

STUDIES IN PSALMS

- and helping their father—but under what circumstances? How do we know this is the proper application? Discuss.
3. How does the noon “sleep” have a very prominent part in the first half of this psalm? Discuss.
 4. How related to the building of the Temple?

PSALM 128

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Happy Home and a Prosperous Commonwealth.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, The Happy Home Described. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The Interest of the Commonwealth in Such a Home.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 How happy every one who revereth Jehovah—
who walketh in his ways!
- 2 The toil of thine own hands when thou eatest—
how happy for thee! and good for thine!
- 3 Thy wife—
like a fruitful vine in the recesses of thy house!
Thy children—
like plantings of olive-trees around thy table!
- 4 Lo! surely thus shall be blessed the man who revereth
Jehovah.
- 5 May Jehovah bless thee out of Zion;
and gaze thou upon the prosperity of Jerusalem,
- 6 And see thou sons to thy sons.
Peace be upon Israel!

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 128

Blessings on all who reverence and trust the Lord—on all who obey Him!

- 2 Their reward shall be prosperity and happiness.
- 3 Your wife shall be contented in your home. And look at

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all those children! There they sit around the dinner table as vigorous and healthy as young olive trees.

4 That is God's reward to those who reverence and trust Him.

5 May the Lord continually bless you with heaven's blessings¹ as well as with human joys.²

6 May you live to enjoy your grandchildren! And may God bless Israel!

EXPOSITION

Every one can see how delightful a companion picture this psalm forms to that which has immediately preceded it. It overflows with tender admiration for the man who, in his home, realises to the full the richness of Jehovah's blessing: *How happy* (ml., *Oh the blessednesses of*) twice exclaims the psalmist: first thinking of the devout mind and the well-ordered life of the chief recipient of Jehovah's blessing; then passing on to the sturdy independence of the man in being permitted to earn his own livelihood and that of his wife and children. No idler is he: no mere dependent. *Happy for thee* to gain thine own bread by thy toil, and to have loving ones to share it with thee, and *good for thine*, to nestle under thy wing and multiply thy blessings: *thy wife, like a vine*—graceful, dependent, fruitful—in the recesses of thy house, her sheltered heaven on earth, where she prefers to be; *thy children like plantings*—still young—of *olive-trees* on the way to transplantation into homes of their own, but at present placed around thy table as its richest ornament.

His neighbours call attention to him (*Lo!*) as a witness to Jehovah's kindness and faithfulness, and as an encouragement to others. In fact, the State sends blessings into the Home; and the Home—such a home returns blessings to the State. On such homes, worshippers implore benedictions from Jehovah: out of such homes welcoming eyes behold *the prosperity of Jerusalem*. And so, back and forth, the blessing goes and comes: from *thee* outwards to *Jerusalem*, from Jerusalem inwards and upwards to thy *grandchildren*. Out of such happiness, in giving and receiving, come finally devout good wishes for all the people: *Peace be upon Israel!*

1. Literally, "from Zion."

2. Literally, "of Jerusalem."

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It would seem that never in history was the theme of this psalm more needed in our nation. Discuss.
2. What prominent place does the wife have in this picture?
3. What effect upon neighboring nations would the devotion of Israel have?
4. Are we oversimplifying to suggest that in this psalm is the answer to our domestic and national dilemma?

PSALM 129

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel's Thanks for Past Deliverances, and
Prayer for Continued Vindication.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Israel's Experience of Vexation and Deliverance.
Stanza II., vers. 5-8, The Shame and Chagrin Awaiting all the Haters of Zion.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 "Full much have they harassed me from my youth"—
pray let Israel say:
- 2 "Full much have they harassed me from my youth—
but they have not prevailed against me.
- 3 Upon my back have ploughed the ploughers—
they have lengthened their field.¹
- 4 Jehovah is righteous—
he hath cut asunder the cords of the lawless."
- 5 Let them be put to shame and retreat backward—
all the haters of Zion!
- 6 Let them become as the grass of housetops—
which before it hath unsheathed doth wither,²
- 7 Wherewith hath filled his hand no reaper,
and his bosom no binder:
- 8 Neither have said the passers-by—

1. "Furrow-strip"—Del. A highly poetic description of the extent of country occupied by an invader.

2. As much as to say: "As grass withered before it unsheaths its ear, so let the Assyrians vanish before they unsheath a sword against Jerusalem."