

STUDIES IN PSALMS

4. This is a psalm for the expectant mother. It is referred to Mary and Hannah—just how related?
5. Sacred Romance might be involved. How?

PSALM 114

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Passover Song.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Deliverance out of Egypt set forth as the Basis of Jehovah's Worship and Reign in Israel. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Nature's Excitement over the Birth of the Nation. Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, Nature Interrogated as to the Cause of her Excitement. Stanza IV., vers. 7, 8, The Psalmist Answers for Nature: Jacob's God is Nature's Lord.

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

- 1 When Israel came forth out of Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of unintelligible speech
- 2 Judah became his sanctuary,
Israel his realm.
- 3 The sea saw and fled,
the Jordan turned backward;
- 4 The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like the young of the flock.
- 5 What aileth thee O thou sea that thou fleest?
thou Jordan that thou turnest backward?
- 6 Ye mountains that ye skip like rams?
ye hills like the young of the flock?
- 7 At the presence of the Lord be in birth-throes O earth!
at the presence of the God of Jacob:
- 8 Who turneth the rock into a pool of water,
flint into a fountain of water.

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 114

Long ago when the Israeli escaped from Egypt, from that land of foreign tongue,

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2 Then the lands of Judah and of Israel became God's new home and kingdom.

3 The Red Sea saw them coming and quickly broke apart before them! The Jordan River opened up a path for them to cross!

4 The mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs!

5 What's wrong, Red Sea, that made you cut yourself in two? What happened, Jordan River, to your waters? Why were they held back?

6 Why, mountains, did you skip like rams? Why, little hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, the God of Jacob.

8 For He caused gushing streams to burst from flinty rock.

EXPOSITION

The exceeding beauty of this psalm must be confessed by all who, being able to appreciate poetry as such, at the same time possess an historical imagination. The moment this little poem is regarded as written for a passover celebration, and therefore as one of a series let into the midst of historical readings and accompanied by ceremonial actions,—not only is its beauty seen, but its brevity is saved from all suspicion of baldness. Each stanza says so little; and yet, for such an occasion, there is in that little so much that is to the point. The first stanza covers at once the birth of the nation, and its orderly establishment in the Holy Land under David and Solomon. The second stanza comprehends the miracles at the Red Sea and the Jordan, and the agitations of Sinai which attended the bringing of the nation into Covenant. In the third stanza, the poet interrogates the Sea, the River, the Mountains and Hills, as though he were there on the spot as a witness of their actions. In the fourth stanza, he justifies their excitement, by charging them to do the very things of which he has been witnessing; only with the understanding that these things are the legitimate concomitants of such a nation's birth. Even this he says in suchwise as to convey two further truths: namely, that he *Lord (Adon)* of nature is the *God (Eloah)* of Jacob, and no mere tribal Deity,—as moderns too hastily assume; and, by expressing the action of Omnipotence on *rock* and *flint* by means of a timeless participle (*who turneth*) further intimates

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that such manifest control over nature's laws merely awaits Jehovah's sovereign will.

This psalm being anonymous and the immediate occasion of its composition being unknown, dogmatism is precluded; but, if conjecture may sometimes serve useful ends, it may be asked, —Could any author more likely than ISAIAH be named? or any occasion more probable be suggested than Hezekiah's Great Passover? Its position in "The Hallel" could have been assigned to it at a later date.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Show the beauty and purpose of this psalm.
2. Trace the progressive history of Israel in the psalm.
3. Who was the possible author? What was the possible occasion of its composition?

PSALM 115

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Not for Her Own Glory but for His, Israel moves herself to trust in Jehovah to Shew his Superiority over Idols.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Introductory appeal to Jehovah. Stanza II., vers. 4-8, Idols Disparaged. Stanza III., vers. 9-11, With Alternate Voices, the Choir encourages Israel to Trust. Stanza IV., vers. 12, 13, The Congregation Proclaims its Confidence. Stanza V., vers. 14, 15, A Priest Blesses the Congregation. Stanza VI., vers. 16-18, A United Chorus of Praise.

(No "P.R.I." here in M.T.)

- 1 Not unto us Jehovah not unto us
but unto thine own name give glory,
because of thy kindness because¹ of thy truth.
- 2 Wherefore should the nations say—
"Where pray is their God?"
- 3 When our God is in the heavens,
all that he pleased hath he done?

1. So M.T. (without "and"). Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "and because"—Gn.