

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

vouchsafed, but remoulding it into the form of present petitions to suit the existing dire emergency. As if conscious that he had been drawing largely on an "old" song, the writer longs to launch upon a *new song*; and instantly bounds into the present by recognising victories heretofore granted to kings, and *the snatching away of David, his servant, from the hurtful sword*,—a clear enough indication that it is not the language of David himself that we are now reading, but that of another, who finds inspiration in David's memory.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There are three previous psalms quoted in this one. Which ones? For what purpose?
2. Who is the author of this psalm? Why not Jehoshaphat?
3. What part of this psalm is a "new song"? Discuss its meaning.

## PSALM 145

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Alphabetical Psalm in Praise of Jehovah's Greatness,  
Goodness and Righteousness.

### ANALYSIS

Naturally, this psalm falls into 21 Couplets (and Verses), the letter *mm* being absent from the Hebrew Text. Further division is not easy; but by restoring the missing letter, as indicated at the foot of ver. 13, the psalm might be resolved into Three Groups of Seven Couplets each, leaving the letter *tau*—the twenty-second—to head an Application of the Whole Psalm to the Psalmist himself and to All Flesh. Even so, however, this grouping would be merely formal, and not indicated by any corresponding division of topics. By accident rather than design, the dominant subject of each would be Jehovah's Greatness, Goodness, and Righteousness; and it may be of practical service to note this.

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(Lm.) Praise—By David.

- 1 I will exalt thee my God O king—  
and would fain bless thy name to the ages and beyond.

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- 2 Every day will I bless thee—  
and would fain praise thy name to the ages and beyond.
- 3 Great is Jehovah and to be praised exceedingly—  
and his greatness is unsearchable.
- 4 Generation to generation will laud thy works—  
and thy heroic deeds will they tell.
- 5 The stateliness of the glory of thy majesty will men speak—<sup>1</sup>  
and of thy wonders would I fain soliloquise.
- 6 And the might of thy fearful acts will men affirm—  
and of thy greatness will I tell.
- 7 The memory of the abundance of thy goodness will men  
pour forth,—  
and thy righteousness will they ring out.
- 8 *Gracious and compassionate is Jehovah—  
slow to anger and great in kindness.*
- 9 Good is Jehovah to all—  
and his compassions are over all his works.
- 10 All thy works Jehovah thank thee—  
and thy men of kindness bless thee.
- 11 The glory of thy kingdom they affirm—  
and thy heroic might they speak.
- 12 To make known to the sons of men his heroic acts  
and the glory of the stateliness of his kingdom.
- 13 Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages—<sup>2</sup>  
and thy dominion is over all succeeding generations.<sup>3</sup>
- 14 Jehovah is ready to uphold all who are falling—  
and to raise up all who are bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all for thee do wait—  
and thou givest them their food in its season.
- 16 Thou openest thy hand—<sup>4</sup>  
and satisfiest every living thing with good will.<sup>5</sup>
- 17 Righteous is Jehovah in all his ways—  
and kind in all his works.<sup>6</sup>

1. So it shd. be (and so the verse be divided) (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

2. So literally: "of all olamim" (pl.).

3. In some MSS. this verse is here found:—  
Faithful is Jehovah in all his words—  
and kind in all his works.

and so in Sep., Syr., and Vul.—Gn. This would supply the missing initial letter *nun*.

4. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., and Sep.): "hands" (pl.)—Gn.

5. So Dr. But Del.: "with favour."

6. Or: "doings."

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- 18 Near is Jehovah to all who call upon him—  
to all who call upon him in truth.
- 19 The pleasure of them who revere him he fulfilleth—  
and their cry for help he heareth and saveth them.
- 20 Jehovah preserveth all them who love him—  
but all the lawless he destroyeth.
- 21 The praise of Jehovah my mouth doth speak—  
and let all flesh bless his holy name  
to the ages and beyond:7

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

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I will praise You, my God and King, and bless Your name each day and forever.

3 Great is Jehovah! Greatly praise Him! His greatness is beyond discovery!

4 Let each generation tell its children what glorious things He does.

5 I will meditate about Your glory, splendor, majesty and miracles.

6 Your awe-inspiring deeds shall be on every tongue; I will proclaim Your greatness.

7 Everyone will tell about how good You are, and sing about Your righteousness.

8 Jehovah is kind and merciful, slow to get angry, full of love.

9 He is good to everyone, and His compassion is intertwined with everything He does.

10 All living things shall thank You, Lord, and Your people will bless You.

11 They will talk together about the glory of Your kingdom and mention examples of Your power.

12 They will tell about Your miracles and about the majesty and glory of Your reign.

13 For Your kingdom never ends. You rule generation after generation.

7. U.: "to times age-abiding." &c. Many MSS. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.) here add:—

And we will bless Yah—

from henceforth and unto the ages—praise ye Yah.

Cp. Ps. 115:18—Gn.

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14 The Lord lifts the fallen and those bent beneath their loads.

15 The eyes of all mankind look up to You for help; You give them their food as they need it.

16 You constantly satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.

17 The Lord is fair in everything He does, and full of kindness.

18 He is close to all who call on Him sincerely.

19 He fulfills the desires of those who reverence and trust Him; He hears their cries for help and rescues them.

20 He protects all those who love Him, but destroys the wicked.

21 I shall praise the Lord and call on all men everywhere to bless His holy name forever and forever.

## EXPOSITION

This delightful psalm, by its contents reminds us of Ps. 103; and, by both its contents and its form, of Ps. 34. It is surprising to find how easily the psalmist follows his alphabetical initialing of the verses without shewing constraint in his composition.

Passing on to the contents of the psalm, considered on their merits, it is eminently satisfactory to observe the restraint to which the enthusiasm of the writer submits itself. This is no mere adulation of the Almighty. The man that wrote this song was not aware of the shadows which frequently throw this life into gloom. He knew that the *compassions* of Jehovah towards the miserable were often called into exercise: that poor footsore and purblind travellers along life's journey were not infrequently in danger of *falling*; and many times needed help to prevent their being too long *bowed down*. And this is well: otherwise the very brightness of the psalm might have dazed the eyes of the sick and the weary.

However, behind the sympathetic tenderness of the psalm there is perceptible an element of strength which is fitted to act as a moral tonic on minds afflicted with indecision concerning right and wrong. Jehovah is *righteous* as well as *kind*. The very *heroic acts* by which Jehovah had so often delivered Israel, had undoubtedly fallen as heavy blows on tyrants and invaders who richly deserved to be smitten. It would be culpable carelessness for the singer of this song, utterly to forget the dark

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side of the cloud whose silver lining now causes him so much genuine delight.

This psalm is noted among psalms for the universality of its terms. Not excluding beasts from the bountiful care of their Creator, how should it exclude men of any name or nation? *Good is Jehovah to all—and his compassions are over all his works*; not over and beyond his works—too high above them to benefit them—but *over*, protectingly and for blessing. That it should be immediately added: *All thy works thank thee*, seems almost too good to be true; too favourable a verdict to be pronounced upon men's response to Jehovah's goodness; too much like a verdict constructively framed in their favour, beyond their deserving. We could more easily accept the verdict if regarded as awarded to the lower creation—to the singing of the bird, the roaring of the lion and even the braying of the ass—than when taken to refer to "men made in the likeness of God"; those inferior creatures after their kind and in their own way, may be regarded as thanking their creator for what he has done for them; but these intelligent creatures, called men,—how can it be said of *them—all thy works thank thee*? As we cannot deny their inclusion among Jehovah's "works," we can only leave the statement, as a condescending construction put by a loving Creator on the common joy which men feel in view of the mercies which bestrew their path. Even beyond their intention, Jehovah will count their instinctive gladness as "thanks" rendered to him: if he can do no better with them he will class them with those lower creatures who *unconsciously* "thank" him. He seeks for more. He would have all men to become receivers and reflectors of his own kindness—his *hasidim*—*his men of kindness*, in whose hearts gratitude dwells and in whose lives benevolence overflows; men who go beyond thanks, men who *bless* Jehovah, and speak well of his name.

We confess we are amazed at the latitude of construction to which the psalm itself thus conducts us; but it has sterner things in store for us. There is a discipline in life that lies behind all this. Men cannot go on for ever, receiving God's gifts and remaining unmoved: they must either be melted into saints or hardened—by their own resistance—into sinners. They are under the law of love. Let them resist that—knowingly and persistently—and they must ultimately become *lawless*! And, against such, the stern announcement of this benevolent psalm has gone forth in tones of thunder:—

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Jehovah preserveth all them who love him—  
but all the lawless he destroyeth.

That is the last word of the last stanza of the psalm. There is nothing beyond it, saving an application by the psalmist to himself and to all flesh: nothing to tone this down or explain it away: it seems and it sounds absolute and final.

It confirms other psalm-deliverances that have gone before. We have already learned (Ps. 37) that "there is a future for the man of peace. But transgressors have been cut off together, the future of lawless men hath been cut off"; and from Ps. 73—"Lo! they who have gone far from thee shall perish, Thou wilt have exterminated every unchaste wanderer from thee." Small reason, then, is there in the Psalms as a collection, to blunt the prudent fear which this psalm is fitted to call into exercise.

And the less so, rather than the more, in consequence of the grandeur and the permanence of Jehovah's Kingdom. Jehovah's rule is all-pervading and ever-abiding. Men cannot escape his dominion. His own character is perfect and unchanging; his aim is to make men morally like himself—to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, to reform, remake, renew; to educate for immortality, and then bestow the boon. While his own character is perfect and unchanging, its manifestation to finite beings, under discipline, may require ages. To chastise them for their sins, and yet convince them that he is love, and to transform them into his own image,—this *may* be the work of ages: who can tell? Only the Infinite Searcher of Hearts can determine when all hope is past, and nothing is left but to destroy, to exterminate. He can create and he destroy; and none but he. It is something, then, of incalculable moment, to learn from his own lips what are the issues involved.

The close of this psalm goes back to its commencement. It ends with "I"—multiplied into the race, *all flesh*: it began with "I"—*I will exalt, would fain bless; will bless, would fain praise*. But very significantly and instructively was this beginning made; for all at once, by way of *desire*, the psalmist went bounding off beyond the narrow limits of the present life: *I would fain bless and praise thy name to the ages and beyond!* "For ever and ever will the poet thus extol God and bless His name; because the praising of God is his deepest need, in this devotion to the ever-living King he forgets his own mortality—this impulse of the soul, an impulse begotten by God himself,

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towards the praising of the God to whom the soul owes its origin, in which praise it finds its noblest enjoyment, is indeed a practical proof of a life after death"—Del. So it is indeed, to those in whom it exists; for see with what complete logic this one psalm proves it. Do I really *desire* to bless and praise Jehovah to the ages? Is that, in truth, my feeling towards him? Then the *desire* shall be granted; for again in this psalm it is written—*The pleasure of them who revere him he fulfilleth; and their cry for help he heareth and saveth them.* There is, therefore, both theoretic and practical safety in such a hope.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In this alphabetical psalm there are only 21 of the 22 letters. Why?
2. What are the three possible main divisions of this psalm?
3. This psalm can act as a tonic for certain needy persons. Who are they?
4. Are we to understand from this psalm that even the lower animals thank Jehovah? How so?
5. How wondrously good, kind, and righteous is our God. What should be the response of man? What is his response?
6. There seems to be a grand proof of immortality in this psalm. Discuss.

## PSALM 146

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Twelve Reasons for Trusting in Jehovah.

### ANALYSIS

Having, in Response to the Public Reader's Invitation, stirred up his Own Soul to Praise Jehovah all his Life Long (vers. 1, 2), the Psalmist urges a Caution against Trusting in Nobles (vers. 3, 4); and then (vers. 5-10) Felicitates the Man who makes the God of Jacob his Help—for a Series of Twelve Reasons, which he Poetically Unfolds.

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

- 1 Praise Jehovah O my soul!