burdens* and *salvation* itself are the benefits which come into view as calling forth praise; but, when it comes to *bathing thy foot in blood*, it becomes a question as to whether we had not better hark back, and reopen the inquiry as to *the people intended*. Surely, better leave it to the Twelve-tribed Nation, to sit for the portrait, as the people intended by the *we* and the *our* and the *us* throughout the psalm; than to throw the whole psalm into confusion, by overlooking the fact that *Gentiles also* are found here in their own right, so far as description is concerned: *kings, messengers out of Egypt, Ethiopians, Kingdoms of the earth*, are surely comprehensive enough designations to do ample justice to all Non-Israelites.

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In view of other prophecies, especially those which touch on the great biblical question of the bringing of life and incorruption to light, perhaps the line in this division of the psalm which most strongly attracts us is that which says: *And to Jehovah Sovereign Lord belong escapes in view of death.* Here, as in so many cases, translation and interpretation reciprocally serve each other: the right rendering helps out the true exegesis; and, *vice versa*. Until we are satisfied that we have seized the true exegesis, we cannot be quite sure that we have hit upon the happy rendering. *Escapes in view of death.* More literal than *escapes* is *outgoings*, and various "outgoings" are conceivable; "sallies," "outlets," "issues" or "results" each being worthy of a moment's thought. Indeed, had the Hebrew phrase been quite literally, "the outgoings of death," we might have thought of DEATH'S OWN EXITS, his departures from first one sphere and then another of his former dominion; so that first the Messiah dieth no more, then the Church dieth no more, until at length Death itself is swallowed up in victory. But probably this would in any case have been too great a stride to suppose here taken by the revealing Spirit, whose disclosures ordinarily advance by gently graduated degrees. Hence, and the Hebrew being literally as peculiar as it is, and the English phrase "escapes in view of death" being as striking and satisfying as it is, probably we shall be doing wisely to content ourselves with its obvious suggestions. The moment we do this, we bethink us of the numberless "escapes in view of death" which David himself had experienced; of the one marvellous "escape" of Hezekiah "in view of death;" then, rising to the level of national outlook, we recall the "escape in view of death" granted by the passage through the Red Sea; the resuscitation of the nation by deliverance from captivity; and realise how ample were the reasons for the insertion of such a line as this in such an ode, and how mighty is the impulse of devout thankfulness to attribute all such "escapes in view of death" to *Jehovah Sovereign Lord*. After submitting all which, it is difficult not to feel that even this rich line of things scarcely fills up the passage;—which apprehension, however, is partly due to the immediately succeeding lines, which, to say the least, countenance the surmise of a two-fold allusion; namely one to Jehovah's enemies, as well as one to his friends. In other words, vers. 21-23 suggest an enlarged application of the previous words, so far as this: "To Jehovah, Sovereign Lord, belong escapes in view of death"—which *he grants or withholds* according to his

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holy will; so that neither *by* death nor *from* death can his enemies escape the visitation of his righteous wrath. This extension of the sense will appear the more called for the more we find in Amos 9:1-4 a parallel to vers. 21, 22 of this psalm. The decisive force of ver. 23 in determining who are the *us* and the *we* of the psalm has already been indicated.

DIVISION VII.—It seems possible and convenient to comprehend all the remainder of this psalm under the one compound division-line placed at its head. *The goings of God . . . into the sanctuary* are pretty clearly pictured as “a procession,” or, still more probably, as “processions”: the whole being uplifted into the realm of the ideal, so as to comprehend not only an allusion to the original bringing up of the ark by David, and the repeated bringings home of the ark after it had gone out before the hosts of Israel to battle (2 Sam. 11:11) but also any procession which the future may have in store. Whether, in ver. 25a, we should read with some authorities *sharim*, “singers,” or with others *sarim* “princes,” is a nice question, which perhaps cannot be dogmatically decided: the verses following (especially ver 27) perhaps favour “princes;” and the more readily, when two things are considered—first, that procession without “princes” would be very incomplete; and, second, that a procession with “princes” leading the way, would even then not be without “singers,”—that is to say, if we may gather from Rev. 15:2-4 that *harpers* need not be tongue-tied, but may sing as well as play.

It seems quite fitting that the psalmist should, in ver. 26a, address the processionists in anticipation of the *assemblies* which they are about to form in the temple courts; and further that (in ver. 26b) he should synonymously term those “assemblies” *the elect of Israel*—to appropriate the word which Ginsburg decides should stand in the text; and which prepares us to find an *elect* group of *tribes* in ver. 27—probably as representatives of the whole twelve-tribed nation: before leaving which we may ask, without assuming that David himself wrote this part of the psalm, Who so likely as David to have set *Benjamin* at the head of the group? That David—partly out of his old habit of reverence for Saul and partly out of his love for Jonathan—should have done it is conceivable. No later singer would have been likely to indulge in such a stroke of antiquated chivalry.

From this point onward for some way in the psalm, there is little that demands comment: save, perhaps, chiefly, to note how admirable a parallel with ver. 28b is found in Isa. 26:12; to

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observe that by *the beasts of the reeds* we are, by general consent, to understand the "hippopotamus" as the symbol of Egypt, in which case the *mighty oxen* which follow would naturally suggest the monarchs of Assyria and Babylon, and thus prepare us to favour Dr. Briggs' emendation of 30c, remembering how repeatedly, between West and East, Israel was trampled in the mire.

After the direct address to God—*Command, Rebuke, Scatter* (ver. 23-31)—which may itself form part of the song which the processionists sing; we come upon the exhilarating climax of the entire psalm, in which (as it would appear) Israel in her gladness invites the outlying nations to join her in praise: a climax which is indeed exhilarating, by reason of the comprehensive vision it gives of earth and heaven united, and the frank and grateful strains in which we hear the nations themselves recognising that the God of the heavens is the God of Israel: *He rideth on the ancient heavens of heavens, yet over Israel is his majesty; His strength is in the skies, yet the God of Israel it is who giveth strength and abundant might to the people.* It is this very blending of earth and heaven, of the past and the future, which for once induces a slight uncertainty as to which *sanctuary* is intended in the last verse of the psalm. If we felt bound to restrict the outlook of ver. 35 to that of vers. 17, 24, we should decide for the earthly sanctuary; but, perceiving as we do the delightful way in which, here at the close, the vision of the psalmist seems to alternate and vibrate between earth and heaven with a general uplifting effect, we are disposed to leave this nice point for the event of fulfilment to determine. It is probably more important to note that, whether the Divine Manifestation intended be made from the heavenly sanctuary or the earthly, there will be in it a sufficiently marked element of terror to render it *fear-inspiring*. So far—no further as yet—does the vision reach. Nevertheless, coupling the end of the psalm with its beginning, and noting well the promising transition from Sinai to Zion in the centre of this magnificent composition, we can be well content to rest in the final note—*Blessed be God!* and can felicitate ISRAEL that, under the leadership of such men as David, Hezekiah and undoubtedly Isaiah, such strains as these were in the earlier centuries of the Monarchy prepared for the celebration of the "lily" feast at the beginning of the year, that is, for the Passover; according to Dr. Thirtle's principle for the re-adjustment of the musical inscriptions. "Undoubtedly Isaiah" may be thought to be going beyond the evidence; but after



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the weighty arguments for attributing the authorship of Isaiah 40-66 to the known Isaiah of Hezekiah's day, which have been advanced by Dr. Thirtle, in his "Old Testament Problems," it may soon be open to us to turn the tables upon Kirkpatrick, for example (who infers the late date of this psalm from its numerous resemblances to "Isaiah II."), by contending that, on the contrary, those very resemblances go far to prove that the closing chapters of Isaiah as well as the psalm were written early enough to justify the librarian's mark inscribing even this psalm to (*or by*) *David*: from whom we may well believe its fundamental strains actually came. That Hezekiah probably added to it and adapted it to temple worship, does not really throw doubt on the traditional heading; any more than does an addition or two by an exilic editor, who may, for example, easily have supplement Division I. by the line, *Howbeit the stubborn remain in a sunburnt land*. Even this supposition, however, is by no means necessary to the assumption of the Davidic authorship and the Hezekian co-authorship, seeing that extensive deportations to sunburnt eastern lands had already taken place in Hezekiah's day.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Perhaps the best we can do for discussion would be to reproduce the brief comments and somewhat extended outline of W. Graham Scroggie: "The Psalm has been called 'the grandest and most elaborate of all the Dedication Odes,'" and "one of the masterpieces of the world's lyrics"; and Maclaren says: "This superb hymn is unsurpassed, if not unequalled, in grandeur, lyric fire, and sustained rush of triumphant praise."

The main subject is, THE VICTORY OF GOD.

In stanza 1, is sung GOD'S VICTORIOUS MARCH (1-6). In verses 1-3 is an invocation, God is bidden *arise and scatter His enemies*; and in verses 4-6 is a summons wherein His people are called upon to *prepare His way*. Noteworthy here are (a) the flight and plight of God's enemies (1, 2); (b) the rapturous joy of His people (3, 4); (c) the description of God in his relations (5, 6), in which mark the contrast between the lot of subjects (5, 6a), and of rebels (6b).

In stanza 2, THE WILDERNESS LIFE IS DESCRIBED (7-10). Here is summarized the story of Numbers, *omitting the sins of Israel*. In graphic language is set forth the history of Israel from the Exodus to the Entry into Canaan. The *terror* and *tenderness*

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of God are prominent; His *power* and His *providence*. "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain" *in the wilderness!* He sends rain where it is needed most.

In stanza 3, THE VICTORIES WHICH WON THE LAND are recounted (11-14). This stanza covers the period of Joshua and the Judges. Here we observe the hurry of battle and the tumult of many voices on the field. Mark the scorn of verse 12, *kings fleeing*, and *women at home* dividing the spoil. When *the Lord speaks* (11), who can resist?

Maclaren has described verses 11-14 as "the despair of commentators," and Perowne says that "it is indeed almost hopeless now to understand the allusions," yet the general drift of the stanza is discernible. It is a picture of "a battle, with the battle left out." It has reasonably been suggested that it is "a fragment of one of those ancient battle-songs, sung by the women after the defeat of the foe." With verse 13 should be read Judg. V. 16, where Deborah upbraids Reuben for cowardice and irresolution, and for preferring the ignoble ease of pastoral life to the glorious dangers of the war of independence:

"Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,  
To hear the pipings for the flocks?"

These verses are extremely difficult to understand; indeed they are among the most difficult in the Psalter.

In stanza 4, THE ENVIABLE LOT OF ZION is depicted (15-18). The battle is won, and the conqueror enters Zion and its Sanctuary (16, 17), there to abide. The lofty peaks of Bashan envy the little mount of Zion (16), for here is the glory of God, and not there. The Conqueror enters not alone, but with a multitude of captives (18), anticipating that day when He ascended, with such a host, a higher Height from which He bestowed gifts on His Church (Eph. IV:8).

The climax of the Psalm is in this stanza. All that preceeds has led up to it, and all that follows flows down from it. The Conqueror, the Lord God has reached this Sanctuary.

With this ends the first main division of the Psalm, the historical retrospect, and with the next stanza begins the second division, in which the Conqueror is seen, not in relation to Israel only, but to all peoples (32, 35).

In stanza 5, THE GREAT ALTERNATIVES are presented (19-23). Here are two contrasted pictures. If we behold *God*, we see Him first as *Burden-bearer* (19, R.V.), and *Deliverer* (20); and then

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as a *Warrior* (21), and *Destroyer* (21-23). If we behold the *people*, we see that God's first aspect and action are because they believe, and His second, because they do not. *If He does not bear your burden, you will have to bear your own.* By Him only is escape from death (20).

In stanza 6, THE SONG OF THE SAVED is sung (24-27). In verses 15-18 we learned of the Conqueror's march to the Sanctuary; how we see His redeemed people following Him (24) with songs (25) of praise (26), four tribes being specially mentioned (27). This is a description of a solemn procession of thanksgiving to the Temple. The faithful share in the Lord's triumph: they who follow in the way of the Cross will know at last the joy of the Crown.

In stanza 7, THE PRAYER OF THE PROCESSION is recorded (28-31). Is as Maclaren suggests, "command" be read instead of "hath commanded," in verse 28, it will be seen that these four verses divide into two and two, and that in each pair the first verse is a petition, and the second, an anticipation of the answer. Here *faith* and *hope* alternate; faith in *request*, and hope of *response*; and so read—faith (28), hope (29), faith (30), hope (31). Surely this stanza is Messianic, and looks forward to a day when this dream shall be fulfilled, when indeed "*Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God.*"

In stanza 8, is A CALL TO ALL KINGDOMS (32-35). It begins with "*Sing unto God,*" and it ends with, "*Blessed be God*"; and the exhortation rests upon the declaration: Jehovah is *the God of Israel*, and is to become *the God of all the earth* by the acknowledgment of all peoples. He is *strong*: mark the occurrence of "*strength*" four times in these verses; none shall be able ultimately to resist Him (in verse 33 read, "a voice of strength"). The whole Psalm is a pean of praise; it throbs with exultation; in it we hear the roar of battle, melting in the song of triumph. The Lord is the Victor, and His people are the crowned. The great truth and message of this Psalm is that God will be finally triumphant and be universally sovereign, and that is implied which is not plainly declared, that this victory and sovereignty will be realized through Christ. But what in the future shall be true in the experience of a world, may in the present be true in the experience of each of us.

*Thought:* God's enterprise includes all the earth."

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### PSALM 69

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Pictures of Distress and Outcries for Deliverance, followed by  
Imprecations on Cruel Enemies, and by Promises of Praise.

#### ANALYSIS

This psalm is almost certainly Composite, not easily lending itself to Stanzaic divisions. The following are its principal contents. Chiefly under the figure of a Man Drowning in a Swampy Stream, the psalmist describes his sufferings from Innumerable Foes—vers. 1-4. He confesses his Folly and Wrong-doing—ver. 5. Prays that others may Not be Injured through Him—ver. 6. Declares that he Suffers for Jehovah's sake—vers. 7-9. Is Exposed to Ridicule—vers. 10-12. Yet Hopes to be Heard—ver. 13. Frames his Petitions on his Original Description of Peril—vers. 14, 15. Becomes yet More Importunate—vers. 16-18. Is Broken-hearted by the Bitter Mockery of his Enemies—vers. 19-21. At length, in seven strong couplets, he prays for the Punishment of his Foes—vers. 22-28. Returning to his Own Case, he Confidently Counts on Salvation and Promises Praise—vers. 29-31. He anticipates that the Humbled will be Revived and Jehovah Exalted—vers. 32, 33. And finally invites Heaven and Earth to Give Praise for the Restoration of Zion—vers. 34-36.

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(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Save me O God because waters have come in as far as the  
life:<sup>1</sup>
- 2 I have sunk into a swamp that is deep where is no place to  
stand,  
I have come unto depths of waters and a flowing stream  
hath swept me away;
- 3 I<sup>2</sup> am weary with mine outcry parched is my throat,  
bedimmed are mine eyes through waiting for my God.
- 4 More than the hairs of my head are they who hate me  
without cause,

1. U.: "soul."

2. These varying indentations indicate varying measures in the original

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more numerous than my bones<sup>1</sup> are they who are falsely my foes:

When I had seized nothing then I<sup>2</sup> had to make good.

5 O God thou knowest my folly,<sup>3</sup>

and my wrong-doings from thee are not hid.

6 Let not those who have waited for thee be put to shame through me O Jesovah of hosts!<sup>4</sup>

let not those who are seeking for thee be confounded through me O God of Israel!

7 Because for thy sake have I borne reproach,<sup>5</sup> confusion hath covered my face:

8 Estranged have I become from my brothers, yea an alien to the sons of my mother:

9 Because zeal for thy house hath consumed me,<sup>6</sup> and the reproaches meant for thee<sup>7</sup> have fallen on me.

10 When I have humbled<sup>8</sup> with fasting my soul then hath it become a reproach to me:

11 When I have made my clothing sackcloth then have I become to them a taunt-song:

12 They who sit in the gate compose songs<sup>9</sup> about me, yea, string-songs for the imbibers of strong-drink.

13 But as for me my prayer is to thee Jehovah in an acceptable time,<sup>10</sup>

O God! in the abounding of thy kindness answer me in the truth of thy salvation.

14 Rescue me from the mire and oh let me not sink,<sup>11</sup> oh let me rescued from my haters and from depths of waters:

15 Let not a flowing stream of waters sweep me away, nor a deep swallow me up,

nor a well close over me her mouth.

16 Answer me Jehovah! for good is thy kindness,<sup>12</sup>

1. So it shd. be (w. Syr.) (or "locks")—Gn.

2. So *Gt*—Gn.

3. Cp. 39:5.

4. So Sep. M.T.: "O Adonai Jehovah of hosts."

5. Cp. 44:22; Rom. 8:36.

6. Cp. Jn. 2:17.

7. M.T. (ml.): "And the reproaches of those reproaching thee."

8. So it shd. be (w. Sep.): cp. 35:13—Gn.

9. So Br. (cp. 105:2; Judges 5:10).

10. Ml.: "in a time of favour."

11. Cp. v. 2 ff.

12. Cp. 109:21.

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according to the abounding of thy compassions turn thou  
unto me;

- 17 And hide not thy face from thy servant,  
because I am in distress haste thee answer me.
- 18 Oh draw near to my soul redeem it,  
on account of mine enemies ransom thou me.
- 19 Thou knowest my reproach and my shame and my confusion,  
before thee are all mine adversaries.
- 20 Reproach hath broken my heart and I am incurable,  
And I waited for one to show sympathy and there was none,  
and for comforters but I found none;
- 21 But they put in<sup>1</sup> my food poison,<sup>2</sup>  
and for my thirst they gave as my drink, vinegar.<sup>3</sup>
- 22 Let their table before them become a trap,<sup>4</sup>  
and unto their friends<sup>5</sup> a lure.<sup>6</sup>
- 23 Let their eyes become too dim to see,  
and their loins continually cause thou to shake.
- 24 Pour out over them thine indignation,  
and let the glow of thine anger overtake them.
- 25 Let their encampment become desolate,<sup>7</sup>  
in their tents be there none to dwell.
- 26 Because whom thou thyself hadst smitten they pursued,  
and unto the pain of thy wounded ones they must needs add.<sup>8</sup>
- 27 Lay punishment on their iniquity<sup>9</sup>  
and do not let them come into thy vindication.<sup>10</sup>
- 28 Let them be blotted out of the register of the living,<sup>11</sup>  
and with the righteous let them not be enrolled.
- 29 But I am humbled and in pain,  
thy salvation O God shall set me on high!
- 30 I would fain praise the name of God in a song,  
and would magnify him with thanksgiving;

1. Or: "as"—O.G.

2. Cp. Mt. 27:34.

3. Cp. Jn. 19:29.

4. Cp. Rom. 11:9, 10.

5. "And their peace-offerings"—Br.

6. Or: "bait." So Dr.

7. Cp. Acts 1:20.

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

9. "Impute guilt to their guiltiness"—Carter.

10. Or: "righteousness."

11. ="book of life"—Cp. Exo. 32:32, 33, Ps. 87:6, Isa. 4:3, Eze. 13:9, Dan. 12:1.

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- 31 And it will be more pleasing to Jehovah than a bullock,—  
a bull with horn and split hoof.  
32 The humble have seen and rejoice:  
ye seekers after God! let your hearts then revive,  
33 Because a hearkeeper to the needy is Jehovah,  
and his prisoners hath he not despised.  
34 Let the heavens and the earth praise him,  
the seas and everything gliding therein  
35 Because God will save Zion,  
and will build the cities of Judah,  
and men shall dwell there and possess it;  
36 And the seed of his servants shall inherit it,  
and the lovers of his name shall abide therein.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 69

Save me, O my God. The floods have risen. Deeper and deeper I sink in the mire; the waters rise around me.

3 I have wept until I am exhausted; my throat is dry and hoarse; my eyes are swollen with weeping, waiting for my God to act.

4 I cannot even count all those who hate me without cause. They are influential men, these who plot to kill me though I am innocent. They demand that I be punished for what I didn't do.

5 O God, You know so well how stupid I am, and You know all my sins.

6 O Lord God of the armies of heaven, don't let me be a stumbling block to those who trust in You. O God of Israel, don't let me cause them to be confused,

7 Though I am mocked and cursed and shamed for Your sake.

8 Even my own brothers pretend they don't know me!

9 My zeal for God and his work<sup>1</sup> burns hot within me. And because I advocate Your cause, Your enemies insult me even as they insult You.

10 How they scoff and mock me when I mourn and fast before the Lord!

1. Literally, "for Your house."

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11 How they talk about me when I wear sackcloth to show my humiliation and sorrow for my sins!

12 I am the talk of the town and the song of the drunkards.

13 But I keep right on praying to you, Lord. For now is the time—You are bending down to hear! You are ready with a plentiful supply of love and kindness! Now answer my prayer and rescue me as You promised.<sup>1</sup>

14 Pull me out of this mire. Don't let me sink in. Rescue me from those who hate me, and from these deep waters I am in.

15 Don't let the floods overwhelm me, or the ocean swallow me; save me from the pit that threatens me.

16 O Jehovah, answer my prayers, for Your loving kindness is wonderful; Your mercy is so plentiful, so tender and so kind.

17 Don't hide from me;<sup>2</sup> for I am in deep trouble. Quick! Come and save me.

18 Come, Lord, and rescue me. Ransom me from all my enemies.

19 You know how they talk about me, and how they so shamefully dishonor me. You see them all and know what each has said.

20 Their contempt has broken my heart; my spirit is heavy within me. If even one would show some pity, if even one would comfort me!

21 For food they give me poison; for my awful thirst they offered me vinegar.

22 Let their joys<sup>3</sup> turn to ashes and their peace disappear;

23 Let darkness, blindness and great feebleness be theirs.

24 Pour out Your fury upon them; consume them with the fierceness of Your anger.

25 Let their homes be desolate and abandoned.

26 For they persecute the one You have smitten; and scoff at the pain of the one You have pierced.

27 Pile their sins high and do not overlook them.

28 Let these men be blotted from the list<sup>4</sup> of the living; do not give them the joys of life with the righteous.

29 But rescue me, O God, from my poverty and pain.

1. Literally, "in the truth of Your salvation."

2. Literally, "Your servant."

3. Literally, "their table."

4. Or, "Let them be blotted out of the book of life."



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30 Then I will praise God with my singing! My thanks will be His praise—

31 That will please Him more than sacrificing a bullock or an ox.

32 The humble shall see their God at work for them. No wonder they will be so glad! All who seek for God shall live in joy.

33 For Jehovah hears the cries of His needy ones, and does not look the other way.

34 Praise Him, all heaven and earth! Praise Him, all the seas and everything in them!

35 For God will save Jerusalem;<sup>1</sup> He rebuilds the cities of Judah. His people shall live in them and not be dispossessed.

36 Their children shall inherit the land; all who love His name shall live there safely.

## EXPOSITION

This psalm is remarkable, on the one hand, for its terrible imprecations on enemies; and, on the other, for the frequency with which it is quoted in the New Testament: also, in a minor degree, for its manifestly composite structure, which sets stanzical arrangement at defiance—as may be seen by observing the varying indentations of the lines, which in the present rendering call attention to the numerous metrical changes evident in the Hebrew.

As to this past peculiarity, it may at once be remarked: That only by a drastic re-arrangement of its parts, can continuity of measure and symmetry of form be secured; and, even so, only at the risk of obliterating traces of living adaptation to his own circumstances effected by the final author: whose spontaneous comments on the two original psalms before him, we can here and there with probability distinguish. Readers caring to follow up this suggestion may find assistance by noting: That lines here set fully out in the margin are regarded as pentameters, those pushed in one degree at tetrameters, and those indented two degrees as trimeters, counting with Dr. Briggs by word-group beats. After making reasonable allowance for possible contractions and expansions of the lines without serious disturbance of the sense, there will still surely emerge to the critical eye clear indications that, in its present form, the psalm is decidedly composite.

1. Literally, "Zion."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Neatly connected with these matters of form arises the always interesting question of authorship. The traditional headline traces the psalm ultimately to David; nor is this note of origin probably so easily discredited as some critics appear to suppose. The opening lines of this psalm remind us of the first stanza of Ps. 40, which we saw reason to conclude came from David's pen; and at the close of those lines (namely at ver. 4c) is a statement so peculiar that scholars have pronounced it a mere proverbial saying, the exact meaning of which is not to be pressed; *when I had seized nothing then had I to make good*. It seems not to have occurred to them to reflect how naturally this would become literally true of David, in those early days when he was accustomed to make raids in the name of King Saul into the territories of the Philistines and others, and when the hatred of the meaner spirits amongst Saul's courtiers had already begun to show itself. As, however, there is no temptation to attribute the entire psalms to David, it becomes easy to remark how well many parts of the psalm could have come from Hezekiah—especially its close. To what extent the early life of Hezekiah was conformed to that of David in respect of the stern discipline of suffering and waiting, perhaps we shall never know, but from slight indications, discovered in Ps. 35, 42 and 43, our minds are familiarised with the possibility that Hezekiah had a considerable share in sufferings such as are so emphatically memorialised in this psalm. Naturally, JEREMIAH stands pre-eminent as a prince of sufferers; and if in Ps. 31 we felt constrained to admit "the weeping prophet" into that gallery of portraits—even though placed there by the Sopherim (Intro., chap. I.)—it would be taking an extreme position to assume that we have none of Jeremiah's work in this psalm. Nevertheless the reasons for so late a date to the whole psalm are probably by no means so conclusive as, for instance, Kirkpatrick deems them to be. But, in truth, anything like adequacy in experience of suffering to prepare the psalmist for penning the more sorrowful of the strains before us, is the less anxiously to be sought, the more we perceive the spirit of the Messiah to have been at work in preparing these lines of lamentation. If even Briggs has to say: "This sufferer is doubtless the ideal community of Ps. 22, Is. 53; "how readily may we assure ourselves that "the ideal community" has to be summed up and made possible by the patiently borne sufferings of the IDEAL MAN who, to our eyes, is in those scriptures so plainly delineated.

## PSALM-SIXTY-NINE

In point of fact, as in previous psalms, so in this, the reachings forth of the Divine Spirit towards something more than types could express, are plainly visible; so that, for instance, as in Ps. 45 no "king most beautiful" can be found in Israel fully answering to the description there given, so probably it would be vain to expect to find in Israel any typical sufferer—or circle of sufferers—exhausting the terms of this psalm. Suffice it to observe, at this point, that whether with types or without them, many and undeserved are the woes which lead up to the great imprecatory passage which fills vers. 22-28 of this psalm: which, indeed, for length and intensity, is really not exceeded by Psalm 109.

Now there are several considerations which may well be urged in mitigation of the difficulty widely felt respecting the OUTCRIES FOR VENGEANCE which are scattered throughout the Old Testament; and which, in the devotional atmosphere of the Psalms, are, to many sensitive minds, painfully unacceptable.

In the *first* place, it should be considered: That desire for the punishment of persistent evil-doers, is an ineradicable instinct of the human breast, rooted in the persuasion that the Judge of all the earth must needs do right, and in the apprehension that, were it otherwise, all faith in the government of God would necessarily come to an end.

In the *second* place it should be remarked: That vengeance is seldom if ever expressed, with any show of Divine approval, except as provoked by atrocious crimes of wilful cruelty and bloodshed. In this very psalm, an aggravation of offence is alleged against those against whom imprecations are uttered:

*Because whom thou thyself had smitted they pursued,  
And unto the pain of thy wounded ones they must  
needs add.*

With which may be compared Isaiah 47:6 and other passages.

In the *third* place, it should be remembered: That there was no clear revelation, in those older times when the Old Testament was being written, of the reservation of rewards and punishments to a future life. Under such conditions the feeling naturally sprang up: "Now or never must justice be done!" Hence it was inevitable that, in periods of strain due to the triumph of the wicked, good men should cry out for early Divine intervention; so that normal moral conditions of life might be restored, and men generally be reassured that "there is fruit

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

to the righteous." Given, then, the instinctive impulse, the bitter occasion, and the time urgency—what wonder that grossly injured men should cry out to God for vengeance?

But in the *fourth* place, it should be called to mind: That to a large extent, times have been constitutionally changed since those Old Testament imprecations were uttered. For the Church of Christ, at least, a new Era has set in; seeing that the example, the commands, and especially the spirit of the Lord Jesus not only forbid outcries for vengeance, but render indulgence in them abhorrent to our better natures: so that what was excusable under the Law is unpardonable under the Gospel. We ourselves have been forgiven; and, at the risk of having our own pardon withdrawn (Mat. 18:21-35), we are solemnly bound by our Master to forgive even our enemies. Their repentance we must seek; and be ready to pardon. Hence we live in the atmosphere of forgiveness, human and divine. This is very much the reason why we are so shocked at the imprecations of the older time, and have to excuse ourselves from making them our own.

But this is not all. We have now, in the *fifth* place, to brace up our minds and to sharpen our vision to perceive and to realise: That the forgiveness of injuries is only a partial and after all temporary manifestation of the spirit of Christ. It is binding on individual Christians, and binding on the collective Church; but it is certainly not binding on the civil magistrate, or he would indeed "hold the sword in vain;" and even on individual Christians and the collective Church, it is, though binding, yet transitionally educative rather than of absolute and permanent obligation. For the present, retaliation is forbidden: for the present, forgiveness of injuries is enjoined: for the present, the forcible suppression of evil is to a real and serious degree postponed: for the present, prayers for the punishment of evil-doers naturally falter on our lips. Adequately to realise this is to reach a vantage ground which reveals on the one hand to what a spiritual elevation our Lord Christ has uplifted us, and on the other hand that the kingdom of God comprehensively viewed has in it lower levels which must be included. The most effective way to bring this home to us to study, not the earthly life only of our Master, but his entire commission as Redeemer and Monarch of mankind. On earth, he did not curse; he only blessed. But he warned, and uttered woes; he denounced, and he predicted; and the woes that trembled on his lips seemed to fore-

## PSALM-SIXTY-NINE

cast the terrible "accursed" which he knew he should have to utter when he should sit as king on his throne of glory (Mat. 25:41). And, finally, "the wrath of the Lamb," in its partial unveiling, is seen in the Apocalypse to strike apprehensive consternation into the hearts of men who would if they could hide themselves from its terrors (Rev. 6:16, 17). So that, when we declare that the spirit of Christ is opposed to imprecations on the doers of wrong, this statement needs to be brought under the regulative restriction: That the Messiah in his humiliation, while as yet he was learning obedience by the things that he suffered (Heb. 2:10) might not curse, and did not; but that, when released by his Father from that severe course of discipline, his "love of righteousness and hatred of lawlessness," may and must so flame forth that "his own right hand shall teach him fearful things" (Ps. 45:4). Whether as it is now with him so it will hereafter be with us, when vested with immortal strength to bear so weighty a responsibility, may to some minds seem speculative and doubtful, and in any case probably remains to be seen. Ideally considered, it might seem fitting that, even to the Church, regarded as the Bride of the Lamb, should NOT be given the work of inflicting punishment on offenders, nor even be assigned the duty of offering prayers for its infliction; but, if not to Christians as such, yet almost certainly to Hebrews, there is in store a prerogative of vengeance of which the most formidable of Gentile nations might do well to stand in fear. Anything more solemnly admonitory in that direction than Ps. 149 cannot well be conceived; seeing that therein Jehovah's very "men of kindness" are taught that it will be nothing less than a splendid service which they shall render when they are commissioned to—

"Let extollings of God be in their throats,  
And a two-edged sword be in their hand;  
To execute an avenging on the nations,  
(To inflict) chastisements on the peoples;  
To bind their kings with chains,  
And their honorables with fetters of iron,—  
To execute upon them the sentence written."

Let Turkey beware! Let Russia beware! And let us British Christians learn to respect and not be wholly ashamed of the punitive element in our Holy Oracles.

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The QUOTATIONS made from this psalm in the N.T. are too instructive to be passed over in silence. From Mat. 27:34 and Jn. 19:28, 29; also from Jn. 2:17, 15:25, and Rom. 15:3, we see how clearly the Apostles discovered in their Lord the Sufferer of the psalm. From Acts 1:20, we gather how the imprecations of the psalm served the useful purpose of preparing the minds of his fellow-apostles for the falling of Judas out of their number. And, finally, from Rom. 11:9, 10, we perceive that this psalm assisted the Apostle Paul in accepting the unwelcome conviction that a temporary hardening of heart had been permitted by God to befall his own chosen people. In fine, while on the one hand there is in the N.T. no distinct echo of the maledictions of this psalm—no direct cursing therefrom repeated; yet, on the other hand, there is no shrinking from the practical use thereof in other ways—on the contrary, the evidence goes to shew how deeply its lessons had engraven themselves on the most godly minds in Israel. We ourselves also, in humble obedience to our Lord, must abstain from cursing—from making our own its prayers for the punishment for the wicked, even the maliciously injurious; but, if we enter intelligently into the reasons why this abstention becomes our duty, we can then study to profit this and the like examples of O.T. imprecations. The high standard of poetic beauty mostly attained by these stern lyrics may excite our reverent admiration; while the intense moral earnestness which they breathe may help to brace our minds to the strong and healthful conviction that in sacred things there should be no trifling, and that, after all, justice is the foundation of grace.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham feels this psalm practically defies outlining. Scroggie on the other hand offers this outline: "The Song is divided into two equal parts (1-18) and (19-36). Each of the two main parts have three minor parts—This is a personal psalm and the writer is always in view: (1) His Condition 1-6; (2) His Claim 7-12; (3) His Cry 13-18; (4) His Calamity 19-21; (5) His Curse 22-28; (6) His Confidence 29-36." Please read the psalm with this outline before you—see if it fits. Discuss.
2. The authorship of this psalm seems to be a real problem—are we to abandon the Davidic authorship? Discuss.

## PSALM SIXTY-NINE, SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

3. Why do so many students suppose that Jeremiah was the author? Cf. Jer. 15:15-18; 11:18-23; Lam. 3:53-58. Discuss this possibility.
4. This psalm is quoted often in the New Testament—Cf. Matt. 27:34; Jh. 2:17; 15:25; 19:28, 29; Rom. 15:3; 11:9, 10. What do these New Testament references teach us about this psalm?
5. Rotherham gives five fine observations concerning the OUT-cries FOR VENGEANCE found in this psalm and others. Please list and discuss his observations.

## PSALM 70, 71

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer Not to be Forsaken in Old Age.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3 (70), Prayer against Enemies. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5 (70), Prayer in behalf of Friends. Stanza III., vers. 1-3 (71), Prayer for Rescue and Deliverance, with Appeals to Divine Righteousness and Protection. Stanza IV., vers. 4-6 (71), For Deliverance from One who is Lawless, Perverse and Ruthless, sought by Reference to Youthful Days. Stanza V., vers. 7-9 (71), The Wonders of a Lifetime are pleaded against Rejection in Old Age. Stanza VI., vers. 10-13 (71), Urgency against Appearance of being Forsaken. Stanza VII., vers. 14-16 (71), More Hopeful Strain. Stanza VIII., vers. 17-19 (71), Renewed references to Youth and Age, coupled with desire by this Aged Saint to do more for his Matchless God. Stanza IX., vers. 20-24 (71), In view of Resurrection, whose-souled Praise is Promised, aided by Lute, Lyre, Lips and Tongue.

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(Lm.) By David—To bring to remembrance.

- 1 Be pleased<sup>1</sup> O God to rescue me,  
Jehovah! to help me oh make haste!
- 2 Put to shame and abashed<sup>2</sup> be they who are seeking my life,<sup>3</sup>  
Turned back and confounded be they who are taking  
pleasure in my hurt,<sup>4</sup>

1. So *Gt.*: cp. 40:13—*Gn.* Cp. throughout w. 40:13-17.

2. Cp. 71:24.

3. U.: "soul."

4. Cp. 71:18, 24; also 35:4, 26, 40:14.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 3 Let them turn back on account of their own shame  
who are saying<sup>1</sup>—"Aha! Aha!"<sup>2</sup>
- 4 Glad and joyful in thee be all who are seekers of thee,  
and let them say continually "God<sup>3</sup> be magnified!"<sup>4</sup>  
who are lovers of thy salvation.
- 5 Since I am humbled and needy O God do haste for me!  
my help and my deliverer art thou  
Jehovah!<sup>5</sup> do not tarry.

(Nm.)

## P S A L M 71

(Nm.)

- 1 In thee Jehovah have I taken refuge,  
let me not be put to shame to the ages:
- 2 In thy righteousness wilt thou rescue me and deliver me,  
incline unto me thine ear and save me:
- 3 Be thou unto me a rock of refuge<sup>6</sup>  
a place of security<sup>7</sup> for saving me,  
because my cliff<sup>8</sup> and my fastness art thou.<sup>9</sup>
- 4 My God! deliver me from the hand of a lawless one,  
from the grasp of a perverse and ruthless one;
- 5 For thou are mine expectation Sovereign Lord,  
Jehovah my trust from my youthful days:
- 6 On thee have I stayed myself from birth,  
thou art he that severed me from the body of my mother,—<sup>10</sup>  
of thee shall be my praise continually.
- 7 A very wonder have I been to multitudes,  
but thou hast been my strong refuge.

1. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Cyr., Vul.) add: "of me"; cp. 40:13—Gn.

2. Cp. 35:21.

3. Some cod. (w. Aram. and Vul.): "Jehovah"; cp. 40:16—Gn.

4. Cp. 35:27.

5. Some cod. (w. 6 ear. pr. edns. and Syr.): "O my God"; cp. 40:18—Gn.

6. So in some cod. (w. 6 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Vul.): cp. 31:2—  
Gn. M.T.: "rock of habitation."

7. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Vul.); cp. 31:2—Gn.

8. Cp. 42:9.

9. Cp. 31:2, 3.

10. Cp. 22:9.



## PSALM SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

- 8 My mouth shall be filled with thy praise,  
all the day with thy splendour,<sup>1</sup>
- 9 Do not cast me off in old age,<sup>2</sup>.....  
when my vigour faileth do not forsake me.
- 10 For mine enemies hath said concerning me,—  
yea the watchers for my life<sup>3</sup> have taken counsel together,—
- 11 Saying, "God himself hath forsaken him,  
pursue and capture him for there is no one to rescue him!"
- 12 O God! be not far from me,  
my God! to help me oh make haste.<sup>4</sup>
- 13 Put to shame and confounded<sup>5</sup> be they who are accusing  
my soul,  
covered with reproach and confusion be they who are seeking  
my hurt.<sup>6</sup>
- 14 But I continually will hope,  
and will add to all thy praise.
- 15 My mouth shall record thy righteousness,  
all the day thy salvation,—  
though I know not how to record it.<sup>7</sup>
- 16 I will enter into the mighty doings of Adonai,  
Jehovah! I will mention thy righteousness thine alone.
- 17 O God! thou hast taught me from my youthful days,  
and hitherto have I been declaring thy wondrous works:
- 18 Even now therefore that I am old and grey-headed<sup>8</sup>  
O God! do not forsake me,—  
until I declare thine arm to a (new) generation—<sup>9</sup>  
to everyone who is<sup>10</sup> to come thy might.
- 19 And as for thy righteousness up to the height,  
wherein thou hast done great things  
O God! who is like unto thee?
- 20 Whereas thou hast let me<sup>11</sup> see many distresses and  
misfortunes  
thou shalt again restore me<sup>11</sup> to life,

1. Or: "beauty," adoring."

2. Cp. ver. 18.

3. U.: "soul."

4. Cp. 70:1, 5.

5. So some cod.: cp. 35:4—Gn.

6. Cp. 35:4, 28, 40:14, 70:2.

7. Ml.: "numbers" or "records."

8. Cp. ver. 9; also 1 Sam. 12:2.

9. Sep.: "to every generation that is coming."

10. A sp. vr. (sevir): "all who are"—Gn.

11. Written "us": read "me" (w. Sep. and other authorities)—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- yea out of the deeps of the earth shalt thou again bring me<sup>1</sup>  
up:
- 21 Increase thou my greatness  
and on every side console me.
- 22 I also will thank thee by the aid of the lute for thy truth  
O my God,  
I will make melody unto thee with a lyre O Holy One of  
Israel!
- 23 My lips shall ring out their joy when I make melody unto  
thee,—  
yea my soul which thou hast ransomed:
- 24 My tongue also all the day shall talk to me of thy  
righteousness,  
because put to shame because abashed are they who were  
seeking my hurt.<sup>2</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 70

Rescue me, O God! Lord, hurry to my aid!

2, 3 They are after my life, and delight in hurting me.  
Confuse them! Shame them! Stop them! Don't let them keep  
on mocking me!

4 But fill the followers of God with joy! Let those who love  
Your salvation exclaim, "What a wonderful God He is!"

5 But I am in deep trouble. Rush to my aid, for only You  
can help and save me. O Lord, don't delay.

### PSALM 71

Lord, You are my refuge! Don't let me down!

2 Save me from my enemies, for You are just! Rescue me!  
Bend down Your ear and listen to my plea and save me.

3 Be to me a great protecting rock, where I am always  
welcome, safe from all attacks. For You have issued the order  
to save me.

4 Rescue me, O God, from these unjust and cruel men.

5 O Lord, You alone are my hope; I've trusted You from  
childhood.

1. *Written* "us": *read* "me" (w. Sep. and other authorities)—Gn.

2. Cp. 70:2.

## PSALM SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

6 Yes, You have been with me from birth and have helped me constantly—no wonder I am always praising You!

7 My success—at which so many stand amazed—is because You are my mighty protector.

8 All day long I'll praise and honor You, O God, for all that You have done for me.

9 And now, in my old age, don't set me aside! Don't forsake me now when my strength is failing!

10 My enemies are whispering,

11 "God has forsaken him! Now we can get him. There is no one to help him now!"

12 O God, don't stay away! Come quickly! Help!

13 Destroy them! Cover them with failure and disgrace—these enemies of mine.

14 I will keep on expecting You to help me. I praise You more and more.

15 I cannot count the times when You have faithfully rescued me from danger. I will tell everyone how good You are, and of Your constant, daily care.

16 I walk in the strength of the Lord God. I tell everyone that You alone are just and good.

17 O God, You have helped me from my earliest childhood—and I have constantly testified to others of the wonderful things You do.

18 And now that I am old and gray, don't forsake me. Give me time to tell this new generation (and their children too) about all Your mighty miracles.

19 Your power and goodness, Lord, reach to the highest heavens. You have done such wonderful things. Where is there another God like You?

20 You have let me sink down deep in desperate problems. But You will bring me back to life again, up from the depths of the earth.

21 You will give me greater honor than before, and turn again and comfort me.

22 I will praise You with music, telling of Your faithfulness to all Your promises, O Holy One of Israel.

23 I will shout and sing Your praises for redeeming me.

24 I will talk to others all day long about Your justice and Your goodness. For all who tried to hurt me have been disgraced and dishonored.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### EXPOSITION

Although by this time the general terms and tenor of this compound psalm have become so familiar as to render detailed exposition needless, yet are there several most interesting questions which cluster around this composition as a whole. And first there is the position that it is a compound psalm—in other words that the two psalms are really one. Dr. Thirtle comes to the natural conclusion that, lacking any inscriptional line to divide them, they should be conjoined; and when we examine the contents in quest of confirmatory internal evidence, the result must be pronounced satisfactory, as the references appended to the two psalms will sufficiently indicate.

We next observe that, with a single exception, this psalm stands alone in its specific allusions to *old age*, and absolutely alone in the pathetic character of those allusions. In Ps. 92 the reference is wholly triumphant, as an outburst of joy in the assurance that the righteous do still bring forth fruit in old age. Here a very different note is struck. It is the plaintive appeal of an old man, that he may not be *forsaken* now that his *vigour* is departing from him. This note is the more touching in that it is deliberately repeated, and is set in striking contrast with the memories of a long and chequered life.

In point of fact, this feature of the psalm at once raises the familiar question of authorship, investing it, in the present instance, with an especial interest; inasmuch as we at once become inquisitive as to what psalm-composing saint of those olden times is likely to have been so deeply moved and so clearly depressed by the consciousness of advancing years, as the writer of this psalm manifestly is. The ascription of the psalm to *David*, naturally reminds us that this famous singer himself lived to become an old man; and the example of Ps. 39 would have prepared us for a sombre outlook, had that been all that is here in evidence; but it certainly would not have led us to look for an apprehension of being *forsaken*! The glimpse given us in Chronicles of the venerable monarch dedicating his bountiful gifts and those of his people for the building and furnishing of the Temple (1 Ch. 29), utterly forbids the supposition that David could have feared being forsaken in his old age. We are not surprised, therefore, that these critics who are pre-disposed to post-date the authorship of the Psalms, should think of Jeremiah rather than of David as the writer, nor are we much surprised

## PSALM SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

to find so conservative a critic as Delitzsch strongly inclining to that opinion: the drawback against that hypothesis being the not very serious one, that there is nothing beyond conjecture, or at most plausibility, to sustain the thought that the "weeping prophet" continued weeping till the last—though, even had he done so, it may be surmised it would rather have been over Jerusalem than over himself. But now, further noticing that, according to its superscription, this pathetic psalm was designed *To bring to remembrance*, the suggestion arises whether it may not enshrine *memorials* of the prophet Samuel himself: leaving David as the actual writer of the psalm, even as many of the incidents alluded to are Davidic, and much of the imagery is Davidic; still, embodying strains with which the youthful harpist first became familiar from the lips of the venerable president of the school of the prophets. The more we think of it, the more this supposition attracts us, at least as an alternative opinion—not the less so in that such a persuasion strikes a companion note to that which would trace to Samuel the first beginnings of the so-called Wisdom Literature. What, if in Samuel's long and consecrated life, should be discovered the seeds of Sacred Song and the training of Sacred Minstrels, as well as the shaping of proverbs and aphorisms, the evolution of Sacred Drama? How did those sons of the prophets cultivate their gifts; they used musical instruments—therefore they sang, therefore they must have had, and probably composed, songs for singing. If his pupils did this must not he, their president, have had the gifts needed for their guidance? Assuming this probability, it is obvious to remark next, that Samuel had much in his old age to sadden him and to draw from him on a memorable occasion a pathetic reference to his grey hairs (1 Sam. 12:2): his sons not following in his steps, the people becoming envious and discontented, Saul a failure as king. We know that Samuel and David came into contact; and we ask whether it is not within the bounds of likelihood that, on some never-to-be forgotten occasion, the forebodings of Samuel's troubled heart found rhythmical utterance in terms which made a profound impression on David's mind; and that, although the latter may never have used them, hitherto, yet now at length, when his own age is advancing, with sufficient self-consciousness to move his sympathy from other ageing men, these strains are revived with sufficient strength to urge him to embalm them in a psalm of exquisite tenderness

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and deep pathos. As soon as this likelihood finds lodgment in our minds and we again peruse the psalm under its influence, expression after expression leaps out into vividness as even more suited to Samuel's story than to any other with which we are familiar. Who, more fittingly than he could claim that Jehovah had been his *trust* and his *teacher from his youthful days*? Who, so justly as he, could assert that he had been spending *his life hitherto in declaring God's wonders*? Who, so well as the trainer of prophets and minstrels, could plead with such force to be spared yet a little longer to prepare instructors for *coming generations*? We do not dogmatise; nor do we more than suggest the traces of an influence affecting the avowed singer's mind. The psalm is David's—at least, it has upon it the tokens of his experience, the abounding of his figures of speech; but it is enriched with memories other than his own, memories which strengthen rather than weaken the claims of the psalm to be attributed to him.

There is one other matter claiming attention before this psalm is dismissed, namely, its assertion of a hope of resurrection (71:20). The surprising thing about this is the degree to which such an assertion has been obscured by translators and expositors; by translators, in softening down, to the ambiguous idea of "quickenings," of a word which primarily means *to restore to life*; and by expositors, in a rather hasty and needless turning aside to a mere national resuscitation. The correct principle of interpretation surely is—first, fact—then figure; first, the individual—then the national. Who would speak of the *birth* of a nation, to whom the birth of an individual was not familiar? In like manner, who would think of the *re-birth*, or resurrection, of a nation, to whom the re-birth or resurrection of the individual was not already pre-supposed, as the more familiar conception? It might have been thought that in a text like this, wherein the parallel of resuscitation is the being *brought up out of the deeps of the earth*, in clear recognition of the Hebrew doctrine of Sheol or Hades (cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Hades"), the assertion of individual resurrection would have been allowed a chance of asserting itself. But no! Delitzsch Perowne, and Kirkpatrick all fail us; and even the Massorites are blamed for preferring the singular "me" to the plural "us" in their various readings, notwithstanding the admitted fact that they had the Septuagint and other ancient versions to justify their

## PSALM SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

preference, and the further fact that—according to the confession of Dr. Briggs—"the first person singular best suits the context." The last-named critic does not hesitate to apply the entire Psalm to the Hebrew nation, with regard to its *old age* as well as with regard to its *youth*. Now, we can understand how a nation may not hesitate to count itself to be still young; but it is by no means so easy to acquiesce in the likelihood that it would complacently and pathetically confess itself to be aged and nearly worn out. In fact we cannot help wondering, at what precise stage of *this* nation's existence, it settled down so easily to the admission that it had become decrepit, as to find heart to *sing about its pitiable senility!* And this concerning a race remarkable for its longevity, and whose embodied nationality may, after more than five-and-twenty centuries' further lapse, be only in abeyance. Would it not be better to admit frankly, that a nation may easily, in song, regard itself as summed up in the persons of its chief heroes, without wiping those heroes out of personal existence, or assuming that they had no individual experience worth recording? And further, in the admitted infrequency of O.T. allusions to a future life and to incorruption, is it worthy of Christian scholars to pare down those allusions to the lowest possible number? Rather let us hear and individual hope, whether voiced by Samuel or by David or by Jeremiah, triumphantly expressing itself by saying:

Whereas thou hast let me see many distresses and  
misfortunes,  
Thou shalt again restore me to life,  
Yea out of the deeps of the earth shalt thou bring  
me up.

And then, if you will, leave it to Hezekiah, to bring up *lute* and *lyre* and *lips* and *soul* and *tongue* to celebrate the glowing expectation.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### Psalms 70

1. Why are these two psalms considered as one?
2. Read Psalms 40:13-17. Why is this psalm repeated?
3. Evidently these verses had a special appeal for a special occasion. What was the occasion? Could you give some imaginative guess?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### Psalm 71

1. This is indeed a unique psalm in several particulars:—the allusions to old age is one—the nature of such allusions is also unique—how? Could you give another unusual quality about this psalm?
2. The question of authorship is raised—what prevents us from accepting the title—"By David"? Several other authors have been suggested—name two. Rotherham has an interesting suggestion as to authorship—who is it?
3. Read verse twenty of this psalm—is this a reference to life after death—to the resurrection? Discuss.
4. Could this psalm be used to aid the aged today? Read the paraphrase version before you answer. Discuss.

## P S A L M 72

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A People's Prayer for a Perfect King.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Prayer for King of Royal Descent, that the Divine Attributes of Justice and Righteousness may be Given Him, and that he may exercise them with Fruitfulness and Efficiency. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Unlimited Continuance, Penetrating Gentleness, Abounding Fruitfulness, and Universal Extension, desired for his reign. Stanza III., vers. 9-11, The Submission to Him of All Enemies and Rivals, is besought. Stanza IV., vers. 12-15, these Petitions are based upon the King's Effective Interposition for the Needy and Helpless. Stanza V., vers. 16-17, Material Prosperity and the Brightening of City Life, entreated; as Rebounding to the Perpetual Praise of the King, and as Realising Ancient Covenant Blessing. Benediction: Closing this Second Book of Psalms, and therewith associating the God of Israel and his wondrous doings with all the Earth, which is thus filled with his glory.

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(Lm.) By Solomon.

- 1 O God! thy justice<sup>1</sup> to the King do thou give,  
and thy righteousness unto the son of a king;

1. "So Sep. and Jerome in accordance with the parallel 'righteous.'"—Br. M.T.: "just decisions" ("rights"—Del.)



## PSALM SEVENTY-TWO

- 2 May he judge thy people with righteousness,  
and thy humbled ones with justice:
- 3 May the mountains bear<sup>1</sup> tidings of welfare to the people,  
and the hills in righteousness:
- 4 May he vindicate the humbled of the people,  
bring salvation to the sons of the needy;  
and crush the oppressor.
- 5 May he continue<sup>2</sup> as long as the sun,  
and in presence of the moon,—  
to generation of generations.
- 6 May he come down as rain on meadows to be mown,  
as myriad drops replenishing the earth.
- 7 May there be a springing forth in his days of righteousness,<sup>3</sup>  
and an abundance of welfare until there be no moon.
- 8 And may he have dominion from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- 9 Before him may adversaries<sup>4</sup> kneel  
and as for his foes the dust may they lick!
- 10 The Kings of Tarshish and the Coastlands a gift may they  
render,  
the kings of Sheba and Seba a present bring near.
- 11 And may there bow down to him all kings,  
all nations do service to him.
- 12 Because he rescueth the needy from the mighty,<sup>5</sup>  
and the humbled when there is no helper for him:
- 13 Hath pity on the weak and the needy,  
and the lives<sup>6</sup> of the needy saveth:
- 14 From oppression and violence redeemeth their life,<sup>7</sup>  
and precious is their blood in his sight:
- 15 "Let him live then! and let there be given to him of the gold  
of Sheba;"

1. "The mountains are personified for the messengers who come over them, proclaiming from all parts the prevalence of peace and righteousness —Br. Otherwise, if the verb be rendered "bear"—"bring forth": "May peace or well-being be the fruit that ripens upon all mountains and hills" —Del.

2. So Sep. (*sunparamenei*).

3. So in some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

4. "So most moderns"—O.G. 850. Reading *zarim* for *zum*. M.T.: "desert dwellers."

5. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "him that crieth out."

6. U.: "their souls."

7. U.: "their soul."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- so will he pray for him continually,  
all the day invoke on him blessing!<sup>1</sup>
- 16 May there be an expanse<sup>2</sup> of corn in the earth unto the top  
of the mountains,  
and the fruit thereof rustle like Lebanon;  
and they of the city bloom like fresh shoots of the earth.
- 17 Be his name to the ages,  
in presence of the sun fruitful<sup>3</sup> be his name!  
May all the families of the ground<sup>4</sup> bless themselves in him  
all nations pronounce him happy.
- 18 Blessed be Jehovah God of Israel,<sup>5</sup>  
who doeth wondrous things by himself alone;
- 19 And blessed be his glorious name to the ages,  
and filled with his glory be all the earth:  
Amen and amen!
- 20 Ended are the prayers of David son of Jesse.  
(Lm. None; unless ver. 20 be one.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 72

O God, help the king to judge as You would, and help his son to walk in godliness.

2 Help him to give justice to Your people, even to the poor!

3 May the mountains and hills flourish in prosperity because of his good reign.

4 Help him to defend the poor and needy and to crush their oppressors.

5 May the poor and needy revere You constantly, as long as sun and moon continue in the skies! Yes forever!

6 May the reign of this Son<sup>6</sup> of mine be as gentle and fruit-

1. "The poor man is he who revives and is endowed, who intercedes and blesses; while the king is the beneficent giver. It is left for the reader to supply in thought the right subjects to the separate verbs"—Del.

2. "An abundance that occupies a wide space"—Del. "Expanse(?)"—Dr.

3. Ml.: "propagate," or "be propagated." Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.)—"be established"—Gn.

4. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn. Cp. Gen. 12:3.

5. M.T.: "Jehovah God, God of Israel;" but some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.) omit first occurrence of "God"—Gn.

6. The reference seems to look beyond Solomon's son to Jesus the Messiah.

## PSALM SEVENTY-TWO

ful as the springtime rains upon the grass—like showers that water the earth!

7 May all good men flourish in His reign with abundance of peace and to the end of time.

8 Let Him reign from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

9 The desert nomads shall bow before Him; His enemies shall fall face downward in the dust.

10 Kings along the Mediterranean coast—the kings of Tarshish and the islands—and those from Sheba and from Seba—all will bring their gifts.

11 Yes, kings from everywhere! All will bow before Him! All will serve Him!

12 He will take care of the helpless and poor when they cry to Him; for they have no one else to defend them.

13 He feels pity for the weak and needy, and will rescue them.

14 He will have them from oppression and from violence, for their lives are precious to Him.

15 And He shall live; and to Him will be given the gold of Sheba, and there will be constant praise<sup>1</sup> for Him. His people<sup>2</sup> will bless Him all day long.

16 Bless us with abundant crops throughout the land, even on the highland plains; may there be fruit like that of Lebanon; may the cities be as full of people as the fields are of grass.

17 His name will be honored forever; it will continue as the sun; and all will be blessed in Him; all nations will praise Him.

18 Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, Who only does wonderful things!

19 Blessed be His glorious name forever! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and amen!

20 (This ends the psalms of David, son of Jesse.)

## EXPOSITION

If we assume that behind this psalm lay many prayers by David taking effect in the mind of Solomon his son by fostering a worthy ideal of what a good king might do for his people and a determination to fulfil that ideal; and that the youthful heir to the throne himself embodied that ideal and that determination

1. Literally, "men shall pray for him continually."

2. Implied. Literally, "they" or "he."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

in a prayer to be used by his people on his accession to the throne,—we shall probably form a correct conception of the origin of the psalm. The deep and wide desire here expressed is worthy of David; the form it assumes is Solomonic to a marked degree; and if, beyond this, there are conceptions going far beyond any which we should have thought it likely that Solomon would entertain,—these we may attribute in part to the educative influence which we have elsewhere seen cause to attribute to the Davidic Kingly covenant communicated through Nathan the prophet, and partly to the free action of the inspiring Spirit on the psalmist's mind. There is certainly one element in the psalm, which might have seemed at first sight better suited to a later reign, such as that of Hezekiah—following the declension of King Ahaz's days, or even of Josiah—succeeding to the corruptions of the reigns of Manasseh and Amon; namely, a background of existing oppression and wrong, loudly calling for relief, and which we can with difficulty imagine David to have bequeathed to his son Solomon. If, notwithstanding this, we feel, as well we may, that at no later period than that immediately succeeding David's day, could there have been, in the atmosphere, such a constellation of bright hopes, ready for recognition and psalmody, as here bursts upon our view, then we must needs see, once more, the Antitype breaking loose from the Type, and going beyond it. And this is, in all probability, what we are here called upon to recognise; for, if, with the Targum, we hold that this Ideal King is ultimately the Messiah, and if we look for Messiah's manifested reign to follow upon the evil domination of Antichrist, it is easy to see what a throng of wicked deeds of oppression, the world over, will be waiting for relief and redress when the Messiah himself ascends the Throne of David.

Not only in respect of manifold oppressions needing royal interposition in order to their removal, do we here perceive an element carrying us beyond Solomon, but in other ways besides; for example, in the universality of his dominion, in the peerless glory of his name, and in the realisation through the Ideal King of the worldwide blessing promised to Abraham. Leaving the thoughtful reader to conceive, as best he may, how mighty the Messianic impulse of the psalm thus appears, it may serve a useful purpose to emphasise one or two of the more obvious characteristics of the Ideal King as here portrayed.

## PSALM SEVENTY-TWO

The central position and causal efficacy of Stanza IV. are remarkable. This stanza is introduced by the only *Because* of the psalm. And here let us note what it is that leads up to this stronghold of the logical sense—that it is nothing less than the Imperial Supremacy which is desired for the Ideal King. Let his *adversaries kneel* before him; let his *foes lick the dust*; let *distant kings* come to *render him homage* with their *rich gifts*; in short, let *all kings bow down to him* and *all nations do him service*; BECAUSE he deserves it—because he deserves it in a peculiar way, with a worth proved by deeds, deeds of pity and love and matchless generosity; for note how the verbs are accumulated in support of this one strong *because*: “because” he *rescueth, hath pity, saveth, redeemeth*, and finally, if Delitzsch is correct in the striking climax to which he brings this stanza, *endoweth*, out of his own royal treasury, the lives that he spareth: —THEREFORE let all kings and nations do him willing homage and service, gladly acknowledging that never such a king bare rule before. Not by doings of power, but by deeds of love, is universal dominion here desired.

And yet there is power behind and along with the love: power wielded by love, power giving effect to love—no pity for the perverters of justice, to the extent of sparing them to be perverters again. No! the implied threats to those who wrong their poor neighbors, are strong as iron, fitted to strike terror into cruel hearts. In order that he may *vindicate the humbled* and *bring salvation to the needy*, let him—so it is expressly desired—*let him crush the oppressor! May his foes lick the dust*. Language like this ought to stand high and clear above the possibility of mistake.

Nevertheless, this Ideal King knows how to be gentle. It is desired that his beneficent influence be *like rain coming down on a mowing*, bringing the crop to perfection before it is cut. How much that beautiful phrase, *coming down*, suggests—of efficacious gentleness, descending into all the nooks and crannies and crevices of actual lowly life. Nor does the psalmist shrink from pointing to actual temporal benefits, anticipated to result from this gentle yet strong king's dominion. In language which it would be a sin to spiritualize, he prays, that, instead of *uncultivated wastes*, agriculture may carry her triumphs, terrace above terrace, to the summits of the mountains; and then, while the breezes of Lebanon are still upon his cheeks, he thinks of

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

the pale-faced *city-dwellers*, and desires that they may *bloom like the fresh shoots of the earth*.

Such is the picture. It is Messianic. But it is unfulfilled. It does not correspond with the spiritual and invisible reign of the Messiah in heaven. It is a mockery of the down-trodden of earth, to treat this psalm as if it were now in course of fulfilment. It is valid, but it is in reserve. It has never yet been fulfilled; but it will be fulfilled in the letter and in the spirit. Why its accomplishment has been so long delayed, must be sought elsewhere. Meantime, a comprehensive study of all the psalms which have a direct bearing on the Kingdom of God, will assist the student to get upon the high-road of correct and successful interpretation. When men are ready to do ungrudgingly honour to the God of Israel, then will the time not be far distant when the *whole earth shall be filled with his glory*. Cp. Intro., Chapter III., "Kingdom."

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There seems to be at least two ideal kings—who are they?
2. All of the characteristics of God's ideal king cannot find fulfillment in anyone in the history of Israel—what is important about this thought?
3. What shall we say of "existing oppression and wrong, loudly calling for relief" if we relate this psalm to the time of Solomon? Discuss.
4. There is the wonderful promise of the universal reign of this king—"his adversaries will kneel before him; his foes will lick the dust, distant kings will come to do him homage—and to give him gifts—*why* will there be such a response to this king?
5. Give five blessings granted because of this king. Discuss
6. When will all these grand descriptions become a reality? Discuss.