

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

a *national* song. Indeed, it has not a private or personal allusion in it—with one exception. That exception, however, is very observable. It consists of the sudden introduction, at ver. 5, of a personal note, on which probably no one lower than a King would have adventured. Who is this that presumes to say—*I know that great is Jehovah?* Any godly monarch in Israel, it is true, might thus have made prominent his own individuality. A Jehoshaphat, for example, on the one hand, or a Josiah, on the other, might have thus *authenticated* Jehovah's praise; or, of course, a Hezekiah—no smaller man nor less godly. Indeed, even for Hezekiah, one could almost wish for circumstantial evidence, dating this psalm late enough to clothe the speaker with such a strong assurance as would naturally spring from a recent recovery from sickness or a recent rescue from a foreign invader; and it is only when we recall our late conclusions respecting Hezekiah's youth, and the strong presumption thence arising that he experimentally *knew* Jehovah's power,—that we became reconciled to his thus magnificently saying "*I know.*" But recalling this, we do feel content to leave it as the greater probability that the good King did, for the occasion named, compose this psalm: the more so, for that we have no knowledge of the poetic and musical accomplishments of either Jehoshaphat or Josiah.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by saying some psalms are "Hallels"?
2. What indications are in this psalm of its being a "public" psalm?
3. This is also a "national" song. Discuss such indication.
4. There is an exception to the public and national aspect of this psalm. What is it?

## PSALM 136

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Second Call to Temple-Worship, with Responses Inserted.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, A Threefold Call for Thanks, based on the three leading Divine Names. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, the Call Continued, based on

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the General Wonders of Heaven and Earth. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, On the Ruling Lights of the Heavens. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, On the Exodus from Egypt. Stanza V., vers. 13-15, On the Passage through the Red Sea. Stanza VI., vers. 16-22, On Guidance through the Wilderness into Israel's Promised Inheritance. Stanza VII., vers. 23-26, On Subsequent Deliverance from Low Estate, Adversaries, and Famine.

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

- 1 Give ye thanks to Jehovah—for he is good,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 2 Give ye thanks to the God of gods,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 3 Give ye thanks to the Sovereign Lord of lords,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 4 To him that doeth great wonders by himself alone,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 5 To him who made the heavens with understanding.  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 6 To him that stretched out the earth upon the waters,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 7 To him that made great lights,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 8 The sun to rule over the day,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 9 The moon and stars to rule over the night,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 10 To him that smote the Egyptians in their firstborn,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 11 And brought forth Israel out of their midst,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 12 With a firm hand and an outstretched arm,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 13 To him that divided the Red Sea into parts,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 14 And caused Israel to pass over through the midst thereof,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 15 And shook off Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 16 To him that led his people in the wilderness,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 17 To him that smote great kings,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*

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- 18 And slew majestic<sup>1</sup> kings,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 19 Even Sihon king of the Amorites,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 20 Also Og king of Bashan,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 21 And gave their land for an inheritance,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 22 An inheritance to Israel his servant,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 23 Who in our low estate was mindful of us,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 24 And rescued us<sup>2</sup> from our adversaries,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 25 Who giveth bread to all flesh,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*
- 26 Give ye thanks to the GOD of the heavens,  
*For to the ages is his kindness.*

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 136

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His loving-kindness continues forever.

2 Give thanks to the God of gods, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

4 Praise Him who alone does mighty miracles, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

5 Praise Him who made the heavens, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

6 Praise Him who planted the water within the earth,<sup>1</sup> for His lovingkindness continues forever.

7 Praise Him who made the heavenly lights, for His lovingkindness continues forever;

8 The sun to rule the day, for His lovingkindness continues forever;

1. Br.: "noble."

2. Ml.: "tare us away."

1. Or, "who separated the earth from the oceans."

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9 And the moon and stars at night, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

10 Praise the God who smote the firstborn of Egypt, for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever.

11, 12 He brought them out with mighty power and up-raised fist to strike their enemies, for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever.

13 Praise the Lord who opened the Red Sea to make a path before them, for His lovingkindness continues forever,

14 And led them safely through, for His lovingkindness continues forever—

15 But drowned Pharaoh's army in the sea, for His loving-kindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever.

16 Praise Him who led His people through the wilderness, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

17 Praise Him who saved His people from the power of mighty kings, for His lovingkindness continues forever,

18 And killed famous kings who were their enemies, for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever;

19 Sihon, king of Amorites—for God's lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever—

20 And Og, king of Bashan—for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever.

21 God gave the land of these kings to Israel as a gift forever, for His lovingkindness to Israel<sup>2</sup> continues forever;

22 Yes, a permanent gift to His servant Israel, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

23 He remembered our utter weakness, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

24 And saved us from our foes, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

25 He gives food to every living thing, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven, for His loving-kindness continues forever.

## EXPOSITION

Though, in general purpose and in leading characteristics, this psalm is much like the preceding one, it nevertheless has several features of its own. It is a Hallel like the foregoing:

2. Implied.

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that is, it is expressly adapted to Temple worship; and, like that, broadly bases Jehovah's claims to worship on creation and (national) redemption. It is, however, special, in that it formally introduces, as ground for adoration, the three leading Divine names — *Jehovah*, *Elohim* ("God") and *Adonai* ("Sovereign Lord"); deals with the passage through the Red Sea by three distinct movements (*divided—caused to pass—shook off*); and, after falling back on the previous psalm by way of abbreviated quotation as to taking possession of Canaan, lastly brings forward *three* reminiscences, which throw a welcome sidelight on the time at which the psalm was probably composed. These three reminiscences are concerned with: (1) *a low estate*, (2) *a rescue from adversaries*, and (3) *a supply of bread*: just these—no others—no more: a cluster of coincidences, finding a striking verification in the times of King Hezekiah. (1) The *low estate* of the nation during the presence of the Assyrians in the land is manifest (cp. 2 K. 17:19-23, 19:3, 2 Ch. 29:8, 9); and is a phrase more exactly fitted for that application than for the Exile in Babylon, which surely was something more than a "low estate." (2) The *forcible rescue* from the Assyrians was unique; and the word is more suited to allude to that event than to permissions to captives to return to their land of their own free will. (3) As we have already been reminded by Ps. 126, there was a near approach to famine when the Assyrians were gone; and though the statement as to the provision of *bread* is here couched in general terms, yet a recent event might well have suggested such a grateful acknowledgement just here. Even Delitzsch, though clinging to a post-exilic origin to the psalm, sees here a reference "to a time in which they suffered from famine as well as slavery." "Invasion" and "famine" wholly meet the case, and then there is the "forcible rescue": respecting which Aglen's note is suggestive: "*Redeemed*.—Better, as in original, *snatched us from*. (Compare Ps. 7:2, used of a lion suddenly seizing his prey.)" So suddenly did Jehovah seize Sennacherib.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm is much like the one preceding it but it has its own distinctive features. Discuss the similarities and differences.
2. Discuss the meaning and application of the three divine names; i.e. for our day.

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3. There are several triads in this psalm, three names, three stages of crossing the Red Sea; three reminiscences. Discuss the latter.
4. Once again this psalm is linked with a Hezekiah and Sennacherib. How?

## PSALM 137

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Returned Levite's Memories of Babylon, Apostrophe to Jerusalem, and Imprecations on Edom and on Babylon.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, A Returned Captive's Record of the Declinature of Himself and Brethren to Sing Songs of Zion on Foreign Soil. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, To his Brethren, he excuses the Refusal and Apostrophises Jerusalem. Stanza III., ver. 7, He prays for the Punishment of Edom's Perfidy. Stanza IV., vers. 8, 9, He Bitterly Apostrophises Babylon.

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(Nm.)

- 1 By the streams of Babylon  
there we sat down yea we wept—  
when we remembered Zion.
- 2 On<sup>1</sup> the poplars<sup>2</sup> in the midst thereof  
we hung up our lyres.
- 3 For there asked our captors of us—  
words of song!  
And our spoilers—<sup>3</sup>  
of gladness!<sup>4</sup>  
"Sing to us of the Songs of Zion."
- 4 How could we sing the songs of Jehovah—  
on a foreign soil?—

1. Or: "by." So Br.

2. So O.G. "*arab*, as is now established by botanists, denotes the *Populus Euphratica*, very young specimens of which with their narrow leaves may easily be confounded with willow underwood, upon a superficial inspection"—Delitzsch.

3. So *Gt.*; and so ("prob.") Dr.

4. Cp. ver. 6, same word. Here prob. "words" that is "of gladness" shd. again be understood from previous line.