

PSALM 76

PSALM 76

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song of Triumph over a Divinely-smitten Foe.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, By reason of a Recent Interposition in behalf of Jerusalem, God has Anew Made Himself Known there, as a Lion Dwelling in his Lair. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The Majesty of God and the Impotence of the Smitten Enemy contrasted. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, God, Terrible when Arising to Judgment. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, The Wrath of Mankind turning to Give Thanks and Keep Festival. Counsels to Worshippers.

---

(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph—Song.

- 1 God hath made himself known in Judah,  
in Israel great is his name:
- 2 And his covert hath come to be in Salem,  
and his lair in Zion hath been placed:<sup>1</sup>
- 3 He hath shivered the flames of the bow,<sup>2</sup>  
shield and sword and battle.<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Enveloped in light art thou majestic—from the mountains  
of prey:
- 5 They let themselves be spoiled did the valiant of heart—  
they slumbered their sleep,  
And none of the men of might could find<sup>4</sup> their hands:
- 6 At the rebuke O God of Jacob—stunned were the horsemen.<sup>5</sup>
- 7 As for thee fear-inspiring thou art:  
who then shall stand before thee because of the power<sup>6</sup> of  
thine anger?
- 8 Out of the heavens proclaimedst thou sentence:  
earth feared and was still

1. So Br. revocalises, *sh-m-h*, and brings back to end of this line.

2. A poetic description of arrows.

3. Comprehensively, for all other weapons of war.

4. Far less use them, to arise and grasp their weapons.

5. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

6. So G. Intro. 144, correcting orthography.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 9 When God arose to vindication,<sup>7</sup>  
to save all the humble of the land.<sup>8</sup>
- 10 Surely the wrath of mankind will thank<sup>9</sup> thee,  
the residue of intense<sup>10</sup> wrath will keep festival to thee<sup>11</sup>
- 11 Vow and pay to Jehovah your God,  
all ye around him bear along a gift to the inspirer of fear,
- 12 He taketh away<sup>12</sup> the spirit of nobles,  
is fear-inspiring to the kings of the earth.
- (Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) Jor Jeduthun.<sup>13</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 76

God's reputation is very great in Judah and in Israel!

2 His home is in Jerusalem! He lives upon Mount Zion.

3 There He breaks the weapons of our enemies.

4 The everlasting mountains cannot compare with You in glory!

5 The mightiest of our enemies are conquered; they lie before us in the sleep of death; not one can lift a hand against us.

6 When You rebuked them, God of Jacob, steeds and riders fell.

7 No wonder You are greatly feared! Who can stand before an angry God?

8 You pronounce sentence on them from heaven; the earth trembles and stands silent before You;

9 You stand up to punish the evil-doers and to defend the meek of the earth.

10 Man's futile wrath will bring You glory! You will use it as an ornament!

\* \* \* \* \*

11 Fulfill all your vows that you have made to Jehovah your God. Let everyone bring Him presents. He should be revered and feared,

12 For He cuts down princes and does awesome things to the kings of the earth.

7. Intro., Chap. III., "Righteousness."

8. Or "earth."

9. Cp. 6:5 n.

10. "The word WRATH is in the plural, denoting either wrath of every kind, or wrath in its intensity."—Per.

11. So Sep., implying a difference, in Heb. exemplar, of a single letter.

12. So O.G. ("cut off=take away"); and so Br. (w. Sep., Vul., Jerome).

13. Cp. 38 n.

PSALM 76  
EXPOSITION

The reference of this psalm to the overthrow of Sennacherib is so obvious as to explain the unanimity with which expositors find in it that allusion. Doubtless there are some minor points in the psalm which invite discussion, and as to which a difference of final opinion may be expected. But these are of little moment as compared with the remarkable statement regarding *the wrath of man* which occupies the 10th verse, as to which a perplexing amount of diversity exists. This verse stands as follows in the A.V.:—

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee,  
The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

The assurance thus conveyed may be said to meet with general devout acceptance, as is evident from the frequent acquiescent use of the words in public worship. The only difficulty they present is that scholars are unable to find the word "restrain" in the original of the second line. Accordingly, in the R.V., the following innovation appears:—

The residue of wrath shalt thou gird upon thee;

and with this rendering Dr., Per., Del., and others in the main agree. But it is distinctly unacceptable, apparently far-fetched, and gives rise to endless diversities when exposition is attempted. Whose wrath does God gird about him, whether by way of ornament, or for use? If his own, then why with only a "residue"? to say nothing of the awkwardness of taking the wrath to be human in one line and divine in the next. In short, there can be little doubt that the Sep. has here preserved the true reading, by the use of a word differing only by one letter from the M.T. (*h-h-g-k*) instead of (*h-h-g-r*) *will keep festival to thee*. A renewed study of the passage—giving to it a more literal turn and bringing it into closer touch with the context—brings out the force and beauty of this ancient variation. Note then (1) that *mankind*, instead of "man" (for *a-d-m*) in the first line, widens the outlook, and prepares us to discover that it is the excusable wrath of the down-trodden nations directed against the down-treading world-power, represented by Assyria, which, when Divine interposition effects deliverance, turns to give God *thanks*—"thanks" itself being more literal than "praise"—willing thanks rather than unwilling and merely enforced and constructive praise. (2) That *keep festival* in line 2, makes a good

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

parallel with *thank* in line 1. (3) That the *intense wrath* of line 2 prepares for the strong verb *keep festival* which follows it; so that the stronger motive power produces the stronger result, implying that there are some among the lately down-trodden nations whose "wrath" was so intense that mere "thanks" will not serve for its outlet—it moves to nothing less than the keeping of a *holy festival of praise*. Note (4) how strongly this construction works out of the foregoing context and into the succeeding: *Earth feared and was still when God arose to vindication* (vers. 8, 9)—so deep was its emotion, and so potent to turn its wrath of resentment into thanksgiving for deliverance. Will ye, then, *keep festival*? Then, mind ye *pay your vows* (ver. 11). *All ye around him* (*ibid*)—ye smaller neighboring nations, who, having shared in Israel's peril, now share in her deliverance, *bear along*, in procession, *a gift to the Inspirer of fear*, even Israel's God who has just smitten the Assyrians. It is distinctly pleasant thus to get a glimpse of *mankind* lying outside the dominant world-power, sharing in Israel's deliverance, and fulfilling a more hopeful part than merely contributing unwitting and unwilling praise to the God of all the earth. Moreover, the student of unfulfilled prophecy will not fail to observe how, by exchanging *earth* for *land* in ver. 9, he obtains a most significant adumbration of time yet to come when God will arise to the vindication of the humble through all the earth.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The historical circumstances of this psalm is the destruction of Sennacherib's army in the reign of Hezekiah. Read Isaiah, chapters 36 and 37. Why is there such a unanimity of opinion as to what incident is here described?
2. Refer again to the three psalms of 74, 75 and 76 and show how they fit together.
3. The poet has so well described the destruction of Sennacherib's host—  
"Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown."  
What encouragement is this to us?
4. Rotherham sees a real exegetical problem with verse 10—how is it solved? Does Taylor agree with him in the paraphrase? Do you agree? Discuss.

## PSALM 76 AND 77

5. When and where and how will God defend "the meek of the earth"? (vs. 9)

## PSALM 77

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Comfort in Distress Obtained by the Study of a Song.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Introductory—shewing, by quotation of Language and Statement of Fact, that the Psalmist has been Inconsolable. Stanza II., 4-9, In like manner, the Psalmist pursues his Study, rising to an Intense Spirit-Search (indented). Stanza III., vers. 10-15, A second study, conducting to a Satisfying Conclusion (indented): God is Holy, Incomparable, Redeeming. Stanza IV., vers. 16-19, The "String-Song" itself, on which the "Study" has been based (divisible into four sub-stanzas—tristichs). Stanza V., ver. 20, Conclusion: The Flock is under the Care of a Divine Shepherd (implied).

---

(Lm.) By Asaph—Psalm.

- 1 "With my voice unto God let me cry:  
with my voice unto God, and he will give ear to me."
- 2 In my day of distress after Adonai I sought,  
mine eye poured out and became not slack:<sup>1</sup>  
my soul refused to be consoled:—
- 3 "Let me remember God though I moan,  
let me soliloquise though my spirit swoon."
- 4 I anticipated the night-watches with mine eyes,<sup>2</sup>  
I was disturbed and could not speak:
- 5 I pondered on days out of aforetime:—  
"The years of by-gone ages let me recall,—
- 6 My string-song in the night is near my heart,—<sup>3</sup>  
let me soliloquise that my spirit may make diligent search.<sup>4</sup>
- 7 To the ages will Adonai reject?  
and not again grant acceptance any more?

1. As in Lam. 3:49; and so Dr. deems probable. M.T.: "my hand by night was outstretched, and grew not numb."

2. So, nearly, Br. (w. Vul. and some cod, of Sep.).

3. Or: "mind"—so that I can easily recall it.

4 N.B.: this "spirit-search" begins with the next line.