

STUDIES IN PSALMS
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."

PSALM 129

"The blessing of Jehovah be unto you!"

[nor heard in reply]

"We have blessed you in the name of Jehovah."^s

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 129

Persecuted from my earliest youth (Israel is speaking),

2 And faced with never-ending discrimination—but not destroyed! My enemies have never been able to finish me off!

3, 4 Though my back is cut to ribbons with their whips, the Lord is good. For He has snapped the chains that evil men had bound me with.

5 May all who hate the Jews be brought to ignominious defeat.

6, 7 May they be as grass in shallow soil, turning sear and yellow when half grown, ignored by the reaper, and despised by the binder.

8 And may those passing by refuse to bless them by saying, "Jehovah's blessings be upon you; we bless you in Jehovah's name."

EXPOSITION

The solidarity of Israel as a nation is here strikingly and even pathetically set forth. The *youth* of the nation is by implication traced back to Egypt; and her experience since then of trouble from without is gathered up into one sad memory. That is one aspect of the figure—the nation represented as an individual. Then the individualised nation is identified with the land in which she dwells; and the rude dealings of the invader with the land are figured as the ploughing of long furrows upon her bare back. How pathetically this latest memory pictures the ruthless doings of Sennacherib is evident. But deliverance has come; and the sudden liberation of the land from the invader is vividly set forth as *the cutting asunder of the cords* by which the slave had been held bound while the cruel lash was laid on. It was emphatically JEHOVAH who cut asunder those cords. The deliverance was not obtained by battle, nor by long journeying out of a foreign land.

3. "The last line should be printed as a return greeting from the reapers—Aglen.

STUDIES IN PSALMS

So let all Israel's enemies be vanquished, like these Assyrians, who have been *put to shame and have retreated backward* (comp. 2 K. 19:36). And now, further, Assyria is paid back in her own coin: she had spoken of the nations who were unable to resist her might as "grass on the housetops" (2 K. 19:26, Isa. 37:27); and here she is herself made the object of the contemptuous comparison, with an additional stroke of wit at her expense: *Let the haters of Zion be as the grass of the house tops, which before it hath unsheathed doth wither*. Assyria had not unsheathed her sword against Jerusalem! And no friendly greetings were likely to congratulate her on the harvest she had reaped in Jehovah's inheritance.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There is something very pathetic about this psalm—What is it?
2. Why compress all the history of Israel into one sad memory picture? i.e. What was the immediate cause for this?
3. Compare II Kings 19:36; Isaiah 39:27 and show how it relates to verses five through eight.

PSALM 130

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Ransomed out of the Depths.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-2, The Fact of Supplication Narrated. Stanza II., vers. 3-4, The Terms of the Supplication Stated. Stanza III., vers. 5-6, The Urgency of the Supplication Described. Stanza IV., vers. 7-8, An Extension of the Supplication Urged.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 Out of the depths called I upon thee Jehovah!
- 2 "Sovereign Lord oh hearken unto my voice,
let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications:—
- 3 If iniquities thou shouldst mark¹ O Yah!
Sovereign Land!² who could stand?

1. Ml.: "watch." "Retainest"—Del.; "treasure up"—Leeser; "Wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss"—P.B.V.

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