

STUDIES IN PSALMS

PSALM 46

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Trust in God, Joyfully Maintained in Face of Peril,
Speedily Rewarded.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Trust in God held fast in presence of National Troubles that are likened to the Catastrophes of Nature. Stanza II., vers. 4-7, With His secret Water-supply and her God Himself in her midst, the Besieged City is kept Glad and Safe, and is Speedily Delivered. Stanza III., vers. 8-11, An Invitation to View Jehovah's Doings in Forcibly bringing Wars to an End; and a Divine Warning, bringing Hope to the Nations of the Earth. A *refrain* celebrates Israel's Confidence in her God.

(Lm.) Song.

- 1 God for us is a refuge and strength,
a help in distresses most willingly found.¹
- 2 Therefore we will not fear though the land should roar,²
and the mountains stagger into the midst of the seas:
- 3 Seas³ may roar the waters thereof foam,
mountains may shake at the swelling of the stream,—
(Jehovah of hosts is with us,
a lofty retreat for us is the God of Jacob.⁴)
- 4 His channels make glad the city of God,
the Most High hath kept sacred⁵ his habitations:
- 5 God is in her midst—she shall not stagger,
God will help her at the approach of the morning:
- 6 Nations have roared—kingdoms have staggered,
he hath uttered his voice—earth melteth:—
- 7 Jehovah of hosts is with us,
a lofty retreat for us is the God of Jacob.

1. Ml.: "letting himself be found exceedingly."

2. So Br. M.T. "show change."

3. Prob. omitted by oversight in M.T. Cp. Br.

4. The refrain of vers. 7, 11, prob. omitted here by oversight. So Del., Kp., and others. Per. thinks the omission designed.

5. So it should be (w. Sep. & Vul.)—Gn.

PSALM FORTY-SIX

- 8 Come view the doings of Jehovah,¹
who hath set desolations² in the earth:
9 Causing wars to cease unto the end of the earth,
the bow he breaketh and cutteth asunder the spear.
waggon he burneth with fire,
10 "Desist and know that I am God,—
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."
11 Jehovah of hosts is with us,
a lofty retreat for us is the God of Jacob.
(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For the sons of korah.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 46

God is our refuge and strength, a tested help in times of trouble.

2 And so we need not fear even if the world blows up, and the mountains crumble into the sea.

3 Let the oceans roar and foam; let the mountains tremble!

4 There is a river of joy flowing through the City of our God—the sacred home of the God above all gods.

5 God Himself is living in that City; therefore it stands unmoved despite the turmoil everywhere. He will not delay His help.

6 The nations rant and rave in anger—but when God speaks, the earth melts in submission and kingdoms totter into ruin.

7 The Commander of the armies of heaven is here among us. He, the God of Jacob, has come to rescue us.

8 Come, see the glorious things that our God does, how He brings ruin upon the world,

9 And causes wars to end throughout the earth, breaking and burning every weapon.

10 "Stand silent! Know that I am God! I shall be honored by every nation in the world!"

11 The Commander of the heavenly armies is here among us! He, the God of Jacob, has come to rescue us!

1. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.): "God." Cp. 66:5—Gn.

2. "Wastes," "horrors"—O.G.

STUDIES IN PSALMS EXPOSITION

The three psalms now coming before us are nearly connected, and yet differ considerably from each other. Ps. 46 immediately reflects some historical event—possibly the invasion of Judaea in the days of Jehoshaphat as recorded in 2 Ch. 20, but more probably the later invasion by Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah, as narrated in 1 Kings 18, 2 Ch. 32, Isa. 36. Ps. 47, while doubtless suggested by the same event, is an ideal prediction and prophetic celebration of Jehovah's reign over the earth through Israel; and Ps. 48, which again reflects the past deliverance of the Holy City, is probably as much prophetic as it is historical; and strongly presses forward towards the final establishment of Jerusalem as the Metropolis of the World.

The spirit of Ps. 46 is that of stout-hearted trust in God. God is nearer than any enemy, and more powerful to relieve from danger than the enemy is to inflict it. The images employed in the psalm are bold, being formed by depicting such convulsions of nature as are seldom or never witnessed, yet are easily conceived. The terrible *roar* of the *land* in an earthquake, when *the mountains* are seen *staggering into the midst of the sea*, and the resentful sea is witnessed dashing its mighty waves on the *mountains* that overhang the shore: such is the scene which the poet's art presents as a figure of disturbed nations. At first this picture is presented without express application; amid even these convulsions, *God is our refuge and lofty retreat*. In the second stanza the national application is made prominent. They are *nations* that *roar*, *kingdoms* that *stagger*: still our trust is in the mighty God who governs nature, holding its tremendous forces in check, and who in like manner controls kings and peoples. But before this application is made, a contrast in natural images is introduced, which is the more effective because a literal realisation in the holy city is assumed to be well known to those who sing this anthem of deliverance. The God of the mighty sea is also the God of the springs which supply water to the holy city. These springs have lately been captured by Hezekiah through the formation of channels and enclosing walls which direct all the water to the city itself, while concealing and denying the supply from the enemy. The springs form the city's Divine supply; the wit and wisdom which have utilised them to the utmost and conserved them with so much care, being regarded as God's gifts, it could be well said that

PSALM FORTY-SIX AND FORTY-SEVEN

his channels make glad the city; and not only glad, but patient, bold and defiant (Isa. 37:22) in presence of the besieger. Louder than the roar of nations is the *voice* of God; at the resounding of which *earth melteth* and the courage of her most valiant sons becomes weak as water. The minds of the singers of this song are left to supply the rest. Assyria has been overthrown in the land. The scene is one of terrible devastation. We are invited to view it, and to learn its great lesson. Wars will cease when Jehovah inflicts such *wastes* and *horrors* on those who wage them, that they will be compelled to stay the carnage. He will say *Desist* in such manner that they will *know* that He who speaks is God and must be obeyed. Then will he be *exalted among the nations*: "scattering those who in war take delight" (Ps. 68:30) and giving the nation rest and peace.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There seems to be a close association in the next three psalms —what is it?
2. Read again the paraphrase of verses one and two, and see the very real relevance of this psalm to our present day dilemma.
3. Allow the term "Jerusalem" in this psalm to mean the church, or "the city of our God". What then would be the river flowing through the city? Discuss.
4. Read Romans 8:31-39, and compare with verses two and three. Discuss.
5. Read the verses of the hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, and compare with this psalm.

PSALM 47

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel Invites the Nations to Rejoice in the
Universal Kingship of Her God.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Invitation Itself, announcing the Central Fact of Jehovah's World-wide Sovereignty. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Israel Claims her God-given Supremacy over the Nations. Stanza III. and IV., vers. 5, 6;