

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

2. Please read Acts 2:25 ff and discuss.
3. Oh—that the expression of the psalmist in verse 5 were ours—! How can we obtain this personal relationship with our God?
4. How does the 23rd psalm compare with verse 6?
5. Discuss the Messianic and personal aspects of this psalm.

## PSALM 17

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

One who is Righteous Prays, in Great Trouble,  
for Divine Deliverance and Manifestation.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Prayer of Righteousness. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, The Proving of Righteousness. Stanza III., vers. 4-6, The Precaution of Righteousness! Stanza IV., vers. 6-8, Prayer for Attention, Kindness and Tender Care. Stanza V., vers. 9, 10, Refuge sought from Greedy, Cross and Arrogant Enemies. Stanza VI., vers. 11, 12, Invaders Advancing, Surrounding, Encamping, and Waylaying. Stanza VII., vers. 13, 14, Arise, Confront, Bring down, Deliver, Slay! Stanza VIII., vers. 14, 15, Punishment invoked on Three Generations—Reward counted upon by a Hoped-for Satisfying Vision of God.

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#### (Lm.) Prayer—By David

- 1 Oh hear Jehovah one who is righteous—attend to my piercing cry,  
oh, give ear to my prayer—without lips of deceit:
- 2 from thy presence let my sentence come forth—that mine<sup>1</sup> eyes may behold it.
- 3 With equity hast thou tried my heart—hast inspected me by night,  
hast proved<sup>2</sup> me thou findest in me no evil purpose—my mouth transgresseth not:
- 4 as for the doings of men by the word of thy lips (do I regard them).  
I have watched the paths of the violent one;
- 5 my steps hold fast to thy tracks—my footsteps slip not

1. So. Sep.

2. "Zaraph, smelt, refine, test"—O.G.

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- 6 I have called upon thee—surely thou wilt answer me O God!  
Incline thine ear to me—hear my promise,<sup>1</sup>
- 7 make wonderful thy deeds of kindness<sup>2</sup>—thou Saviour from  
assailants!<sup>3</sup>
- 8 I am taking refuge at thy right hand—protect me as the  
pupil the daughter of the eye.
- 9 In the shadow of thy wings wilt thou hide me from the  
lawless,  
those mine accusers that assail me—with greed<sup>4</sup> encompass  
me,
- 10 their gross heart<sup>5</sup> have they closed—with their mouth have  
they spoken proudly.
- 11 They advance now they march round us—their eyes they  
fix,
- 12 They mean to encamp in the land—they maltreat as a lion,  
they are greedy for prey—they are like a young lion lurking  
in secret places.
- 13 Oh, arise Jehovah! confront him bring him down,  
oh, deliver my soul from the lawless one (destroy with) thy  
sword!
- 14 let them be slain (by) thy hand—slain out of the world.  
Let their portion be during life—let thy stored-up penalty  
fill their bosom,<sup>6</sup>  
let their sons be sated—and leave their residue to their  
children;
- 15 but as for me let me have vision of thy face—be satisfied  
with thy form.<sup>7</sup>

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 17

I am pleading for Your help, O Lord; for I have been honest and have done what is right, and You must listen to my earnest cry!

1. "Saying" or "speech"; but cp. Ps. 119, table.

2. "Make signal thy kindnesses"—Dr.

3. "Those that rise up (against them)"—Dr.

4. ML: "with (or in) soul."

5. ML: "fat, midriff, diaphragm."

6. ML: "belly."

7. Or.: "the form of thee" M.T., more fully:—

But as for me in righteousness shall I have vision of thy face,  
Oh let me be satisfied when I awake a resemblance of thee!

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2 Publicly acquit me, Lord, for You are always fair.

3 You have tested me and seen that I am good. You have come even in the night and found nothing amiss and know that I have told the truth.

4 I have followed Your commands and have not gone along with cruel and evil men.

5 My feet have not slipped from Your paths.

6 Why am I praying like this? Because I know You will answer me, O God! Yes, listen as I pray.

7 Show me Your strong love in wonderful ways, O Savior of all those seeking Your help against their foes.

8 Protect me as You would the pupil of Your eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings as You hover over me.

9 My enemies encircle me with murder in their eyes.

10 They are pitiless and arrogant. Listen to their boasting.

11 They close in upon me and are ready to throw me to the ground.

12 They are like lions eager to tear me apart, like young lions hiding and waiting their chance.

13, 14 Lord, arise and stand against them! Push them back! Come and save me from these men of the world whose only concern is earthly gain—these men whom You have filled with Your treasures so that their children and grandchildren are rich and prosperous.

15 But as for me, my contentment is not in wealth but in seeing You and knowing all is well between us. And when I awake in heaven, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see You face to face.

## EXPOSITION

The first method of these "Studies" as to the question of authorship was to analyse a psalm with exclusive regard to internal evidence; and to interrogate that evidence by saying, "Now what sort of man appears to have written that psalm, under what circumstances, with a view of what dangers (if any), and with what feelings?" Only after pursuing this method with the present psalm, did any name occur as probable; and then it was the name of King Hezekiah, in view and in presence of the Assyrian invasion. If we take this suggestion as a working

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hypothesis, it is at once seen what a large amount of verisimilitude gathers about it. It is at once noticed how naturally, in such case, the writer appears both as an individual and as a personified nation; and the danger comes into view as an actual and most formidable invasion, by a cruel, greedy, insensate enemy. It is easily realised how naturally a good man like Hezekiah would assure himself of his rectitude, as a man and a monarch, in pressing his suit at Jehovah's footstool; and, considering the multitude of persons and the variety of interests at stake, how inevitable were the passion and the persistence in petition which are here displayed—piercingly loud (ver. 1), courageously bold (vers. 13, 14), thoughtfully tender (ver. 8); how suitable to the gravity of the occasion is the largeness of the blessings sought—that the answer should plainly have come forth from the *Divine Presence* (ver. 2), that it should amount to nothing less than Jehovah's *making his deeds of kindness wonderful* (ver. 7)—and that its result on the enemy should be his inevitable *slaughter* (vers. 13, 14). In view of such a situation, how little of personal vengeance appears in the most sweeping petitions for the punishment of the foe; for only by such an overthrow could the deliverance sought be so much as imagined. Even the desire that the stroke might be felt to the third generation (ver. 14) would seem to be necessarily involved in the making of Israel's deliverance effective. Perhaps, even beyond all these features of adaptation discoverable in this psalm, is its conclusion; and, quite unexpectedly, to the writer of this exposition, its conclusion rather in the shorter form inserted in the text than in the longer form relegated to the margin. For, assuredly, it was not without searchings of heart that the familiar and favourite ending of the Massoretic Text was, at the bidding of a very refined criticism—unwilling to admit any unsymmetrical distension of metre or stanza,—assigned to a lower place; especially considering that such assignment would in a measure put out of confident use the significant word "awake," which had always been felt to be evidence that actual resurrection from the dead formed, for the psalmist, "the path to life" by which he hoped to ascend to the beatific vision of Jehovah's face. But, with the apprehension that HEZEKIAH might have written this psalm, the whole realm of probability was changed. The natural thing for HEZEKIAH to say, under the

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circumstances; would be the very thing that the textual critic prefers should be regarded as the original text: *But, as for me, let me have vision of thy face!*—the very thing Hezekiah had hoped for, without need to “awake,” because without having previously fallen asleep! This we can confidently gather from the very bitterness of his lament when the prospect of death came upon him: “I shall not see Yah even Yah in the land of the living!” (Isa. 38:11). *That*, then,—namely to “see Yah in the land of the living,”—had been Hezekiah’s cherished hope; and that is the hope expressed in the short but powerful conclusion of this psalm preferred in the text above. In decipherment of the final word—*be satisfied with thy form*—a backward and a forward glance will repay us: backward to Num. 12:8, to discover the same word employed as here; and forward to John 1:18, 14:9, 1 Pet. 1:7, 8, 1 John 3:2, to be reminded of the form, and the vision of that form, which we are joyfully assured will give unbounded satisfaction.

This psalm is a *tephillah* prayer; and admirably that word describes it. It is attributed *To David*; and doubtless its groundwork came from him. So strongly, however, is the image of Hezekiah impressed upon it, that already, in the above exposition, had such authorship been confidently inferred, before the perusal of Dr. Thirtle’s second book: which offers the following reinforcement:—“Hezekiah was familiar with persecution. Ver. 5 reads like Ps. 73:2; ver. 14 like 73:3-9, a psalm from the time of Hezekiah. The concluding verse looks forward to recovery from sickness.”—Thirtle, O.T.P., p. 314.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. When and where was the request of verses one and two answered?
2. In what sense could David say he was “good” as in verse three?
3. How did Rotherham arrive at the thought that this psalm was a record of Hezekiah’s reaction to the Assyrian invasion? Do you agree? Discuss.
4. What do the textual critics say about this Psalm? Why? Discuss.
5. Verse 15 is applied to neither Hezekiah nor David in Acts 2:28—or is this the Psalm used by Peter? Discuss.