

STUDIES IN PSALMS

towards the praising of the God to whom the soul owes its origin, in which praise it finds its noblest enjoyment, is indeed a practical proof of a life after death"—Del. So it is indeed, to those in whom it exists; for see with what complete logic this one psalm proves it. Do I really *desire* to bless and praise Jehovah to the ages? Is that, in truth, my feeling towards him? Then the *desire* shall be granted; for again in this psalm it is written—*The pleasure of them who revere him he fulfilleth; and their cry for help he heareth and saveth them.* There is, therefore, both theoretic and practical safety in such a hope.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In this alphabetical psalm there are only 21 of the 22 letters. Why?
2. What are the three possible main divisions of this psalm?
3. This psalm can act as a tonic for certain needy persons. Who are they?
4. Are we to understand from this psalm that even the lower animals thank Jehovah? How so?
5. How wondrously good, kind, and righteous is our God. What should be the response of man? What is his response?
6. There seems to be a grand proof of immortality in this psalm. Discuss.

PSALM 146

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Twelve Reasons for Trusting in Jehovah.

ANALYSIS

Having, in Response to the Public Reader's Invitation, stirred up his Own Soul to Praise Jehovah all his Life Long (vers. 1, 2), the Psalmist urges a Caution against Trusting in Nobles (vers. 3, 4); and then (vers. 5-10) Felicitates the Man who makes the God of Jacob his Help—for a Series of Twelve Reasons, which he Poetically Unfolds.

(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.

- 1 Praise Jehovah O my soul!

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- 2 I would fain praise Jehovah while I live,
I would harp¹ to my God while I have being.²
3 Do not ye trust in nobles—
in a son of the earth-born who hath no salvation:³
4 Forth goeth his spirit⁴ he returneth to his ground,
in that day his thoughts⁵ perish.⁶
5 How happy is he who hath the God of Jacob as his help,
whose hope is on Jehovah his God:
6 who made heavens and earth
the sea and all that is in them,—
the One who keepeth truth to the ages;
7 who executeth justice for the oppressed,
who giveth bread to the hungry;
Jehovah who releaseth the bound,
8 Jehovah who giveth sight to the blind,
Jehovah who lifteth up the bowed down,
Jehovah who loveth the righteous,
9 Jehovah who preserveth sojourners,—
fatherless and widow restoreth;
but the way of lawless ones he bendeth aside.⁷
10 Jehovah reigneth to the ages,
Thy God O Zion to generation after generation.

(Nm.)⁸

PARAPHRASE

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Praise the Lord! Yes, really praise Him!

2 I will praise Him as long as I live, yes, even with my dying breath.

3 Don't look to men for help; their greatest leaders fail;

4 For every man must die. His breathing stops, life ends, and in a moment all he planned for himself is ended.

1. Or: "make melody."

2. Cp. 104:33.

3. Or: "deliverance."

4. Or: "breath." Cp. 104:29, 30.

5. "Fabrications"—Aglen; "purposes"—P.B. R.V. mgn.

6. Similarly: "Be not afraid . . . To-day he shall be lifted up, and tomorrow he shall in nowise be found, because he is returned unto his dust, and his thought is perished"—1 Mac. 2:63 (R.V.)

7. Thwarting it, and causing it to vanish. Cp. 1:6.

8. See 147 (beginning).

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5 But happy is the man who has the God of Jacob as his helper, whose hope is in the Lord his God—

6 The God who made both earth and heaven, the seas and everything in them. He is the God who keeps every promise.

7 And gives justice to the poor and oppressed, and food to the hungry. He frees the prisoners,

8 And opens the eyes of the blind; He lifts the burdens from those bent down beneath their loads. For the Lord loves good men.

9 He protects the immigrants, and cares for the orphans and widows. But He turns topsy-turvy the plans of the wicked.

10 The Lord will reign forever. O Jerusalem,¹ your God is King in every generation! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

EXPOSITION

The indications of authorship contained in this psalm are probably best met by supposing the principal portion of it to have been penned by Hezekiah, and the caution against trusting in nobles to have been added in the days of Nehemiah. Setting aside for the moment the excepted verses (3, 4) the psalm as a whole admirably suits the time and spirit of Hezekiah: the individuality of the opening lines, together with the inclusion of instrumental music, well agrees with the strongly devout and musically accomplished personality of the good King; and so does the enthusiasm with which Jehovah's worthiness of his people's confidence is amplified in the later verses: we can almost hear him saying, *Happy is the man*—"yea, and I am that man"; and then, as we read on, we are not only reminded of Hezekiah's favourite habit of alluding to Jehovah as *maker of heaven and earth*, but under nearly all the lines we can feel pulsating the rich experience of the same monarch, not failing to be reminded of the example which he had recently witnessed, in the overthrow of Sennacherib, of a *lawless* foreigner whose way had been *bent aside* into the pathless waste of destruction.

If this conclusion be accepted as sufficiently probable, then we shall naturally conclude that the caution against trusting in nobles—improbable from the pen of Hezekiah—was added after the exile, when, as remarked under Ps. 118, Nehemiah had good cause to distrust the nobles of Judah (Neh. 6:17-19).

It is a question of detail—but of some interest in exegesis

1. Literally, "Zion."

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—to ask in what relation *nobles* (ver. 3) stand to the common *son of the earth-born* mentioned in the next line: are “nobles” distinguished from “common men,” or simply declared to be themselves but “common men”—mere mortals like the rest of mankind? If we make two classes out of the verse then “nobles” are left without any reason assigned why *they* should not be trusted. It seems better, therefore, to refrain from supplying a “nor” with the A.V. (and R.V.) (without acknowledgment of its being such) or an (“or”) with Dr., and to regard the second line as giving a conclusive reason why even “nobles” should not be trusted: as much as to say—“each of whom is a mere mortal like others, and what he may *think* to do for you, he may not live to accomplish.”

Another question of still greater critical nicety, is whether it is better to translate *ruah* in ver. 4 as *breath* or *spirit*. If the one implies the other, as suggested by a comparison of Gen. 2:7 with Ec. 12:7, then it does not really matter—provided the double inclusion, by marginal alternative or otherwise, be borne in mind.

Delitzsch well reminds us that this “How happy” of ver. 5 is the last of twenty-five occurrences of the original word (which means that) in the psalms. He also beautifully remarks on 9c: “Only one line is devoted to this manifestation of Jahve in the capacity of penal judge. For He rules in love and wrath, with most delight, however, in love.”

The critical reader will excuse the very elementary observation—submitted to help the uncritical—that it is sometimes convenient in the enumerations of the psalms, as elsewhere, to count the *verbs* which in their rich variety impart so much life to the composition: as for instance here:—1. *made*, 2. *keepeth*, 3. *executeth*, 4. *giveth*, 5. *releaseth*, 6. *giveth sight* (lit. *openeth*), 7. *lifteth up*, 8. *loveth*, 9. *preserveth*, 10. *restoreth*, 11. *bendeth aside*, 12. *reigneth*. So that we are well within our right in entitling this psalm—“Twelve reasons for trusting in Jehovah.”

And finally it may be assumed that no reader will fail to observe the keen appreciation of the gracious name *Jehovah* shewn by its five-fold emphatic repetition in vers. 7-9.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm has some very helpful reasons for trusting in Jehovah, but before these are considered, the psalmist must be in the mood for praising God. How is this achieved?

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2. Who is the author, and what is the circumstance of this psalm?
3. Why not trust in nobles?
4. List six of the twelve reasons for trusting in Jehovah. Make these reasons personal.

PSALM 147

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Praise for the Restoration of Jerusalem and for Israel's Pre-eminence: with Grateful Recognition of Rain and of Spring.

ANALYSIS

After the Repetition and Expansion of the "Public Reader's Invitation" (ver. 1), Jehovah is Praised as the Builder, Healer and Restorer of Jerusalem (vers. 2-6); as the Sender of Rain (vers. 7-11), of Security, Peace and Plenty, and of Winter and Spring (vers. 12-18); and as the Author of Israel's Pre-eminence (vers. 19, 20).

(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.

- 1 Praise ye Yah¹ for it is good,²
make melody³ to our God for it is full of delight:
Comely is praise!
- 2 Builder of Jerusalem is Jehovah,
the outcasts of Israel he gathereth:
- 3 He who granteth healing to the broken in heart
and a binding up to their wounds:
- 4 who counteth out a number to the stars,
to all of them names he calleth:
- 5 Great is our Sovereign Lord and of abounding strength,
and to his understanding there is no calculation.⁴
- 6 Restorer of the humble is Jehovah,
abasing lawless ones down to the ground.
- 7 Respond ye to Jehovah with a song of thanksgiving,
make melody to our God with the lyre:

1. Prob. a choir's repetition of P.R.I.—see Exposition.

2. Cp. 92:1.

3. So *Gt.* [i.e. imper. pl.] as in 135:3.

4. Or: reckoning, ml. number.