

STUDIES IN PSALMS

anointed? Hadn't he led them to many victories? How surprised he was to see the vast numbers that had arisen against him. Many were saying that God had forsaken him and pointing to David's sin and suffering as proof.

THOU ARE MY SHIELD vrs. 3-6

How often in the life of David had he found God his shield? He knew that God would protect him. After all, God was his glory. His one great desire was to glorify God. His deep repentance was his sincere declaration of his determination to glorify God in righteousness. Because he had placed himself in the hands of the Lord he could lie down and sleep unafraid. Let his enemies rage about him; God was his protector.

ARISE, O LORD, SAVE ME vrs. 7-8

How natural it was for this man of God to cry out, "Save me." He knew that the eyes of the Lord were over him, and he was sure that the ears of the Lord were opened unto his prayers. God was his saviour. He was so sure that God would save him that even as he cried he stated in the affirmative that God had smitten all his enemies. There was a simplicity and yet a fullness to David's faith that was amazing.

Harrison Mathews.

Isn't it just as sensible to approach the psalm from this view point as from the one suggested by Rotherham? Discuss.

PSALM 4

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Ideal Levite's Evening Prayer.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, New Favour Sought in the Strength of Past Supplies. Stanza II., ver. 2, Expostulation addressed to Wealthy Worshippers, whose Taunts for the Poverty of his Office he had borne. Stanza III., ver. 2, The Levite magnifies his Office, and counts on his nearness to God to ensure an Answer to his Prayer. Stanzas IV. and V., vers. 4, 5, The Salutary Lessons which his Answer brings him. Stanza VI., ver. 6, A Shrewd Observation on a Prayer Frequently Heard in the Temple. Stanza VII., ver. 7, Grateful Praise

PSALM FOUR

for Superior Spiritual Blessings. Stanza VIII., ver. 8, Resolve on speedy and contented Retirement to Rest.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David

- 1 When I call answer me O God of my right
when in a strait thou didst make room for me,
be gracious unto me and hear my prayer.
- 2 Ye sons of the great! how long shall my glory be a reproach,—
while ye love emptiness while ye seek falsehood
- 3 Know then that Jehovah hath distinguished the man of kind-
ness¹ as his own,—
Jehovah will hear when I call unto him.
- 4 "Be deeply moved but do not sin,
reflect in your hearts on your bed and be silent.
- 5 "Sacrifice ye sacrifices of righteousness,
and direct your trust unto Jehovah."
- 6 Multitudes are saying—
"Who will let us see prosperity?
lift up on us the light of thy face O Jehovah."
- 7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart
more than when their corn and their new wine have increased.
- 8 In peace at once will I lay me down and sleep,
for thou Jehovah in seclusion
in safety makest me dwell.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) As to Inheritances.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 4

O God, You have declared me perfect in Your eyes;² You have always cared for me in my distress; now hear me as I call again. Have mercy on me. Hear my prayer.

2 The Lord God asks, "Sons of men, will you forever turn My glory into shame by worshiping these silly idols, when every claim that's made for them is false?"

3 Mark this well: The Lord has set apart the redeemed for Himself. Therefore He will listen to me and answer when I call to Him.

1. Cp. Intro., Chap. II., "Kindness."

2. Literally, "God of my righteousness."

STUDIES IN PSALMS

4 Stand before the Lord in awe, and do not sin against Him. Lie quietly upon your bed in silent meditation.

5 Put your trust in the Lord, and offer Him pleasing sacrifices.

6 Many say that God will never help us. Prove them wrong, O Lord, by letting the light of Your face shine down upon us.

7 Yes, the gladness You have given me is far greater than the joys at harvest time as they gaze at their bountiful crops.

8 I will lie down in peace and sleep, for though I am alone, O Lord, You will keep me safely.

EXPOSITION

The presumption is that David wrote this psalm, and that he intended it for evening worship; but on what occasion did he write it, and for whom? Did he write it for himself, when yet fleeing from Absalom, as some suppose; or did he write it for a Levite for ordinary evening worship, as the subscribed line suggests?

It is perhaps not an unnatural supposition that as David wrote the previous psalm, which, in fact, whether so intended or not, comes out well as a morning prayer; therefore he wrote this psalm also as an evening prayer, soon after, under similar circumstances, in fact while yet fleeing from before his rebellious son. Now while the grounds for such a conclusion are very slight, still, if the contents of the psalm had decidedly favoured it, we might have accepted it:—but do they? It is submitted that they do not; and the more obviously that this psalm on its own merits is fitted for evening worship, the more is that circumstance alone sufficient to account for its position here, quite apart from the precise circumstances that gave it birth.

Is it likely that David would compare his escape from Jerusalem to a deliverance from a narrow place into one of more ample room (ver. 1)? Is it likely that he would imply that Absalom's partizans were composed of the great men of the nation (ver. 2)? Is it likely that he would advise rebels on the march to reflect on their beds before further committing themselves (ver. 4)? Is it likely that, merely because the Levitical services were left going in Jerusalem, he would advise conspirators to sacrifice sacrifices of righteousness and trust in Jehovah (ver. 5)? And, finally, is it likely that he would represent Absalom's men as revelling in an abundance of *corn*

PSALM FOUR

and new wine, while he, the rightful king, was acting the poor pilgrim, "beggar's staff" in hand (ver. 7)? The extreme unlikelihood that David would do any of these things, emboldens us to decline such an hypothesis of origin, even though sustained by all the eloquence of Professor Delitzsch.

As soon, however, as we entertain the other account of origin suggested, every step in our inquiry deepens our impression in its favour.

David, as we know, was in deepest sympathy with the Levites as a tribe; and after he discovered how he had neglected them in his first essay to bring up the ark to Jerusalem, he took care to assign them the place of honour to which their calling as a tribe entitled them. And when we see him dancing before the ark in a linen ephod we are led to regard him as a Levite in spirit, wanting only the name and the formal appointment. If, therefore, the Levites came to feel their need of an evening psalm, and revealed their want to David, we may be sure that they would readily secure the services of his harp and of his muse.

Turning now to the subscribed line of the psalm and discovering there words which, when properly deciphered and rendered, refer to *Inheritances*, we are at once reminded that Jehovah himself was the inheritance of the Tribe of Levi, and that he, by the bountiful provision which he made in the holy ritual connected with offerings and sacrifices, took care that this consecrated and peculiarly dependent tribe should not in vain look to him for their temporal supplies. (Cp. Num. 18:20-24, Deu. 10:9, 18:2, Josh. 13:14, 33, Ps. 132:9, 16.) We have only to add to this the great truth, attested by Num. 3:11, 13, 45, that the tribe of Levi was by express Divine appointment a representative tribe, in order to realise how certainly and how fully the Levites as a class were an *ideal* tribe. All the godly in Israel were, by calling, Jehovah's *hasidhim*, or *men of kindness*; but the Levites were officially this, and it was peculiarly their duty and privilege to keep all Israel in mind of this their high calling to represent among men the essential kindness of their God. If, therefore, we may assume that the two kinds of inheritance would naturally combine in one celebration,—namely the inheritance of the Levites in Israel, and the inheritance of Israel among the nations,—and one evening song would blend two such congenial memories, then nothing would

STUDIES IN PSALMS

be more becoming than that the Levites should have and should sustain in the Temple service just such an anthem of praise as this.

The more narrowly we examine this psalm, so subscribed, the more admirably do we find it fitted for such a purpose.

The Levite proclaims that his *right* is in Jehovah, who has *made room* for him in Jerusalem, although he has given him no landed estate among his brethren of the other tribes. His peculiar position exposes him to especial trials; and, among them is his liability to be taunted for his poverty and dependence by the insolent rich. These are apt to turn the *glory* of his position into a *reproach*. He would, therefore, have such *lovers of emptiness*, such *seekers of falsehood*, know that the great principle of Divine *kindness* of which his tribe is the embodied representative has been *made wonderful* by Jehovah: who will assuredly now hearken to his evening prayer. Indeed he seems to be already possessed of an answer: counselling him *when deeply moved* by the taunts of the wealthy to beware of the sin of dissatisfaction and envy: let him, therefore, school his mind to contentment in the *silence* of the wakeful midnight hour, as he lies on his lonely *bed*; let him do his duty when *offering sacrifice* for himself and for the sins of his people; and so let him *direct his trust unto Jehovah*. To this answer, he gratefully responds. Having observed how *multitudes* in their prayers when offering their temple-gifts, appear with all their possessions, to be harassed by adversity and hoping for *better times*; having noticed also the *gladness* of his clients *when their corn and their new wine have increased*; he acknowledges that Jehovah has put *into his heart* a deeper and more lasting *joy* than any which the wealthy have experienced. Thus refreshed in spirit, *at peace* with God and with his fellow-men,—*he lays him down to sleep* in his temple-chamber,—*in seclusion* from the world—*apart*, it may be, from his loved ones in the distant Levitical city; but in conscious *safety* as he thus reposes under the very wings of the God of Israel. Thus concludes the Ideal Levite's evening psalm.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It will help us to think carefully of the possibilities of applying this psalm to David—and of the problems of doing so—Discuss the possible historical circumstances.

PSALM FOUR AND FIVE

2. The larger help to us will be in the application of the psalm to our lives: (1) In verse one: what confidence for answered prayer is here found? (2) In verse two: just what is "the glory" of God? Why do men turn His glory into a reproach or shame?
3. "The Redeemed" or "the Man of Kindness" has been particularly distinguished or set aside by God—how so? See verse three.
4. In verse four the power for overcoming sin is revealed—what is it?
5. According to verse five not all sacrifices to God are pleasing—how is this true of us?
6. Are we to be concerned about the attitude toward God held by the multitudes among whom we live? See verse six and give an answer.
7. A constant awareness of solid satisfaction in the life and work we do is the greatest of human possessions, and it can be ours—see verse seven.
8. Sleep is one thing—there are pills for this—sleep in peace is something else what shall we take to produce this?

PSALM 5

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Morning Prayer for Deliverance from Conspirators.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Petitions Pleaded to which an Answer is Awaited.
Stanza II., vers. 4-6, Jehovah's Character Forbids the Success of the Rebels.
Stanza III., vers. 7-9, The Petitioner's Privileged Position made a Plea for Guidance through Present Perils. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, The Punishment of the Wicked will Restore the Confidence of the Righteous.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 To mine utterances give ear O Jehovah,
understand thou my plaint:
- 2 Attend to the voice of my cry for help my King and my God,
for unto thee do I pray,