

## PSALM EIGHTEEN

# PSALM 18

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

David's Song of Deliverance.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-6, By many Epithets of Admiration, the Psalmist proclaims Jehovah as Worthy of Praise, for Delivering him from Extreme Danger, in Answer to Prayer. Stanza II., vers. 7-12, a description of the Divine Descent from the Heavenly Temple, for the Purpose of Deliverance. Stanza III., vers. 13-19, Amid a Storm of Thunder and Lightning, the Drowning One is rescued. Stanza IV., vers. 20-27, Principles of Divine Procedure Declared. Stanza V., vers. 28-34, Enumeration of Deeds Done in Divine Strength. Stanza VI., vers. 35-42, More Deeds—of Climbing, Pursuing, Destroying, Girding, Defeating and Trampling Underfoot. Stanza VII., vers. 43-50, Deliverance from Feuds at Home, from Foes Abroad, and from Foreigners Infesting the Fastnesses of the Land,—made a Theme of Loving Thanks to Jehovah, and a Prophecy of Lasting Prosperity to the Dynasty of David.

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(Lm.) By the servant of Jehovah, by David,—who spake to Jehovah the words of this Song on the day when Jehovah had rescued him out of the grasp of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul; and he said:

- 1 I will tenderly<sup>1</sup> love thee Jehovah my strength!<sup>2</sup>
- 2 Jehovah was my crag and my fastness and my deliverer,  
my God my rock in whom I took refuge;  
my shield and my horn of salvation my lofty retreat.  
My Saviour! from violence<sup>3</sup> didst thou save me.<sup>4</sup>
- 3 Worthy to be praised I proclaim Jehovah,  
since from my foes I am saved.

1. "Fervently"—Per., Dr. For the unusual word here used, see 1 John 4:19 and final par. in Exposition.

2. This line not in 2 Sam. 22, a prob. addition by Hezekiah. (Cp. Thirtle, O.T.P., 123.)

3. Perh. originally "violent one"; cp. v. 48.

4. This line adopted from 2 Sam. 22.

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- 4 There encompassed me the breakers<sup>1</sup> of death,  
the torrents of perdition made me afraid;
- 5 The meshes of hades surrounded me,  
there confronted me the snares of death.
- 6 In the strait I was in I called on Jehovah,  
and unto my God made I outcry for help:  
He heard out of his temple my voice,  
and mine outcry before him entered into his ears.
- 7 Then did the earth sway and quake,  
and the foundations of the heavens<sup>2</sup> were disturbed,—  
they swayed to and fro because his anger burned:
- 8 They went up a smoke in his nostrils,  
and fire from his mouth devoured,—  
coals were kindled therefrom.
- 9 Then bowed he the heavens and came down,  
and thick gloom was under his feet:
- 10 Then rode he on a cherub and flew,  
and swooped down on wings of wind;
- 11 And he put darkness<sup>3</sup> round about him,  
a covering of darkness of waters:
- 12 thick clouds of the sky without brightness,  
Before him his cloud-masses rolled along.<sup>4</sup>
- 13 Then Jehovah thundered in<sup>5</sup> the heavens,  
yea the Highest gave out his voice,<sup>6</sup>
- 14 And he sent forth his arrows and scattered them,  
yea flashes flashed he and made a loud noise<sup>7</sup>
- 15 Then appeared channels of waters,  
were uncovered the foundations of the world,—  
(at thy rebuke Jehovah,  
at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils).<sup>8</sup>
- 16 He reached out from on high he laid hold of me,  
he drew me out of many waters:

1. So in 2 Sam. 22:5. M.T. here: "meshes"; but (Br.) "It is improbable that the original was so unnecessarily tautological."

2. So 2 Sam. 22:8. M.T. here: "mountains."

3. M.T. adds: "his hiding-place."

4. M.T. (emended by Ginsburg) adds: "There were kindled live coals of fire." Prob. a repetition, in error, of ver. 8c.

5. In some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.): "from." And so 2 Sam. 22:14, and Br. here.

6. M.T. adds: "Hail and live coals of fire." "Not in 2 S.: is a gloss"  
—Br.

7. So Br.

8. Note change of person; and that stanza too long by two lines.

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- 17 He rescued me from my foe so mighty,  
and from those who hated me because they were too strong  
for me:
- 18 They confronted me in my day of distress,  
then became Jehovah a stay to me;
- 19 and brought me forth into a wide place,  
He rescued me because he delighted in me.
- 20 Jehovah rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to the cleanness of my hands he repaid me
- 21 Because I had kept the ways of Jehovah,  
and not broken loose from my God:
- 22 Because all his regulations were before me,  
and his statutes did I not put from me:
- 23 So became I blameless with him,  
and kept myself from mine iniquity:
- 24 (So Jehovah returned to me according to my righteousness,  
according to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes).<sup>1</sup>
- 25 With the man of kindness thou dost shew thyself kind,  
with the blameless man thou dost shew thyself blameless,
- 26 with the pure thou dost shew thyself pure,  
and with the perverse thou dost shew thyself able to  
contend.<sup>2</sup>
- 27 For thou a humbled people didst save,  
but looks that were lofty layedst thou low.
- 28 For thou wast<sup>3</sup> my lamp O Jehovah,  
my God enlightened my darkness;
- 29 For in thee I brake down a fence,<sup>4</sup>  
and in my God lept I over a wall.
- 30 As for God blameless is his way,<sup>5</sup>  
a shield is he—to all who take refuge in him
- 31 For who is a **God**<sup>6</sup> save Jehovah?  
and who is a Rock save our God?—
- 32 The GOD who girded me with strength,  
and made blameless my way;
- 33 Who set my feet like hinds,  
and upon high places made me hold my ground;

1. Prob. a repetition of ver. 20.

2. *Ml.*: "tortuous": perh.—"able to cope with their perversity."

3. So 2 Sam. 22:29.

4. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*

5. *M.T.* adds: "The saying (promise) of Jehovah is refined as with fire."

6. "A divine being"—*Del.*

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- 34 Who taught my hands to war,  
and made mine arms bronze.
- 35 Thus didst thou grant me as a shield thy salvation,  
and thy right hand upheld me;  
and thy humility made me great.
- 36 Thou didst broaden my stepping-places under me,  
so that mine ankles faltered not.
- 37 I pursued my foes and overtook them,  
and turned not until I had made an end of them;
- 38 I smote them and they were unable to rise,  
they fell under my feet.
- 39 Thus didst thou gird me with strength for the battle,  
thou didst bring down mine assailants<sup>1</sup> under me;
- 40 As for my foes thou gavest me their neck,  
and as for them who hated me I exterminated them:
- 41 They cried out but there was none to save,  
unto Jehovah! but he did not answer them:
- 42 So I beat them small like the dust of the earth,<sup>2</sup>  
like mire in the lanes I pulverised<sup>3</sup> them.
- 43 Thou didst deliver me from the strivings of a people,  
thou didst set me as head of nations,—  
a people I had not known served me:
- 44 At the hearing of the ear they submitted to me  
the sons of the foreigner came cringing unto me
- 45 The sons of the foreigner lost heart,  
and trembled forth out of their fastnesses.
- 46 Living and blessed is my Rock,<sup>4</sup>  
and exalted is the God of my salvation:—
- 47 The GOD who avenged me,  
and subjugated peoples under me:
- 48 Who delivered me from my foes,  
yea from mine assailants<sup>5</sup> didst thou raise me on high,—  
from a man of violence didst thou rescue me.
- 49 For this cause will I thank thee among the nations Jehovah!  
and to thy name will I make melody.
- 50 Who hath made great the victories<sup>6</sup> of his king,

1. Or: "those that rose up against me."

2. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*

3. So. *Br.*

4. *M.T.*: "Jehovah liveth and blessed be my rock"—*Del.*, *Dr.*

5. Or: "those rose up against me."

6. Or: "magnified the great salvation (*pl. intensive*). *Cp. Isa. 26:18,*

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and wrought kindness for his Anointed—  
for David and for his seed to the ages.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

### PARAPHRASE

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*(This song of David was written at a time when the Lord had delivered him from his many enemies, including Saul.)*

Lord, how I love You! For You have done such tremendous things for me.

2 The Lord is my fort where I can enter and be safe; no one can follow me in and slay me. He is a rugged mountain where I hide; He is my Savior, a rock where none can reach me, and a tower of safety. He is my shield. He is like the strong horn of a mighty fighting bull.

3 All I need to do is cry to Him—oh, praise the Lord—and I am saved from all my enemies!

4 Death bound me with chains, and the floods of ungodliness mounted a massive attack against me.

5 Trapped and helpless, I struggled against the ropes that drew me on to death.

6 In my distress I screamed to the Lord for His help. And He heard me from heaven,<sup>1</sup> my cry reached His ears.

7 Then the earth rocked and reeled, and mountains shook and trembled. How they quaked! For He was angry.

8 Fierce flames leaped from His mouth, setting fire to the earth;<sup>2</sup> smoke blew from His nostrils.

9 He bent the heavens down and came to my defense;<sup>3</sup> thick darkness was beneath His feet.

10 Mounted on the cherubim<sup>4</sup> He sped swiftly to my aid with wings of wind.

11 He enshrouded Himself with darkness, veiling His approach with dense clouds dark as murky waters.

12 Suddenly the brilliance of His presence broke through the clouds with lightning<sup>5</sup> and a mighty storm of hail.

1. Literally, "out of His temple."

2. Literally, "coals were kindled by it."

3. Implied.

4. Literally, "a cherub."

5. Literally, "coals of fire."

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13 The Lord thundered in the heavens; the God above all gods has spoken—oh, the hailstones; oh, the fire!

14 He flashed His fearful arrows of lightning and routed all my enemies. See how they run!

15 Then at Your command, O Lord, the sea receded from the shore. At the blast of Your breath the depths were laid bare.

16 He reached down from heaven and took me and drew me out of my great trials. He rescued me from deep waters.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me—I who was helpless in their hands.

18 On the day when I was weakest, they attacked. But the Lord held me steady.

19 He led me to a place of safety, for He delights in me.

20 The Lord rewarded me for doing right and being pure.

21 For I have followed His commands and have not sinned by turning back from following Him.

22 I kept close watch on all His laws; I did not refuse a single one.

23 I did my best to keep them all, holding myself back from doing wrong.

24 And so the Lord has paid me with His blessings, for I have done what is right, and I am pure of heart. This He knows, for He watches my every step.

25 Lord, how merciful You are to those who are merciful. And You do not punish those who run from evil.<sup>1</sup>

26 You give blessings to the pure but pain to those who leave Your paths.

27 You deliver the humble but condemn the proud and haughty ones.

28 You have turned on my light! The Lord my God has made my darkness turn to light.

29 Now in Your strength I can scale any wall, attack any troop.

30 What a God He is! How perfect in every way! All His promises prove true. He is a shield for everyone who hides behind Him.

31 For who is God except our Lord? Who but He is as a rock?

32 He fills me with strength and protects me wherever I go.

1. Literally, "with the upright You show Yourself upright."

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33 He gives me the surefootedness of a mountain goat upon the crags. He leads me safely along the top of the cliffs.

34 He prepares me for battle and gives me strength to draw an iron<sup>1</sup> bow!

35 You have given me Your salvation as my shield. Your right hand, O Lord, supports me; Your gentleness has made me great.

36 You have made wide steps beneath my feet so that I need never slip.

37 I chased my enemies; I caught up with them and did not turn back until all were conquered.

38 I pinned them to the ground; all were helpless before me. I placed my feet upon their necks!

39 For You have armed me with strong armor for the battle. My enemies quail before me and fall defeated at my feet.

40 You made them turn and run; I destroyed all who hated me.

41 They shouted for help but no one dared to rescue them; they cried to the Lord, but He refused to answer them.

42 So I crushed them fine as dust and cast them to the wind. I threw them away like sweepings from the floor.

43, 44, 45 You gave me victory in every battle! The nations came and served me.

Even those I didn't know before cotted now and bow before me. Foreigners who have never seen me submit instantly. They come trembling from their strongholds.

46 God is alive! Praise Him who is the great rock of protection.

47 He is the God who pays back those who harm me and subdues the nations before me.

48 He rescues me from my enemies; He holds me safely out of their reach and saves me from these powerful opponents.

49 For this, O Lord, I will praise You among the nations.

50 Many times You have miraculously rescued me, the king You appointed. You have been loving and kind to me and will be to my descendants.

## EXPOSITION

It is important to remember that David inherited the unfinished task of Joshua, whose divine commission was—to extir-

1. Literally, "a bow of bronze."

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pate the Canaanite nations whose abominable iniquities had justly called down on them this awful doom. Unless this is borne in mind, the Royal Singer of Israel must appear to the Christian mind, especially in this his triumphal ode, as resting under a cloud of suspicion that he did not hate war as he should: seeing that when his wars were ended, he could, with such manifest satisfaction, celebrate the completeness of his victories. It is doubtless well that we should recoil from the terrible necessity for extermination, and realise the extent to which another spirit has fallen on us from our suffering and rejected Messiah; but it is not altogether well when we, for want of reflection, fail to mark the footsteps of God in history; and thus are led to blame an ancient hero whom we ought rather to praise. Whatever of courageous and skillful warrior David was, that had he become under divine training; and we have to beware lest we blame that training rather than the Canaanitish abominations which called for such avengers as the men who received it. The dispensation under which we live is one of forbearing and suffering Love; and, if we cast a longing eye on territories to possess ourselves of which we have received no such mandate as was given to Moses and his people,—let us beware lest we go before we are sent, and are sternly called to account by our Divine Judge for our lust of dominion. No opinion is here expressed as to whether a commission to exterminate tribes guilty of enormous wickedness may or may not be constructively inferred, in the absence of express Divine revelation; but let statesmen remember the position in which they stand in such matters, and make very sure of their Divine call to invade other lands before they draw the sword for such ends. Extremes beget extremes. Let us avoid them in this matter, by remembering that we are not Israel; but, of the Israel of ancient times, let us judge fairly; and of her hero king, as he appears in this truly magnificent song.

It will have been observed by every reader how very figurative is this psalm. Many of the metaphors employed, it is true, are so obvious in their significance and of such easy application to well-known or readily imaginable incidents in David's history as to need little explanatory comment. But there is one figurative representation in the psalm which is so bold, and prolonged as almost to amount to an allegory; and is at the same time so lofty in its sublimity as to render it possible for us to let its historical application escape us. The historical event to which it refers is David's danger of perishing by the hand of the violent



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King Saul; and the daring figure by which his escape from that danger is set forth is that of escape from drowning; but until we connect the danger as described in vers. 4 and 5 with the deliverance as briefly asserted in ver. 16; and observe that the intervening verses portray first a divine preparatory movement from the highest heaven down to the skies of this lower world, and then the gathering of the Storm which it to effect the rescue; and then, finally, the outburst of the Storm, culminating in the deliverance of the Drowning Man from sinking down into the abysses of destruction;—the possibility is that the point of the allegory may be lost in what may unjustly appear to be a cloud of words. But when once the largeness of the poetical scheme of representation is apprehended, then it may be found that the need arises for a fresh grasp of the historical situation, to enable us to discover some proportion between the facts as they occurred and the figures in which they are here clothed. Let us then sufficiently recall the incidents of the history to enable us to realise that the danger to David from Saul was greater, more prolonged, and more distressing, than any other which befell Israel's favourite hero prior to his firm settlement in his kingdom. Of the troubles which befell him afterwards and of their grievous occasion, there is no need here to take account; since we are only concerned now to get behind this Triumphal Ode and the events which led up to it. We have, then, to remember that Saul was David's first hero and lord; that, as Jehovah's anointed, he commanded the young Bethlehemite's profoundest homage; that he drew the young harpist and warrior into peculiarly close and difficult relations to himself; that he became unreasonably jealous of him, lent a willing ear to every malicious story told of him, persecuted him with relentless hatred: and, all the while, he—David—could not, would not, durst not lift up a hand against his master. He had to suffer and wait for Divine interposition; and many a time must it have appeared that such interposition was never coming. Is it any wonder, then, that, being a poet born, he should oft have compared himself to a DROWNING MAN, in his last exhausted struggles against the surging flood of the Kishon, the Jordan, or even of the great western sea, of sinking in the depths of which he may, in the course of this eventful life have been in danger? And, considering how in this contest he could not strike a blow in self-defence but had to leave his succour exclusively in Jehovah's hands, is it so very surprising that, being a poet born and

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conscious of a Divine afflatus carrying him out and beyond himself, and his deliverance when it came being so unexpected and ultimately so complete,—he should have conceived the idea and clothed it in words of such a theophanic interposition as he here describes? Other enemies could be alluded to in quite an ordinary manner; and his own share in *running, leaping, climbing, bending the bow*—using his *feet, his arms, his hands*, could all be allowed to shine through by means of familiar poetic allusions; but the *enemy*—the *violent man*—the *perverse*,—HE had to be reverently left to the judgment of God; and none can say that that judgment has not been most effectively— even if most poetically—described. From his chief foe, the poet had been rescued by an interposition absolutely Divine.

It has been objected to Stanza IV. (vers. 20-27), that, in various degrees it is unlike the original psalm, and must be regarded as made up of later glosses. Of vers. 21-24, in particular, it is alleged (by Br.) that "it has nothing in keeping with the previous thought of the psalm. The original is hot with passion: this is calm and placid." Now the fact of a passing change of feeling may be frankly conceded. But is the inference drawn therefrom legitimate? Why may not David have rested his muse for a little, and imparted a moral backbone to his ode by drawing from the stores of his memory sentiments learned in the school of Samuel in his brief "sojourn in Naioth"? In particular, those singular epigrammatic sayings forming vers. 25, 26 (*To the man of kindness, etc.*), may well be a sample of the wisdom learned by the sons of the prophets under the presidency of the great seer: who, as we know from 1 Sam. 15:22, 23, *knew how to moralise*. Moreover, there are several points of contact between the stanza brought under suspicion and those going before and after. The close of the previous stanza, at ver. 19 (*because he delighteth in me*), forms an excellent point of departure for what immediately follows; and then again ver. 27 reads much like an application of the foregoing principles, by David, to his own actual circumstances. It seems peculiarly apt that he should think of his own little band of followers as *a humbled people, saved*; and of the downfall of Saul's house as the *laying low of looks that were lofty* almost beyond endurance. Again, it may be observed that in any case the hot passion of the opening stanzas has cooled towards the end of the psalm. For there is something, not merely placid, but almost playful in the way in

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which, through Stanzas V. and VI., the now staid monarch recounts the exploits of his early and more warlike young manhood. Finally, it may be said, in the interest of the poetic art, that the retention of the stanza which Dr. Briggs sets aside, brings the stanzas up to the perfect number, seven, and admirably places the Wisdom stanza in the centre of the psalm, just between the passivity and the activity of the psalmist; at the same time leaving the closing stanza with those nice touches of royalty upon it which impart to it a special fitness to form the crown of the song.

It is reassuring, after the contrary denials of Wellhausen, to find so strenuous a critic as Dr. Briggs admitting that: "If we remove the glosses, which have adapted an ode of victory of David to later religious uses, the ode stands out in simple grandeur as fitting appropriately to the historical experience of David, whether he wrote it or another wrote it for him by historic imagination, entering into the experience of the heroic king. After removing the glosses there is nothing that bars the way to his authorship." Even a critical reader may doubt whether it is necessary to remove the alleged glosses, beyond the point which leaves us with seven symmetrical stanzas. It may be further said that, in view of the admitted beauties of this song, we need never decline the Davidic authorship of a psalm merely on the score of its poetic excellence.

The great value of the following extract will excuse its length. "David began, as in ver. 2, 'The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer'; and went on to rehearse the wonderful acts of God in his daily deliverance. Hezekiah had as much to say, if not more; but he must begin differently. His deliverance from death and a host of enemies, induced in him a tenderness of expression which suggested a new beginning for the psalm, even though confined to a single line. So he prefixed the words, 'I love thee, O Lord, my Strength.' The terms are striking—'Fervently do I love thee': 'warmly do I cherish thee' (*r-h-m*). After such a pledge of affection, the king could proceed, and appropriate to his own lips lines which, in the language of poetry, are suitable for the description of any notable intervention on the part of Jehovah . . . The grateful soul must entertain a warm affection for Jehovah by whom it had been loved (*h-sh-k*). Hence, he says in one place: 'I love (*'h-b*) the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication' (Ps. 116:1); and the Lord spoke in response 'Because he hath set his

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love (*h-sh-k*) upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known my name' (Ps. 91:14) . . . Upon whom is the king's affection lavished? Upon 'Jehovah, MY STRENGTH.' Who could say this like Hezekiah? The man whose name was *hzkyhu* speaks of his Deliverer as *yhw hzky*. All the promise and assurance of the king's name have been realised; and now love is returned, in warmest emotion, to a faithful God. In other words, in the terms used we have the elements of the name Hezekiah . . . Everything favours the conclusion that substantial changes (in the psalms) so far as they may be detected, belong to the reign of Hezekiah"—Thirtle, O.T.P., 122-124.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please read again the account of Saul's pursuit of David as given in I Samuel 19:1—27:12. Select and discuss at least two instances in which this psalm could have application or fulfillment.
2. Read II Samuel 22:1-51—notice that there is no question as to whom this psalm applies. Why is it repeated in the Bible?
3. Define and relate to David the following expressions: (a) "The breakers of death or the waves of death;" (b) "The meshes of hades or the cords of Sheol;" (c) "The snares of death."
4. Define and relate to Jehovah (and David) the following expressions: (a) "Then the earth shook and trembled;" (b) "Fierce flames leaped from His mouth, setting fire to the earth; smoke blew from His nostrils;" (c) "And He sent forth His arrows and scattered them."
5. Please satisfy your own mind (and of those who study with you) that there is no blame for injustice associated with God as revealed in this psalm. Discuss.
6. Read the following discussion of this psalm by G. Campbell Morgan—discuss his point of view:

This is one of the most majestic and beautiful of the worship psalms. It is at once a perfect pattern of praise, and therefore a great revelation of the method and might and mercy of God. So clear and simple is it in its movement and language that nothing need be said of it save perhaps to suggest an analysis to aid in its study.

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PROLOGUE OF PRAISE (vers. 1-3). Here the psalmist pours out the gladness and gratitude of his heart which thrills with the highest spirit of adoration.

THE PERIL AND DELIVERANCE (vers. 4-19). The terrible nature of the peril is first made clear, and then the story of the might and majesty of Jehovah's process is told, and the fact of deliverance declared.

THE PRINCIPLE (vers. 20-29). The reason of the Divine deliverance is declared, and the truth of perpetual importance, that God is to man what man is to God, is affirmed.

THE RESULTANT CONFIDENCE (vers. 30-45). Again the song breaks forth in almost tumultuous joy. Absolute confidence in God, and assurance of continued triumph are based upon experiences already gained of His goodness.

EPILOGUE OF PRAISE (vers. 46-50). The anthem ends with further sentences which group the benefits conferred upon the king by his God, and attest his determination to praise Him among the nations.

## PSALM 19

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Greater than the Glory of God in the Heavens is the  
Grace of Jehovah in the Law.

### ANALYSIS

A Composite Psalm: in which, by the mere force of Juxtaposition, the Grace of Jehovah in the Law, is seen to be even More Precious than the Greatness of God in the Heavens. Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, 4, The Witness to God borne by the Heavens in General. Stanza II., vers. 4c-6, The Witness by the Sun in particular. Stanza III, vers. 7-9, The Excellence of the Law in Itself and in its Beneficent Effects. An Overflow from the foregoing Stanza (ver. 10). Stanza IV., vers 11-14, A Personal Application: with Prayer, for Profit by the Law, and for the Divine Acceptance of this Psalm.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 The heavens are telling the glory of GOD,  
and the work of his hands the expanse is declaring:
- 2 Day unto day doth pour forth speech,