

STUDIES IN PSALMS

and—he humbled himself; but not without a struggle: he had to be weaned from Self, and has here described the process, with unsurpassable insight and delicacy. He had had to smooth and soothe his ruffled soul; and wean himself from any longer drawing sweet satisfaction from what Self could afford. Henceforth he must take a manlier part than nestle on the soft bosom of Self. He was weaned. And now he would wean Israel. Trouble awaited her in the future—this also now he knew. But, having in his previous song sung of ransom from iniquities, and of Jehovah himself as Ransomer, he must needs now again urge Israel, with tenderer pathos and with longer outlook than before, to *hope for Jehovah, from henceforth and unto the ages*. This loving call still woos Israel to hear.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How was this psalm composed?
2. David was “surprised by joy”—how?
3. There is a marvelous lesson of the life of Hezekiah described—what is it? Discuss.

PSALM 132

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Davidic Dynasty Humbled and Exalted.

ANALYSIS

Stanza, vers. 1-10, Prayer by the Typical Messiah. Anti-Stanza, vers. 11-18, Promise for the Antitypical Messiah.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

- 1 Remember O Jehovah unto David—
all his humiliations:—
- 2 What he sware unto Jehovah—
vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob:
- 3 “Verily I will not enter into the tent of my house—
I will not go up on the couch of my bed,
- 4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes—
nor to mine eyelids slumber:

PSALM 132

- 5 Until I find a place for Jehovah—
habitations for the Mighty One of Jacob.”
- 6 “Lo! we heard of it in Ephrathah—
we found it in the fields¹ of the forest:
- 7 ‘We would fain enter into his habitations!
we would bow down at his footstool!’
- 8 ‘Arise! Jehovah to thy resting-place—
thou and the ark of thy strength:
- 9 Thy priests let them be clothed with righteousness—
thy men of kindness let them ring out their joy.’”
- 10 For the sake of David thy servant
do not turn away the face of thine Anointed One.²
- 11 Jehovah sware to David—
in truth will he not turn back from it:
“Of the fruit of thy body
will I seat on a throne for thee:
- 12 If thy sons keep my covenant—
and my testimonies which I shall teach them
Even their sons unto futurity—
shall sit on a throne for thee.”
- 13 For Jehovah hath chosen Zion—
- 14 “This is my resting-place unto futurity—
here will I dwell for I have desired it:
- 15 Her provision will I abundantly bless—
her needy ones will I satisfy with bread;
- 16 Her priests also will I clothe with salvation,
and her men of kindness shall indeed ring out their joy.³
- 17 There will I cause to bud a horn unto David,
I have set in order a lamp for mine Anointed One:
- 18 His enemies will I clothe with shame—
but upon himself shall blossom his crown!”

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 132

Lord, do You remember that time when my¹ heart was so filled with turmoil?

2, 3, 4, 5 I couldn't rest, I couldn't sleep, thinking how I

1. Some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns.): “field” (sing.)—Gn.

2. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., “Anointed.”

3. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., “Kindness.”

1. Literally, “David's soul.”

STUDIES IN PSALMS

ought to build a permanent home for the Ark² of the Lord, a Temple for the mighty One of Israel. Then I vowed that I would do it; I made a solemn promise to the Lord.

6 First the Ark was in³ Ephrathah, then in the distant countryside of Jaar.

7 But now it will be settled in the Temple, in God's permanent home here on earth. That is where we will go to worship Him.⁴

8 Arise, O Lord, and enter Your Temple with the Ark, the symbol of Your power.

9 We will clothe the priests in white, the symbol of all purity. May our nation shout for joy.

* * * * *

10 Do not reject Your servant David—the king You chose for Your people.

11 For You promised me that my son would sit on my throne and succeed me. And surely You will never go back on a promise!

12 You also promised that if my descendants will obey the terms of Your contract with me, then the dynasty of David shall never end.

13 O Lord, You have chosen Jerusalem⁵ as Your home:

14 "This is My permanent home where I shall live," You said, "for I have always wanted it this way.

15 I will make this city prosperous and satisfy her poor with food.

16 I will clothe her priests with salvation; her saints shall shout for joy.

17 David's power shall grow, for I have decreed for him a mighty Son.⁶

18 I'll clothe His enemies with shame, but He shall be a glorious King."

EXPOSITION

Again are we enabled to realise how truly and helpfully previous psalms lead us forward to what still awaits us. That

2. Implied.

3. Literally, "Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah."

4. Literally, "We will go into His tabernacles; we will worship at His footstool."

5. Literally, "Zion."

6. Literally, "a progeny."

PSALM 132

little snatch of a song, in praise of humility, which we have just dismissed,—how truly does it prepare us for the *humiliations of David*, with a reference to which this psalm opens.

But Jehovah humbles his loyal servants in order to fit them for the greater things to which they may not prematurely aspire; and if the Son of David who pens this psalm has schooled himself successfully into the spirit of the psalm we have just admired for its lessons of humility, he is thereby only the better prepared to lead us forward to the “wonderful things” to which this psalm conducts us.

Though he now only introduces it into his series of *Step Songs*, it has probably lain in his repertoire since those early days of his reign when, having cleansed the Temple, he anew dedicated it to the worship of Jehovah; installing priests and Levites in the zealous discharge of their duties, taking care suitably to clothe them with official garments, and bountifully to provide for their temporal needs. We can imagine no more congenial occasion than this, for the origin of this intensely Messianic psalm. Everything in that occasion and in this psalm favours their being thus brought together. Newly come to the throne, after some years of reproach and patient waiting, and godly self-discipline, the author cannot forget that he now stands in covenant line with his revered ancestor David, whose songs he has so often studied with delight. Having found vent for his reforming zeal by cleansing the temple and restoring its inspiring ritual, now to be renewed with accompanying songs,—what more natural to a born poet and an anointed prophet-king than to compose a psalm like this: a psalm in every way worthy of such an auspicious occasion? Note, especially, in glancing through the psalm with these incidents in view, how, notwithstanding the unfeigned humility which restrains him from once formally alluding to himself or indulging in so much as a first personal pronoun, the profound consciousness of Messianic heirship is upon him. For to whom but to himself can we suppose him to refer at the close of the first stanza, when, gathering up all that has gone before, he pleads: *For the sake of David thy servant—do not turn away the face of thine Anointed One.* With the fitting occasion for this prayer in our minds, we instinctively supply the unspoken burden of it: “Do not turn away his face, when he thus presents anew to thee thine own holy temple, cleansed, and vocal with thy praise.”

STUDIES IN PSALMS

By connecting this first climax, in ver. 10, with the opening words of the psalm, we grasp the indisputable fact that *this first stanza is a prayer: Remember . . . do not turn away*. All that comes between is pleading. As much as to say: "By all the devotion and enthusiasm and energetic service and consecrating forethought of my revered ancestor David, whose words and deeds I this day recall, and humbly mention as my pleading before thee,—O Jehovah, do not turn away my face."

Once we grasp the firm logic of this intercession, we can easily allow for the poetic freedom with which the details are filled in. Whether we are to accept the allusion to *Ephrathah* as to the name of a district large enough to include Kirjath-jearim where the ark was, or to understand David to refer to tidings of the whereabouts of the ark with which they were familiar in his youth in Bethlehem-ephrathah, becomes a matter of small importance. With a like sense of freedom as to details, we can, without disturbance to the general sense, understand the *we* of vers. 6 and 7 as proceeding originally from David, in recognition of the people who accompanied him when he went to fetch up the ark to Jerusalem; and, then, again we can hear David's own voice of invocation in vers. 8 and 9 even though the terms of the invocation were taken from the story of the original journeying of the ark through the wilderness, and again employed by Solomon on an intermediate occasion. All this poetic and highly picturesque filling in of the argument drawn from David and his times by no means robs this part of the psalm of its force as a mighty plea urged by King Hezekiah.

In like manner, the general sense of *promise granted in answer to prayer*, becomes evident as dominating the second half of the psalm (vers. 11-18), notwithstanding the sweep of its contents and the loftiness of its closing aspiration. The first half of the psalm led off with what David *swore* to Jehovah; the second half begins, its response, with what Jehovah *swore* to David. And therein—in that covenant-oath to David—lay promises yet unexhausted and which guarantee to Hezekiah, as being in the line of the covenant, all the favour he might need for himself and for the temple he this day hallows to Jehovah.

It is worthy of note how the interests of the throne and of the temple here again intertwine. The covenant, through Nathan, points to the throne (vers. 11 and 12); and then immediately the temple is introduced as in some way supporting

PSALM 132

the throne: *For Jehovah hath chosen Zion—hath desired it as a habitation for himself.* Such intertwining of the two interests has characterised the Davidic Covenant from the first; for was it not just when David proposed to build a *temple* that Jehovah promised him an abiding *throne*? Possibly there is in this more than meets the eye. Be that as it may, the blending of interests goes on quite to the end of the psalm: ver. 14—place; ver. 15—place; ver. 16—place; ver. 17—throne; ver. 18—throne and *crown!* That is the climax—*crown* the final word.

In these last 5 verses of 10 lines, the whole passion of the psalm is expressed; and the expression is in every way most beautiful and impressive. As to form, it is all direct divine speech: Jehovah's voice alone is heard throughout; and if the speech as a whole was never uttered before, then it may be taken as a new and complete revelation of things never before so connectedly divulged.

The original petitions of David are hereby represented as granted—reaffirmed—amplified. The *resting-place* reappears as *desired, found, perpetual.* The *priests* and *Levites* are heralded by *provision* in abundance and *satisfied needy ones.* The very clothing of the priests is enhanced from *righteousness to salvation.* The official *men of kindness,* the Levites, do INDEED *ring out their joy,* with reduplicated emphasis. Not only is what was asked in David's petitions now abundantly given; but more than was asked, at least so far as this psalm is concerned. For again, as already observed, the temple gives place to the throne: *There* (in that place) *will I cause to bud a horn unto David—a living symbol of power. His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon himself shall blossom his crown—a living symbol of royalty.* Bold metaphors truly; but for that very reason fitting the ultimate climax of the psalm and causing us to feel instinctively that a greater than Hezekiah is here. They are, indeed, things "too wonderful" for him; and, therefore, here he leaves them unexplained. The THRONE in its PLACE, and the final HEIR on the throne, would all in due time be revealed.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does psalm 131 prepare us for psalm 132?
2. When was the psalm written? When was it used?
3. How is the term "Ephrathah" used in verse 6?
4. What is the gist or theme of the prayer in verse one through ten?

STUDIES IN PSALMS

5. What is the response or answer to the prayer as in verse eleven through eighteen?
6. In what sense or meaning is this psalm Messianic?

PSALM 133

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Brethren in Fellowship: a Charming Spectacle.

ANALYSIS

A Glimpse of Fraternal Reunion (ver. 1) suggests Comparison: (ver. 2) with the Descending Oil of Sacred Consecration; and (ver. 3) with the Descending Dew of Natural Refreshing.

(Lm.) Song of the Steps—By David.

- 1 Lo! how good and how delightful—
the dwelling¹ of brethren all together;²
- 2 Like the precious oil upon the head—
flowing down upon the beard the beard of Aaron—
which floweth down over the opening of his robe:
- 3 Like the dew of Hermon—
which floweth down over the mountains of Zion;
For there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing—
life unto the ages!

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 133

How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers live in harmony!

2 For harmony is as precious as the fragrant anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head, and ran down onto his beard, and onto the border of his robe.

3 Harmony is as refreshing as the dew on Mount Hermon, on the mountains of Israel. And God has pronounced this eternal blessing on Jerusalem,¹ even life forevermore.

1. Or: "remaining," "abiding."

2. "For brethren to dwell also together"—Dr.

1. Literally, "Zion."