

PSALMS 122 AND 123

But the closing stanza must not be missed nor slurred over; for, in truth, it asks to be read with a delicate meaning discovered between its lines. For who is the INDIVIDUAL that closes the psalm? Who is he that, having so thoughtfully provided for the spiritual wants of others, now begs to be heard for himself:—"begs," we say, advisedly; since no scholar can deny that a homely *passion of importunity* is there, in the Hebrew, which sooner than let the mere English reader miss we have ventured to represent by the quaint form of request, "*Do pray let me speak*"? Who is this, then, with a heart so large that he can, within the compass of two closing sentences, take in with loving embrace his *brethren and friends* and likewise, with worshipful concern, *the house of Jehovah*? Is it not the author of the psalm himself, who can no longer be restrained from speaking for himself; and who, for some of us, by the fitness of every word of the psalm to the man and to the occasion, has virtually signed his name, KING HEZEKIAH?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the particular occasion of this psalm? We are invited to use our imagination as to the circumstances.
2. An appreciation for the nation is obtained by this visit. How?
3. There is "an excellent stroke of poetic policy in the third stanza. What is it?"
4. How was the religious, judicial and civil unity of Israel suggested?
5. Give several phrases as to the *united intercession*.
6. The writer of the psalm has an individual request at the close of the psalm. What is it?

P S A L M 1 2 3

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The King's Response to the Injunction to Lift up
his Eyes as High as Heaven.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I, ver. 1, An Individualistic Couplet by way of Response to the Exhortation in Ps. 121:2. Stanza II, ver. 2, Israel unites in getting into an

STUDIES IN PSALMS

Attitude of Earnest Waiting on Jehovah; which, in Stanza III., vers. 3, 4, Finds expression in Importunate Entreaty.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 "Unto thee have I uplifted mine eyes,
O thou who art enthroned in the heavens!"
- 2 Lo! as the eyes of menservants unto the hand of their lord,
as the eyes of a maidservant unto the hand of her lady
So our eyes are unto Jehovah our God,
until that he be gracious unto us.
- 3 "Be gracious unto us O Jehovah be gracious unto us,
for greatly are we sated with contempt:
- 4 Exceedingly sated on her part is our soul—²
with the scorn of the arrogant,
the contempt of the proudest oppressors."

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 123

O God enthroned in heaven, I lift my eyes to You.

2 We look to Jehovah our God for His mercy and kindness just as a servant keeps his eyes upon his master or a slave girl watches her mistress for the slightest signal.

3, 4 Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy. For we have had our fill of contempt and of the scoffing of the rich and proud.

EXPOSITION

Most naturally, King Hezekiah, who is a skilful leader in psalmody as well as a worthy example of devotion, leads off this psalm; which comes out well as a Response to the Assurance in 121:2—"Help is from Jehovah—maker of heaven and earth."

The second verse gathers up into congregational expression a representation of a waiting and watching attitude towards Jehovah which is at once homely, beautiful and suggestive. These worshippers, though on earth, are led to regard themselves as attendants in presence of their Heavenly King; full in his view; awaiting his pleasure. As personal attendants await in silence the slightest expression of the will of their superior; watching the pointing finger which says "Go," the open

1. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

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palm which says "Bring," the beckoning movement which says "Come"; so, says the psalmist, even with such profound respect and watchful attention are *our eyes unto Jehovah our God, until that he be gracious unto us*. Surely, a comparison as suggestive as it is beautiful. Such servants know their master's or mistress's ways—the meaning of each familiar gesture. They need no loud word of formal command: all they require is, to catch the slightest hint of the superior's WILL as the sufficient signal for obedience. And so, the least word from Isaiah for instance, would be intimation enough for both the King and his people:—without (say) going to the Pentateuch, or to Mount Sinai, for a formal "Thus saith the Lord."

This adjustment of the mental attitude of the worshipping nation towards Jehovah is then at once merged in importunate entreaty. The plea is pointedly put—*Be gracious unto us, O Jehovah,*—and emphatically repeated—*be gracious unto us;* and then weighted with a reason: *for greatly are we sated with contempt*. "Oh! we have had enough of this vile and blaspheming Rabshakeh and his imperious master." We all know the story. Fancy the foreigner on our own soil; and ourselves at the time in certain and miraculously attested covenant relation with the Maker of heaven and earth! and should *we* not have importuned our God in some such strains as these?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is a "response psalm"; a response to what?
2. A beautiful court scene is here given—i.e. a scene in the court of King Jehovah. What is involved?
3. How beautifully is obedience to God here suggested. Discuss.
4. What is meant by the phrase ". . . greatly are we sated with contempt"?

P S A L M 1 2 4

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Sudden and Complete Deliverance Acknowledged
as Jehovah's Own Work.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Israel taught to Recognize and Remember the Extent