

PSALMS 147 AND 148

certain that it was constructed, in part, of pre-existing materials: at least, this hypothesis would best account for the incorporation in it of what appear to be two fragments—one by way of thanksgiving for *rain* after drought, and the other in grateful recognition of the return of *spring* after a severe winter: both of which are not likely to have appeared side by side in one and the same original psalm.

The opening lines are unusually suggestive as to the remarkable repetition of the compound word—or rather the phrase—"hallelujah" (properly *hallelu Yah*) in connection with these late Hallel psalms. Some critics simply treat them as double "hallelujah" psalms, each one beginning *and* ending with that word. As soon, however, as we accept Dr. Ginsburg's opinion, as an expert, in favour of treating the word as a phrase, and the phrase as constituting the Public Reader's Invitation to join in the responses, we seem to be driven to form some other conclusion as to the reduplication—for as such it appears in Dr. Ginsburg's Hebrew Bible. In the present instance, the simplest theory would appear to be this: the first "hallelujah" may be regarded as the original invitation proper, to be *said* rather than *sung* by the prelector; and the second as a choir's taking up and repeating of the invitation—passing it on to the people, so to speak—at the same time expanding it into a small introductory stanza ending with *Comely is Praise*. The reason which supports this suggestion is, the unlikelihood that a psalm should begin with the word *For* (as Del., Per. and Dr. begin this psalm).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is one of the latest psalms. At what time was it composed? How composed?
2. Why does Rotherham spend so much time and space on the use of the word "hallelujah"?
3. What shall we say of the present practice of attributing to "nature" the snow-frost-rain, etc.?

PSALM 148

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Praise Invoked from All Creation.

STUDIES IN PSALMS

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-6, All Things in Heaven called upon to Praise Jehovah
—for Reasons Given. Stanza II., vers. 7-14, All Things on Earth, in Like
Manner: with a Specification of the Special Mercies and Duties of Israel.

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

- 1 Praise ye Yah.¹
Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens,
praise him in the heights;
- 2 praise him all ye his messengers,
praise him all ye his hosts;²
- 3 praise him sun and moon,
praise him all ye stars of light;
- 4 praise him ye heavens of heavens,
and ye waters above the heavens:—
- 5 Let them praise the name of Jehovah,
for he commanded and they were created;
- 6 And he stationed them perpetually to the ages,—
a statute he gave and they do not transgress.
- 7 Praise ye Jehovah from the earth:
sea-monsters³ and all resounding deeps;
- 8 fire and hail snow and vapour,⁴
blast of tempest executing his word;
- 9 ye mountains and all hills,
fruit-trees and all cedars;
- 10 thou wild beast and all cattle,
crawling creature and bird of wing;
- 11 kings of earth and all peoples,
rulers and all judges of earth;
- 12 young men yea even maidens,⁵
old men together with children:—
- 13 Let them praise the name of Jehovah,
for exalted is his name alone,—
his majesty is over earth and heavens;

1. Possibly a repetition of "P.R.I." by mistake. But prob. a choir's repetition as suggested in Exposition of previous Psalm.

2. So *read* in cod. wh. write "host" (sing.). Some cod. both *read* and *write* "hosts" (pl.)—Gn.

3. "Dragons"—Br.

4. "Or steam, smoke (Gen. 19:28, Ps. 119:83), alluding probably to phenomena accompanying a thunderstorm in mountain-regions"—Dr.

5. Or: "virgins."

PSALM 148

14 And he hath uplifted a horn for his people,—
a theme of praise for all his men of kindness,
for the sons of Israel a people near him.

(Nm.)^c

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 148

Praise the Lord, O heavens! Praise Him from the skies!

2 Praise Him, all angels, all the armies of heaven.

3 Praise Him sun and moon, and all you twinkling stars.

4 Praise Him, skies above. Praise Him, vapors high above
the clouds.

5 Let everything He has made give praise to Him! For
He issued His command, and they came into being;

6 He established them forever and forever. His orders
will never be revoked.

7 And praise Him down here on earth, you creatures of
the ocean depths.

8 Let fire and hail, snow, rain, wind and weather, all obey.

9 Let the mountains and hills, the fruit trees and cedars,

10 The wild animals and cattle, the snakes and birds,

11 The kings and all the people, with their rulers and their
judges,

12 Young men and maidens, old men and children—

13 All praise the Lord together. For He alone is worthy.
His glory is far greater than all of earth and heaven.

14 He has made His people strong, honoring His godly ones
—the people of Israel, the people closest to Him.

* * * * *

Hallelujas! Yes, praise the Lord!

EXPOSITION

This psalm is remarkable for its universal sweep, its unrivalled grandeur, and its national application. With clearly marked consecutiveness, it appeals first to the *heavens* (ver. 1) and then to the *earth* (ver. 7). In the fewest possible words it touches upon all things and beings above and below: poetically investing *things* with the intelligence of *persons*, provoking the interesting inquiry how this feature of the psalm is meant to

6. See Exposition of 147.

STUDIES IN PSALMS

be understood. And yet it finally gravitates to *Israel*, as the appointed (earthly) leader in the praises of the universe. The filling in of this outline gives occasion for many felicities of order and grouping: the *order* observed, beginning with the heavens and then descending to the earth, by a reverse movement, ascends again from the *earth* to the *heavens* (ver. 13). The *grouping* shows such subtle methods as—setting a species first, i.e., *messengers* (ver. 2a), a species of heavenly intelligences, and then *hosts* (ver. 2b), including both “messengers” and “attendants” (Ps. 103:20, 21); and such delightful juxtapositions as *young men* and *maidens*, (ver. 12a) and such charming contrasts as *old men* and *children* (ver. 12b): in the doing of which, resorting to the refinements of a passing compliment to maidenly modesty, by the delicate touch of a *yea even*; as much as to suggest that, though maidens may characteristically oft remain silent, yet, when Jehovah’s praises call on them to join, they need not hesitate to respond; and by the equally delicate *together with* of the next line, which has the effect of summoning groups of little ones to their grandsires’ knees. Both order and grouping are honoured by the way in which the breathless enumerations of objects in heaven and on earth are severally followed by deliberately drawn-out and restful reasons *why* those invoked should respond in praise. In the closing of the first stanza, the permanence of *law* is made prominent: *he commanded—he stationed—a statute he gave*, leading up to the significant fact, so beneficent in its results—*they do not transgress*. Alas for all concerned, if they did! So used as we are to the beneficent regularities of nature that our minds instinctively shrink from the unimaginable crudities and endless mishaps of “chance worlds.” “They do not transgress!” And so “the sun knows” the “place” (and the time) of his going in—to the inch and to the moment; or, if *he* does not know, *we* know, for him and of him, that he will *not transgress*. But when we make the rapid run of the second stanza from monsters to men, we begin to catch glimpses of a still softer light. We are, doubtless, still under the reign of law; but the law is becoming elevated from the law that controls matter to the law that governs mind. And mind perceives the name and fame of Jehovah. The atmosphere in which mind lives is appreciative knowledge. No knowledge in the creature: no name for the Creator. No eye to see: no glory seen, no praise forthcoming: no reciprocal love.

PSALM 148

But how of created things that are not endowed with mind? Can *they too* praise? Yea, in their own way. Unconsciously; or, at best, half-consciously: dependent on Man to interpret their sighings and their songs. As the song of the bird is to the songster's uncomprehended ecstasy, so is the intelligent and sympathetic adoration of man to the instinctive impulse of the bird: its expression and interpretation.

This intimate relation between man who knows Jehovah's name and the creatures beneath him who—so far as we can tell—know it not, is deep-seated in the divinely appointed nature of things. As we voice their joys, they share our sorrows. They not only grow and sing, but they also shudder and groan. The sparrow falls dead, leaving its unprotected brood to perish; but not without our Father. And he has appointed that all creation—which at present is "sighing together and travailing-in-birth throes together until the present—shall, at the manifestation of the sons of God, be freed from the bondage of the decay into (not quite the glory, but) the freedom of the glory of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19-21). But everything in its own order: the Sons of God first, and creation afterwards. Everything in its own order: Israel first, and the nations afterwards. Hence, not by lapse or collapse, this magnificent psalm finds its climax in ISRAEL: prophetically declaring that Israel's God *hath uplifted a horn for his people*, (which constitutes) *a theme of praise for all his—hasidhim—his men of kindness*; the Levites, first; then, as represented by them, all Jehovah's ideal Israel—for the real will yet be transfigured into the ideal—a *people near him*, and through whom he can act on the nations (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kindness").

Meanwhile, where is the Church? Is that forgotten? Nay: but, throwing our minds back into the time and atmosphere of these "songs of Israel" before we give our answer, we reply: The Church is at present "hidden in God"; "hidden away from the ages and the generations" (Eph. 3); and, therefore, "hidden away" from the writers of these psalms. And woe betide us if we exegetically call the Church out of its divine concealment before its time. The presumption of so doing will be avenged at our hands—no later on than in the very next psalm (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kingdom").

STUDIES IN PSALMS
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. All creation is called upon to express thanks and wonder at the goodness and greatness of our God. Is it happening? Discuss.
2. God has commanded, stationed, the physical creation. How did it (has it) responded? What lesson for us?
3. We could not imagine a world of chance and yet this is very much what the evolutionary concept of creation would ask us to believe. Discuss.
4. The law of the mind is involved in the second stanza of this psalm. Discuss.
5. There will come a time when all creation will be delivered from the limitations now upon it. Discuss cf. Romans 8:10-21.

P S A L M 1 4 9

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A New Song for Israel, which Others may Not Sing.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, A Well-Defined People Addressed. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, A Well-Defined Time Indicated. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, A Well-Defined Work Described.

(P.R.I.) Praise ye Yah.¹

- 1 Sing ye to Jehovah a song that is new,
his praise in the assembly of his men of kindness.²
- 2 Glad be Israel in his great Maker,
let the sons of Zion exult in their King:
- 3 Let them praise his name in the dance,
with timbrel and lyre let them make melody unto him.
- 4 Since Jehovah is taking pleasure in his people,
adorneth the humble ones with victory³

1. Apparently doubled. See Exposition of 147.
2. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kindness."
3. Or: "salvation."