

STUDIES IN PSALMS

7. David's basic problem was not that he was hiding in a cave. As to his future, what did he need to know?
8. At this time, it evidently became clear to David that to overcome his foe, what must finally take place?

PSALM 144

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

From David's Psalms are Selected Strains, by one of his Sons,
Emboldening him to Plead for Deliverance from Foreigners.
An Appendix anticipates Happy Times.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I, vers. 1, 2, Blessing rendered to Jehovah in language taken from Psalm 18. Stanza II, vers. 3, 4, Confession of Man's Insignificance and Frailty, as found in Psalms 8 and 39. Stanzas III. and IV., vers. 7-11, Petitions for Deliverance from Foreigners in Terms Suggested by Psalm 18 and rising to *Refrain* fervour. Stanza V., vers. 12-15, An Appendix, picturing the Temporal Benefits Resulting from the Realisation by a People that Jehovah is Their God.

(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Blessed be Jehovah my rock!
who teacheth my hands to war,
my fingers to fight:
- 2 My kindness and my fastness,
my lofty retreat and my deliverer—mine,
my shield and he in whom I have taken refuge,
who subdueth my people¹ under me.
- 3 Jehovah! what was an earth-born that thou shouldst
acknowledge him?
the son of a mere man that thou shouldst take account
of him?²
- 4 An earth-born resembleth a vapour,³
his days are like a shadow that passeth away.

1. A sp. vr. (sevir): "subdueth peoples" (pl.). In some cod. (w. Aram. and Syr.): "peoples" is both written and read. Cp. 18:47—Gn.

2. Cp. 8:4.

3. Or: "breath."

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- 5 Jehovah! bow thy heavens and come down,
touch the mountains that they smoke:
- 6 Flash forth a flash and scatter them,
send out thy arrows and confuse them:
- 7 Stretch forth thy hand⁴ from on high:—
*Snatch me away and rescue me—
out of many waters,
out of the hand of the sons of a foreigner:*
- 8 *Whose mouth speaketh unreality,
and whose right-hand is a right-hand of falsehood.*
- 9 O God! a song that is new would I fain sing unto thee;
with a lute of ten-strings would I fain play unto thee:—
- 10 Who giveth victory⁵ to kings,
who snatched away David his servant from the hurtful
sword.
- 11 *Snatch me away and rescue me
out of the hands of the sons of a foreigner:
Whose mouth speaketh unreality,
and whose right-hand is a right-hand of falsehood.*
- 12 When our sons are like plants well-grown while yet young,
Our daughters like corners carved according to the
construction of a palace;
- 13 Our garners full pouring out from one kind to another,
Our flocks multiplying by thousands by myriads in the open
fields,
- 14 Our kine great with young no premature births,—⁶
With no goings forth to war and no cries of alarm in our
broad-ways
- 15 *How happy the people when they have it thus!
How happy the people when Jehovah is their God!*

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

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Bless the Lord who is my immovable Rock. He gives me strength and skill in battle.

2 He is always kind and loving to me; He is my fortress,

4. So (sing.) in some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)
—Gn. M.T.: "hands" (pl.).

5. Or: "salvation."

6. So Br. with probable correctness.

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my tower of strength and safety, my deliverer. He stands before me as a shield. He subdues my people under me.

3 O Lord, what is man that You even notice him? Why bother at all with the human race?¹

4 For man is but a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.

5 Bend down the heavens, Lord, and come. The mountains smoke beneath Your touch.

6 Let loose Your lightning bolts, Your arrows, Lord, upon Your enemies, and scatter them.

7 Reach down from heaven and rescue me; deliver me from deep waters, from the power of my enemies.

8 Their mouths are filled with lies; they swear to the truth of what is false.

9 I will sing You a new song, O God, with a ten-stringed harp.

10 For You grant victory to kings! You are the one who will rescue Your servant David from the fatal sword.

11 Save me! Deliver me from these enemies, these liars, these treacherous men.

* * * * *

12, 13, 14, 15 Here is my description of² a truly happy land where Jehovah is God:

Sons vigorous and tall as growing plants.

Daughters of graceful beauty like the pillars of a palace wall.

Barns full to the brim with crops of every kind.

Sheep by the thousands out in our fields.

Oxen loaded down with produce.

No enemy attacking the walls, but peace everywhere.

No crime in our streets.

Yes, happy are those whose God is Jehovah.

EXPOSITION

This psalm is manifestly both adapted and composite. It is seen to be *adapted*: inasmuch as Stanzas I. and II. are based upon Davidic psalms, altered to suit a later set of circumstances than those to which the original psalms applied; and inasmuch as these are followed by special petitions, in Stanzas III. and IV., directly springing out of those altered conditions. On the face of it, the psalm is *composite*; the Appendix speaking for itself,

1. Literally, "or the son of man that You take account of him?"

2. Implied.

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as being, both in form and substance, disjointed from what has gone before, couched in a wholly different vein, with no formal allusions to anything which has preceded it, and not only disconnected, but clearly incomplete, having no introduction of its own: nevertheless a most pleasing and worthy Appendix, with a reason for its present position which the thoughtful mind can easily supply—as much as to say, “Only let our God answer our foregoing petitions, and then we may hope for the realisation of the happy state of things which the following extract so beautifully portrays.”

We need not hesitate long before concluding that, in all likelihood, King Hezekiah was the adapter—almost the author—of vers. 1-11; inasmuch as the emergency which prompts the prayer is evidently caused by the presence of the *foreigner* in the land. Not even the gathering of the surrounding nations against Jehoshaphat so well meets the case; for the extreme annoyance and humiliation caused by the boastful *mouth* and the tyrannous *right-hand* of the enemy are far more like the experience due to a present and persistent invader like the Assyrians, than would be the mere gathering of Moab and Ammon, however alarming that gathering might be.

Assuming, then, that here we see the adapting hand of Hezekiah, it is only due to him to observe how wisely and well he has done his adapting work. If the reader of this Exposition will only have well in mind the sources indicated in our “Analysis” he will be able to appreciate the verifying observations which follow, though briefly expressed.

In Stanza I., the compiler simply pours forth adorations which suggest that he has just been reading the great triumphal song of his ancestor which we know as Ps. 18: adorations calculated to inspire confidence in the urgent petitions he is now about to urge.

In Stanza II., we have a singular combination of allusions, well befitting the humility of one who realises his personal littleness and unworthiness, in view of the largeness of the mercies for which he is about to ask.

In Stanza III., we come to petitions proper, the boldness of the figures of speech in which would surprise us, even though we know Hezekiah to be a poet, were it not that we can see he has been dwelling on the extraordinary imagery of the 18th Psalm: not exactly quoting its language, which indeed first appeared as thanksgiving for victories and deliverances already

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vouchsafed, but remoulding it into the form of present petitions to suit the existing dire emergency. As if conscious that he had been drawing largely on an "old" song, the writer longs to launch upon a *new song*; and instantly bounds into the present by recognising victories heretofore granted to kings, and *the snatching away of David, his servant, from the hurtful sword*,—a clear enough indication that it is not the language of David himself that we are now reading, but that of another, who finds inspiration in David's memory.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There are three previous psalms quoted in this one. Which ones? For what purpose?
2. Who is the author of this psalm? Why not Jehoshaphat?
3. What part of this psalm is a "new song"? Discuss its meaning.

PSALM 145

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Alphabetical Psalm in Praise of Jehovah's Greatness,
Goodness and Righteousness.

ANALYSIS

Naturally, this psalm falls into 21 Couplets (and Verses), the letter *mem* being absent from the Hebrew Text. Further division is not easy; but by restoring the missing letter, as indicated at the foot of ver. 13, the psalm might be resolved into Three Groups of Seven Couplets each, leaving the letter *tau*—the twenty-second—to head an Application of the Whole Psalm to the Psalmist himself and to All Flesh. Even so, however, this grouping would be merely formal, and not indicated by any corresponding division of topics. By accident rather than design, the dominant subject of each would be Jehovah's Greatness, Goodness, and Righteousness; and it may be of practical service to note this.

(Lm.) Praise—By David.

- 1 I will exalt thee my God O king—
and would fain bless thy name to the ages and beyond.