

## PSALM 90 AND 91

appeal to the Eternal God." Compare this with Rotherham's divisions. A great deal of discussion is given to the two uses of the term "return" in vs. 3. Scroggie says: "*Return ye*, may be a parallel thought, *return to dust*, or it may refer to the rise of a new generation, answering to *generations* in verse." How does this compare with Rotherham? Discuss.

3. Does God inflict death? If so why?
4. What is "our secret" which is set up near the lamp of God's face?
5. God hates sin—why?
6. What is "the pivotal prayer" of this psalm?
7. What is "the wisdom" obtained in numbering our day?
8. Read carefully verses 13-17 and relate them to Moses, i.e. as they were written. Discuss.
9. There are some tremendous lessons for living in this psalm. List two or three for discussion.

## PSALM 91

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Personal Application of the Foregoing Psalm.

### ANALYSIS

Prelude, Commending the Initial Sentiment of Moses' Prayer. Stanza I., vers. 2-8, Exhortation to Make this Sentiment One's Own: sustained by Expanding its Implied Promises. Stanza II., vers. 9-13, To One who has Obeyed the Exhortation, a Further Expansion of the Promises is made. Stanza III., vers. 14-16, Jehovah, in Love, Responds to the Love Set Upon Him.

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(Lm.—None.)<sup>1</sup>

- 1 *How happy<sup>2</sup> is he that abideth in the hiding-place of the Most High,  
in the shadow of the Almighty he tarrieth!—*
- 2 Say thou<sup>3</sup> to Jehovah—"My refuge and my fastness,  
my God in whom I trust."

1. N.B. according to rule this psalm should immediately follow the foregoing, without break.

2. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*

3. According to change of vowel points advised by Dr., thereby preparing for second person in ver. 3.

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- 3 For he will rescue thee from the trap of the fowler,  
from the pestilence that engulfeth:
- 4 With his pinion will he cover thee,  
and under his wings shalt thou take refuge,—  
a large shield and buckler is his truth.
- 5 Thou shalt not be afraid of the dread of the night,  
of the arrow that flieth by day.
- 6 Of the pestilence that in darkness doth walk,  
of the destruction that despoileth at noon.
- 7 There may fall at thy side a thousand,  
Yea a myriad at thy right hand,—  
Unto thee shall it not draw near:
- 8 Only with thine own eyes shalt thou look on,  
and the recompense of lawless ones shalt thou see.
- 9 Because thou hast said<sup>4</sup>—“Jehovah is my refuge,”  
hast made the Most High thy dwelling-place<sup>5</sup>
- 10 There shall not be suffered to meet thee misfortune,  
and plague<sup>6</sup> shall not draw near in thy tent.<sup>7</sup>
- 11 For his messengers will he charge concerning thee,  
to keep thee in all thy ways:
- 12 On their palms will they bear thee up,  
lest thou strike against a stone thy foot:
- 13 On reptile<sup>8</sup> and cobra shalt thou tread,  
shalt trample on young lion and serpent.<sup>9</sup>
- 14 “Because on me he hath set his love<sup>10</sup> I will deliver him,  
I will set him on high because he hath come to know my  
name:
- 15 He shall cry unto me and I will answer him,  
with him will I myself be in distress:  
I will rescue him and will glorify him.
- 16 With length of days will I satisfy him,  
and will content<sup>11</sup> him with my salvation.”

(Nm.)

4. So *Gt.*

5. As in 90:1.

6. Or: “stroke.” Heb. *nega'*. Cp. 38:11 note.

7. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. ed., and Aram.): “tents” (pl.)—Gn.

8. So Br., reading *z-h-l* for *sh-h-l*. M.T.: “lion.”

9. Or: “dragon (as devourer), or (sea)- or (river)-monster”—O.G.

10. Or: “to me hath become attached.” Cp. 18:1 and Expn.

11. Or (ml.) “saturate.” So (*r-w-h*) *Gt.* M.T.: “let him gaze upon  
my s.”

PSALM 91  
PARAPHRASE  
PSALM 91

We live within the shadow of the Almighty, sheltered by the God who is above all gods.

2 This I declare, that He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; He is my God, and I am trusting Him.

3 For He rescues you from every trap, and protects you from the fatal plague.

4 He will shield you with His wings! They will shelter you. His faithful promises are your armor.

5 Now you don't need to be afraid of the dark any more, nor fear the dangers of the day;

6 Nor dread the plagues of darkness, nor disasters in the morning.<sup>1</sup>

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7 Though a thousand fall at my side, though ten thousand are dying around me, the evil will not touch me.

8 I will see how the wicked are punished but I will not share it.

9 For Jehovah is my refuge! I choose the God above all gods to shelter me.

10 How then can evil overtake me or any plague come near?

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11 For He orders His angels to protect you wherever you go.

12 They will steady you with their hands to keep you from stumbling against the rocks on the trail.

13 You can safely meet a lion or step on poisonous snakes; yes, even trample them beneath your feet!

14 For the Lord says, "Because he loves Me, I will rescue him; I will make him great because he trusts in My name."

15 When he calls on Me I will answer; I will be with him in trouble, and rescue him and honor him.

16 I will satisfy him with a full life<sup>2</sup> and give him My salvation."

EXPOSITION

Two things are clear. This psalm is no part of the Prayer of Moses; and yet it was occasioned thereby. All the evidence

1. Literally, "at noonday."
2. Literally, "with long life."

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that confirms the Mosaic authorship of Ps. 90, turns round and rebuts the assumption that Ps. 91 also was written by him. The lonely grandeur is gone. The large outlook has closed. The sweeping comprehensiveness is at an end. And yet a very close *relationship* is evident. The first verse of this psalm might have been written as a label on the previous one; and for a time left in that form; tautological,—probably because incomplete; a mere suggestion to be expanded at a more convenient season. It is as though Samuel, or David, or Hezekiah had just perused afresh his precious treasure, handed down from the great Lawgiver; and, impressed with its sublime beauty and power and its fitness to be turned to practical use, had penned on it just the two lines which now open it: which lines, by himself or some other prophetic singer, were afterwards taken up, in *hortatory* mood, not improbably addressed to the fortunate royal possessor himself: Say thou (“O my master”; or, *Say thou, O my soul*)! We thus reach the idea that Ps. 91 is strictly an Appendix to Ps. 90: which hypothesis at once accounts for the fact that it has no inscription above or below. It is quite easy, and not altogether vain, to think—how aptly Nathan may have addressed Stanza I. (vers. 2-8) to his royal master David, or how readily David himself may thus have addressed his own soul—in either case naturally introducing *large shield and* (smaller) *buckler*. It is equally feasible to think of some such poet as Isaiah adding another stanza or two to this Appendix; and, if we could imagine *him* as striking in at ver. 9 with Hezekiah in view,—that would quite well account for the otherwise unaccountable emphasis on the pronoun *thou*! As much as to say: “My royal Master! thine ancestor David full well knew what it was to be preserved from *dread and arrow and pestilence and destruction*—to be saved alone while *thousands were falling by his side*; and he did indeed live to see *recompense falling upon lawless ones*. But *thou, too*, even as he did, hast said, ‘Jehovah is my refuge.’ Nor shalt THOU be disappointed.” Not necessarily vain, are such imaginings, if they hover over the realm of actuality, and rebuke the dry dogmatism that is so very sure that things hinted at could never have happened.

There is probably a further and deeper reason why it cannot be vain to seek to actualise such poetic writings as these; and that is, to check the easy assumption that there can be no fulfilment at all of such promises as these, unless, without break, fulfilment runs steadily on and up to the climax of complete ac-

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accomplishment. A moment ago, we suddenly pulled up in sight of the word *plague*, remembering that, literally, and for the time, the *plague* did *draw near in the tent* of Hezekiah. Was this Appendix-writer—therefore—dishonored? Surely we have need to follow our Lord's own example, by saying "It is written again!" Yea, it is written again, *in this same Appendix, He shall cry unto me*; and truly Hezekiah *did cry* (2 K. 20:3, Isa. 38:2); *and I will answer him*; and truly Jehovah *did answer* (2 K. 20:5, 6, Isa. 38:4-8): in short, was *with him in distress*—*did rescue*—*did glorify*. Whether the restored monarch was actually *satisfied* with his fifteen additional years and *content* with the remainder of his life, history informeth us not. Possibly he was *not*; because nearly all such promises as these have in them an element of extension and expansion ever ready to require more than this life to fill to the full their accomplishment. In other words, *the length of days* of these ancient Hebrew songs is ever crying out—dumbly but really—for Resurrection and Incorruption!

In now taking a retrospect of this psalm, it is extremely important to remark—that its promises are essentially *conditional*: they all depend on actually making the Most High a *refuge*—a *habitation*. The opening inscription of ver. 1 calls for this. So does the injunction of ver. 2. So also does the emphatic and extended reason given in ver. 9. And this condition, be it carefully noted, consists of a living experience: of an intention, carried out; of a believing recognition of the all-encompassing and protecting *presence of the Most High*. And this goes far beyond the heathenish employment of this psalm, or any other formula of words, as a protection from evil. It is not: He that carries in his pocket a piece of paper or parchment containing these words, or any such words. It is not: He that carries these words in his memory: which may be nothing more than a clever feat of formalism. But: He that does the thing described; which cannot mean less than an habitual and believing walk with God. Moreover: He who is walking with God, can neither knowingly step aside from the path of duty; nor, uninvited, make experiments with God. If God really commands his servants to prove him, then doubtless they may obediently respond. Otherwise, they cannot go along that path; because, in the absence of any such Divine challenge, the *prohibition* comes in:—"Thou shalt not put the Lord thy God to the proof." Neither Satan nor the Scientific Doubter has authority to suspend this Divine Prohibition. The

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Almighty does not put his power into commission, to be used at any creature's pleasure. It is well he does not. This is not to deny that there is a charm in the promises of God, but it is to protest that their true charm comes from treating them not as mere charms, but as the living words of a living God.

But this psalm furnishes another lesson: it puts before us, with all the vividness of an object-lesson, the importance of setting the various commands and promises of Scripture side by side, that we may gather their true sense and make of them a legitimate application. The final stanza of this psalm comes before us with an especial appealing force, because it purports to give us Jehovah's own direct words, revealing the response of his love to his servant's love: *Because on me he hath set his love.* Being at the same time the close of the psalm, it is in every way fitting that this stanza should be invested with any explaining and harmonising power needed for practical guidance. From this point of view, note especially, that Jehovah himself prepares his loving servants for the possibility that—after all the promises which have gone before—they may yet come into *distress*. for such a temporary non-fulfilment of his promises, Jehovah holds himself responsible—*with him will I myself be, in distress.* He makes our distresses his own. He bears the burden of his unfulfilled promises. He says: "Wait! and I will more than fulfil them all." And then to Grace he adds *Glory!*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "Two things are clear". What are they?
2. Who is the possible author or writer?
3. Why say psalms 91 is an appendix to 90?
4. How was verse 7 made to apply to David? Who applied it?
5. The verses Satan applied to our Lord (Matthew 4:5-7) Rotherham applies to someone else. Who? Why?
6. Rotherham has some good words on the superstitious use of this psalm. What is said? Discuss.

## PSALMS 92 to 97

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Service of Song for a Sabbath Day.