

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

2. Who is the author, and what is the circumstance of this psalm?
3. Why not trust in nobles?
4. List six of the twelve reasons for trusting in Jehovah. Make these reasons personal.

## PSALM 147

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Praise for the Restoration of Jerusalem and for Israel's Pre-eminence: with Grateful Recognition of Rain and of Spring.

### ANALYSIS

After the Repetition and Expansion of the "Public Reader's Invitation" (ver. 1), Jehovah is Praised as the Builder, Healer and Restorer of Jerusalem (vers. 2-6); as the Sender of Rain (vers. 7-11), of Security, Peace and Plenty, and of Winter and Spring (vers. 12-18); and as the Author of Israel's Pre-eminence (vers. 19, 20).

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

- 1 Praise ye Yah<sup>1</sup> for it is good,<sup>2</sup>  
make melody<sup>3</sup> to our God for it is full of delight:  
Comely is praise!
- 2 Builder of Jerusalem is Jehovah,  
the outcasts of Israel he gathereth:
- 3 He who granteth healing to the broken in heart  
and a binding up to their wounds:
- 4 who counteth out a number to the stars,  
to all of them names he calleth:
- 5 Great is our Sovereign Lord and of abounding strength,  
and to his understanding there is no calculation.<sup>4</sup>
- 6 Restorer of the humble is Jehovah,  
abasing lawless ones down to the ground.
- 7 Respond ye to Jehovah with a song of thanksgiving,  
make melody to our God with the lyre:

1. Prob. a choir's repetition of P.R.I.—see Exposition.

2. Cp. 92:1.

3. So *Gt.* [i.e. imper. pl.] as in 135:3.

4. Or: reckoning, ml. number.

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- 8 who covereth the heavens with clouds,  
who prepareth for the earth rain;  
who causeth mountains to sprout grass;
- 9 Who giveth to cattle their food,  
to young ravens when they call:
- 10 Not in the heroic strength of the horse doth he delight,  
nor in the legs of a man hath he pleasure;
- 11 Pleased is Jehovah with them who revere him,  
with them who wait for his kindness.
- 12 Laud O Jerusalem Jehovah,  
Praise thou thy God O Zion,
- 13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates,  
hath blessed thy children within thee:
- 14 Who placeth as thy boundary peace,  
with the marrow of wheat doth satisfy thee.
- 15 Who sendeth his saying to the earth,  
very swiftly runneth his word;
- 16 Who giveth snow like wool,  
hoar frost like ashes he scattereth;
- 17 Who casteth down his ice<sup>5</sup> like morsels,  
Before his cold who can stand?
- 18 He sendeth forth his word and melteth them,  
he causeth a blowing of his wind there's a trickling of  
waters.
- 19 Who declareth his word to Jacob,  
his statutes and his decisions to Israel.
- 20 He hath not done thus to any nation,  
and decisions<sup>6</sup> he maketh not known to them.<sup>7</sup>

(Nm.)<sup>8</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 147

Hallelujah! Yes, praise the Lord! How good it is to sing  
His praises! How delightful, and how right!

2 He is rebuilding Jerusalem and bringing back the exiles.

3 He heals the broken-hearted, binding up their wounds.

4 He counts the stars and calls them all by name.

5. "As hailstones or as sleet"—Del.

6. Cp. 119, Table.

7. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

8. See 148 (beginning).

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5 How great He is! His power is absolute! His understanding is unlimited.

6 The Lord supports the humble, but brings the wicked into the dust.

7 Sing out your thanks to Him; sing praises to our God, accompanied by harps.

8 He covers the heavens with clouds, sends down the showers and makes the green grass grow in mountain pastures.

9 He feeds the wild animals and the young ravens cry to Him for food.

10 The speed of a horse is nothing to Him. How puny in His sight is the strength of a man.

11 But his joy is in those who revered Him; those who expect Him to be loving and kind.

12 Praise Him, O Jerusalem! Praise Your God, O Zion!

13 For He has fortified your gates against all enemies, and blessed your children.

14 He sends peace across your nation, and fills your barns with plenty of the finest wheat.

15 He sends His orders to the world. How swiftly His word flies.

16 He sends the snow in all its lovely whiteness, and scatters the frost upon the ground,

17 And hurls the hail upon the earth. Who can stand before His freezing cold?

18 But then He calls for warmer weather, and the spring winds blow and all the river ice is broken.

19 He has made known His laws and ceremonies of worship to Israel—

20 Something He has not done with any other nation; they have not known His commands.

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Hallelujah! Yes, praise the Lord!

## EXPOSITION

Notwithstanding its almost certain post-exilic date and its evidently composite character, this is a beautiful and useful psalm. It would seem disingenuous not to admit that in all probability it received its present form and some of its strains in the post-exilic period, and was provided to celebrate the great Restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah. It is almost equally

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certain that it was constructed, in part, of pre-existing materials: at least, this hypothesis would best account for the incorporation in it of what appear to be two fragments—one by way of thanksgiving for *rain* after drought, and the other in grateful recognition of the return of *spring* after a severe winter: both of which are not likely to have appeared side by side in one and the same original psalm.

The opening lines are unusually suggestive as to the remarkable repetition of the compound word—or rather the phrase—"hallelujah" (properly *hallelu Yah*) in connection with these late Hallel psalms. Some critics simply treat them as double "hallelujah" psalms, each one beginning *and* ending with that word. As soon, however, as we accept Dr. Ginsburg's opinion, as an expert, in favour of treating the word as a phrase, and the phrase as constituting the Public Reader's Invitation to join in the responses, we seem to be driven to form some other conclusion as to the reduplication—for as such it appears in Dr. Ginsburg's Hebrew Bible. In the present instance, the simplest theory would appear to be this: the first "hallelujah" may be regarded as the original invitation proper, to be *said* rather than *sung* by the prelector; and the second as a choir's taking up and repeating of the invitation—passing it on to the people, so to speak—at the same time expanding it into a small introductory stanza ending with *Comely is Praise*. The reason which supports this suggestion is, the unlikelihood that a psalm should begin with the word *For* (as Del., Per. and Dr. begin this psalm).

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is one of the latest psalms. At what time was it composed? How composed?
2. Why does Rotherham spend so much time and space on the use of the word "hallelujah"?
3. What shall we say of the present practice of attributing to "nature" the snow-frost-rain, etc.?

## PSALM 148

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Praise Invoked from All Creation.