

STUDIES IN PSALMS

ranted in thinking of sinners as merely banished to some other place, as if there were some such place not included in Jehovah's dominions (cp. 103:19). Still, that is not what is either said or suggested in this psalm; and it would seem dutiful to accept the natural interpretation of the solemn words before us. Suffice it that "there is a future for the righteous" (Ps. 37, 73); and that the overthrow of moral evil will so be accomplished as to call forth the self-incited refrain—*Bless Jehovah, O my soul!*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the theme of this psalm?
2. What purpose is seen in creation?
3. What is meant by saying "Jehovah is here represented as *before, above, and beyond* his works"?
4. What figures of speech are used to show God is present in His creation? Why suggested?
5. This earth is made very important in this psalm. If it is all to be burned up, why so much emphasis?
6. Do animals have a spirit? Are they the same as man? Discuss.
7. This psalm could give a new meaning to the word "creation". Discuss.
8. What is impressive about the last stanza of the psalm?
9. There is "a dark hint" of what?
10. Are we to unavoidably conclude that this earth will be the theatre of God's activities for all future time?

PSALM 105

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Hymn of Praise to Jehovah for Giving Israel a
Covenant Land in which to Observe His Law.

ANALYSIS

The Main Design of this Psalm is clearly to Endear the Land to the People for whom it was designed, that therein they should Observe Jehovah's Law. To attain this end the History of their First Fathers is traced as Circling Round this Land, and then the Steps are Traced by which the Nation was Brought Into the Land to Dwell There.

PSALM 105

(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!¹

- 1 Give ye thanks to Jehovah proclaim his name,²
make known among the peoples his doings:
- 2 Sing to him harp to him,
soliloquise³ of all his wondrous works:
- 3 Make your boast in his holy name,
joyful be the heart of such as seek Jehovah
- 4 Search out Jehovah and his strength,
seek diligently his face at all times:
- 5 Commemorate his wondrous works which he hath done,
his tokens and the just decisions⁴ of his mouth.
- 6 Ye seed of Abraham⁵ his servants,⁶
ye sons of Jacob his chosen ones:
- 7 He Jehovah is our God,
through all the land⁷ are his regulations.⁸
- 8 He remembereth to the ages his covenant,
the word he commanded to a thousand generations:
- 9 Which he solemnised with Abraham,
and his oath unto Isaac;
- 10 And he confirmed it to Jacob as a statute,
unto Israel a covenant to the ages,—
- 11 Saying "To thee will I give the land of Canaan,
the lot of your inheritance."
- 12 While as yet they⁹ were men easily counted,
indeed few¹⁰ and strangers therein:
- 13 And they wandered¹¹ from nation unto nation,
from a kingdom unto another people:

1. That is, "Public Reader's Invitation." "There can hardly be a doubt," says Ginsburg, "that this [a sentence and not a mere single word] exhibits the primitive reading." Ginsburg further expresses the confident conclusion that the phrase was originally the prelector's [the public reader's] invitation to the worshipers to join in the public responses.—Gn. Intro., pp. 375-81. Hence the omission of the phrase at end of this psalm, as there acknowledged.

2. So Dr. Cp. Isa. 12:4.

3. "Compose a song"—Br. "Discourse"—Del. "Muse ye"—Dr.

4. Or: "judgments."

5. Some cod.: "Israel." Cp. I Ch. 16:13—Gn.

6. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr.)—Gn.

7. Or: "earth."

8. That is, "by-laws," "code of laws"—as in Exo. 21—23. Or: "just decisions"—as in ver. 5 above.

9. Some cod. (w. Aram., Syr.): "ye." Cp. I Ch. 16:19—Gn.

10. "Caph veritatis"—O.G. 454.

11. "went to and fro"—Per.

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- 14 He suffered no son of earth to oppress them,
and rebuked for their sakes kings: [saying]
- 15 "Ye may not touch mine anointed ones,¹²
nor to my prophets do harm."
- 16 And he called a famine on the land,
all the staff of bread he brake:
- 17 He sent before them a Man,¹³
as a slave was he sold—[even] Joseph:
- 18 They humbled with fetters his feet,¹⁴
into iron entered his soul:¹⁵
- 19 Until the time when came in his word,
speech of Jehovah had tested him:
- 20 A king sent and released him,
a ruler of peoples and unloosed him:
- 21 He made him lord of his house,
and ruler over all his possessions:
- 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure,¹⁶
and unto his elders to impart wisdom.
- 23 So Israel came into Egypt,
and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
- 24 When he made his people very fruitful,
and made them stronger than their adversaries¹⁷
- 25 Their heart turned to hate his people,
to deal treacherously with his servants.
- 26 He sent Moses his servant,
Araon whom he had chosen:
- 27 He¹⁸ among them the threat of his signs,¹⁹
and his tokens in the land of Ham.
- 28 He sent darkness and made it dark,
but they rebelled²⁰ against his threats.²¹

12. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Anointed."

13. Almost—"great man."

14. Written "feet": read "foot." Some cod. both read and write "foot"
—Gn.

15. "Pathetic circumlocution for personal pronoun"—Dr. Prob. not merely his "person" physically; but all his sense of humiliation: "Joseph's whole sensitive personality"—Kp.

16. Ml.: "according to his soul"="liking."

17. Cp. Exo. 1:7.

18. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): Cp. 78:43.

19. N.B. that the signs were threatened before they came.

20. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Syr.)—Gn.

21. Same word as in ver. 27.

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- 29 He turned their waters into blood,
and caused their fish to die.
- 30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
in the chambers of their kings:
- 31 He spake and there came in the gadfly,²²
gnats,²³ in all their bounds.
- 32 He made their showers to be hail,
a fire of flames throughout their land;
- 33 And smote down their vine and their figtree,
and brake in pieces the trees of their bound.
- 34 He spake and there came in locusts,
and young locusts without number;
- 35 And devoured all the herbage in their land,
And devoured the fruit of their ground.
- 36 And he smote all the firstborn in their land,
the beginning of all their strength:
- 37 And brought them out with silver and gold,
and there was none among his tribes that faltered.
- 38 Glad was Egypt when they went forth,
because fallen was the dread of them upon them,
- 39 He spread out a cloud for screen,
and fire to give light by night.
- 40 They asked²⁴ and he brought in the quail,
and with the bread of heaven he used to satisfy them:
- 41 He opened a rock and there gushed forth waters,
they flowed aolng through parched places [as] a river.
- 42 For he remembered his holy word
with Abraham his servant;
- 43 And brought forth his people with gladness,
with a cry of joy his chosen ones;
- 44 And gave unto them the lands of the nations,
and of the toil of the peoples they took possession:
- 45 In order that they might observe his statutes,
and over his laws might keep watch.²⁵

(Nm.)²⁶

22. "Dog-fly"—Dr.

23. Meaning dubious—O.G. Prob. "gnats" as Exo. 8:12, 13, 14.

24. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "he asked."

25. Here follows, in M.T., "Praise ye Yah"—prob. by erroneous anticipation of the following at the beginning of Ps. 106. See note at the beginning of this psalm.

26. See 106 (beginning).

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PARAPHRASE

PSALM 105

Thank the Lord for all the glorious things He does; proclaim them to the nations.

2 Sing His praises and tell everyone about His miracles.

3 Glory in the Lord; O worshipers of God, rejoice.

4 Search for Him and for His strength, and keep on searching!

5, 6 Think of the mighty deeds He did for us, His chosen ones—descendants of God's servant Abraham, and of Jacob. Remember how He destroyed our enemies.

7 He is the Lord our God. His goodness¹ is seen everywhere throughout the land.

8 Though a thousand generations pass He never forgets His promise, His covenant with Abraham and Isaac,

10, 11 And confirmed with Jacob. This is His never-ending treaty with the people of Israel:

"I will give you the land of Canaan as your inheritance."

12 He said this when they were but few in number, very few, and were only visitors in Canaan.

13 Later they were dispersed among the nations, and were driven from one kingdom to another;

14 But through it all He would not let one thing be done to them apart from His decision.² He destroyed many a king who tried!

15 "Touch not these chosen ones of Mine," he warned, "and do not hurt My prophets."

16 He called for a famine on the land of Canaan, cutting off its food supply.

17 Then He sent Joseph as a slave to Egypt to save His people from starvation.

18 There in prison they hurt his feet with fetters, and placed his neck in an iron collar,

19 Until God's time finally came—how God tested his patience!

20 Then the king sent for him and set him free.

21 He was put in charge of all the king's possessions.

22 At his pleasure he could imprison the king's aides and teach the king's advisors.

1. Literally, "His judgments."

2. Literally, "He suffered no man to do them wrong."

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23 Then Jacob (Israel) arrived in Egypt and lived there with his sons.

24 In the years that followed, the people of Israel multiplied explosively, until they were a greater nation than their rulers.

25 At that point God turned the Egyptians against the Israeli; they hated and enslaved them.

26 But God sent Moses as His representative, and Aaron with him,

27 To call down miracles of terror upon the land of Egypt.

28 They^s followed His instructions and He sent thick darkness through the land,

29 And turned the nation's water into blood, poisoning the fish.

30 Then frogs invaded in enormous numbers; they were found even in the king's private rooms.

31 When Moses spoke, the flies and other insects swarmed in vast clouds from one end of Egypt to the other.

32 Instead of rain He sent down murderous hail, and lightning flashes overwhelmed the nation.

33 Their grape vines and fig trees were ruined; all the trees lay broken on the ground.

34 He spoke, and hordes of locusts came,

35 And ate up everything green, destroying all the crops.

36 Then He killed the oldest child in each Egyptian home, their pride and joy—

37 And brought His people safely out from Egypt, loaded with silver and gold; there were no sick and feeble folk among them then.

38 Egypt was glad when they were gone, for the dread of them was great.

39 He spread out a cloud above them to shield them from the burning sun, and gave them a pillar of flame at night to give them light.

40 They asked for meat and He sent them quail, and gave them manna—bread from heaven.

41 He opened up a rock, and water gushed out to form a river through the dry and barren land;

42 For He remembered His sacred promises to Abraham His servant.

3. Implied.

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43 So He brought His chosen ones singing into the Promised Land.⁴

44 He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, complete with their growing crops; they ate what others planted.

45 This was done to make them faithful and obedient to His laws. Hallelujah!

EXPOSITION

A sense of the value of these historical psalms grows upon us as we proceed with their study. Books were few, and comparatively inaccessible: hence, if history had to live for practical ends, it must be lodged in the memories of the people; and poetry was well adapted to effect that lodgment—especially poetry such as we here find, with its sententious brevity of expression, its happy use of parallelism, its abounding figures of speech, its picturesque brightness, its easy and rapid flow. Such poetry puts history “into the mouths” of the people (Deu. 31:19) by fixing it in their memories, enabling them readily to repeat it, and encouraging them to sing and harp its strains. It was a history worth repeating, not only because it was *their* history and was unique, but because there ran through it the golden thread of Divine interposition. If God is revealed in all history, he is pre-eminently revealed in Israel’s, since He was ever and anon giving them new epochs, new starting points of development; as well as constant watchful care. But it was so full and significant a history as to abound with lessons of a most varied description—fitted to warn, to encourage, to move to devotion in prayer and praise. Hence it was a task worthy of gifted psalmists, so to select and epitomise, so to bring to the front and leave in the background, as to point the moral as well as adorn the tale. These historical psalms thus became national stories told with a purpose. This becomes clear when the three leading historical songs (78, 105, 106) are laid side by side as to their main scope and design. Thus the 78th gains immensely in interest when viewed as an Asaphic appeal put forth in the time of Hezekiah for the purpose of encouraging and cementing the Reunion of the Tribes. The present psalm, the 105th, is mainly devotional, it is true; but it clearly has, as its didactic purpose, so to foster confidence in the covenant faithfulness of Jehovah, as to encourage the spirit of obedience, and the desire on the

4. Implied.

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part of the people to dwell in their own land for the very purpose of having perfect freedom to observe all Divine ordinances. The psalm which immediately succeeds this, the 106th, while equally devotional in its setting with its predecessor, is wholly different in its chief aim. It is, as we shall see, above all things, an admonitory psalm: its warnings are loud and long, and that they should ever have been turned into measure for psalm-singing, redounds to the everlasting praise for honesty of the psalmist that durst compose it and of the people who were willing to sing it.

Settling down for a little on the particular psalm now before us, it is observable (vers. 1-5) with what fulness of appeal the psalmist seeks to kindle the devotional spirit: *give thanks—proclaim — make known — sing — harp — soliloquise — boast — be joyful—search—seek diligently—commemorate,*—note after note of invitation is struck till every ear is attent, and every mind is fixed on Jehovah as the one object of worship.

Then observe, with what force of appeal (vers. 6-11), the fathers of the nation are introduced; and how these worshippers now addressed are reminded of the fact that they are the children of those patriarchs, and are themselves chosen to be the people of their father's God—that they are a covenant people, inheritors of the covenant *land*.

It is needless to recapitulate the psalm. But note how attention is for awhile held on the story of their first fathers (vers. 12-15); then (vers. 16-23) on the providentially over-ruled famine in Canaan, on the touching story of Joseph—whose name, it will be observed, is quite dramatically introduced, and to whom are devoted no less than twelve most effective lines. The remarkable providences are thus displayed by which the man *Jacob—Israel*, whose names become those of the nation, is brought down into Egypt: and so at length (vers. 24, 25) the familiar story is begun of the dangerous increase of Israel, the mission of Moses and Aaron (ver. 26), the threatening of the plagues (too often overlooked) as well as the infliction of them (ver. 27) of which a selection is then given (vers. 28ff.),—a selection only, it is true, but sufficiently full and detailed to raise the whole question of historicity to the high level of perpetual national celebration; and to challenge the modern sceptical mind to say whether such a story—so detailed, so significantly dovetailed into the history, so celebrated down to the present day—had, after all, no solid foundation in fact. And finally observe

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how the land-covenant, introduced as early in the psalm as the eighth verse, is reintroduced as far on as at the forty-second verse, so leading up to the unifying theme and climax of the psalm—the LAND as the Divinely ordained sphere of the full and unmolested observance of the LAW.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What particular value are these historical psalms?
2. Why was there a need to repeat the events of the past?
3. There seems to be several purposes in the historical psalms: (78, 105, 106). Give the purpose of each.
4. An intense devotional attitude can be developed by following the appeals here made: there are eleven of them. Try two or three and see.
5. A very strong nationalistic spirit is here generated—why?

PSALM 106

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Humbled Israel Confessing Her Sins as a Nation.

ANALYSIS

Enclosed within an Introduction of Praise and Prayer, vers. 1-5, and a Conclusion of Prayer and Doxology, vers. 47, 48, stands a National Confession of Sin, vers. 6-46, Relieved only by the Merciful Deliverances of Jehovah, the Intercession of Moses, ver. 23, the Interposition of Phinehas, ver. 30, and the Compassion of Israel's Captors, ver. 46. The Sins Confessed are chiefly the following:—Incredulity, ver. 7; Murmuring for Food and Drink, ver. 13; Rebellion against their Leaders, ver. 16; Worship of the Golden Calf, ver. 19; Refusal of the Land, ver. 24; Worship of the Moabitish Baal, ver. 28; Rebellion against Moses and Aaron, ver. 32; Non-Extermination of Idolatrous Peoples, and the Taking Part in their Licentious and Cruel Idolatry, vers. 34-40.

(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah!¹

- 1 Give ye thanks unto Jehovah *for he is good,
for to the ages is his kindness.*²

1. Cp. 105 notes at beginning and end.

2. Cp. refrain of 136; also I Ch. 16:34, Ezra 3:11, Jr. 33:11.