

PLAMLS 121 AND 122

but must wait till he should "see the salvation of God." How much easier thus to apply the words, than to force the accustomed thought of help coming from the mountains of Judæa to bring the returning exiles out of Babylon.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Verse one of this psalm is very much misunderstood. The help *does not* come from the hills—from whence? Discuss.
2. Who would give help and assurance to Hezekiah? (i.e. besides God)
3. There seems to be two counsellors in this psalm. What does each say? Who are they?

P S A L M 1 2 2

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Tribes Welcomed to the Passover.

ANALYSIS

(See Inserted Headlines.)

(Lm.) Song of the Steps—By David¹
(A PILGRIM'S REMINISCENCE OF THE
START FROM HOME.)

- 1 I rejoiced with those who were saying to me:—
"To the house of Jehovah we go!"

(A BAND OF PILGRIMS' OUTBURST OF
TRIUMPH ON ARRIVAL.)

- 2 Standing are our feet—
within thy gates—
O Jerusalem!

(THE PILGRIMS, ADMIRING THE CITY, ARE
REMINDED OF ITS RELIGIOUS USE.)

- 3 Jerusalem!
She that hath been built up a veritable city,
Joined for her part into a unity:

1. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.) omit: "By David"—Gn.

STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 4 Whither have come up tribes—
The tribes of Yah—
A testimony to Israel—
To give thanks to the name of Jehovah.

(SURPRISED OBSERVATION OF JUDICIAL PREPARATIONS.)

- 5 Surely there have they placed seats² for justice!
seats² for the house of David!

(PRAYERS SUGGESTED FOR JERUSALEM'S PEACE.)

- 6 Ask ye the peace of Jerusalem:—
"Quiet be they who love thee!
7 let there be peace within thy walls!
quietness within thy palaces!"

(AN INDIVIDUAL'S EAGERNESS TO JOIN.)

- 8 "For the sake of my brethren and my friends
do pray let me speak:—
'Peace be within thee!
9 For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God
let me seek to secure a blessing for thee.' "

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 122

I was glad for the suggestion of going to Jerusalem, to the Temple of the Lord.

2, 3 Now we are standing here inside the crowded city.

4 All Israel—Jehovah's people—have come to worship as the law requires, to thank and praise the Lord.

5 Look! There are the judges holding court beside the city gates, deciding all the people's arguments.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May all who love this city prosper.

7 O Jerusalem, may there be peace within your walls and prosperity in your palaces.

8 This I ask for the sake of all my brothers and my friends who live here;

9 And may there be peace as a protection to the Temple of the Lord.

2. Or: "thrones."

PSALM 122
EXPOSITION

It will be noticed that some authorities omit the ascription of this psalm to *David*; and, judging from internal evidence, nothing can well be imagined more perfectly fitting, for its primary occasion, than to view it as King Hezekiah's welcome to the Northern Tribes whom he had invited to join in the celebration of his great Passover. The completeness of its adaptation to that memorable occasion cannot be exaggerated. Down to the minutest detail, it approves itself as worthy of the man who conceived it, and the occasion for which it was first intended.

Imagine, then, the profound satisfaction with which a godly Northerner heard one after another of his neighbours declaring his intention to respond to good King Hezekiah's invitation, by going up to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem. That gives the *motif* of the first brief stanza, ver. 1.

Think, further, of the feelings of a band of such pilgrims when they first found themselves standing within the gates of the Sacred City. Naturally, the first person singular has given place to the first person plural—the *I* of isolated reception of the news of intention to go, is exchanged for the *our* of companionship in the triumph of actual arrival. Every word tells exactly as written: *Standing—are our feet—within thy gates—O Jerusalem!* We can perceive the thrill of emotion with which the feet of the pilgrims press the hallowed ground. That is our second stanza.

The newly-arrived gaze around them in silent astonishment and admiration, as if perchance they had hitherto only been accustomed to the straggling houses of a country village, and had never seen a real city before. "*Jerusalem!* and this is she!—*she that hath been built*, compact and continuous, as a *city worthy of the name*; every dweller in close touch with his neighbour, for fellowship in need, in worship, and in mutual defence; Jerusalem—striking *symbol of unity*. We, of the Tribes have been scattered and divided,—but our beloved Jerusalem is ONE!" So may we appreciate the first half of the third stanza.

Fine the tact of poetic vision, that sees the chance of here introducing a skilful and strong reminder of the duty of the Tribes to their Mother City. Nothing so prosy and pedagogic as to say, "Whither the tribes ought regularly to come up, as for centuries they have not done": nothing so *awkward as that* comes from the poet's pen; but rather the gracious recognition

STUDIES IN PSALMS

that they *have responded* to the King's invitation; since here, in fact, they are; as Northerner, having already greeted Northerner in Jerusalem, rejoices to know: *Whither have come up tribes.* Moreover, these *tribes that have come up*, are not aliens and rebels; oh no! *but tribes of Yah*, that had a right to come—a *testimony to Israel*, by the original ordinance, making for national unity; and how much more *telling a testimony* now, when men from all quarters are once more joining in bearing it. They have come, not to be reprimanded for their long absence, but to join in the soul-cementing bonds of united *praise to Jehovah*—their ancestors' still Living God. That excellent stroke of poetic policy completes our third stanza.

If any one thing, more than another, should elicit our admiration of the Divine Tact of this psalm-writer, it is the way in which he succeeds in bringing in—as by means of a casual observation—the most delicate of reminders that the holy people, who are *religiously* one, should be *judicially*, and therefore *civilly*, one also. It is not hinted that a notice had been seen exhibited at the street-corners, to the effect that "All coming to Jerusalem to worship are expected to bring with them their civil causes to be tried by the rightful present Representatives of the Beloved King David." No! it is—as to its actual poetic form—not an authoritative notice at all; but merely a sojourner's surprised and significant observation of something in the city he has seen. But what has he seen? Nothing more than *empty chairs*, placed in the public area set apart as forum. But those empty chairs are eloquent; for they are chairs of state. "*Surely, there, have they placed seats for justice: seats for the house of David!*" so remarks the pilgrim as he passes by, impressed by the sight, the profound meaning of which he thoughtfully ponders.

But a truce to object-lessons and moralisings prompted by them. The great Feast is rapidly reaching its climax of UNITED INTERCESSION. Here are fitting prayers suggested. The city as a whole filling every mind, "*Ask ye the peace of Jerusalem,*" says the poet: and in so doing, such things as the following, it will be seasonable that ye say:—"Quiet be they who love thee: may they 'lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and gravity.' *Let there be peace within thy walls, O Jerusalem*—whatever storms may rage in foreign lands. And *quietness itself*—in purest distillation—*be within thy palaces* of state and power." All of which, the student of the psalm can amplify according to his own sense of fitness.

PSALMS 122 AND 123

But the closing stanza must not be missed nor slurred over; for, in truth, it asks to be read with a delicate meaning discovered between its lines. For who is the INDIVIDUAL that closes the psalm? Who is he that, having so thoughtfully provided for the spiritual wants of others, now begs to be heard for himself:—"begs," we say, advisedly; since no scholar can deny that a homely *passion of importunity* is there, in the Hebrew, which sooner than let the mere English reader miss we have ventured to represent by the quaint form of request, "*Do pray let me speak*"? Who is this, then, with a heart so large that he can, within the compass of two closing sentences, take in with loving embrace his *brethren and friends* and likewise, with worshipful concern, *the house of Jehovah*? Is it not the author of the psalm himself, who can no longer be restrained from speaking for himself; and who, for some of us, by the fitness of every word of the psalm to the man and to the occasion, has virtually signed his name, KING HEZEKIAH?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the particular occasion of this psalm? We are invited to use our imagination as to the circumstances.
2. An appreciation for the nation is obtained by this visit. How?
3. There is "an excellent stroke of poetic policy in the third stanza. What is it?"
4. How was the religious, judicial and civil unity of Israel suggested?
5. Give several phrases as to the *united intercession*.
6. The writer of the psalm has an individual request at the close of the psalm. What is it?

PSALM 123

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The King's Response to the Injunction to Lift up
his Eyes as High as Heaven.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I, ver. 1, An Individualistic Couplet by way of Response to the Exhortation in Ps. 121:2. Stanza II, ver. 2, Israel unites in getting into an