

STUDIES IN PSALMS

5. What is the response or answer to the prayer as in verse eleven through eighteen?
6. In what sense or meaning is this psalm Messianic?

PSALM 133

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Brethren in Fellowship: a Charming Spectacle.

ANALYSIS

A Glimpse of Fraternal Reunion (ver. 1) suggests Comparison: (ver. 2) with the Descending Oil of Sacred Consecration; and (ver. 3) with the Descending Dew of Natural Refreshing.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps—By David.

- 1 Lo! how good and how delightful—
the dwelling¹ of brethren all together;²
- 2 Like the precious oil upon the head—
flowing down upon the beard the beard of Aaron—
which floweth down over the opening of his robe:
- 3 Like the dew of Hermon—
which floweth down over the mountains of Zion;
For there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing—
life unto the ages!

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 133

How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers live in harmony!

2 For harmony is as precious as the fragrant anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head, and ran down onto his beard, and onto the border of his robe.

3 Harmony is as refreshing as the dew on Mount Hermon, on the mountains of Israel. And God has pronounced this eternal blessing on Jerusalem,¹ even life forevermore.

1. Or: "remaining," "abiding."

2. "For brethren to dwell also together"—Dr.

1. Literally, "Zion."

PSALM 133
EXPOSITION

This beautiful psalm was manifestly prompted by a spectacle actually beheld. It points with the finger to some memorable scene, which lingers in the poet's mental vision. Probably nothing so perfectly answerable to the enthusiasm of this little snatch of song, has ever been suggested, as the Reunion of the Tribes on the occasion of Hezekiah's great passover. It is true the Northern Tribes were not so extensively represented at the feast as was desired; but those who came were welcome; and it is given to a seer to behold the ideal in the actual.

The stay in the sacred city was not long, but it was an *abiding* while it lasted: it brought brethren face to face who had never before seen each other; and, sweeping away prejudices and misunderstandings, cementing holy friendships by sacred service and song and by the giving and receiving of domestic courtesies, made the participants realise how truly they were brethren.

The comparisons employed to celebrate such reunion, converge to a single point, without losing their native attributes of many-sided suggestiveness. The precious perfumed oil, poured on Aaron's head, and not merely sprinkled on his garments as in the case of his sons, would naturally retain its symbolic fitness to suggest a gracious, delightfully fragrant, unseen influence; and in like manner the dew of Hermon would not lose its inherent adaptedness to convey the subsidiary ideas of copiousness and invigoration because of a further main point to be emphasised. Nevertheless, while these clustering conceptions around the figures employed need not be stripped off them, the single point to which both figures are directed should be firmly grasped. That point is the expansive and diffusive *descent* of the influence—of the invigoration—which is unmistakably urged home by the threefold use of the words *flowing down* or *descending*. The sacred oil *flows down* from the head to the beard, from the beard to the robe, and so by implication embraces and consecrates the whole man. The dew of the lofty summits of Mount Hermon *flows down* or *descends* (at times) not merely down upon that mountain's own spurs, but further and further down, until it reaches and rests upon the lowly Mount Zion in the south: which last point has been distinctly made credible by the observations of travelers in Switzerland and in Palestine. So, the poet would have us observe, the realisation of brotherly fellowship by those who are brethren, is

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an expanding and descending force, however gentle and unobserved; which reaches down far below the point of original bestowment of the grace. By the help of these simple analogies the mind of the reader climbs to higher things: to the rich influences descending from public worship into family life and into civic communities. The Christian will be forgiven if he is reminded of the ever descending grace which flows down from his Head in heaven: if a poetic Christian, he may indulge in a smile at the psalmist's adroitness in fetching one of his similes from the far North beyond where the Northern tribes dwelt, to their quite legitimate gratification; and, if at the same time he is a breezy Christian, possessing some breadth and flexibility of apprehension,—he will be unable to restrain himself from a feeling of additional pleasure that the spell of the psalmist's genius, having first appropriated a *sacred* symbol, then goes farther afield and presses a *secular* symbol into his service; reflecting that, even the dew of Hermon may benefit Zion, even as Christ is head over all things to his Church. Yet, when all comes to all, lowly Zion will be loftier in his eyes than Lebanon; for, *there, in Zion, hath Jehovah commanded the blessing even life for evermore.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What particular event seems to fit this psalm?
2. What are the motivations and methods of fellowship and unity?
3. There are two beautiful figures of speech in this psalm—show how they perfectly accomplish their purpose.

PSALM 134

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Night Service in the Temple.

ANALYSIS

(See Inserted Headlines.)

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.