

PSALM 102 AND 103

5. What is said of God here is said of the Son in Hebrews. What is the significance of this?

PSALM 103

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Bless Jehovah; for He is Worthy.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Bless Jehovah: For his Personal Dealings. Stanza II., vers. 6-10, For his Revealed Character. Stanza III., vers. 11-14, For his Kindness, Forgiveness, Compassion, and Considerateness. Stanza IV., vers. 15-18, For the Continuity of his Dealings, in Contrast with Man's Frailty. Stanza V., vers. 19-22, For the Permanence and Universality of his Kingdom, let All his Creatures Bless Him.

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(Lm.) By David

- 1 *Bless Jehovah O my soul,*  
and all within me his holy name:
- 2 *Bless Jehovah O my soul,*  
and forget not any of his dealings:—
- 3 who pardoneth all thine iniquities,<sup>1</sup>  
who healeth all thy diseases,
- 4 who redeemeth from the pit thy life,  
who crowneth thee with kindness and compassions,
- 5 who satisfieth with good thy desire,<sup>2</sup>  
thy youth reneweth itself like an eagle.<sup>3</sup>
- 6 A doer of acts of righteousness is Jehovah,  
and acts of vindication for all who are oppressed:
- 7 Who made known his ways to Moses.  
to the sons of Israel his doings:—
- 8 *Compassionate and gracious is Jehovah,*  
*slow to anger and abundant in kindness.*<sup>4</sup>

1. So (pl.) some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Sep., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "iniquity" (sing.)

2. So Sep. "Supplication"—Del. "Age"—Carter. "Spirit"—Leeser.

3. Or: "vulture." So Dr.

4. Cp. Exo. 34:6, 7. The Refrain of the Bible (see "The Emphasised Bible").

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- 9 Not perpetually will he contend,  
nor to the ages retain [anger]:
- 10 Not according to our sins hath he done to us,  
nor according to our iniquities hath he dealt with us.
- 11 For as the heavens are exalted over the earth  
exalted<sup>5</sup> is his kindness over such as revere him:
- 12 As far as the east is from the west  
hath he put far from us our transgressions:
- 13 Like the compassion of a father on sons  
is the compassion of Jehovah on such as revere him;
- 14 For he knoweth how we are formed,<sup>6</sup>  
putteth himself in mind that dust are we.
- 15 Weak man—like grass are his days,  
Like the blossom of the field so doth he blossom:
- 16 When a wind hath passed over it then it is not,  
nor acquainted with it any more is its place.
- 17 But the kindness of Jehovah is from age to age  
on such as revere him,  
And his righteousness is unto children's children
- 18 unto such as keep his covenant  
and unto such as remember his precepts to do them.
- 19 Jehovah—in the heavens hath he established his throne,  
and his kingdom over all hath dominion.
- 20 *Bless Jehovah* ye<sup>7</sup> his messengers,  
heroes of vigour doers of his word,—  
hearkening to the voice of his word:
- 21 *Bless Jehovah* all ye his hosts,  
his attendants doers of his pleasure:
- 22 *Bless Jehovah* all ye his works,  
in all places of his dominion:  
*Bless Jehovah O my soul.*

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

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I bless the holy name of God with all my heart.

2 Yes, I will bless the Lord and not forget the glorious things He does for me.

3 He forgives all my sins! He heals me!

5. So *Gt.*—*Gn.* M.T.: "Mighty."

6. *Ml.* "our formation."

7. Some *cod.* (*w.* *Sep.* and *Vul.*): "all ye"—*Gn.*

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4 He ransoms me from hell! He surrounds me with loving-kindness and tender mercies!

5 He fills my life with good things! My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

6 He gives justice to all who are treated unfairly.

7 He revealed His will and nature to Moses and the people of Israel.

8 He is merciful and tender toward those who don't deserve it; He is slow to get angry and full of kindness and love!

9 He never bears a grudge, nor remains angry forever.

10 He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins,

11 For His mercy towards those who fear and honor Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.

12 He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west.

13 He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence Him.

14 For He knows we are but dust,

15 And that our days are few and brief, like grass, like flowers,

16 Blown by the wind and gone forever.

17, 18 But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, to those who reverence Him; His salvation is to children's children of those who are faithful to His covenant and remember to obey Him!

19 The Lord has made the heavens His throne; from there He rules over everything there is.

20 Bless the Lord, you mighty angels of His who carry out His orders, listening for each of His commands.

21 Yes, bless the Lord, you armies of His angels who serve Him constantly.

22 Let everything everywhere bless the Lord. And how I bless Him too!

## EXPOSITION

The superscription of this psalm is *By David*, and the few grammatical peculiarities found in the psalm itself are probably insufficient to discredit this ancient literary tradition; since, according to Chwolson, quoted by Thirtle (O.T.P. 29), those peculiarities may be merely "genuine ancient Hebrew grammatical forms accidentally retained." By whomsoever written, this sacred song breathes a deeply devotional and tenderly trustful spirit:

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whoever has sins to mourn or sorrows to carry may find therein solace or instruction.

### I. BLESS JEHOVAH, FOR HIS PERSONAL DEALINGS.

Ver. 1. *Bless*, as on bended knee, *Jehovah* (*Yahweh*) "the Becoming One," who, out of his own Divine resources, can supply all creature-need: *O my soul*, my true inner self, realising thy complete personality in and through all the parts and powers wherewith thou art endowed. *And all within me*, especially my "heart" or *mind*, and my "reins" or *impulses*; (bless) *his holy name*, as the summarised expression of his revealed person and character.

Ver. 2. *Bless Jehovah, O my soul*; for thus again I address thee, that is myself; "I" being subject and object, inspector and inspected, teacher and taught in one; about to project myself from myself, to look at and examine myself, to encourage and admonish myself; and, therefore, by reason of the mysterious complexity of my being, responsible for my state and conduct before God. Thou, *O my soul*, thus gifted, use the ready instrument of self-discipline, thy memory: *Forget not any of his dealings*: his *benefits*, if thou wilt,—but have not all his "dealings" been "benefits," though sometimes in disguise? forget not *any* of his dealings, for whereas it would be difficult to forget them "all," be it thy care, as far as may be, that thou forget *none*, since the forgotten mercy or chastisement may be that which thou dost now most need to recall. (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Soul.")

Vers. 3-5. *Who*—that is *Jehovah* (five times repeated!). By the help of these pronouns, catechise thyself, *O my soul*! How many of these appeal to thee? Knowest thou nothing of *the pardon of thine iniquities*—thus searchingly put first, as most concerning thee? Even of *the healing of thy diseases* art thou unmindful? Has *thy life* never been *redeemed from the pit of Hades*? Have no garlands of Divine *kindness* and *compassions* ever decked thy brow? On what numberless occasions have not thy lawful *desires* been *satisfied*—desires for food, sleep, rest and countless other mercies; and canst thou forget *Who* it is that, through all channels, has been the bountiful satisfier of thy craving? Dost thou arise each morning a *new man*, still in thy *youth* right down to old age, and canst thou forget whose recreative energy it is that thus worketh within thee?

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### II. FOR HIS REVEALED CHARACTER.

Vers. 6-10. Nor is this all, O my soul. He who has become all this to thee, has revealed and made public his character; by *acts of righteousness* fulfilling his promises, by *acts of vindication for all who are oppressed*, chiefly by bringing Israel out of Egypt, approving himself of old to the confidence of his people, *making known his ways unto Moses, and his doings to the sons of Israel*; especially proclaiming himself to the former as *Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger and Abundant in Kindness*; thereby giving occasion to "The Refrain of the Bible" (see Emphasised Bible on Exo. 34:6, 7)—of which hast thou not heard, O my soul?—a Refrain running through the Holy Scriptures, and shewing how holy men remembered and pleaded it in times of national trouble? In harmony with which Refrain, thou mayest confidently reckon, O my soul, that although Jehovah may long complain, yet will he *Not perpetually contend*; although he "leave not altogether unpunished, but visiteth the iniquity of fathers on sons and upon son's sons unto a third and unto a fourth generation," yet *Not age-abidingly, Not age-without end*, will he *retain* the sinner in being, and his *anger* against the sinner; seeing that he himself has declared that before his perpetual wrath no spirit could abide (Isa. 57:16). Therefore, be thou sure, O my soul, that even in his most awful visitations he never ceases to deserve thy praise; while, as to thyself and thy brethren, thou canst still say, *Not according to our sins hath he done to us, Nor according to our iniquities hath he dealt with us*. For his revealed character, then,—*Bless Jehovah, O my soul*.

### III. FOR HIS KINDNESS, FORGIVENESS, AND CONSIDERATENESS

Ver. 11. Lift up thine eyes on high, O my soul, and see how *lofty* are those overarching *heavens*: in like manner, *lofty* beyond all thought and hope is Jehovah's *kindness* over *these who revere him*.

Ver. 12. Canst thou measure from *east* to *west*, when each recedes as thou approachest? So neither canst thou mete the distance to which he removes from thee the transgressions which he forgives. "The wages of sin is death"; but "in his favour is life"; and these can never meet and mingle.

Ver. 13. Thou knowest *the compassion of a father on his sons*, how like it is to the compassion (from *r-ch-m*—"womb")

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of a mother for her babe. Thou, then, only *revere him* and such tender Divine compassion shall rest on thee.

Ver. 14. Do thy source in *dust*, and thy continued kinship therewith, ever enfeeble and hamper thee, in the service thou wouldst fain render him; doth thy temper fail because thy nerves are unstrung; hast thou to cease from work, even for him, because thou art weary, hungry, cold? Be of good cheer; he knows it all, he made thee thus. *He puts himself in mind* that, even where the spirit is willing, the flesh may be weak.

### IV. FOR THE CONTINUITY OF HIS DEALINGS IN CONTRAST WITH MAN'S FRAILTY.

Vers. 15 and 16. Art thou discouraged, O my soul, because of the frailty of thy being and the brevity of thy *days*, so like the withering *grass* and the fading *blossom*? Shrinkest thou from the nipping *wind* that shall cut thee off, and from the thought that the vacancy thou leavest will soon be filled and thou shalt be missed no more? Yet hear thou again.

Vers. 17, 18. Not so is *the kindness of Jehovah*, even with regard to thee. It has perpetuating ways of its own. It descendeth from generation to generation. Thy progenitors are gone? Yea, but leaving behind for thee a legacy of blessing, in so far as they revered Jehovah in their day. Thou, therefore, in like manner, mayest leave a blessing behind thee: only teach thou thy children how to inherit it. And of this be sure: that in the end *righteousness* and *faithfulness* and *obedience* shall prove stronger than sin. Therefore still "Bless Jehovah."

### V. FOR THE PERMANENCE AND UNIVERSALITY OF HIS KINGDOM

Ver. 19. The object of thine adoration is supreme, for it is *Jehovah* himself whom thou wouldst bless. Beyond him is there none; outside his *dominion* is there none: *in the heavens*, high above this earth, *hath he established his throne*; just to the degree, therefore, to which he comes to reign on earth, he must needs bring heaven with him. *And his kingdom over all hath dominion*; therefore are there no beings unaccountable to him, therefore is there no creature-freedom uncircumscribed by him, therefore can there never be any events not subservient to his rule. Moral evil can only enter and stay in his dominions as long as he permits. This, O my soul, is thy safety and stay. My soul, thou art the richer, that there are heavens, within the compass of which are gathered subjects of thy King; for,

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although the Creator might be above all locality, yet not so the creature; and therefore it is a joy to thee to think of inhabited heavens, especially if and so far as they are peopled by loyal fellow-subjects of thine. Thine emotions must needs go forth to them. They may not hear thine appeal to them, save through their Sovereign and thine; yet wouldst thou fain emulate or even provoke their devotions, and feel the ecstasy of fellowship as they bless Jehovah.

Ver. 20. *Bless Jehovah, ye his messengers* whose privilege it is, when ye have entered his presence and listened to his commanding *word*, to depart on your several errands of state, thus making good your official name, in which alone ye appear to delight: with swiftness ye fly, with *heroic vigour* ye execute, with loyal promptness ye return to *hearken again* to your Sovereign Lord.

Ver. 21. *Bless Jehovah, all ye his waiting hosts, his attendants*, abiding more continually in his presence, *doers of his pleasure*, howsoever made known, by look, by hint, by perceived need and fitness, by inward impulse—*his pleasure*, not your own.

Ver. 22. *Bless Jehovah, all ye his works, in all places of his dominion*: whether with reason, or with instinct; or with neither, leaving it to more favoured ones to perceive your use and beauty and render praise for the same, becoming interpreters of your parts and powers, and employing you to rise the higher towards the Divine Throne. And, both first and last, chiefly thou, finding thyself in such large and glorious fellowship as thou humbly tenderest thine adorations,—*Bless Jehovah, O my soul*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the expression: "Bless Jehovah"?
2. How is the word "soul" used?
3. What a beautiful penetrating analysis of man is given in the comment on verse 2. Read it again.
4. What is "the ready instrument of self-discipline"?
5. There are five areas of God's personal dealings with us. Please list them (as in vs. 1-5) and make personal application.
6. In what sense is our strength renewed like an eagle?
7. In what two or three acts has Jehovah revealed His character?

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8. There are four personal characteristics of Jehovah. Name them and discuss their application to Israel and to you.
9. In what way does our Lord deal with us like sons?
10. Is our frailty ever an excuse for sin?
11. The brevity of life is a great source of discouragement. How is it overcome?
12. The heavens are peopled or populated. Of what comfort is this to us?
13. Who are the messengers of our God? What is their ministry? How does it relate to us?

## PSALM 104

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Creation Hymn.

### ANALYSIS

It is difficult to frame an Analysis of this psalm. The course of thought and observation followed therein bears Some Resemblance to the Method Pursued in Gen. 1:1—2:3; but the Differences are Considerable. So far as the psalm submits itself to external measurement, it may be said that 10-line stanzas prevail; but two out of the six run up to 20 and 17 lines respectively. The chief *refrain* of the previous psalm is repeated here. There is here no Superscribed Line, as to the previous psalm there was no Subscribed Line: probably furnishing evidence that the Two Psalms at an early time became Practically One.

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(Lm. None)

- 1 *Bless Jehovah O my soul!*  
Jehovah my God thou art exceeding great,  
Majesty and state hast thou put on:
- 2 Wrapping thyself in light as a mantle,  
stretching out the heavens as a tent-curtain:
- 3 who layeth in the waters the beams of his upper-chambers,  
who maketh the clouds his chariot,  
who walketh on the wings of the wind:
- 4 Making his messengers winds,<sup>1</sup>  
his attendants fire and flame.<sup>1</sup>

1. Or: "Making his messengers of winds His attendants of fire and flame."