

STUDIES IN PSALMS

Spirit-ministry from Heaven, have in them the potent charm of the embrace and kissing of Angels. And for the rest we are content to work and wait.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "There is a marked difference between the Praise with which this psalm opens and the Prayer which follows thereon." What is it? How can we reconcile the thoughts?
2. Discuss "the prophetic solo" as here used.
3. Graham Scroggie says of this psalm: "The psalm reflects the feelings of Judah shortly after the return from Babylonian captivity, and with it we should read *Haggai* and the early part of *Zechariah*. The people had expected much from their deliverance, but the harsh realities of their enterprise had stripped off its imaginative charm". Discuss this possibility.
4. Rotherham considers verses 8 through 13 as "the Divine Response to the Soloist's appeal"—is this reasonable? Discuss.
5. Verse six of this psalm is a request of perennial need: "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in Thee?" How can this prayer be answered today?

PSALM 86

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer of a Tried and Faithful Servant of Jehovah.

ANALYSIS

The Psalmist prays to be Heard and Answered and for his Life to be Preserved because of his Need (ver. 1), his Devotion and Trust (ver. 2), his Pleading (vers. 3, 4), Adonai's Goodness (vers. 5, 6), and Incomparable Character and Doings (ver. 8); which are So Great that All Nations will Come and Worship (vers. 9, 10). Pleading for Guidance, he Promises Praise (vers. 11, 12) and Bethinks him of a Past Rescue of His Life (ver. 13), which (life) seems to be Again in Danger from Insolent Foes (ver. 14): in view of whom he Pleads the Character of Jehovah as set forth in "THE REFRAIN of the Bible" (ver. 15). He prays for Favour, Strength and Salvation, in view of his own Devotion and that of his Mother (ver. 16); asking for Such a Token as shall Shame his Enemies (ver. 17).

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(Lm.) Prayer—By David.

- 1 Incline Jehovah thine ear, answer me;
for humbled and needy am I.¹
- 2 Oh guard thou my life,² for a man of kindness³ am I,
save thy servant thou my God—who turneth his trust unto
thee.
- 3 Shew me favour Sovereign Lord,⁴
for unto thee do I cry all the day:
- 4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant,
for unto thee Sovereign Lord my soul do I lift.
- 5 For thou Sovereign Lord⁵ art good and ready to pardon,
and *abundant in kindness* to all who cry unto thee.
- 6 O give ear Jehovah unto my prayer,
and oh attend unto the voice of my supplications.
- 7 In my day of distress I cry unto thee,
surely thou wilt answer me.
- 8 There is none like unto thee among messengers divine⁶
Sovereign Lord,
and there are none like thy works.⁷
- 9 All nations which thou hast made
will come in and bow down before thee Sovereign Lord,⁸
and give glory to thy name;
- 10 For great art thou and a doer of wondrous things,
thou art God alone.
- 11 Shew me Jehovah thy way, I would walk in thy truth:
let my heart rejoice⁹ to revere thy name:
- 12 I would thank thee Sovereign Lord my God with all my heart,
and would fain glorify thy name to the ages.

1. Cp. 40:17, 70:5, 109:22: all ascribed, "To David."

2. U.: "soul."

3. Heb. *hasidh*=receiving and reflecting kindness. "One whom thou lovest"—Kp., Per.; "Godly"—Dr., Del.; "Pious"—Br., Leeser, P.B.; "Devoted to thee"—Carter. N.B., no psalmist elsewhere makes this claim. Cp. Intro, Chap. III., "Kindness."

4. Heb. *adonai*; and so—rendered "Sovereign Lord"—seven times in this psalm; "Jehovah" occurs four times. But here some cod. (w. 5 ear. pr. edns.): "thee Jehovah"—Gn.

5. Some cod.: "thou Jehovah"—Gn.

6. Or: "gods." But see Ps. 8:5. Heb. *'elohim*.

7. Or: "doings."

8. Cp. 22:27.

9. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. Cp. O.G. 402. M.T.: "Unite my heart": i.e., concentrate its energies. But Sep., Syr., with other vowels, have, "Let my heart rejoice"—Dr.

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- 13 For thy kindness is great over me,
and thou hast rescued my soul from the lower hades.¹⁰
- 14 O God, insolent men have risen up against me,
and a congregation of ruthless men¹¹ have sought my soul,¹²
and have not set thee before them.
- 15 But thou Sovereign Lord art a *God compassionate and
gracious,*
*slow to anger and abundant in kindness and truth.*¹³
- 16 Turn thou unto me and be gracious unto me:
oh give thy strength unto thy servant,
and oh bring salvation to the son of thy handmaid.¹⁴
- 17 Work with me a token¹⁵ for good,
that they who hate me may see and be put to shame,—
in that thou Jehovah hast helped me and consoled me.
- (CMm.) For the sons of korah.¹⁶

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 86

Bend down and hear my prayer, O Lord, and answer me,
for I am deep in trouble.

2 Protect me from death, for I try to follow all Your laws.
Save me, for I am serving You and trusting You.

3 Be merciful, O Lord; for I am looking up to You in
constant hope.

4 Give me happiness, O Lord, for I worship only You.

5 O Lord, You are so good and kind, so ready to forgive;
so full of mercy for all who ask Your aid.

6 Listen closely to my prayer, O God. Hear my urgent cry.

7 I will call to You whenever trouble strikes, and You will
help me.

8 Where among the heathen gods is there a God like You?
Where are their miracles?

9 All the nations—and You made each one—will come and
bow before You, Lord, and praise Your great and holy name.

10. "The lowest part of the interior of the earth"—Del. "The nether Sheol"—Dr. "The nethermost Sheol"—Kp.

11. Cp. 54:3.

12. Or: "life"; but the word is *nephesh*, as in ver. 13.

13. Cp. Exo. 34:6, 7. "The Refrain of the Bible"—Emp. Bible.

14. Cp. 116:16.

15. Or: "sign."

16. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

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10 For You are great, and do great miracles. You alone are God.

11 Tell me where You want me to go and I will go there. May every fiber of my being unite in reverence to Your name.

12 With all my heart I will praise You. I will give glory to Your name forever,

13 For You love me so much! And You are constantly so kind! And You have rescued me from deepest hell.

14 O God, proud and insolent men defy me; violent, godless men are trying to kill me.

15 But You are merciful and gentle, Lord, slow in getting angry, full of constant lovingkindness and of truth;

16 So look down in pity and grant strength to Your servant and save me.

17 Send me a sign of Your favor. When those who hate me see it they will lose face because You help and comfort me.

EXPOSITION

By the general consent of critics, this psalm is composite to such a degree as nearly to resolve itself into a mosaic, consisting of extracts from other scriptures; yet "even this psalm is not without a significance and beauty of its own"—Del. The psalmist is in a situation bearing considerable resemblance to that of David when persecuted by Saul. In other respects his position is like that of Hezekiah. The psalm is peculiar in having in it no fewer than seven occurrences of the Divine name *Adonai*, here rendered "Sovereign Lord" (as in 8:1, 9). It is notably distinguished by containing a prophecy of the gathering of all nations to worship. Although it takes note of mortal perils past and to come, there is a complete absence from it of pleadings for vengeance: the worst thing this wronged saint desires for his enemies is that they may be put to shame.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please notice the number of references to other psalms: twenty psalms "are laid under contribution" in the formation of this psalm—also references from Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. This is a prayer. What does it teach us as to the wording of our prayers?
2. Consider this prayer as divided into four parts; (1) 1-5; (2) 6-10; (3) 11-13; (4) 15-17. Each is a petition: fol-

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lowing the petition is a reason for answer based on a tribute of God. Find them and incorporate them into life and prayer.

3. This prayer is "full of the Lord"; He is mentioned 16 times. It is also full of the psalmist or David—he mentions himself 35 times. How shall we reconcile this thought?
4. "Unite my heart to fear thy name"—(vs. 116). What a tragic loss is a divided heart. The heart is: will, conscience, emotions and intellect.

PSALM 87

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Glorious Destiny of Zion as the Metropolis of the Nations.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Jehovah's Preferential Love for Zion Declared.
Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The Glorious Things Spoken of Zion. A Chorus of Exultation.

(Lm.) Psalm—Song.

- 1 (2) His foundation, on the Holy Mountains 2 Jehovah loveth,—¹
the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
- 3 Glorious things are spoken of thee O city of God!
- 4 "I will mention Rahab² and Babylon as of them who know³ me,
lo! Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia—"This one was born there!" "
- 5 And of Zion it shall be said—"One after another was born in her!"
and he himself will establish her as highest.⁴
- 6 Jehovah will record when enrolling peoples "This one was born there."

1. Or: (taking previous words as an abrupt heading) carry forward "Jehovah loveth" to next line.

2. That is "Egypt," as in 89:11, Isa. 30:7, 51:9.

3. Or: "acknowledge," as in 1:6 and elsewhere.

4. Cp. Deu. 26:19, 28:1.