

STUDIES IN PSALMS

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?

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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.

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- 4 Their idols are silver and gold,
the work² of the hands of men:—
- 5 A mouth have they but do not speak,
Eyes have they but do not see;
- 6 Ears have they but do not hear,
A nose have they but do not smell;
- 7 Their hands! but they do not feel,
Their feet! but they do not walk,
They make no murmuring sound with their throat.
- 8 Like them shall become they who make them,
every one³ who trusteth in them.
- 9 O Israel!⁴ trust thou in Jehovah,
Their⁵ help and their shield is he!
- 10 O house of Aaron! trust ye in Jehovah,
Their help and their shield is he!
- 11 Ye that revere Jehovah! trust in Jehovah,
Their help and their shield is he!
- 12 Jehovah hath remembered us he will bless—
will bless the house of Israel,
will bless the house of Aaron,
- 13 *will bless them who revere Jehovah,*
the small as well as the great.
- 14 Jehovah will add unto you—
unto you and unto your children.
- 15 Blessed are ye of Jehovah,
maker of heavens and earth.
- 16 The heavens are the heavens of⁶ Jehovah,
but the earth hath he given to the sons of men.
- 17 It is not the dead who praise Yah,
nor any that go down into Silence;
- 18 But we will bless Yah,
from this time forth and to the ages.⁷

(Nm.)⁸

2. Some cod. (w. Sep. and Vul.): "works" (pl.)—Gn.

3. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): "And every one"—Gn.

4. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): "O house of Israel"—Gn.

5. That "our" does not stand here, as in 33:20, "may be explained from the antiphonal singing; so far, however, as the psalm supplicates God's protection and help to a military expedition, the declaration of assured hope, *their Help and Shield is He*, may be referred with Hitzig to the army that has gone or is going forth"—Del.

6. "Are assigned to"—Br. (reading SiMiM instead of SHaMaim).

7. Cp. Isa. 38:18, 19.

8. See 116 (beginning).

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PARAPHRASE

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Glorify Your name, not ours O Lord! Cause everyone to praise Your lovingkindness and Your truth.

2 Why let the nations say, "Their God is dead!"¹

3 For He is in the heavens, and does as He wishes.

4 Their gods are merely man-made things of silver and of gold.

5 They can't talk or see, despite their eyes and mouths!

6 Nor can they hear, nor smell,

7 Nor use their hands or feet! Nor speak!

8 And those who make and worship them are just as foolish as their idols are.

9 O Israel, trust the Lord! He is your helper. He is your shield.

10 O priests of Aaron, trust the Lord! He is your helper; He is your shield.

11 All of you His people, trust in Him. He is your helper; He is your shield.

12 Jehovah is constantly thinking about us and He will surely bless us! He will bless the people of Israel and the priests of Aaron,

13 And all, both great and small, who reverence Him.

14 May the Lord bless you richly both you and your children.

15 Yes, Jehovah who made heaven and earth will personally bless you!

16 The heavens belong to the Lord, but He has given the earth to all mankind.

17 The dead cannot sing praises to Jehovah here on earth.²

18 But we can! We praise Him forever! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

EXPOSITION

The fact that this psalm is without head-line to divide it from the foregoing, confirmed as it is in many ancient authorities by being run on as a continuation of that which has gone before, is of sufficient force to shew at what an early date this sequence was effected; but can scarcely prevail to over-ride internal evidence in favour of an independent origin. In its contents

1. Literally, "Where is their God?"

2. Implied.

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this psalm strongly asserts its individuality; and, indeed, points clearly to a situation so much like that formed by the league of surrounding nations against King Jehoshaphat (2 Ch. 20), as to throw any other theory of origin into the shade. That it came into further use with great acceptance at the time of the return from the Babylonish Exile in nowise conflicts with this theory of its original composition. It will be noted that the tone of the psalm is peculiar: it is neither despairing nor triumphant. Honour is anticipated, but rendered in advance to Jehovah himself. Idolatry presents itself forcibly enough to call forth elaborate sarcasm; yet it would seem as though the worshippers of Jehovah were not out of peril, hence they encourage each other to have confidence—*trust ye in Jehovah*; but they encourage each other in song—in responsive song! All the essential conditions for this peculiar state of things may be found in the critical condition of affairs when nations of idolaters were surrounding King Jehoshaphat; when his army in going forth against its enemies was assured it would not have to fight; and when bands of singing Levites were provided, well able to raise responsive song on what might have been a battlefield, for they went forth before the armed men! In point of fact, we can almost see the turning point of affairs on that memorable day reflected in the psalm itself at ver. 12. For if,—when the history records that “Judah came near the watch-tower of the wilderness (and) they turned towards the multitude, and lo! there they were, dead bodies fallen to the earth, with none to escape;”—if, just then, a priest had broken the silence by exclaiming in changed tense and in a tone of triumph,—*Jehovah hath remembered us!* could anything have been more appropriate or more dramatic? It is quite true that many able critics, who cannot see behind the return from the Exile, find another and a not unsuitable crisis of affairs, to fit in with that change of language in the psalm: they picture a public Temple service as in progress, and that when the sacrifice is laid on the altar and Jehovah as of old lights the flame of acceptance on the altar, the priest then exclaims—*Jehovah hath remembered us!* But surely it would have been all the more remarkable if the language to express that Divine manifestation had been provided some centuries earlier, when a wide land constituted the altar and holocaust of idolaters were the victims.

Possibly another link of connection is lying to our hand. Jehoshaphat lived before Hezekiah. Hezekiah, through means of

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his royal library, must have been acquainted with the songs of his predecessors. What if,—in providing for his Great Passover, to which he was so anxious to bring, in reunion, all Israel,—what if he discovered and brought into passover use this song of Jehoshaphat's days, weaving it into the service, with probably some of his own compositions,—would not such an appropriation of this psalm help to fix it in the "Hallel" for ever?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What evidence of independent origin is found in this psalm? Read II Chr. 20.
2. This psalm was used for a very special occasion—what was it?
3. Rotherham seems very confident as to the historical circumstances for the original use of this song. Where and when?
4. Hezekiah could have made special use of this psalm. How?

PSALM 116

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Individual Thanks for Deliverance from Peril of Death.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, With Profession of Love the Psalmist Describes his Peril and Prayer. Stanza II., vers. 5-9, In Glowing Terms describes Jehovah's Answer. Stanza III., vers. 10-14, Reviewing his Trial, he Desires to Return Public Thanks. Stanza IV., vers. 15-19, The Costliness of Death Intensifies his Desire for Publicity in Thanksgiving.

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

- 1 I love—
For Jehovah heareth my voice my supplications;
- 2 For he hath inclined his ear unto me,
and throughout my days will I call.¹
- 3 There encompassed me the meshes of death,
and the straits of hades overtook me;
distress and sorrow I found:

1. Or: "invoke."