

STUDIES IN PSALMS

PSALM 15

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Approved Citizen-Guest of Jehovah.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, Worshippers Approaching the Holy City enquire What Kind of Persons may Enter and Dwell there. Stanza II., vers. 2-5, The Reply from Within specifies Ten Virtues, Assuring their Possessor of an Undisturbed Residence.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David

- 1 Jehovah! who shall be a guest in thy tent?
who shall dwell in thy holy mountain?
- 2 He that walketh without blame in his righteousness,¹
and speaketh truth with his heart:
- 3 hath not played the spy on his neighbour,
hath not done his friend a wrong;
and a reproach hath not taken up against his intimate:²
- 4 despised in his eyes is the reprobate,³
but them who revere Jehovah does he honour:
he hath sworn to his friend and will not change,
- 5 his silver hat he not put out on interest;
and a bribe against the innocent hath he not taken:—
He that doeth these things shall not be shaken to the ages.

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 15

Lord, who may go and find refuge and shelter in Your tabernacle up on Your holy hill?

1. So Br. M.T.: "He that walketh without blame and doeth what is right."

2. Or: "one near him."

3. "Who is displeasing in his own eyes, worthy of contempt"—Del.

PSALM FIFTEEN

2 Anyone who refuses to slander others, does not listen to gossip, never harms his neighbor,

4 Speaks out against sin, criticizes those committing it, commends the faithful followers of the Lord, keeps a promise even if it ruins him,

5 Does not crush his debtors with high interest rates, and refuses to testify against the innocent despite the bribes offered him—such a man shall stand firm forever.

EXPOSITION

This is an interesting psalm of instruction, valuable in its bearing on character. It is brightly dramatic. It places the inhabitants of Jerusalem in a beautiful light, as guests in Jehovah's house at the same time that they are dwellers in his holy city: their residence in the one giving them easy and constant access to the other. The same character that would make them honoured citizens, would make them welcome worshippers. In placing Jehovah in the light of a Host, the psalm sheds a soft radiance on the Divine character. It was beseeching that such a Host should have noble guests; and it will be observed how prominent nobility of character is here made, by the very nature of the virtues which are signalled. Such a man as is here portrayed could not be mean. The close observer will discover that the ten characteristics named are arranged in couplets and triplets:—a couplet of general principles in work and word (ver. 2); a triplet of social virtues, coming nearer and nearer to the man himself—neighbour, friend, intimate (ver. 3): a couplet of bold contrast, touching religious character (ver. 4a, b); then a triplet of sterner excellences, safeguarding social intercourse (vers. 4c, 5a, b). Summing up all that has gone before as the condition, the psalmist assures the would-be Citizen-Guest of a permanent welcome. Several other psalms fall into line with this in emphasising character: as 1, 24, 121; and Isaiah 33:14-16 may be aptly compared. The Christian justly enamoured of justification for the ungodly and salvation for the lost, will act wisely by reminding himself that the initial justification without works is in order to works; and the universal and imperative requirement of repentance demands the production of godly character as the great object of the Gospel.

STUDIES IN PSALMS
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is there some relationship between this psalm and the 14th?
2. Where is the tabernacle of God and His holy hill?—then and now.
3. What advantages would there be in finding refuge and shelter in the tabernacle of God?
4. Who said the morals of the Old Testament are lower than those of the New? How shall we account for the code of ethics here delineated?
5. Discuss the positive and negative thinking suggested in this psalm.

PSALM 16

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Ideal Israelite's Triumph over Death.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Prayer for Preservation: offered in Dependence on Jehovah, Discernment of his Doings, and Detestation of Idolatry. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Contentment with Jehovah as a Present Portion, under Divine Counsel creates Confidence for the Future. Stanza III., vers. 9-11, Exultant Expectation of Escape from Death and Entrance upon Heavenly Delights.

(Lm.) Tablet¹—By David

- 1 Preserve me O God, for I have taken refuge in thee.²
- 2 I have said³ to Jehovah—"My Sovereign Lord art thou, for my well-being goeth not beyond⁴ thee."

1. So Sep. With this well agrees Thirtle's suggestion: "The term *Michtam* seems best explained by a *personal* or *private* prayer or meditation. A "tablet" would well serve such a purpose. "Seems to mean primarily an inscription"—Del.

2. "This short introit is without any parallel clause, and is therefore nonostichi—a sigh that expresses everything in few words"—Del.

3. So some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.; and so Del., Per., Dr., Kp., Br., M.T.: "thou saidst" ("O my soul" prob. understood).

4. Ml.: "upon," "over." "That is, 'in addition to thee, beside thee,' equivalent in meaning to 'apart from thee,' or 'without thee'"—Del.