

PSALM SIXTY-NINE, SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

8. Why do so many students suppose that Jeremiah was the author? Cf. Jer. 15:15-18; 11:18-23; Lam. 3:53-58. Discuss this possibility.
4. This psalm is quoted often in the New Testament—Cf. Matt. 27:34; Jh. 2:17; 15:25; 19:28, 29; Rom. 15:3; 11:9, 10. What do these New Testament references teach us about this psalm?
5. Rotherham gives five fine observations concerning the OUT-cries FOR VENGEANCE found in this psalm and others. Please list and discuss his observations.

PSALM 70, 71

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer Not to be Forsaken in Old Age.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3 (70), Prayer against Enemies. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5 (70), Prayer in behalf of Friends. Stanza III., vers. 1-3 (71), Prayer for Rescue and Deliverance, with Appeals to Divine Righteousness and Protection. Stanza IV., vers. 4-6 (71), For Deliverance from One who is Lawless, Perverse and Ruthless, sought by Reference to Youthful Days. Stanza V., vers. 7-9 (71), The Wonders of a Lifetime are pleaded against Rejection in Old Age. Stanza VI., vers. 10-13 (71), Urgency against Appearance of being Forsaken. Stanza VII., vers. 14-16 (71), More Hopeful Strain. Stanza VIII., vers. 17-19 (71), Renewed references to Youth and Age, coupled with desire by this Aged Saint to do more for his Matchless God. Stanza IX., vers. 20-24 (71), In view of Resurrection, whose-souled Praise is Promised, aided by Lute, Lyre, Lips and Tongue.

(Lm.) By David—To bring to remembrance.

- 1 Be pleased¹ O God to rescue me,
Jehovah! to help me oh make haste!
- 2 Put to shame and abashed² be they who are seeking my life,³
Turned back and confounded be they who are taking
pleasure in my hurt,⁴

1. So *Gt.*: cp. 40:13—*Gn.* Cp. throughout w. 40:13-17.

2. Cp. 71:24.

3. *U.*: "soul."

4. Cp. 71:18, 24; also 35:4, 26, 40:14.

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- 3 Let them turn back on account of their own shame
 who are saying¹—"Aha! Aha!"²
- 4 Glad and joyful in thee be all who are seekers of thee,
 and let them say continually "God³ be magnified!"⁴
 who are lovers of thy salvation.
- 5 Since I am humbled and needy O God do haste for me!
 my help and my deliverer art thou
 Jehovah!⁵ do not tarry.

(Nm.)

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(Nm.)

- 1 In thee Jehovah have I taken refuge,
 let me not be put to shame to the ages:
- 2 In thy righteousness wilt thou rescue me and deliver me,
 incline unto me thine ear and save me:
- 3 Be thou unto me a rock of refuge⁶
 a place of security⁷ for saving me,
 because my cliff⁸ and my fastness art thou.⁹
- 4 My God! deliver me from the hand of a lawless one,
 from the grasp of a perverse and ruthless one;
- 5 For thou are mine expectation Sovereign Lord,
 Jehovah my trust from my youthful days:
- 6 On thee have I stayed myself from birth,
 thou art he that severed me from the body of my mother,—¹⁰
 of thee shall be my praise continually.
- 7 A very wonder have I been to multitudes,
 but thou hast been my strong refuge.

1. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Cyr., Vul.) add: "of me"; cp. 40:13—Gn.

2. Cp. 35:21.

3. Some cod. (w. Aram. and Vul.): "Jehovah"; cp. 40:16—Gn.

4. Cp. 35:27.

5. Some cod. (w. 6 ear. pr. edns. and Syr.): "O my God"; cp. 40:18—Gn.

6. So in some cod. (w. 6 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Vul.): cp. 31:2—

Gn. M.T.: "rock of habitation."

7. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Vul.); cp. 31:2—Gn.

8. Cp. 42:9.

9. Cp. 31:2, 3.

10. Cp. 22:9.

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- 8 My mouth shall be filled with thy praise,
all the day with thy splendour,¹
- 9 Do not cast me off in old age,².....
when my vigour faileth do not forsake me.
- 10 For mine enemies hath said concerning me,—
yea the watchers for my life³ have taken counsel together,—
- 11 Saying, "God himself hath forsaken him,
pursue and capture him for there is no one to rescue him!"
- 12 O God! be not far from me,
my God! to help me oh make haste.⁴
- 13 Put to shame and confounded⁵ be they who are accusing
my soul,
covered with reproach and confusion be they who are seeking
my hurt.⁶
- 14 But I continually will hope,
and will add to all thy praise.
- 15 My mouth shall record thy righteousness,
all the day thy salvation,—
though I know not how to record it.⁷
- 16 I will enter into the mighty doings of Adonai,
Jehovah! I will mention thy righteousness thine alone.
- 17 O God! thou hast taught me from my youthful days,
and hitherto have I been declaring thy wondrous works:
- 18 Even now therefore that I am old and grey-headed⁸
O God! do not forsake me,—
until I declare thine arm to a (new) generation—⁹
to everyone who is¹⁰ to come thy might.
- 19 And as for thy righteousness up to the height,
wherein thou hast done great things
O God! who is like unto thee?
- 20 Whereas thou hast let me¹¹ see many distresses and
misfortunes
thou shalt again restore me¹¹ to life,

1. Or: "beauty," adoring."

2. Cp. ver. 18.

3. U.: "soul."

4. Cp. 70:1, 5.

5. So some cod.: cp. 35:4—Gn.

6. Cp. 35:4, 28, 40:14, 70:2.

7. Ml.: "numbers" or "records."

8. Cp. ver. 9; also 1 Sam. 12:2.

9. Sep.: "to every generation that is coming."

10. A sp. vr. (sevir): "all who are"—Gn.

11. Written "us": reud "me" (w. Sep. and other authorities)—Gn.

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- yea out of the deeps of the earth shalt thou again bring me¹
up:
- 21 Increase thou my greatness
and on every side console me.
- 22 I also will thank thee by the aid of the lute for thy truth
O my God,
I will make melody unto thee with a lyre O Holy One of
Israel!
- 23 My lips shall ring out their joy when I make melody unto
thee,—
yea my soul which thou hast ransomed:
- 24 My tongue also all the day shall talk to me of thy
righteousness,
because put to shame because abashed are they who were
seeking my hurt.²

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 70

Rescue me, O God! Lord, hurry to my aid!

2, 3 They are after my life, and delight in hurting me.
Confuse them! Shame them! Stop them! Don't let them keep
on mocking me!

4 But fill the followers of God with joy! Let those who love
Your salvation exclaim, "What a wonderful God He is!"

5 But I am in deep trouble. Rush to my aid, for only You
can help and save me. O Lord, don't delay.

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Lord, You are my refuge! Don't let me down!

2 Save me from my enemies, for You are just! Rescue me!
Bend down Your ear and listen to my plea and save me.

3 Be to me a great protecting rock, where I am always
welcome, safe from all attacks. For You have issued the order
to save me.

4 Rescue me, O God, from these unjust and cruel men.

5 O Lord, You alone are my hope; I've trusted You from
childhood.

1. *Written* "us"; *read* "me" (w. Sep. and other authorities)—Gn.

2. Cp. 70:2.

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6 Yes, You have been with me from birth and have helped me constantly—no wonder I am always praising You!

7 My success—at which so many stand amazed—is because You are my mighty protector.

8 All day long I'll praise and honor You, O God, for all that You have done for me.

9 And now, in my old age, don't set me aside! Don't forsake me now when my strength is failing!

10 My enemies are whispering,

11 "God has forsaken him! Now we can get him. There is no one to help him now!"

12 O God, don't stay away! Come quickly! Help!

13 Destroy them! Cover them with failure and disgrace—these enemies of mine.

14 I will keep on expecting You to help me. I praise You more and more.

15 I cannot count the times when You have faithfully rescued me from danger. I will tell everyone how good You are, and of Your constant, daily care.

16 I walk in the strength of the Lord God. I tell everyone that You alone are just and good.

17 O God, You have helped me from my earliest childhood—and I have constantly testified to others of the wonderful things You do.

18 And now that I am old and gray, don't forsake me. Give me time to tell this new generation (and their children too) about all Your mighty miracles.

19 Your power and goodness, Lord, reach to the highest heavens. You have done such wonderful things. Where is there another God like You?

20 You have let me sink down deep in desperate problems. But You will bring me back to life again, up from the depths of the earth.

21 You will give me greater honor than before, and turn again and comfort me.

22 I will praise You with music, telling of Your faithfulness to all Your promises, O Holy One of Israel.

23 I will shout and sing Your praises for redeeming me.

24 I will talk to others all day long about Your justice and Your goodness. For all who tried to hurt me have been disgraced and dishonored.

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EXPOSITION

Although by this time the general terms and tenor of this compound psalm have become so familiar as to render detailed exposition needless, yet are there several most interesting questions which cluster around this composition as a whole. And first there is the position that it *is* a compound psalm—in other words that the two psalms are really one. Dr. Thirtle comes to the natural conclusion that, lacking any inscriptional line to divide them, they should be conjoined; and when we examine the contents in quest of confirmatory internal evidence, the result must be pronounced satisfactory, as the references appended to the two psalms will sufficiently indicate.

We next observe that, with a single exception, this psalm stands alone in its specific allusions to *old age*, and absolutely alone in the pathetic character of those allusions. In Ps. 92 the reference is wholly triumphant, as an outburst of joy in the assurance that the righteous do still bring forth fruit in old age. Here a very different note is struck. It is the plaintive appeal of an old man, that he may not be *forsaken* now that his *vigour* is departing from him. This note is the more touching in that it is deliberately repeated, and is set in striking contrast with the memories of a long and chequered life.

In point of fact, this feature of the psalm at once raises the familiar question of authorship, investing it, in the present instance, with an especial interest; inasmuch as we at once become inquisitive as to what psalm-composing saint of those olden times is likely to have been so deeply moved and so clearly depressed by the consciousness of advancing years, as the writer of this psalm manifestly is. The ascription of the psalm to *David*, naturally reminds us that this famous singer himself lived to become an old man; and the example of Ps. 39 would have prepared us for a sombre outlook, had that been all that is here in evidence; but it certainly would not have led us to look for an apprehension of being *forsaken*! The glimpse given us in Chronicles of the venerable monarch dedicating his bountiful gifts and those of his people for the building and furnishing of the Temple (1 Ch. 29), utterly forbids the supposition that David could have feared being forsaken in his old age. We are not surprised, therefore, that these critics who are pre-disposed to post-date the authorship of the Psalms, should think of Jeremiah rather than of David as the writer, nor are we much surprised

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to find so conservative a critic as Delitzsch strongly inclining to that opinion: the drawback against that hypothesis being the not very serious one, that there is nothing beyond conjecture, or at most plausibility, to sustain the thought that the "weeping prophet" continued weeping till the last—though, even had he done so, it may be surmised it would rather have been over Jerusalem than over himself. But now, further noticing that, according to its superscription, this pathetic psalm was designed *To bring to remembrance*, the suggestion arises whether it may not enshrine *memorials* of the prophet *Samuel* himself: leaving David as the actual writer of the psalm, even as many of the incidents alluded to are Davidic, and much of the imagery is Davidic; still, embodying strains with which the youthful harpist first became familiar from the lips of the venerable president of the school of the prophets. The more we think of it, the more this supposition attracts us, at least as an alternative opinion—not the less so in that such a persuasion strikes a companion note to that which would trace to Samuel the first beginnings of the so-called *Wisdom Literature*. What, if in Samuel's long and consecrated life, should be discovered the seeds of *Sacred Song* and the training of *Sacred Minstrels*, as well as the shaping of *proverbs* and *aphorisms*, the evolution of *Sacred Drama*? How did those sons of the prophets cultivate their gifts; they used musical instruments—therefore they sang, therefore they must have had, and probably composed, songs for singing. If his pupils did this must he, their president, have had the gifts needed for their guidance? Assuming this probability, it is obvious to remark next, that Samuel had much in his old age to sadden him and to draw from him on a memorable occasion a pathetic reference to his grey hairs (1 Sam. 12:2): his sons not following in his steps, the people becoming envious and discontented, Saul a failure as king. We know that Samuel and David came into contact; and we ask whether it is not within the bounds of likelihood that, on some never-to-be forgotten occasion, the forebodings of Samuel's troubled heart found rhythmical utterance in terms which made a profound impression on David's mind; and that, although the latter may never have used them, hitherto, yet now at length, when his own age is advancing, with sufficient self-consciousness to move his sympathy from other ageing men, these strains are revived with sufficient strength to urge him to embalm them in a psalm of exquisite tenderness

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and deep pathos. As soon as this likelihood finds lodgment in our minds and we again peruse the psalm under its influence, expression after expression leaps out into vividness as even more suited to Samuel's story than to any other with which we are familiar. Who, more fittingly than he could claim that Jehovah had been his *trust* and his *teacher from his youthful days*? Who, so justly as he, could assert that he had been spending *his life hitherto in declaring God's wonders*? Who, so well as the trainer of prophets and minstrels, could plead with such force to be spared yet a little longer to prepare instructors for *coming generations*? We do not dogmatise; nor do we more than suggest the traces of an influence affecting the avowed singer's mind. The psalm is David's—at least, it has upon it the tokens of his experience, the abounding of his figures of speech; but it is enriched with memories other than his own, memories which strengthen rather than weaken the claims of the psalm to be attributed to him.

There is one other matter claiming attention before this psalm is dismissed, namely, its assertion of a hope of resurrection (71:20). The surprising thing about this is the degree to which such an assertion has been obscured by translators and expositors; by translators, in softening down, to the ambiguous idea of "quickenings," of a word which primarily means *to restore to life*; and by expositors, in a rather hasty and needless turning aside to a mere national resuscitation. The correct principle of interpretation surely is—first, fact—then figure; first, the individual—then the national. Who would speak of the *birth* of a nation, to whom the birth of an individual was not familiar? In like manner, who would think of the *re-birth*, or resurrection, of a nation, to whom the re-birth or resurrection of the individual was not already pre-supposed, as the more familiar conception? It might have been thought that in a text like this, wherein the parallel of resuscitation is the being *brought up out of the deeps of the earth*, in clear recognition of the Hebrew doctrine of Sheol or Hades (cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Hades"), the assertion of individual resurrection would have been allowed a chance of asserting itself. But no! Delitzsch Perowne, and Kirkpatrick all fail us; and even the Massorites are blamed for preferring the singular "me" to the plural "us" in their various readings, notwithstanding the admitted fact that they had the Septuagint and other ancient versions to justify their

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preference, and the further fact that—according to the confession of Dr. Briggs—"the first person singular best suits the context." The last-named critic does not hesitate to apply the entire Psalm to the Hebrew nation, with regard to its *old age* as well as with regard to its *youth*. Now, we can understand how a nation may not hesitate to count itself to be still young; but it is by no means so easy to acquiesce in the likelihood that it would complacently and pathetically confess itself to be aged and nearly worn out. In fact we cannot help wondering, at what precise stage of *this* nation's existence, it settled down so easily to the admission that it had become decrepit, as to find heart to *sing about its pitiable senility!* And this concerning a race remarkable for its longevity, and whose embodied nationality may, after more than five-and-twenty centuries' further lapse, be only in abeyance. Would it not be better to admit frankly, that a nation may easily, in song, regard itself as summed up in the persons of its chief heroes, without wiping those heroes out of personal existence, or assuming that they had no individual experience worth recording? And further, in the admitted infrequency of O.T. allusions to a future life and to incorruption, is it worthy of Christian scholars to pare down those allusions to the lowest possible number? Rather let us hear and individual hope, whether voiced by Samuel or by David or by Jeremiah, triumphantly expressing itself by saying:

Whereas thou hast let me see many distresses and
misfortunes,
Thou shalt again restore me to life,
Yea out of the deeps of the earth shalt thou bring
me up.

And then, if you will, leave it to Hezekiah, to bring up *lute* and *lyre* and *lips* and *soul* and *tongue* to celebrate the glowing expectation.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

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1. Why are these two psalms considered as one?
2. Read Psalms 40:13-17. Why is this psalm repeated?
3. Evidently these verses had a special appeal for a special occasion. What was the occasion? Could you give some imaginative guess?

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1. This is indeed a unique psalm in several particulars:—the allusions to old age is one—the nature of such allusions is also unique—how? Could you give another unusual quality about this psalm?
2. The question of authorship is raised—what prevents us from accepting the title—“By David”? Several other authors have been suggested—name two. Rotherham has an interesting suggestion as to authorship—who is it?
3. Read verse twenty of this psalm—is this a reference to life after death—to the resurrection? Discuss.
4. Could this psalm be used to aid the aged today? Read the paraphrase version before you answer. Discuss.

PSALM 72

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A People's Prayer for a Perfect King.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Prayer for King of Royal Descent, that the Divine Attributes of Justice and Righteousness may be Given Him, and that he may exercise them with Fruitfulness and Efficiency. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Unlimited Continuance, Penetrating Gentleness, Abounding Fruitfulness, and Universal Extension, desired for his reign. Stanza III., vers. 9-11, The Submission to Him of All Enemies and Rivals, is besought. Stanza IV., vers. 12-15, these Petitions are based upon the King's Effective Interposition for the Needy and Helpless. Stanza V., vers. 16-17, Material Prosperity and the Brightening of City Life, entreated; as Rebounding to the Perpetual Praise of the King, and as Realising Ancient Covenant Blessing. Benediction: Closing this Second Book of Psalms, and therewith associating the God of Israel and his wondrous doings with all the Earth, which is thus filled with his glory.

(Lm.) By Solomon.

- 1 O God! thy justice¹ to the King do thou give,
and thy righteousness unto the son of a king;

1. “So Sep. and Jerome in accordance with the parallel ‘righteous.’”—Br. M.T.: “just decisions” (“rights”—Del.)