

THE  
TITLES OF THE PSALMS  
THEIR NATURE AND MEANING  
EXPLAINED

BY

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SECOND EDITION

HENRY FROWDE  
LONDON, EDINBURGH, GLASGOW  
AND NEW YORK

1905

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

VARIED as they are in character and purpose, the Titles of the Psalms have, from time to time, met with a treatment no less varied at the hands of translators and expositors. In days gone by, reverent souls who found a mystery in every word of Holy Scripture, regardless of text or version, approached the Psalm inscriptions in the same submissive spirit as they studied the Inspired Word itself, assured that each and every title had some message to deliver in harmony with the general trend of Revealed Truth. Hence what we have come to consider as catchwords, having little or no syntactical relation with one another, have been often combined and construed in terms explanatory of the deep things of God. Divested of their true and simple character, common words have been regarded as expressions of mystery; and thus, without actual desire or intention, legitimate criticism has been deferred and the pursuit of sound knowledge postponed.

Opinions having such an origin, and running counter to the recognized principles of Scripture interpretation, have at length been set aside, and scholars have, during more recent years, addressed themselves to this subject along saner lines. As a preliminary to exposition, endeavours have been made to consider the Psalms as

compositions, and to bring to their elucidation such help as can be gathered from the literature of other branches of the great Semitic family. So far as these efforts have related to what are called the Musical Titles of the Psalms, it cannot be said that much success has attended research. Hence there is, it is believed, ample room for another attempt, in which the Psalter and its phenomena will be studied in an entirely new aspect, and therefore with results different from any so far attained.

At the outset, one cannot but be impressed with the variety and, indeed, the complexity of the Psalm titles. A cursory survey discovers that some of these relate to authorship, others to historical origin ; some describe literary features, others liturgical use. Yet others are of the nature of musical indications. Dealing with these last, some translators have found in them topical titles, some musical instruments, some initial words of popular airs ; and others have thought to find in them remains of all these varied features. While questions of literary description—Psalm, Song, Prayer, &c.—have been discussed in order to an appreciation of verbal distinctions, and statements as to authorship have been subjected to criticism on other grounds, less attention has been paid to the so-called Musical Titles, of which ‘For the Chief Musician ; *set to the Gittith*’ (Ps. 8, R.V.) may be instanced, for the present, as an example.

In fact, this field has seemed so unpromising of reward to the investigator that, for the past hundred years or so, scholars have been content to follow one another in the weary iteration of views largely based upon conjecture, and avowedly impossible of accommodation to

all the facts as they appear on the surface of the literature of the Old Testament. Referring to these musical terms in general, the great Franz Delitzsch spoke his mind with characteristic candour :

‘ The key to their comprehension must have been lost very early <sup>1</sup>.’

Speaking of the titles as a whole, it is well, before going further, to notice that just one hundred of the psalms are in such a manner referred to their reputed authors—one (90) is ascribed to Moses, seventy-three to David, two (72, 127) to Solomon, twelve to Asaph, eleven to the sons of Korah, and one (89) to Ethan the Ezrahite <sup>2</sup>. From this it appears that David is *the* psalmist—no other writer can overshadow his fame ; and it is easy to understand how it has come about for the entire collection to pass by his name. It is no longer the fashion to discuss the meaning of *of David* and other similar expressions : beyond question authorship was intended by the formula. At the same time, we must be consistent in regard to the preposition *by*. When prefixed to a name at the head of a psalm it

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, Eaton’s translation, vol. i. 28. Delitzsch spoke the conviction of scholars in general. Neubauer, after a minute examination of Jewish thought on the subject, writes : ‘ From all these different expositions of the titles of the Psalms, it is evident that the meaning of them was early lost ; in fact, the LXX and the other early Greek and Latin translators offer no satisfactory explanation of most of them ’ (*Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica*, vol. ii

<sup>2</sup> This is how things appear in the common editions. We shall show, however, in a later chapter, that Ps. 88 belongs to Heman the Ezrahite, and not to the sons of Korah. Further, on examining the inscription over Ps. 46, we shall find a *repetition* of the authorship of the preceding psalm. This will bring the Korahitic psalms down to nine (see note <sup>2</sup> on p. 14).

stands for *possession* in the sense of authorship ; when prefixed to מְנַחֵם (' The Chief Musician ') it must also stand for *possession*, though in another sense ; presumably that of having been given a place in the precentor's repertory or list of psalms proper for rendering in the Temple service <sup>1</sup>.

As already intimated, it is not our intention to discuss those headings which relate to authorship ; we shall also leave out of our investigations the purely historical notes. At present we merely remark as to these, that thirteen psalms have headings of an historical character, and in every case they relate to David. This means much ; certainly more than it has become customary to allow in recent times. It not only says a great deal for the influence of the king and his place in the history of Israel ; it prepares us for the discovery that in after ages there was no hero to divide honours with David—' the man after God's own heart '—in other words, the man whom Jehovah chose for the throne of Israel. Where is Solomon in this category ? It is clear that in the history of Israel there was but one giant, and he the stripling who slew Goliath.

Other headings, again, define the purpose of the psalms to which they are prefixed, as for example—A Psalm of thanksgiving (100), To bring to remembrance (38, 70), A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day (92). Again, there are terms in which literary features and spiritual purposes are distinguished—A Psalm,

<sup>1</sup> We use language in this way to-day. Possession may be regarded under various aspects : there is a landlord's possession and a tenant's also. A picture may be Turner's or Leighton's for the artistic work in it ; or it may be associated with the name of its owner for his proprietary rights in it.

a Song, a Prayer, a Praise, Michtam, Maschil, Shiggaion<sup>1</sup>. Our present undertaking aims at discriminating headings that are literary or historical from such as are musical or have to do with the Temple choir. This work will entail important consequences ; for we shall find that the musical lines are not *headings* at all, and that, for two thousand years at least, while occupying an improper place, they have been misunderstood in themselves, and also have inevitably involved the text of Scripture in a measure of confusion and disorder. Moreover, we shall find that the technical meanings, varied and contradictory, that have been attributed to certain of the musical terms, in the most approved lexicons and expositions, must be rejected ; and that weight must be given to the simple and obvious significations of such words, which will, as a fact, be shown to be in no sense mysterious or recondite in character.

And as, along these lines, we become better acquainted with features of the Psalter that have been much controverted during the centuries, we shall find ourselves in an improved position to survey and examine the Psalms as a work of literature, and to appreciate their peculiar qualities and religious design.

<sup>1</sup> These terms, and the literary designations as a whole, will be dealt with in chapter xviii.



## CHAPTER II

### FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN

#### (I) THE KEY LOST

THE words 'For the Chief Musician' (A.V. 'To the Chief Musician') are prefixed in the ordinary editions of the Psalter to fifty-five psalms<sup>1</sup>, most of which bear the name of David. The designation is conveyed by the participle of a verb meaning 'to lead in music' (נָצַח *nāzāh*).<sup>2</sup> The features of this word are well summarized by Professor Kirkpatrick :

'The verb is used in Chronicles and Ezra in the sense of *superintending* (1 Chron. 23. 4; 2 Chron. 2. 2, 18; 34. 12; Ezra 3. 8, 9), and in 1 Chron. 15. 21 in the specific sense of *leading* (R.V.) the music. There can be little doubt that the word נָצַח means the *precentor* or *conductor* of the Temple choir, who trained the choir and led the music, and that it refers to the use of the psalm in the Temple services<sup>2</sup>.'

Here we see the distinction between the poet and the precentor—between the Psalmist and the Chief Musician. The Psalms might be written by David, or Asaph, or the sons of Korah, and it did not particularly matter at what time, or in connexion with what circumstances or events; when at length the precentor, or Chief Musician, adopted them for the services of the Temple,

<sup>1</sup> The term is distributed as follows: In Book I (Pss. 1-41) it occurs nineteen times; in Book II (42-72) twenty-five times; in Book III (73-89) eight times; in Book IV (90-106) not at all; and in Book V (107-150) three times.

<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges), p. xxi.

they were invested with a new quality. They might be headed Psalm or Song, Michtam or Maschil ; they might be historical in origin or not associated with any special occurrence : now they were given a stated and recognized place in 'the praises of Israel.' The preposition *lamed* (ל) prefixed to מִנְצֵחַ must be understood (as already intimated) as meaning that the psalm *belonged to the precentor for singing purposes*, equally as it *belonged to the poet as its author*.

Later on, we shall show that the words which occasionally accompany the line 'For the Chief Musician' are of great importance—such words, for instance, as *Gittith*, *Shoshannim*, *Alamoth*. They inform us, in an indirect way, that some psalms were, so to speak, earmarked for one season of the year, and some for another ; some were for male voices and some for female ; while several were specified for use in the commemoration of great events in the history of Israel. They go further : these words provide certain psalms with topical titles, whereby they could be recalled in an instant, and with precision, even although their opening lines might seem similar to those of other pieces in the general collection. In fact, the elements of such a classification as is exhibited in our modern hymn-books are discernible in the Musical Titles of the Psalms.

The parallel does not end here, however. As to the hymns used in Christian worship, whatever may be the circumstances of their origin, they are selected for singing in order that their message may come into relation with some present and immediate subject, or some teaching actually under consideration. In like manner, it would appear, the Chief Musician accepted for Temple use psalms that were made before he came into office,

as well as others which doubtless were strictly contemporary writings ; and one and the other he endorsed for employment on occasions that were by no means parallel with the circumstances of their original composition. That a psalm conveyed a *timely* lesson, seems to have determined its selection for a given season or purpose in public worship.

From this standpoint we can realize how psalms written by David before the Temple was built were afterwards associated with great events in his own career, and sung in his memory and to the praise of the Lord his God. The poet wrote of conflict with enemies ; in the spirit of a wholesome accommodation to the needs of later times the words were sung to assist a realization that ' Through God we shall do valiantly : for he it is that shall tread down our adversaries ' (Ps. 60. 12).

To recur to the confusion that has gathered round the musical terms. When we have dealt with them in detail we shall have something to say about their undoubted antiquity. It is sufficient now to observe, in the words of Delitzsch :

' The LXX found them already in existence, and did not understand them ; they cannot be explained even with the aid of the Books of Chronicles (including the Book of Ezra, which forms a part of these), in which much is said about music, and in which they make their appearance, like much else, as the revival of choice old expressions, so that the key to their comprehension must have been lost very early <sup>1</sup>.'

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms* (Eaton's translation), vol. i. 28. Of the same terms, Kirkpatrick says : ' Many of them are extremely obscure, and their meanings can only be conjectured ' (*Psalms*, Introd. xviii). Driver : ' The terms . . . are frequently obscure ' (*Literature of the Old Testament*, seventh edition, p. 369).

Doubtless the key was lost very early. With some, the explanation will be found in the history of Israel. Now the songs of Zion were exchanged for the sorrows of captivity ; again, in later years, the stress of political conflict effectually held down the religious spirit of the people. Whatever, also, may have been Israel's love for the Law of Moses, and the care shown by the Rabbis for the Pentateuch, certain it is that no corresponding devotion was lavished upon the books which compose the other divisions of the Old Testament—the Prophets and the Hagiographa. Hence, when the Septuagint translation came to be made (about 250–200 B.C.), the work fell to men who knew nothing of the liturgical use of the Psalms in the Temple service of praise. The glorious tradition of bygone years had passed out of mind, and the translators were, in consequence, without safe and effective guidance.

Though not able to speak positively, we believe the sequel will show that when the Alexandrian translators entered upon their work 'the key' was lost. In the wake of that loss has come an ever-increasing volume of speculation, which has done little or nothing to solve the problem. This is hardly surprising. The material which is the subject of examination has become disordered : and, before history or philology can contribute anything to the interpretation of the titles, a readjustment must take place. This we now proceed to explain.

Cheyne : ' There is an appearance of better philology in the later theories, but the result remains uncertain ' (*Origin of the Psalter*, p. 460). Wellhausen : ' In most cases these musical directions are unintelligible to us ' (*Polychrome Bible : Psalms*, p. 217).

## CHAPTER III

### FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN

#### (2) THE KEY FOUND

As a result of minute study of the Psalms, as to their history and structure, alike in the original Hebrew and the early versions, the 'key' of the so-called musical titles has at length been found. In the course of research, we bore in mind the general conditions of ancient writing and the various ways in which documents become corrupted in transmission from generation to generation. We remembered that, owing to the absence of paragraph divisions and the lack of any system of punctuation, old-time writings present, among other problems, cases in which scholars have found it difficult to decide questions of construction, and impossible to individualize with certainty distinct passages of great works.

Here, in the Psalter, we find a remarkable illustration of this very problem. Though the Hebrew text which lay before the Septuagint translators was substantially that which we possess to-day, in points of detail it doubtless had peculiarities that have not come down to us. It may be taken for certain, among other things, that the writing was close and compact, the psalms following one another without break or division. Some benediction or closing line of a formal character indicated the end of a psalm; and some such inscription as 'A Psalm,' 'A Song,' 'By David,' 'By Asaph,' with occasional elaborations of a descriptive or historical

nature, indicated the beginning of another. Where psalms had no such words as these at the end or the beginning, two or more of them were often combined, and many are so found to-day, both in Hebrew MSS. and in codices of the early versions <sup>1</sup>.

In whatsoever way these tokens of division were set out in the actual MSS. that lay before the Septuagint translators—in whatsoever way they may have been understood or estimated by the Septuagint translators themselves—one fact is beyond dispute, the so-called ‘musical’ titles have come down to us, alike in the Massoretic recension of the Hebrew text (copies about 900 A.D.) and in the Greek and other early versions (codices dating from about 400 A.D.) in a form that has, even to the present day, caused great confusion. Whether literary or musical, the lines have been a stumbling-block for lexicographers, critics, and commentators; and among other results this is found, namely, words which in other connexions would have been regarded as unmistakable in meaning <sup>2</sup>, when met with here are immediately enshrouded in mystery, and invested with fanciful and speculative significations.

Yet, all down the ages, the Canonical Scriptures have supplied us with a psalm which, standing by itself, claimed to be studied as a model in all its various features, literary and musical. That psalm appears in Habakkuk 3. Being alone, it cannot have taken anything from a preceding composition, nor can any

<sup>1</sup> This is the case, for instance, with Pss. 9 and 10, 32 and 33, 42 and 43, 70 and 71, and several other psalms, in the Fourth and Fifth Books.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, *Alamoth* and *Shoshannim*, as appearing at the head of Pss. 46 and 45 in the ordinary editions of the Psalter.

concluding words have been misconstrued as belonging to some succeeding composition. It proclaims itself as normal—as a model, a standard psalm. And its striking features are these <sup>1</sup>: it OPENS with—

‘ A PRAYER OF HABAKKUK THE PROPHET UPON  
SHIGIONOTH,’

and it ENDS with—

‘ TO THE CHIEF SINGER ON MY STRINGED  
INSTRUMENTS.’

In other words, at the head of the psalm we have a statement of its class (a Prayer), its author (Habakkuk), and its special character (Shigionoth <sup>2</sup>). These particulars are literary; they deal with the writer and the writing. At the end, we have a statement that is musical and exclusively so; the psalm has been adopted <sup>3</sup> by the Chief Singer (the same word as is rendered ‘ Chief Musician ’ in the Psalms), and it is one for orchestral rendering in the worship of God. The pronoun ‘ my ’ before ‘ stringed instruments ’ seems to suggest (what we do not appear to find in the Psalter) a definite and first-hand assignment of the piece to the Chief Musician.

This psalm in Habakkuk tells us what the Psalms of

<sup>1</sup> For the general purposes of this statement, we quote the A.V. We shall, later on, controvert the ‘ set to ’ of the R.V.; but for the present there is no need to dispense with the guidance of the familiar versions.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter on ‘ Literary and Historical Headings ’; also Appendix, § 5.

<sup>3</sup> As already observed, the *ב* (*lamed*) implies possession in both cases. The psalm *belongs* to Habakkuk as its author; to the chief singer it *belongs* in the sense that he has charge of it for a special purpose (see note on p. 4).

Israel were in point of form. It suggests that in the succession of compositions that make up the Psalter there has been a displacement of the 'Chief Musician' line, along with the words that accompany it in a score or more of instances. The proper place of this line, as we shall demonstrate in a practical manner, is at THE CONCLUSION of a psalm. Through an unfortunate error it has, in every case, been placed at the beginning of THE PSALM FOLLOWING that to which it rightly belongs. The various words that have accompanied it in its wandering have added to the confusion, which has baffled explanation for the past two thousand years. Accordingly, words such as *Gittith*, *Alamoth*, and *Shoshannim*, and others, which could hardly perplex the tyro in the Hebrew language, have, in the abnormal circumstances, been more than a match for the profoundest erudition ; and a desperate ingenuity has overlaid them with meanings that are purely conjectural, and as uninteresting as they are valueless from a philological point of view.

In the edition of the Psalms which follows these pages the titles have been carefully discriminated as to their character : the lines that should follow have been distinguished from those which should precede each psalm. The combination which is thus dissolved has been responsible for lamentable confusion at the head of Ps. 88, as ordinarily printed. There, as has been often pointed out by expositors, one and the same composition is ascribed to two distinct writers. The psalm is described as 'A Song, a Psalm of the sons of Korah,' and also as 'Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.' In the words of Franz Delitzsch, we have here 'alongside of one another two different statements' as to the origin of one



psalm <sup>1</sup>. We do not ask, with the distinguished commentator, 'which notice is the more trustworthy?' The former is out of place; it belongs to Ps. 87, which is explicitly described in its heading as 'A Psalm of the sons of Korah; a Song <sup>2</sup>.' In the accompanying Psalter the conflicting notices are given their proper positions.

As will have been inferred, the displacement here described, and which it is the purpose of the present work to correct, takes us back beyond the age of existing Hebrew manuscripts. The Massoretes seem to have had no conception of the text having become deranged in this particular. Going backward for a second period of a thousand years, we find the Septuagint translation in progress, or possibly just completed; but the best extant copies of this work give us no help. In fact, we are driven to the conclusion that the Seventy were quite unfamiliar with the use of the Psalms in the days of the Temple worship <sup>3</sup>. They had

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms* (vol. ii. 499).

<sup>2</sup> A peculiarity of the musical line here is that it *repeats* the facts as to class and authorship. There is only one other case in which this feature appears, Ps. 46 in the ordinary editions. Both the psalms of which the authorship is repeated are by the sons of Korah. Regarding other psalms which have had more than one name over them, see the 'Praise and Confession Choir' (p. 116).

<sup>3</sup> Ginsburg's *Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* presents the features of the best MSS. and the most approved editions of the text. There the psalms are set out in lines as poetry, and (what is conclusive on the point in hand) למנצח and מזמור לדוד, or corresponding words, are given IN ONE AND THE SAME LINE. As to the Septuagint translation, the collocation reproductions of the Vatican and Alexandrine codices exhibit the same confusion. The words Εἰς τὸ τέλος, which stand for 'For the Chief Musician,' occupy the same line as

no idea of a Chief Musician, or precentor ; and when, in 1 Chron. 15. 20, 21, they met with the words *Alamoth* and *Sheminith* (which occur as psalm titles) they were content to transfer them into their work in Greek letters, as terms which to them were unmeaning or misunderstood <sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, in one case at least, expositors have very generally observed the relation of a musical title to the psalm immediately preceding it. Dealing with literary design in the arrangement of the Psalter, they have called attention to the fact that Psalm 56, over which stands the title *Jonath elem rehokim* ('The Dove of the Distant Terebinths') is preceded by a psalm in which David says : 'Oh that I had wings like a dove ! Then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, I would lodge in the wilderness' (Ps. 55. 6, 7). Green, Delitzsch, Hengstenberg, and others, have seen some relation between the line in question and the preceding psalm ; but it seems never to have occurred to them to go behind appearances and thoroughly to examine the entire system of psalm inscriptions.

While the observation of the expositors named indicates the relation of the line to Psalm 55, the absence

ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυίδ, or such-like headings, as is represented with precision in Swete's *Greek Old Testament according to the Septuagint*.

<sup>1</sup> The Septuagint translators rendered מְנַחֵם ('For the Chief Musician') by *Eis τὸ τέλος* ('For the end'). None of the Greek versions give material help as to that important word. In dealing with the other musical lines, however, the Seventy and their successors were more successful. In due course, we shall amply justify this remark, which is much more favourable to the Greek versions than is the commonly expressed judgement regarding the Psalm Titles.

of any echo of the title in the succeeding psalm plainly suggests that the line is out of place. Pending the development of our case as to the displacement, we ask for some consideration for this candid observation on the part of scholars who had no theory to support in pointing out the facts now described. The line, though standing so long over Psalm 56, proclaims itself as properly belonging to Psalm 55, which it furnishes with a topical title of much force and beauty. In this edition of the Psalter it is given what we hold to be its primitive place.

To conclude this chapter: in a proper arrangement of the material, the lines at the top of a psalm should do this and no more—(1) describe the piece, whether a Song, a Psalm, Michtam, &c.; (2) state the author, David, Asaph, sons of Korah, &c.; (3) set out the circumstances of its composition, as is the case in thirteen historical psalms (Doeg, Ziphites, When Saul sent, &c.); or the object for which it was written ('To bring to remembrance,' 'For the Sabbath day,' &c.). Anything not coming within this description belongs to the preceding psalm; and in the present edition such notices have been restored to the place which they originally occupied. There is no need to emphasize the world of difference between authorship and use in worship, between historical origin and liturgical application. It is primarily with liturgical application and use in divine worship that the subscript line, 'For the Chief Musician,' has to do<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Still we would not overlook, in this connexion, the exceptional instances in which points relating to the class of psalm and the authorship are *repeated* with the musical notice—Pss. 45 and 87 (as numbered in this edition). See note 2 on p. 14.

## CHAPTER IV

### FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN

#### (3) SOME RESULTS OF MISCONSTRUCTION

WHEN the Musical Titles of the Psalms were misconstrued, seed was sown for centuries of confusion, followed by speculation along various lines. The Septuagint translators seem to have looked for a measure of relation between these titles and the psalms that followed them; and occasionally their renderings were accommodated in some degree to such features as they deemed responsive<sup>1</sup>. One thing is certain, at that early time the titles were, with few exceptions, regarded as words to be translated as simply as possible—as the most cursory examination of the Septuagint and other Greek versions will show. Though two or three of the titles may have been thought to stand for musical instruments, none were treated as catchwords of popular airs. The guess-work of subsequent centuries, among Jews and Christians alike, had not as yet begun.

All the same, the Septuagint translators and their followers found no clear and consistent response in the psalms to the titles so far as they understood them. For

<sup>1</sup> See their rendering of *Aijelesh hash-Shahar* as 'Concerning the Morning Aid.' They associated the title with אֵילָת (Eyalûth) in Ps. 22. 19 (20) (R.V. 'succour'). Even the most distinguished of recent expositors have shown a readiness to seize upon such points of similarity; and well they might, considering how frequently any such response has to be sought in vain in the psalm *following* the musical line.

instance, as to *Gittith* (or *Gittôth*) which they rightly rendered 'Winepresses,' they found no echo in Pss. 8, 81, 84—that is, in the psalms *following* the title; and the same may be said regarding other psalms and titles. Hence there arose a disposition to seek a mystical rather than a logical correspondence; but this, it need hardly be said, yielded no satisfactory result. Speculation threw no light upon the problem of the titles, either as to their meaning or their purpose in regard to the psalms<sup>1</sup>.

Next it became general to find 'a musical instrument' expressed by the various words that gave difficulty to the expositor. Seeing that a title received no explanation in the psalm itself, perhaps an explanation could be found in something separate and independent! A safe inference, no doubt; and 'a musical instrument' was a definition sufficiently abstract for any and every troublesome term. Though Semitic literature and Oriental antiquities might be silent regarding the supposed 'harp of eight strings,' or 'trumpet in the shape of a lily,' the rendering served a purpose in the absence of exact information. The Authorized Version of the Psalms had this view underlying its renderings of the musical titles.

The more recent tendency has been to find, not musical instruments, but styles of singing and catch-lines of popular songs. Here, again, the desideratum is met of something altogether independent of the text. Seeing that the Hebrew Psalter, as hitherto studied, had

<sup>1</sup> Neubauer's essay in *Studia Biblica*, vol. ii, on the Psalm Titles according to Early Jewish Authorities, proves how essentially without authority early Jewish opinion is in regard to this subject. In fact the views are in many cases as unreasonable as they are generally discordant.

furnished no explanation of the titles, let the song-books of the surrounding nations be introduced ! Why should not the Psalms have been sung to heathen melodies and airs ? Rather the question should have taken the opposite form—Why *should* heathen melodies come in ? The suggestion is unthinkable to a mind that has any understanding of Israelitish thought and history. However scholars may have reasoned, the position thus stated describes their most approved conclusions—Jews and Christians agreeing. And the Revised Version, with *by* rendered 'set to,' reflects this view.

Let it be noted that these theories, which for a time have foreclosed inquiry, have been based on pure assumption. As a fact, dummy musical instruments and supposititious airs, associated with people of whom we know comparatively little, have been introduced in order to explain the literature of Israel—of whom we know more by far than we do of any other ancient nation ! Speculation having, in these circumstances, yielded no solution of the problem, the psalm titles invite attention from an altogether new point of view.

Our course of procedure is simple. First, we correct the misplacement of the musical line throughout the Psalms ; and then, by applying to the general treatment KNOWN facts and teachings, as distinguished from mere conjectures, we deal with the various titles themselves in the light of the psalms to which they properly belong. We shall be rewarded by glimpses of worship in Israel during the great annual feasts, also of services in commemoration of outstanding events in the history of the nation. These observations will prepare us for others, which will help us to understand the work of the Chief Musician of the Temple at Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CALENDAR IN THE PSALTER

#### (I) PSALMS FOR SPECIAL SEASONS

WITH the musical line 'For the Chief Musician' thus restored to its original place in the Hebrew Psalter, we are enabled to study the Songs of Zion with promise of a larger knowledge of their contents and use. At once we see that we have not simply a collection of poems, but a hymnal consisting of songs and prayers, meditations and homilies, to be rendered in divine worship by singers and instrumentalists. For this latter purpose the pieces have, so to speak, been endorsed by the Chief Musician, or precentor, and received into his repertory.

Proceeding to examine the words which accompany the familiar notice, we inquire, quite naturally, whether they give us any clue as to the occasions on which specific pieces were brought forward in the service of praise. Was everything hap-hazard? or were psalms selected with thought and judgement for use at different seasons of the year? Investigation shows to demonstration that reverent care, along the line suggested, was exercised on the part of those who arranged for the due expression of 'the praises of Israel.' Here and there, at least, we find traces of the ministry of the Chief Musician and his work in connexion with Temple psalmody.

Assuredly we have not in the Book of Psalms any complete calendar such as was doubtless anticipated by David, realized by Solomon and other pious kings, and elaborated on the return from Babylon. We are satis-

fied, however, that there was a formal calendar of worship, and what has not hitherto been recognized will now be shown; for the Psalter rubrics (to use the term generally) indicate the elements of appointments for the great festivals of Israel, as well as for other occasions of national interest and importance.

At the time of the carrying away to Babylon, Israel had a magnificent heritage of religious experience. There had undoubtedly been times of indifference, and disregard of Jehovah and His service; but there were periodical revivals, which avowedly aimed at bringing back the days of David and Solomon—and in particular was the name of the great poet-king influential and his aims regarded as satisfying the highest ideals. Nothing more glorious was conceived by the most godly rulers in Israel than to restore divine worship to what it was in the golden age, in fact, to 'do according to the commandment of David.' Such, undoubtedly, is the impression conveyed by the Books of Chronicles <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This deeply interesting subject may be studied in the light of the following passages: David's ordinance for the service of praise, on the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, to 'prophesy with harps, &c.,' and for song (1 Chron. 25. 1 sq.); Solomon's appointment of Levites to 'praise and minister before the priests,' for all seasons of the year, 'according to the ordinance of David his father' (2 Chron. 8. 13, 14); Jehoiada's provision, after the death of Athaliah, 'according to the order of David' (2 Chron. 23. 18); the appointment of Hezekiah, in times of deep revival, 'according to the commandment of David'... 'with the instruments of David king of Israel'... 'the Levites to sing praises unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer': 'since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem' (2 Chron. 29. 25-30; 30. 26); Josiah's solemn passover... 'the singers the sons of Asaph were in their place, according to the commandment of David' (2 Chron. 35. 1,



Whatever might be the circumstances of their origin, psalms which referred most definitely to the glorious past of the nation, and such as gave expression to earnest prayer to the God of Israel, could not but be selected for the worship of the sanctuary. And, needless to say, the festivals of the spring and autumn would be the first to claim attention on the part of the precentor. Passover, with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, came first; and then Tabernacles, with the Feast of Ingathering. These bulked large in the life of Israel, and we should not be surprised to find psalms associated with them.

Among the psalm titles which have excited the deepest interest are *Shoshannim* and *Gittith*. These, we shall show, point respectively to the Passover and Tabernacles feasts. We shall discuss the words and examine the psalms to which they belong.

Speaking generally, *Shoshannim* means 'lilies,' and *Gittith* speaks of 'winepress.' The one represents flowers, which tell us of spring; the other represents fruit, which speak of autumn. Passover was the spring feast; Tabernacles was the autumn feast. On good and sufficient grounds lexicographers and

15). And on the return from Babylon under Zerubbabel, we meet once more with 'the musical instruments of David,' with songs and singers, also with Levites whose duty it was 'to praise and give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God' (Ezra 3. 10; Neh. 12. 24, 36, 45, 46). In the literary headings of the Psalms, and also in the musical titles, to be explained in subsequent pages, David was the one hero of the nation of Israel. He was Jehovah's choice for the throne, and the glory of the people for many generations. And does not Israel still remember David, and pray daily that God will return in mercy to Jerusalem, and 'establish therein the throne of David'?

expositors have suggested the relation of *Gittith* to the autumn feast, for 'winepress' suggests the vintage season; but we are not aware that *Shoshannim* has yet been recognized as designating the spring feast which was, of course, celebrated in the flower season.

There is no need to prove that spring is the time of flowers, or that autumn is the time of fruits. The two seasons represent the earth's productiveness in beauty and in wealth. Ancient and modern poets have sung these notes<sup>1</sup>, and months have been named accordingly<sup>2</sup>. The pictorial statement of Song of Songs 2. 11, 12 holds true in the West no less than the East: 'The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; THE FLOWERS APPEAR ON THE EARTH, &c.' In other words, after winter comes spring, and the flowers announce the fact. In Israelitish life and experience spring meant the Passover, and anything that recalled the season must of necessity have suggested the feast.

As to the word *Shoshannim*, which stands for the Passover season in the system of psalm titles, its simple meaning is 'lilies.' It was, however, used in a general

<sup>1</sup> Athenaeus spoke of flowers as 'children of the spring'—*ἔαρὸς τέκνα* (*Deipnosoph.*, l. 13, c. 9, 608). W. Cullen Bryant wrote of 'flowering springs' (*The Planting of the Apple-tree*). Thomas Moore's muse brought the two seasons into contrast, thus:

'Every season hath its pleasures:  
Spring may boast her flowery prime,  
Yet the vineyards' ruby treasures  
Brighten autumn's sob'rer time.'

(*Spring and Autumn.*)

<sup>2</sup> Compare the Old Dutch *Grassmonth* and *Winemonth*; the French Republican *Floreal* and *Fructidor*; also the Attic Greek *Anihēstērion* (Flower-month).

of the pillars of Solomon's Temple—LILIES and POMEGRANATES (I Kings 7. 20–22 ff.)? What was the meaning of the ornamentation displayed on the Temple furniture given by Ptolemy Philadelphus to the Jews of Egypt—LILIES and CLUSTERS OF GRAPES (Jos. *Antiq.* 12. 2. 9, 10)? What, again, are we to understand by the FLOWERS OF PURPLE and the GOLDEN VINE exhibited on the veils which adorned the doors of the Temple of Herod (ibid. 15. 11. 3)? Once more, can we overlook the symbology of the seven-branch candlestick on the Arch of Titus, as it appeared in 1710, and was described by Reland—LILIES and POMEGRANATES<sup>1</sup>? Ever and anon one meets the same combination, FLOWERS and FRUIT—

<sup>1</sup> The candlestick of the tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex. 25. 31–34) displayed 'knops and flowers'; according to the Septuagint, 'globes and lilies'; the Targums (Onkelos and Palestine), 'apples and lilies.' Josephus understood the ornaments to be 'knops and lilies, and pomegranates and bowls' (*Antiq.* 3. 6. 7). In a number of places the Seventy have rendered פְּרָחִים (*përäch*, flower) by κρίνον (lily). There seems to have been a disposition to speak of flowers in general as 'lilies.' The point is, that flowers and fruit entered into the symbology of Israel with a definite purpose, ultimately representing the nation itself. May we not see an extension of the same symbols in the 'golden bells and pomegranates' upon the hem of the high priest's robe? (Exod. 28. 33, 34; 39. 25, 26). The bells stood for flowers—for *lilies are bell-flowers*. As other appointments were 'for a memorial of the children of Israel before the Lord' (Ex. 28. 29; 39. 7), so this robe was understood to be in the history of the nation (see Ecclus. 45. 9). It is well to notice, on the other hand, that in the Oracle, or most holy place, of Solomon's Temple, quite another set of emblems appear—cherubim and palm-trees and open (or garlanded) flowers (I Kings 6. 23 ff. See also Ezek. 40. 22; 41. 18–20; and cp. Ps. 92. 12, 13). Leaving considerations of passing seasons and human experience, these emblems seem to be eloquent of the things which abide.

the flowers of spring suggesting the Passover, and the fruit of autumn the Feast of Tabernacles.

Ancient monuments display similar emblems, some of which we may mention. Remains of ancient synagogues in the Holy Land, as witness the publications of the Palestine Exploration Fund, include lintels and cornices with decorations such as have been described—now the LILY-FLOWER is with a WINE-BOWL, at other times with a cluster of grapes<sup>1</sup>. And what shall be said



THE SYMBOLS REPRESENT THE SPRING AND AUTUMN FEASTS; AND THE TOKENS OF THE FEASTS BECAME THE INSIGNIA OF THE NATION.

of the designs upon those much-discussed coins, the Hebrew shekel and half-shekel, which some numismatists assign to one period, some to another? On the one side is a TRIPLE LILY, on the other a WINE-BOWL! Schürer speaks of the significance of these symbols as still 'doubtful<sup>2</sup>.' Association with such a round of objects as we have indicated, going back to Bible times, should help to determine their age beyond dispute<sup>3</sup>. And, need-

<sup>1</sup> When the symbols take the form of a lamb and a wine-bowl, the meaning is the same—the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.

<sup>2</sup> *Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, Eng. tr., div. i. vol. ii. p. 380.

<sup>3</sup> The designs on other coins may be explained by looking in the same direction for their motive. For instance, a silver coin

less to say, when symbols are found on coins they declare their national importance even though their meaning may for a time remain obscure.

If Passover (*Pesach*) stood for anything, it stood for the nation of Israel as 'the redeemed of the Lord.' Whatever may have been the inclusive meaning of Tabernacles (*Succoth*), certainly the sense of divine care and protection was specially prominent. So the two feasts expressed the alpha and omega of Israel's boast in Jehovah—the REDEEMER and KEEPER of the nation (Deut. 24. 18; Lev. 23. 43; Ps. 121. 5). Hence the signs for the seasons came to stand for the people themselves, who claimed in anticipation, and as a present possession, the blessings of the promise given by Hosea: 'I will be as the dew unto Israel: HE SHALL BLOSSOM AS THE LILY, . . . his beauty shall be as the olive tree, . . . they shall revive as the corn, AND BLOSSOM AS THE VINE: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon' (14. 5-7). Note also the remarkable words in 2 Esdras 5. 23, 24: 'O Lord that bearest rule, of all the woods of the earth, and of all the trees thereof, THOU HAST CHOSEN THEE ONE VINE: . . . of all the flowers of the world THOU HAST CHOSEN THEE ONE LILY,' &c.

Let other allusions be considered. Israel a VINE: 'Israel is a luxuriant vine.' God 'brought a vine out of the reign of Herod Agrippa has features precisely similar to the one depicted in the text. On the one side are three ears of corn, springing from one stalk (Passover: see Lev. 23. 10-14); and on the other a tent or booth (Feast of Tabernacles). May the triple character of the Passover symbol not be owing to the fact that, in a certain sense, the institution had three stages—first in Egypt, then in the wilderness, and thirdly in the Land of Promise itself? (see Exod. 12. 3 ff.; Num. 9. 5; Joshua 4. 19; 5. 10).

Egypt' (Hos. 10. 1 ; Ps. 80. 8. See also Isa. 5. 1-7 ; 27. 2-6 ; Jer. 2. 21 ; 12. 10 ff.). Israel a LILY : see the Prayer-book for British Jews, in the service for the Feast of Purim, where Israel is called 'The Lily of Jacob.' Moreover, in a hymn chanted in connexion with the Feast of Hanuca (Dedication), the Jews praise God for delivering 'the Standard of the Lilies,' meaning Israel, from the Grecians, in the days of the Asmoneans. As the feasts were a parabolic expression of the origin of the nation, so the signs of the feasts afterwards became emblematic of the people themselves. Capable of a varied expression, they became the insignia of Israel.

Whether monumental or literary, appearing on Temple furniture or pieces of money, these emblems are full of meaning. If further proof is demanded of their religious and national significance, it is assuredly afforded by the fact that these very symbols were employed long ago on Hebrew tombstones. The commonest symbol found in the Jewish catacombs at Rome is the seven-branch candlestick, which, as already explained, in its original represented both flowers and fruit. Moreover, in the old Jewish cemeteries at Rome similar features are displayed. On some gravestones the TRIPLE LILY appears ; on others the POMEGRANATE <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Where the symbols take the form of a bunch of grapes or a basket of fruit, the meaning is the same. That the lilies have been identified as 'poppies,' and the pomegranates spoken of as 'a round fruit,' is evidence of the extent to which Old Testament symbology has been neglected and misunderstood (See *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, s. v. 'Catacombs,' and literature there indicated ; also Hudson's *History of the Jews in Rome*, ch. 13).

As seen on the monuments of the dead, such symbols cannot be regarded as merely accidental or of an ephemeral character. With Israel, as is well known, the national and the religious were combined. So the flowers declare the sleepers to be of the people of the Passover—that is, REDEEMED ; the fruit proclaim them to be of the people of the Tabernacles Feast—that is, KEPT of the Lord.

The symbols and facts which we have considered go deep into Israelitish history. From them emerge impressions having all the force of logical conclusions. Let us mark well the signs and their meaning :

(1) SHOSHANNIM—*Lilies* (Flowers) for the Feast of Passover (in the Spring), which, in a word, meant DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT, a guarantee or pledge of a thousand deliverances (Exod. 12. 2, 27 ; Deut. 24. 18).

(2) GITTITH—*Winepresses* (Fruit) for the Feast of Tabernacles (in the Autumn), which, in a word, meant the ENJOYMENT OF DIVINE PROTECTION and full reliance upon Jehovah's care (Lev. 23. 43).

These fixtures, as we have already observed, cover the entire ground of the making of the nation, and its consecration to the Lord as a peculiar people. We now proceed to examine the psalms which were associated with them.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CALENDAR IN THE PSALTER

#### (2) PSALMS FOR THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER SHOSHANNIM (Psalms 44, 68)

THERE is no need to give a description of the Passover Feast, nor to rehearse the full significance of the spring commemorations as they struck the Israelitish mind (Exod. 13. 4; 23. 15; 34. 18). Chief as well as first in order of the national festivals, the Passover was celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month, called Abib—ear-forming (of barley) or growing green (of vegetation in general). It recalled the coming out of Egypt through the exertion of Jehovah's mighty power. It was instituted in its first significance in the land of Egypt; and, having been once celebrated in the wanderings in the wilderness of Sinai, it was next observed in the Land of Promise four days after the passage of the Jordan (Exod. 12. 3 ff.; Num. 9. 5; Josh. 4. 19; 5. 10). The ordinance was, above all else, a memorial of great deliverances. In special mercy Jehovah passed over the houses of the Israelites when the first-born of the Egyptians were destroyed.

Whatever may have passed out of mind in the course of centuries, the descendants of the liberated Israelites retained a lively recollection of the story of their national redemption. Jehovah brought them out of the house of bondage with outstretched arm, and for their sakes He cast the heathen out of the land which He had promised to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The



progress of the Ark of the Covenant during the journey to Canaan was attended with marvellous signs : When the ark set forward, Moses said, ' Rise up, O LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered ; and let them that hate thee flee before thee ' (Num. 10. 35). This we do well to remember in our present studies. When God was with Israel their enemies fled ; when He left them they fled before their enemies (Deut. 28. 7, 25). The Passover was also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was ordained to be kept ' in its season from year to year for ever ' (Exod. 12. 14 ; 13. 10 ; Lev. 23. 5, 6). Taken as a whole, these seven days of festivity reminded Israel of the hard bondage of Egypt, of the mighty deliverance wrought for them by a covenant-keeping God, and of the triumphant entrance that had been accorded them into the land of their inheritance.

The *Shoshannim* psalms, two in number, are on this note, and very distinctly so. Those entitled *Shoshannim Eduth*, also two in number, will demand separate treatment. Our present concern is with Psalms 44 and 68. In the latter (ver. 1) we once more meet with the words of Moses, ' when the ark set forward,' in this form : ' Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered ; let them also that hate him flee before him.' Although the prayers and praises of these psalms were timely for any day, they were specially suited for the Passover season, for they rehearsed, with much animation and power, the signs and wonders that were wrought in Israel's behalf ' in the days of old ' (44. 1). And they could not but bring home to the Israelitish mind the assurance that the God of the Exodus from Egypt was ready to deliver His people again and again. Israel ever looked forward to new mercies like those enjoyed by the

PSALMS FOR FEAST OF THE PASSOVER 33

fathers of the nation. If Jehovah was the God of the past, nevertheless the future was with Him : ' I the Lord, the first, and with the last ; I am He.'

PSALM 68 <sup>1</sup>

A Psalm of David, a Song.

- 1 **Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered ;  
Let them also that hate him flee before him.**
- 2 **As smoke is driven away, so drive them away :  
As wax melteth before the fire,  
So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.**
- 3 **But let the righteous be glad ; let them exult before  
God :**  
Yea, let them rejoice with gladness.
- 4 **Sing unto God, sing praises to his name :  
Cast up a high way for him that rideth through the  
deserts ;  
His name is JAH ; and exult ye before him.**
- 5 **A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,  
Is God in his holy habitation.**
- 6 **God <sup>a</sup> setteth the solitary in families :  
He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity :  
But the rebellious dwell in a parched land.**
- 7 **O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,  
When thou didst march through the wilderness ;**
- 8 **The earth trembled, [Selah  
The heavens also dropped at the presence of God :  
Even yon Sinai trembled at the presence of God. the  
God of Israel.**
- 9 **Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain,**

<sup>a</sup> Heb.  
*maketh the  
solitary to  
dwell in a  
house.*

<sup>1</sup> The verses which specially respond to the Musical Title are printed in black (Clarendon) type.

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Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

<sup>a</sup> Or, troop Thy <sup>a</sup> congregation dwelt therein : 10

Thou, O God, didst prepare of thy goodness for the poor.

The Lord giveth the word : 11

The women that publish the tidings are a great host.

Kings of armies flee, they flee : 12

And she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil.

<sup>b</sup> Or, When ye lie among the sheepfolds, it is as the wings... gold. <sup>b</sup> Will ye lie among the sheepfolds, 13

As the wings of a dove covered with silver,

And her pinions with yellow gold ?

When the Almighty scattered kings therein, 14

<sup>c</sup> Or, It snowed <sup>c</sup> It was as when it snoweth in Zalmon. 15

A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan ;

<sup>d</sup> Heb. A mountain of summits. <sup>d</sup> An high mountain is the mountain of Bashan. 16

Why look ye askance, ye high mountains,

At the mountain which God hath desired for his abode ?

Yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.

The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thou-

sands upon thousands : 17

<sup>e</sup> Or, Sinai is in the sanctuary. The Lord is among them, <sup>e</sup> as in Sinai, in the sanctuary. 18

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led *thy* captivity

captive ;

Thou hast received gifts among men,

<sup>f</sup> Heb. Jah. See ver. 4. Yea, among the rebellious also, that <sup>f</sup> the LORD God

<sup>g</sup> Or, dwell there might <sup>g</sup> dwell *with them*. 19

<sup>h</sup> Or, Blessed be the Lord day by day : if one oppresseth us, God is our salvation <sup>h</sup> Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden, 19

Even the God who is our salvation. [Selah

God is unto us a God of deliverances ; 20

And unto JEHOVAH the Lord belong the issues from

death.

But God shall smite through the head of his enemies, 21

PSALMS FOR FEAST OF THE PASSOVER 35

The hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his guiltiness.

- 22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan,  
I will bring *them* again from the depths of the sea :
- 23 That thou mayest dip thy foot in blood,  
That the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion  
from *thine* enemies.
- 24 They have seen thy goings, O God,  
Even the goings of my God, my King, <sup>a</sup> into the sanctuary. <sup>a</sup> Or, in the sanctuary  
Or, in holiness
- 25 The singers went before, the minstrels followed after,  
In the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels.
- 26 Bless ye God in the congregations,  
Even the Lord, *ye that are* of the fountain of Israel.
- 27 There is little Benjamin their ruler,  
The princes of Judah *and* their <sup>b</sup> council, <sup>b</sup> Or, company  
The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.
- 28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength :  
<sup>c</sup> Strengthen, O God, that which thou <sup>d</sup> hast wrought for us. <sup>c</sup> Or, Be strong, O God, thou that hast &c.  
<sup>d</sup> Or, hast wrought for us out of thy temple. Un-to Jerusalem &c.
- 29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem  
Kings shall bring presents unto thee.
- 30 Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds,  
The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples,  
<sup>e</sup> Trampling under foot the pieces of silver ; <sup>e</sup> Or, Every one submitting himself with pieces of silver  
<sup>f</sup> He hath scattered the peoples that delight in war. <sup>f</sup> Or, as otherwise read, Scatter thou  
<sup>g</sup> Heb. Cush.
- 31 Princes shall come out of Egypt ;  
<sup>g</sup> Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God.
- 32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ;  
O sing praises unto the Lord ;

[Selah

To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens,  
which are of old; 33

Lo, he uttereth his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.

Ascribe ye strength unto God : 34

His excellency is over Israel,  
And his strength is in the skies.

<sup>a</sup> Or,  
*Terrible is  
God*

<sup>a</sup> O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places : 35

The God of Israel, he giveth strength and power unto  
*his* people.

Blessed be God.

<sup>b</sup> That is,  
*Lilies.*

For the Chief Musician ; set to <sup>b</sup>Shoshannim <sup>1</sup>.

In this song-psalm of David we have the Passover story—the deliverance from Egyptian and other enemies, and the settlement in a land of prosperity—told with striking detail and great poetic force. Jehovah is the God of complete salvation (19, 20). In the words of Perowne :

‘ The great central idea of the psalm is the choice of Zion as the dwelling-place of Jehovah. To this all leads ; from this all flows <sup>2</sup>.’

But it is because of its graphic outline of antecedent events that the psalm was designated by the chief musician for the Passover season ; and whether we take verse 29, ‘ Because of thy temple at Jerusalem,’ as

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, relating to *Shoshannim*, the Passover Feast. The preposition לְ (*al*), in all such cases as this, may well be rendered ‘ on ’ or ‘ concerning. ’ A still more useful rendering is ‘ relating to ’ ; for then any qualifying description is easily supplied by the mind : relating to — (as a season) ; relating to — (as a choir) ; relating to — (as a subject), as the case may be. In no precise sense does the word mean ‘ set to ’ ; though it may mean ‘ corresponding with ’ or ‘ answering to. ’

<sup>2</sup> *The Psalms*, vol. i. p. 534 (8th ed.).

an allusion to the tabernacle that was actual in David's time or as an anticipation of the more glorious building erected by Solomon, one thing is clear : the psalm reflects conditions of national ascendancy and prosperity on the part of people whose God was Jehovah (18, 34), and whose song was of salvation and deliverances such as the Passover brought to mind from year to year (19, 20).

PSALM 44.

This psalm brings us into another atmosphere. Maschil of the sons of Korah, it was written for times of national decline. Yet it opens on the distinctive Passover note :

*A Psalm of the sons of Korah. Maschil.*

1 We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers  
have told us,

What work thou didst in their days, in the days of old.

2 Thou didst drive out the nations with thy hand, and  
plantedst them in ;

Thou didst afflict the peoples, and <sup>a</sup> didst spread them *a Or, cast them forth*  
abroad.

3 For they gat not the land in possession by their own  
sword,

Neither did their own arm save them :

But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of  
thy countenance,

Because thou hadst a favour unto them.

4 Thou art my King, O God :

Command <sup>b</sup> deliverance for Jacob.

5 Through thee will we push down our adversaries :

Through thy name will we tread them under that  
rise up against us.

6 For I will not trust in my bow,

<sup>b</sup> Or *victories*

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Neither shall my sword save me.  
 But thou hast saved us from our adversaries, 7  
 And hast put them to shame that hate us.  
 In God have we made our boast all the day long, 8  
 And we will give thanks unto thy name for ever.

[Selah

But now thou hast cast *us* off, and brought us to  
 dishonour ; 9  
 And goest not forth with our hosts.  
 Thou makest us to turn back from the adversary : 10  
 And they which hate us spoil for themselves.  
 Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat ; 11  
 And hast scattered us among the nations.  
 Thou sellest thy people for nought, 12  
 And hast not increased *thy wealth* by their price.  
 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, 13  
 A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.  
 Thou makest us a byword among the nations, 14  
 A shaking of the head among the peoples.  
 All the day long is my dishonour before me, 15  
 And the shame of my face hath covered me,  
 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blas-  
 phemeth ; 16  
 By reason of the enemy and the avenger.  
 All this is come upon us ; yet have we not forgotten  
 thee, 17  
 Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.  
 Our heart is not turned back, 18  
 Neither have our steps declined from thy way ;  
 \*That thou hast sore broken us in the place of jackals, 19  
 And covered us with the shadow of death.  
 If we have forgotten the name of our God, 20  
 Or spread forth our hands to a strange god ;

\* Or,  
*Though*

- 21 Shall not God search this out ?  
 For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.
- 22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long ;  
 We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
- 23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD ?  
 Arise, cast *us* not off for ever.
- 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,  
 And forgettest our affliction and our oppression ?
- 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust :  
 Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
- 26 Rise up for our help,  
 And redeem us for thy lovingkindness' sake.

For the Chief Musician ; set to <sup>a</sup> Shoshannim <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> That is,  
*Lilies.*

Note the condition of need expressed in this psalm. Israel is represented as 'cast off and brought to dishonour,' like 'sheep appointed for meat,' and 'scattered among the nations.' There were still fighting hosts, but Jehovah went not forth with them, so they were defeated on the field (9-11). This was virtually a reversal of old-time experiences, when the enemies of Israel fled before them. Yet the nation was still in the land, but held in contempt by the surrounding peoples (13, 14). Not because of any flagrant wickedness were the chosen people being 'killed all the day long,' but presumably because it was the inscrutable will of God that trial should come upon them (18-22). In conclusion comes a prayer for help—for deliverance from the 'affliction and oppression' of the new house of bondage (24: comp. Exod. 3. 7, 9, the words of which are repeated with precision).

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, relating to *Shoshannim*, the Passover Feast. See note on p. 36.



It may seem hardly reasonable to inquire what interpretations others have put upon the word *Shoshannim* (singular *Shushan* or *Shoshan*) in this connexion ; seeing that in no case have such interpretations been subject to help and direction derived from the psalms to which the word rightly belongs in the system of titles as here explained. Yet, in order to show that the conclusions which we have advanced are not opposed to consistent or cogent views, we give the following excerpts from the works of authorities in lexicography and exegesis :

## SHOSHANNIM.

GESENIUS : *Shushan* (or *Shoshan*). A lily ; an instrument of music, perhaps so called as resembling the form of the lily (*Heb. Lex.* s.v., Robinson's edition, 1872). The Oxford Gesenius has not yet reached the word. Buhl's German edition (1899), reminding one of the modest *Query* of old-time lexicons, after dealing with the ordinary uses of the word, says of the occurrences in psalm-inscriptions—' No indication of meaning.'

FÜRST : Proper name of one of the twenty-four music choirs left by David, so called from a master, *Shushan* (*Heb. Lex.* s.v., Davidson's edition).

KIRKPATRICK : '*Shoshannim* denotes, not the theme of the psalm, nor a lily-shaped instrument by which it was to be accompanied, but the melody to which it was to be sung—some well-known song beginning with the word *Shoshannim*' (*The Book of Psalms*, Cambridge Bible, p. 245).

WELLHAUSEN : Probably the catchword of an older song, to the tune whereof this psalm was to be sung (*Polychrome Bible : Psalms*, p. 183).

HAUPT : The Hebrew '*al Shoshannim* may mean 'with Susian instruments' (*Polychrome Bible : Psalms*, p. 183).

By the application of the canon suggested by Hab. 3. 19, the entire relation of the word has been altered. We find it associated with psalms that convey a definite

message ; and hence an exegetical reason is brought in for our contention that *Shoshannim* means lilies, and not a melody ; that it stands for a season, and not a musical instrument ; and that it is used by way of metonymy for the Passover commemoration. Therefore it is neither the name of a choir-master, nor the catchword of an old song, nor a technical term implying that the musical instruments employed in the worship of Jehovah were 'made in Shushan,' or any other land of captivity.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which opened with the Passover celebration, marked the beginning of harvest. From this time onward Israel reckoned forty-nine days—seven times seven—and then, by way of concluding the grain harvest, came the Feast of Weeks. This brings us to the *Shushan Eduth* and *Shoshannim Eduth* psalms, which suggest more problems than we can expect to solve, but nevertheless require careful examination.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CALENDAR IN THE PSALTER

#### (3) PSALMS FOR THE FEAST OF WEEKS

#### SHUSHAN EDUTH : SHOSHANNIM EDUTH

(PSALMS 59, 79)

THE *Shoshannim* Psalms proclaim their special character with great distinctness. We cannot say at what time they were first employed in the Passover celebration ; but the facts regarding the Musical Titles seem to push the date back into days anterior to those in which many modern scholars are disposed to find anything like a collection of Psalms. And if the Chief Musician's notes take us so far, then it becomes needful to place the origin of the pieces themselves, in some cases at least, at a time still earlier than the date of their coming into liturgical use.

Closely associated with the Passover in the Hebrew calendar was the Feast of Weeks<sup>1</sup>, called in the New Testament Pentecost, because falling on the *fiftieth* day after the offering of the barley loaf during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23. 15-17). This was the second of the great annual festivals, on which all the males of Israel were required to appear before the Lord in the national sanctuary (Exod. 23. 14-17).

The intimate connexion of the two feasts is thus explained by Edersheim :—

‘The Feast of Unleavened Bread may be said not to have quite passed till fifty days after its

<sup>1</sup> Also described as the Holy Feast of the Seven Weeks (Tobit 2. 1), because held full seven weeks after the second

commencement, when it merged in that of Pentecost, or "of Weeks." According to unanimous Jewish tradition, which was universally received at the time of Christ, the day of Pentecost was the anniversary of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, which the Feast of Weeks was intended to commemorate. Thus, as the dedication of the harvest, commencing with the presentation of the first omer on the Passover, was completed in the thank-offering of the two wave-loaves at Pentecost, so the memorial of Israel's deliverance appropriately terminated in that of the giving of the Law<sup>1</sup>.

The Feast of Weeks, as instituted, was agricultural in its relations, designed to express gratitude to God for the returns from field labours. Hence it was also called the 'feast of harvest' and the 'day of first-fruits.'

'It celebrated specifically the wheat-harvest (Exod. 34. 22), the last of the cereals to ripen in Palestine. It marked therefore the closing of the grain harvest, as the Feast of Tabernacles (or Ingathering) celebrated especially the return from oliveyards and vineyards, as well as the close of the husbandman's labours as a whole (Deut. 16. 13)<sup>2</sup>.'

Again, the feast was called חג העצרת, or simply עצרת, the Festival of the Conclusion, or the Conclusion (i.e. of the Passover). Whence we see that the grain harvest was virtually marked by two feasts, though neither of them was exclusively concerned with the agricultural side of things. In fact, it may be said of all three of the great feasts that their meaning varied and the Paschal day, counting from the presentation of the omer of flour on the 16th of Nisan—hence, celebrated on the *fiftieth* day.

<sup>1</sup> Edersheim: *The Temple—its Ministry and Services*, pp. 225, 226.

<sup>2</sup> Purves, in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, s.v. 'Pentecost.'

emphasis of their message shifted in the passage of the centuries and with the changes in Israel's experiences as a nation.

Falling in the late spring, on or near the sixth of Sivan, the Feast of Weeks was established in view of Israel's settlement in the Promised Land. The terms of institution are very plain on this point: '*When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring the sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest,*' &c. (Lev. 23. 10 sq.). The feast was for a settled people, and only in that light can its true significance be realized. Like the other great feasts, it fed the faith of Israel. If Passover spoke of deliverance from bondage, Pentecost was equally eloquent in its reminder that God had brought His people into the land of promise, and that harvest plenty was to be received as a gift from His bountiful hand. Moreover, it is important to note that the continuance of Divine care and provision was conditioned upon national obedience: '*Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgements and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety*' (Lev. 25. 18, 19; cp. 26. 3-5).

In the titles now before us, there is a verbal disparity; but this is not important, for *Shushan* (or *Shoshan*) is the singular of *Shoshannim*: and it would seem that, as designating the Spring season, the two forms were used interchangeably. Another point to observe: the word *Eduth* cannot be construed with its companion: the absolute form of *Shoshannim* shows that. Beyond question *Eduth* stands as a mere

catchword, or label, to limit or distinguish the purpose of *Shushan* and *Shoshannim*. The explanation of the titles as they stand is found in two facts that have already been mentioned—(1) that Pentecost was the conclusion of Passover: hence the use of *Shoshannim* (or *Shushan*); (2) that Pentecost commemorated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai: hence the use of *Eduth*, a word meaning 'Testimony,' and specifically applied to the Ten Words.

The Feast of Weeks has come down in Jewish tradition with a designation in complete harmony with this identification—זמן סתן תורתנו—'the time of the giving of our law.' Although in the Pentateuchal story the institution is not associated in explicit terms with the event thus indicated, the various statements of Exod. 19 show the transaction of Sinai to have taken place early in the month Sivan<sup>1</sup>. It is, therefore, by no means astonishing that, as time went on, the Feast of Weeks should have become the memorial of the most sublime occurrence in the history of the nation.

Accordingly, the words *Shushan Eduth* and *Shoshannim Eduth* bring us into the presence of a very early association of the Giving of the Law with the festival of the grain harvest. Having dealt with the Passover term, *Shoshannim*, we must briefly consider

<sup>1</sup> In the words of Edersheim: 'Jewish tradition has it, that on the second of the third month, or Sivan, Moses had ascended the Mount (Exod. 19. 1-3), that he communicated with the people on the third (Exod. 19. 7), reascended the Mount on the fourth (Exod. 19. 8), and that then the people sanctified themselves on the fourth, fifth, and sixth of Sivan, on which latter day the Ten Commandments were actually given them (Exod. 19. 10-16).'—*The Temple—its Ministry and Services*, p. 226.

the adjunct which now directs our attention to Pentecost. That word עֲדוּת (*Eduth*) is a feminine substantive, and means 'Testimony.' This is beyond dispute. In the Old Testament literature the significance of the word inheres in its relation to the Law of God as given to the children of Israel. The slabs bearing the Ten Words were called the Tables of *Testimony* (Exod. 31. 18); the chest containing the said tables was called the Ark of the *Testimony* (Exod. 25. 22); and the tent in which the ark was lodged was designated the Tabernacle of the *Testimony* (Exod. 38. 21). Standing for the Testimony of God, the word *Eduth* is bracketed with *Torah* (the law) in Ps. 19. 7 (8); 78. 5, and elsewhere; also with other terms defining the Divine ordinances—statutes, judgements, and commandments (e.g. 1 Kings 2. 3; 2 Kings 17. 15; 23. 3; 1 Chron. 29. 19; 2 Chron. 34. 31; Neh. 9. 34; Ps. 81. 4, 5; 119 *passim*).

Perhaps nothing exhibits the word *Eduth* in a more distinctive light than its use in 2 Kings 11. 12 and 2 Chron. 23. 11, where, in an account of the anointing of Joash, we read that Jehoiada the priest 'put the crown upon him, and gave him the TESTIMONY' (העדות). No theory of the origin of the Pentateuch can challenge the antiquity of the injunction given in Deut. 17. 18-20, that when, in coming days, a king should rule over Israel, 'he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.' The story of Joash shows this injunction in operation; and helps us to see how the *Torah* became the *Eduth*—how the technical gave way to the explanatory in certain relations of

life<sup>1</sup>. In the Mount it is the Law—God's revealed will (Exod. 24. 12); in the Ark it is the TESTIMONY—God's will embodied in a document for the guidance of man (Exod. 25. 21; 31. 18).

Two psalms bear the *Eduth* mark, and thus recall times when the tribes went up to Jerusalem on the occasion of the TESTIMONY feast, 'to give thanks to the Name of the Lord<sup>2</sup>,' not only for the harvest, but also for having made Jacob His heritage, and given him statutes and judgements such as no great nation had been privileged to receive and enjoy (Deut. 4. 8). Like the other feasts, this brought to mind God's favour to Israel, and was an occasion for national rejoicing. Passover told of bringing *out of Egypt*; Pentecost spoke of bringing *into the land*. The former was a memorial of redemption (Exod. 12. 22; Deut.

<sup>1</sup> Traces of kings of Judah promoting a knowledge of the law in compliance with Deut. 17. 18-20 are also seen—(a) in the reign of Jehoshaphat, who sent Levites to teach the people out of the Book of the Law (2 Chron. 17. 9); and (b) in the reign of Josiah, who, after the recovery of the lost book, led his people in a solemn covenant to perform all the commandments, testimonies, and statutes of the Lord (2 Chron. 34. 30 sq.).

<sup>2</sup> It is suggested that the words עֲדוּת לַיהוָה in Ps. 122. 4 indicate the Feast of Weeks. Every line of the Song responds to this view; and the absence of any preposition after the verb of motion, עלה, supports the conclusion that עֲדוּת is, in this place, an accusative of destination. See such usage: 1 Sam. 8. 7 (Jerusalem); 2 Kings 2. 23 (Bethel); 2 Chron. 20. 36 (Tarshish), 34. 30 (the house of the Lord); Jer. 31. 6 (Zion). The psalm is 'of David,' and admirably fits the situation provided in 2 Sam. 6. 17. And would not the bringing of the Ark of the TESTIMONY to Zion be a fitting exercise preliminary to the Feast of Weeks, 'the time of the giving of our law'?



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24. 18); the latter of settlement in Palestine (Lev. 23. 9-14; Deut. 16. 9-12).

When considering the *Shoshannim* Psalms, we saw that they were evidently selected for the Passover feast because of the general appropriateness of their contents. They were not necessarily written with the feast in mind; in fact, the occasion of their making as poems may have been widely different. In selecting hymns for a special season, one seeks a certain note, not so much a stated subject; and sometimes circumstances arise which make points of contrast more timely than points of harmony. This seems to be characteristic of the *Eduth* Psalms; while reflecting conditions suggestive of Pentecost, they speak of a time when festivity was under eclipse. In fact, Israel was driven, in the terms of these psalms, to pray to God for just such blessings as the feast memorialized in the old-time life of the nation. With this in mind, we may examine the psalms themselves.

### PSALM 59.

*A Psalm of David: Michtam: when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.*

<b>Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God:</b>	1
<b>Set me on high from them that rise up against me.</b>	
<b>Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,</b>	2
<b>And save me from the bloodthirsty men.</b>	
For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul;	3
The mighty gather themselves together against me:	
Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD.	
They run and prepare themselves without <i>my</i> fault:	4

\* Heb. *meet*. **Awake thou to <sup>a</sup> help me, and behold.**

PSALMS FOR THE FEAST OF WEEKS 49

- 5 **Even thou, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,  
Arise to visit all the <sup>a</sup> heathen :** <sup>a</sup> Or, nations  
**Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors.** [Selah]
- 6 **They return at evening, they make a noise like a dog,  
And go round about the city.**
- 7 **Behold, they belch out with their mouth ;  
Swords are in their lips :  
For who, say they, doth hear ?**
- 8 **But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them ;  
Thou shalt have all the <sup>b</sup> heathen in derision.** <sup>b</sup> Or, nations
- 9 <sup>c</sup> **O my strength, I will wait upon thee :  
For God is my high tower.** <sup>c</sup> So some ancient authorities. The Hebrew text has, *His strength.*
- 10 <sup>d</sup> **The God of my mercy shall prevent me :  
God shall let me see *my desire* upon <sup>e</sup> mine enemies.** <sup>d</sup> According to some ancient authorities, *My God with his mercy.*
- 11 **Slay them not, lest my people forget :  
<sup>f</sup> Scatter them by thy power, and bring them down,  
O Lord our shield.** <sup>e</sup> Or, *them that lie in wait for me*  
<sup>f</sup> Or, *Make them wander to and fro*
- 12 **For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their  
lips,  
Let them even be taken in their pride,  
And for cursing and lying which they speak.**
- 13 **Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they  
be no more :  
And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob,  
Unto the ends of the earth.** [Selah]
- 14 **And at evening let them return, let them make a  
noise like a dog,  
And go round about the city.**
- 15 **They shall wander up and down for meat,  
And tarry all night if they be not satisfied.**
- 16 **But I will sing of thy strength ;  
Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning :  
For thou hast been my high tower,**

**And a refuge in the day of my distress.**

**Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises :** 17

**For God is my high tower, the God of my mercy.**

For the Chief Musician ; set to \*Shushan Eduth<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> That is,  
*The lily of  
testimony.*

The point of view is the city (6, 14). Enemies are round about, giving contradiction to that sense of security that should sustain a people who had been placed by a covenant-keeping God in a land of His own selection. Evidently the peace and plenty of Pentecost belong to past history, not to present experience. Redemption from Egypt is recalled by verse 11 (comp. Num. 10. 35); the victories under Joshua are brought to mind by verse 13 (Joshua 4. 24); and the God of Jacob is relied on to execute judgement for the deliverance of His people, as shield and defender, refuge and high tower (11-17). The enemies, who were cast out to make room for Israel, are now pressing into the land again, so that urgent prayer takes the place of harvest praise.

### PSALM 79.

A Psalm of Asaph.

<sup>b</sup> Or, *nations* **O God, the <sup>b</sup> heathen are come into thine inheritance ;** 1

**Thy holy temple have they defiled ;**

**They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.**

The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to 2

be meat unto the fowls of the heaven,

The flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

<sup>1</sup> Rather, relating to *Shushan Eduth*, the Feast of Weeks, marking the close of the grain harvest, and commemorating the Giving of the Law on Sinai.

PSALMS FOR THE FEAST OF WEEKS 51

- 3 Their blood have they shed like water round about  
Jerusalem ;  
And there was none to bury them.
- 4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours,  
A scorn and derision to them that are round about  
us.
- 5 How long, O LORD, wilt thou be angry for ever ?  
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire ?
- 6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that know  
thee not,  
And upon the kingdoms that call not upon thy name.
- 7 For they have devoured Jacob,  
And laid waste his <sup>a</sup> habitation.
- 8 Remember not against us the iniquities of our fore-  
fathers :  
Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us :  
For we are brought very low.
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy  
name :  
And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy  
name's sake.
- 10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their  
God ?  
Let the revenging of the blood of thy servants which  
is shed  
Be known among the heathen in our sight.
- 11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee ;  
According to the greatness of <sup>b</sup> thy power preserve  
thou <sup>c</sup> those that are appointed to death ;
- 12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their  
bosom  
Their reproach, wherewith they have reproached  
thee, O Lord.

<sup>a</sup> Or, pas-  
ture

<sup>b</sup> Heb.  
thine arm.  
<sup>c</sup> Heb.  
the children  
of death.

So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture 13  
 Will give thee thanks for ever :  
 We will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

For the Chief Musician ; set to \* Shoshannim Eduth<sup>1</sup>.

\* That is,  
*Lilies, a  
 testimony.*

The scene is still in the land ; and the enemies of Israel, by their incursions, are making 'the pasture of the Lord' a reproach to their neighbours (4, 12). Though the land was given to Jacob, and the name of God was placed in Jerusalem (Deut. 12. 5 ; Ps. 132. 13, 14), yet the surrounding people break in, lay waste, defile, and murder (1, 3, 7). Israel was being supplanted by the heathen ; the inheritance of God was being overrun by the descendants of such as had been cast out to make room for the chosen people (1, 7). In these circumstances, the God of deliverance is asked to intervene (9-12). Possibly also the 'jealousy' and 'fire' of verse 5 suggest in some degree the story of Sinai ; while the 'sevenfold' of verse 12 is sufficient to recall the name of the Feast itself.

It has already been observed that Pentecost was one of the feasts in which all the males of Israel gathered at the central sanctuary at Jerusalem. In this view of things, we cannot but observe a singularly appropriate note in both the psalms bearing the *Eduth* mark : in a distinctive sense, though the experiences are adverse,

<sup>1</sup> Rather, for, or, in connexion with, *Shoshannim Eduth*, the Feast of Weeks. In this case the preposition לַ (al) 'relating to,' 'concerning,' makes way for לְ (el), which may equally be understood to mean 'answering to' or 'corresponding with.' See note on p. 36. Possibly in this instance the Chief Musician's programme is out of mind, and the *season* itself is referred to, in which case לְ would imply 'in connexion with,' or, 'for' the Feast of Weeks.

they are psalms of the city. In the former, the enemies are spoken of as going *round about the city* (Ps. 59. 6, 14); in the latter, we read of blood being shed like water *round about Jerusalem* (Ps. 79. 3). These expressions were such as might be expected in psalms selected for Temple use on occasions when the tribes 'appeared before the Lord' in compliance with the terms of institution of the great feasts of Israel (Exod. 23. 14-17; Deut. 16. 16).

Though this feature of the psalms seems fairly obvious, yet the latter (Ps. 79) has been generally explained as belonging to the period of the Chaldean overthrow. Such an explanation supposes an external position on the part of the writer, which assuredly the language does not favour. The land has been invaded, and the city is under siege (1, 2). Unfriendly *neighbours* look on in derision (4, 10). Israel is 'a prisoner,' a people 'appointed to death' (11). The prayer is not for restoration to the land, but for deliverance from enemies (6, 9). God is appealed to, as Helper and Saviour, to deliver and preserve His people (9, 11). If a situation is sought for the psalm as it stands, it may be found in more than one reign; though of course one must not look in any prose record for all that this poem tells us.

The writer is a seer, and employs language which is more intense than can be found in any narrative furnished by the books of Kings and Chronicles. We must not be unimaginative in our interpretation of such pieces. The psalmist not only knew what was going on around him, but saw whereunto passing events were tending. If in reality Jerusalem were 'laid on heaps' (v. 1), there could be little point in the prayer

with which the psalm concludes. And the musical line is decidedly against the psalm being post-exilic. Whatever it may mean, it takes us back to a time when the service of praise was fully organized: when the defilement of the Temple, though anticipated in prophetic vision, was not as yet an event of history.

As in regard to other titles, so with *Shushan Eduth* and *Shoshannim Eduth*, we get no guidance whatever unless we recognize their relation to the psalms which precede. This is clear from the following:

#### SHUSHAN EDUTH: SHOSHANNIM EDUTH.

GESENIUS: *Shushan Eduth, Shoshannim Eduth*. A melody whose first line compared the Law as Testimony to a choice flower (*Heb. Lex.*, s.v. *Eduth*, Oxford edition).

DELITZSCH: There was probably a well-known popular song which began 'A Lily is the Testimony,' &c., or 'Lilies are the Testimonies'; and the psalm was composed after the melody of this song in praise of the Thora [Law], and was to be sung in the same way as it (*Commentary on the Psalms*, Eaton's translation, vol. ii. 89).

FÜRST: Perhaps the name of a musical choir whose president was called Shushan, and who was stationed at Adithaim (Josh. 15. 36) in Judah, without anything more definite being known about the point (*Heb. Lex.* s.v., Davidson's edition).

PEROWNE: In the great darkness which envelopes this and other inscriptions, it is impossible to explain the words satisfactorily; but they most probably denote the measure or melody to which the psalm was to be set (*The Book of Psalms: New Translation with Notes*, Eighth edition, vol. i, p. 493).

This is, of course, confusion. The outcome of our treatment is that the words that constitute the title are both allowed their proper lexical meanings; and that simple sense is adequate for all the purposes of a consistent interpretation.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CALENDAR IN THE PSALTER

#### (4) PSALMS FOR THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

##### GITTITH (PSALMS 7, 80, 83)

PROCEEDING to consider psalms selected for use at the Feast of Tabernacles, we are on ground equally interesting: and to a certain extent, as already observed, some scholars have anticipated our conclusions, by defining *Gittith*, after the Septuagint translators, as 'Belonging to the Winepress.' And assuredly the vintage season synchronizes with the great autumn festival, which followed the Day of Atonement when the soul was afflicted in penitential sorrow for sin; it was, in fact, the joyous 'Harvest-Home' in Israel's land.

Coming in the seventh month—Ethaniam, 'flowing brooks'—which after the Exile was called Tishri, the feast lasted eight days. During this time the people lived in booths formed of the branches of trees (Exod. 23. 16; Lev. 23. 33-43; Num. 29. 12-38; Deut. 16. 13). It was at this season that Solomon's Temple was dedicated (1 Kings 8. 2; 2 Chron. 7. 8-10); and the same ordinance was observed with great joy by the captives returned from Babylon (Ezra 3. 4; Neh. 8. 13-18).

Historically this feast is said to commemorate the wanderings in the wilderness, but obviously in order to emphasize some special aspect of those experiences—namely, that, though far away from organized human society, and in remote inhospitable regions, God provided for the children of Israel, 'made them to dwell in booths' (Lev. 23. 43). In the words of Keil:



'The booth (הֶבְרֵט) in Scripture is not an image of privation and misery, but of protection, preservation, and shelter from heat, storm, and tempest (Ps. 27. 5 ; 31. 21 ; Isa. 4. 6). That God made his people to dwell in booths during their wanderings "through the great and terrible wilderness, fiery serpents, scorpions, and thirsty ground where was no water" (Deut. 8. 15), was a proof of his fatherly concern for his covenant faithfulness—which Israel, by its dwelling in booths at this feast, was to recall and bring vividly to the remembrance of succeeding generations <sup>1</sup>.'

Jehovah cared for His people when they most stood in need of His protection. The pillar of cloud to lead them by day, and the pillar of fire to give them light by night, were divine ordinances that could not but impress the camp of Israel with their complete dependence upon Jehovah. No wonder that, in the Targum of Onkelos, the words of Lev. 23. 43 should be extended so as to interpret the cloud as the Heaven-provided tent: the Lord 'made the children of Israel to dwell under the shadow of clouds'; and that the Targum of Palestine should be more specific still, and read the verse: 'That your generations may know how, under the shadow of the Cloud of Glory, I made the sons of Israel to dwell at the time that I brought them out redeemed from the land of Egypt.' 'He led them safely, so they feared not' (Ps. 78. 53). He who had redeemed the Israelites, became their Keeper (Ps. 121).

With recollections of God's care, the feast combined the delights of Harvest-Home. Of all festive seasons in Israel, this was the most joyous. 'All the crops had been long stored; and now all fruits were also gathered, the vintage past . . . The Harvest Thanksgiving of the

<sup>1</sup> *Biblical Archaeology*, vol. ii, p. 55.

Feast of Tabernacles reminded Israel, on the one hand, of their dwelling in booths in the wilderness, while, on the other hand, it pointed to the final harvest, when Israel's mission should be completed, and all nations gathered unto the Lord<sup>1</sup>. Hence the season was also called the Feast of Ingathering.

The *Winepress* psalms are three in number—7, 80, 83. The Hebrew, גִּטִּיּוֹת (Gittith) is almost certainly a variant of גִּטְלוֹת (Gittôth), which appears in Neh. 13. 15: 'In those days saw I in Judah some treading winepresses on the sabbath.' It was apparently read as a plural (and not as an adjective) by the Seventy, who render it in each case, ὑπὲρ τῶν ληνῶν—'Concerning the Winepresses<sup>2</sup>'; and with this the Vulgate agrees *Pro Torcularibus*. Here we have a safe guide as to the meaning of גִּטִּיּוֹת, an explanation which has simplicity and antiquity in its favour.

In view of the natural history of the Holy Land, and in the light of the customs and institutions of the people, *Winepress* is a word that tells its own tale. Both in the Pentateuch and in later Scripture the vintage is combined (in varying terms) with the general harvest: 'threshing-floor and winepress' (Deut. 16. 13), 'treading winepresses, bringing in sheaves,' &c. (Neh. 13. 15). Palestine was 'a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates' (Deut. 8. 8); and above all else in popular esteem stood the vine. Israel was

<sup>1</sup> Edersheim: *The Temple—its Ministry and Services*, ch. 14.

<sup>2</sup> The variant in Cod. A as regards Ps. 80 (classing this with the *Shoshannim* psalms) is passed by as simply curious. The psalm headings in that codex seem to be largely independent of the sources followed by Cod. B, and of that represented by the Massoretic text.

Jehovah's vine ; the vintage spoke of Jehovah's provision for His people. To talk of the winepress implied the harvest-home, the gifts of God brought into the garner for the service of man.

But the winepress meant more than that. If to tread the grapes was a figure of harvest joy (Isa. 16. 10), so also was it a symbol of divine judgement (Isa. 63. 3-6). And, as viewed by Israel of old, judgement was the certain fate of their enemies, because of their being, in effect, the enemies of God ; and this judgement was regarded as inevitable in order to the complete redemption of the chosen of the Lord and the triumph of holiness and truth. With ' the day of vengeance ' for the nations, would come ' the year of the redeemed ' of Jehovah (Isa. 63. 4).

In each of the *Gittith* psalms there is an echo of the winepress ; and possibly this had much to do with their allocation for the season of the Feast of Tabernacles. Yet, above all, we cannot fail to be impressed with the language in which prayer is made to ' the Shepherd of Israel, that leadest Joseph like a flock ' (80. 1)—to ' Jehovah my God, in whom I put my trust ' (7. 1)—by the nation whose great privilege it was to enjoy ' the pastures of God ' (83. 12). In a word, these psalms, whatever their characteristic terms, are the prayers of such as lived in a consciousness that Jehovah was their Keeper—the essential note of the Feast of Tabernacles.

PSALM 80.

A Psalm of Asaph.

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, 1

Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock ;

Thou that <sup>a</sup> sittest upon the cherubim, shine forth.

Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up  
thy might, 2

<sup>a</sup> Or, *dwell-  
est between*

And come to save us.

3 <sup>a</sup> Turn us again, O God ;

<sup>a</sup> Or, Restore

And cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

4 O LORD God of hosts,

How long <sup>b</sup> wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people ?

<sup>b</sup> Heb. wilt thou smoke. See Ps. 74. 1.

5 Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears,  
And given them tears to drink in large measure.

6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours :  
And our enemies laugh among themselves.

7 Turn us again, O God of hosts ;  
And cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

8 Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt :  
Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.

9 Thou preparedst *room* before it,  
And it took deep root, and filled the land.

10 The mountains were covered with the shadow of it,  
And <sup>c</sup> the boughs thereof were *like* <sup>d</sup> cedars of God.

<sup>c</sup> Or, the cedars of God with the boughs thereof  
<sup>d</sup> Or, goodly cedars

11 She sent out her branches unto the sea,  
And her shoots unto the River.

12 Why hast thou broken down her fences,  
So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her ?

13 The boar out of the wood doth ravage it,  
And the wild beasts of the field feed on it.

14 Turn again, we beseech thee, O God of hosts :  
Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine,

15 And <sup>e</sup> the stock which thy right hand hath planted,  
And the <sup>f</sup> branch that thou madest strong for thyself.

<sup>e</sup> Or, protect (or maintain) that which is c.

16 It is burned with fire, it is cut down :

<sup>f</sup> Heb. son.

**They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.**

Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, 17  
Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for  
thyself.

So shall we not go back from thee : 18

Quicken thou us, and we will call upon thy name.

Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts ; 19

Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

For the Chief Musician ; set to the Gittith <sup>1</sup>.

The note of this psalm is clear and definite, the language of the season being employed to depict the condition of things in which Jehovah is asked to intervene as Judge (8-12). Israel is Jehovah's flock ; and, though the people are encompassed by enemies, He will yet bring them back to favour (1-7). Israel is also Jehovah's vine ; He has cared for it in the past, and He will assuredly visit it for salvation. Patience and victory are the subject of impassioned prayer (17, 18). If Jehovah will smile once more—or rather when at length He shall smile again—His people will be saved from their distresses (17-19).

#### PSALM 7.

This also is a psalm for adversity. Accepting for themselves the first person singular of David's song, the people of Israel ask to be saved from their enemies, who, like lions, were rending them in pieces (1, 2).

Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush a Benjamite.

\* Or, take  
refuge

**O LORD my God, in thee do I \* put my trust :**

**Save me from all them that pursue me, and deliver  
me :**

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, relating to the *Gittith*, the Feast of Tabernacles.

- 2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion,  
Rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.
- 3 O LORD my God, if I have done this ;  
If there be iniquity in my hands ;
- 4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace  
with me ;  
(Yea, I have delivered him that without cause was  
mine adversary :)
- 5 Let the enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it ;  
Yea, let him tread my life down to the earth,  
And lay my glory in the dust. [Selah
- 6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger,  
Lift up thyself against the rage of mine adversaries :  
And awake for me ; thou hast commanded judgement.
- 7 <sup>a</sup> And let the congregation of the peoples compass <sup>a</sup>Or, So shall  
thee about :  
And over them return thou on high.
- 8 The LORD ministereth judgement to the peoples :  
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,  
and to mine integrity<sup>b</sup> that is in me. <sup>b</sup> Or, be it  
unto me
- 9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,  
but establish thou the righteous :  
For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.
- 10 My shield is with God,  
Which saveth the upright in heart.
- 11 God is a righteous judge,  
Yea, a God that hath indignation every day.
- 12 <sup>c</sup> If a man turn not, he will whet his sword ;  
He hath bent his bow, and made it ready. <sup>c</sup> Or, Surely  
he will a-  
gain whet
- 13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of  
death ;  
He maketh his arrows fiery shafts.
- 14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity ;

Yea, he hath conceived mischief, and brought forth  
falsehood.

He hath made a pit, and digged it, 15  
And is fallen into the ditch which he made.

His mischief shall return upon his own head, 16  
And his violence shall come down upon his own  
pate.

I will give thanks unto the LORD according to his  
righteousness :

And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most  
High.

For the Chief Musician ; set to the Gittith <sup>1</sup>.

This psalm shows a reversal of Israel's expectations as the people in Jehovah's keeping. The judgement of its enemies is delayed, and persecutors are represented as rending men who have made Jehovah their trust. In fact (to use the language of the winepress) the adversary is 'treading down their life in the earth, and laying their glory in the dust' (5). Assuredly Jehovah is holding Himself in readiness for the work of judgement, whereby the mischief of the wicked shall 'return upon his own head, and his violence come down upon his own pate' (16). They who are oppressing Israel shall themselves be trodden down. The entire psalm is an appeal for Jehovah to avenge His own <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, relating to the *Gittith*, the Feast of Tabernacles.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Origin of the Psalter*, Cheyne argues that this psalm comes of the Persian age, because of a Talmudical statement associating it with the Feast of *Purim*. The musical title *Gittith* takes us many centuries further into antiquity than the treatise quoted, *Massechet Sopherim* ; and it tells us that, a good while before 200 B.C. (long enough previously for important words in the musical lines to become archaic and

## PSALM 83

A Song, a Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 O God, keep not thou silence :  
 Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.
- 2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult :  
 And they that hate thee have lifted up the head.
- 3 They take crafty counsel against thy people,  
 And consult together against thy hidden ones.
- 4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from  
 being a nation ;  
 That the name of Israel may be no more in re-  
 membrance.
- 5 For they have consulted together with one consent ;  
 Against thee do they make a covenant :
- 6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites ;  
 Moab, and the <sup>a</sup>Hagarenes ;
- 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek ;  
 Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre :
- 8 Assyria also is joined with them ;

<sup>a</sup> Or,  
*Hagrites*  
 See 1 Chr.  
 5, 10.

misunderstood by the LXX), the psalm was connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, then designated ' Winepresses.' Its substance justifies the selection. In these circumstances, we follow the psalm backward to a generation before *Purim* was instituted, to the times of the Chief Musician of Temple Psalmody. And, arrived at that point in Israel's history, we see little reason to contest the claims of David as the veritable author of the *Shiggaion*. Changes in lectionaries and service-books are certainly of interest, but they do not speak the final word as to the origination of the materials affected. Hymns may exist for generations before finding their place in collections. It is not in the least surprising that a psalm which, in the days of Israel's kings, was associated with *Succoth*, should afterwards come to be included in the service for *Purim*.



## 64 THE CALENDAR IN THE PSALTER

<sup>a</sup> Heb. <i>They have been an arm to the children of Lot.</i>	<b>They have holpen the children of Lot.</b>	[Selah
	<b>Do thou unto them as unto Midian ;</b>	9
	<b>As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the river Kishon :</b>	
	<b>Which perished at En-dor ;</b>	10
	<b>They became as dung for the earth.</b>	
	<b>Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb ;</b>	11
	<b>Yea, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna :</b>	
	<b>Who said, Let us take to ourselves in possession</b>	12
<sup>b</sup> Or, <i>pastures</i>	<b>The <sup>b</sup> habitations of God.</b>	
	<b>O my God, make them like the whirling dust ;</b>	13
	<b>As stubble before the wind.</b>	
	<b>As the fire that burneth the forest,</b>	14
	<b>And as the flame that setteth the mountains on fire ;</b>	
	<b>So pursue them with thy tempest,</b>	15
	<b>And terrify them with thy storm.</b>	
	<b>Fill their faces with confusion ;</b>	16
	<b>That they may seek thy name, O LORD.</b>	
	<b>Let them be ashamed and dismayed for ever ;</b>	17
	<b>Yea, let them be confounded and perish :</b>	
<sup>c</sup> Or, <i>thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art &amp;c.</i>	<b>That they may know that <sup>c</sup> thou alone, whose name</b>	
	<b>is JEHOVAH,</b>	18
	<b>Art the Most High over all the earth.</b>	

For the Chief Musician ; set to the Gittith <sup>1</sup>.

This also is an appeal to the Keeper of Israel. To conspire against God's people, is to hold Him in contempt. If He really cares for His hidden ones (3), is it not time that He stirred Himself? Yet He 'holds his peace,' and is 'still'! (1). Jehovah's enemies—the enemies of Israel as such—are jubilant. Surely the time of judgment has arrived, now that those who hate God and His people are devising means for the destruction of Israel

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, relating to the *Gittith*, the Feast of Tabernacles.

(2-4). They form an alliance against Israel's God ; every tribe of dishonoured name has joined in the conspiracy (5-11). The purpose is to descend upon God's own inheritance (12). The figures of the threshing-floor, and the unquenchable fire which consumes the stubble, provide words in which to frame the judgement which is invoked upon the enemies of Israel (13-17).

Could psalms more suitable have been chosen for the Feast of Tabernacles ? There are, in each, the associations of language ; also the notes of Israel being God's peculiar people, and of His purpose to avenge their sufferings in judgement upon the nations who have oppressed them. All suggest the *wine-press* ; and the *wine-press* gives colour to their meaning.

As to the word *Gittith*, this remains to be said : standing in its wrong place in the Psalter, it has received varied and inconsistent treatment. Here are some definitions :

#### GITTITH.

GESENIUS : *Upon the Gittite (lyre)*—so Targum ; *To the Gittite (melody)* Ewald, Olshausen, Delitzsch ; or either of these, Hupfeld, Perowne. Septuagint and Vulgate *Ha-Gittôth, wine-presses*, whence Baethgen and others, *at the wine-presses*—i.e. (Baethgen) a song for the Feast of Booths (*Heb. Lex. s.v.*, Oxford edition).

DELITZSCH : An instrument with a joyous sound ; or (and this explanation accounts better for the fact that it occurs only in psalm titles), a joyous melody, perhaps a march of the Gittite guard, 2 Sam. 15. 18 (Hitzig). (*Commentary on the Psalms*, Eaton's translation, vol. i. p. 190.)

FÜRST : A musical body of Levites, who had their chief seat in the Levitical city of Gath Rimmon (*Heb. Lex. s.v.*, Davidson's edition).

WELLHAUSEN : We do not know whether Gittith here means

'belonging to the city of Gath,' which probably had been destroyed before the Babylonian Exile, or 'belonging to a winepress' (=song for the vintage?), or whether it denotes a mode or key, or a musical instrument (*Polychrome Bible: Psalms*, p. 166).

The psalms themselves suggest quite another order of lexical facts. *Gittith* (*Gittôth*) = 'Winepresses,' recalls the Feast of Tabernacles, the object of which was to commemorate God's great goodness to Israel in their pilgrimage through the wilderness. As the Passover reminded Israel that Jehovah was their Redeemer, so the Tabernacles feast brought to mind that He was also their Keeper. Hence the psalms illustrate reliance on God in times of adversity, and that very plainly.

As for the preposition  $\text{לְ}$  ('*al*'), it cannot be accommodated to the rendering 'set to' of modern expositions. Its use is for the English 'on,' 'concerning,' 'relating to.' 'Relating to the Winepresses' (as a season) is a good rendering of the formula. If the precentor had a separate collection, in which these psalms were classed with others, then the object of the musical line may have been to represent the psalms as 'corresponding with' or 'answering to' pieces in the classified collection.

## CHAPTER IX

### DAVID IN THE PSALTER

#### (I) THE POET-KING'S PLACE AND INFLUENCE

THE place of David in the Psalter is not a question to be settled by criticism alone. We have to consider a man whose achievements impressed the imagination of succeeding generations, as well as one whose actions asserted for themselves a conspicuous place in the life of his own time. Other men may have slain giants; but David is the celebrated hero of the encounter with the 'uncircumcised Philistine.' Other kings may have performed acts of piety that men could not but see and admire; yet David stands pre-eminent among the rulers of Israel in the nobility of his design and preparation for the erection of the glorious Temple in which his people should worship Jehovah from generation to generation.

Whatever else he may have been, David was the beloved of Israel as well as the beloved of Jehovah (דָּוִד = דָּוִדָּה. Comp. 2 Chron. 20. 37). His name occurs more frequently than any other in the Old Testament, even eclipsing that of Moses, the ever-to-be-revered founder of the commonwealth of Israel<sup>1</sup>. Not without

<sup>1</sup> A glance at a full concordance will show this. Moses is mentioned in the Old Testament over 650 times, David over 950 times. Of David it was said: 'He played with lions as with kids, and with bears as with lambs of the flock. In his youth did he not slay a giant, and take away reproach from the people, when he lifted up his hand with a sling stone, and beat

reason has he been idealized for two thousand years. Was not the Messiah, which is called Christ, 'born of the seed of David, according to the flesh'? Over and above everything David is the hero of the Old Testament; and, what is more to our present purpose, he alone is the hero of the Book of Psalms.

Let the inscriptions implying Davidic authorship be discussed or discarded, their very existence means something; they mean that the place of the poet-king in the hearts and minds of the editor (or editors) of the Psalter (or Psalters) was second to no other name. Let the headings relating to the historic circumstances that gave rise to particular psalms be discussed or discarded, their very existence means something; every one of them presents DAVID as the delight of the Israelitish people. There is no such inscription in honour of Solomon, or any other king or champion.

In all, seventy-three psalms are described as 'Of David'; thirteen of these bear historical inscriptions, and two of the (five) psalms of stated purpose are David's. Moreover, in addition, the name occurs twelve times in the Psalms themselves, not numbering the famous colophon, Ps. 72. 20. And frequently the word 'the king' stands for David the son of Jesse. Hence, David must not be merely counted as a personage, but weighed for his mighty influence in his own day and down the boasting of Goliath? For he called upon the Most High Lord; and he gave him strength in his right hand, to slay a man mighty in war, to exalt the horn of his people. So they glorified him for his ten thousands, and praised him for the blessings of the Lord, in that there was given him a diadem of glory. For he destroyed the enemies on every side, and brought to nought the Philistines his adversaries, brake their horn in pieces unto this day' (Eclus. 47. 3-7). Cp. note on p. 21.

afterwards. Down the ages, in the Synagogue, prayers have not ceased to be offered daily that Almighty God will re-establish the throne of David, and 'cause the offspring of thy servant David speedily to flourish,' to the end that His people Israel may be saved <sup>1</sup>.

We proceed to show that, as it is with the Psalms in their ordinary titles, so it is with the place of David in the subscript lines—that some of those lines bring under notice commemorative services held in the days of the Chief Musician, in honour of David, the man of war and the devoted worshipper of Jehovah.

<sup>1</sup> See *Jewish Daily Prayers : Sh'moneh Esreh* petitions.

## CHAPTER X

### DAVID IN THE PSALTER

#### (2) ON THE DEATH OF GOLIATH

##### MUTH-LABBEN (PSALM 8)

THE words *Muth-labben* have been the subject of keen controversy. In some measure, the confusion has arisen from a failure to recognize the extent to which the Psalms are connected, in one way or another, with the person and times of David. And confusion has been made 'worse confounded' by the unfortunate fact that expositors have sought in the wrong psalms for a response to the Musical Titles—looking to the psalm following instead of that preceding the line which has been so long misplaced.

So far, we have found a logical relevancy to subsist between the Psalms and their subscript titles. Whether these titles denominate a class, recall an incident, or furnish a pictorial designation founded on outstanding expressions in particular psalms, we shall find this relevancy all through. We must, however, be prepared, in a degree, to meet with titles of the 'catchword' order, such as modern literature abundantly presents; but this may be safely said—in no case will a connexion between title and psalm be missing, so long as we keep the *right* psalm in view.

It is beyond question that the words *Muth-labben* at first suggest 'Dying for the son.' But in examining the

phrase we have some things to remember. First, that the psalm titles, having been out of place for two thousand years, have been hopelessly misunderstood: and second, that, through being misunderstood, they have not received that editorial attention which the Massorettes gave to the general text of the Old Testament. Hence the words that make up these titles are, in a number of cases, defective in spelling<sup>1</sup>, and in some instances have been supplied with points which give a misleading sense<sup>2</sup>. When the points 'stereotype' a sound reading, we are thankful for them, but when they give sanction to a Rabbinical misunderstanding we pass them by without hesitation.

Instead of following the Massoretic doctors, let us inquire regarding traditions and explanations other than the one which they seem to have followed. Among the most striking of these we find that of the Jewish Paraphrase, known as the Targum, which tells us, in effect, that לָבֵן (*lābbēn*), 'of the son,' should be read לָבֵינ (*lābbēyn*), 'of the champion': that is, a quiescent, or vowel-letter, should have been supplied to place the word in its proper light. The title, as given in the Targum, is:

לְשַׁבַּח עַל מִיתוּתָא דִּנְבָרָא דִּי נִפְק מִבֵּינֵי מִשְׁרֵיחָא

—'To praise, regarding the death of the man who went out between the camps'—that is, regarding Goliath the Philistine. Distinguished Jewish commentators have read לָבֵן in this sense. In 1 Sam. 17. 4, 23, Goliath is called 'a champion'—אִישׁ הַבְּבַיִמִּים (*ish hābbēnaim*)—'A man who stood between the two'—an intermediary

<sup>1</sup> That is, the quiescents (or vowel-letters) have been supplied incorrectly; or the vowel-points have been so placed as to perpetuate a misreading of the word.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter on 'Other Things that Follow' (p 160).



who presented himself for single combat to decide and terminate conflict. Hence the word גִּבּוֹר, 'champion'<sup>1</sup>.

Recall the story of the slaughter of Goliath, and then look at the psalm. The 'uncircumcised Philistine' defied the armies of the living God, and cursed David by the gods of his country. David's reply was: 'I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from off thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel' (1 Sam. 17. 45-46). Is David, whom the Philistine disdained for his youth, to be victorious through the power of Jehovah? As a shepherd he has killed a lion and a bear—God delivered them into his hand. Is he now to add conquest over the Philistine giant and attendant hosts to the dominion which is already his over the most fierce beasts of the field? Read the psalm in which he praises God for the result of the contest:

PSALM 8.

A Psalm of David.

**O LORD, our Lord,**

1

**How excellent is thy name in all the earth!**

**Who<sup>a</sup> hast set thy glory<sup>b</sup> upon the heavens.**

**Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou  
established strength,**

2

**Because of thine adversaries,**

**That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.**

**When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, 3**

<sup>1</sup> See the *Hebrew Lexicon* of Buxtorf, s. v. גִּבּוֹר; and the *Concordance of Particles* by Noldius (ed. Tympius), s. v. גִּבּוֹר.

<sup>a</sup> So some ancient versions. The Hebrew is obscure.  
<sup>b</sup> Or, *above*

The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ;  
 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him ?

And the son of man, that thou visitest him ?

5 **For thou hast made him but little lower than <sup>a</sup> God,**  
**And crownest him with glory and honour.**

<sup>a</sup> Or, the  
 angels  
 Heb. Elo-  
 him.

6 **Thou madest him to have dominion over the works  
 of thy hands ;**

**Thou hast put all things under his feet :**

7 **All sheep and oxen,**

**Yea, and the beasts of the field ;**

8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,

Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

9 O LORD, our Lord,

How excellent is thy name in all the earth !

For the Chief Musician ; set to Muth-labben<sup>1</sup>.

Surely it is impossible not to see the appropriateness of this psalm to the incident which it was selected to commemorate. The words are David's according to the inscription ; he is the man whom Jehovah has visited (4). Can the words have had any other text than the one now suggested, on the strength of the title, at length placed at the foot of its own psalm ? After such an act as the killing of Goliath, what could David's note be other than dominion ? He who smote the lion and the bear had now felled to the earth the mighty man from whom the Israelites had fled sore afraid (1 Sam. 17. 24, 49). Did he not come next to God in dominion ? and was he not crowned with glory and honour (5) ? And seeing that ' the beasts of the field ' had found their match in him, were not all things ' under his feet ' (6-8) ?

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, on or relating to *Muth-labben*—For the Death of the Champion (Goliath).

The God who delivered David 'out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear' had given him this victory also. David went forward in the Name of Jehovah, who, through mighty acts, had got to Himself glory reaching up to heaven (1). And all had been done by the agency of one who had no power of his own—in fact, by one who classed himself with 'babes and sucklings' (2). The stripling who went out between the camps 'to take away the reproach from Israel' said that victory would be his, 'that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel' (1 Sam. 17. 46). The psalm concludes, as it began, 'O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!' Little did the poet think, however, when describing a memorable event in the beautiful words of this psalm, that the language he was employing had been charged by the Spirit of Prophecy with higher doctrine and deeper significance than could be realized in his day and generation (see Heb. 2. 6-8).

May it not be said with confidence that what the superscription lacks the subscript line supplies? The former says 'A Psalm of David,' the latter 'Relating to the Death of the Champion'<sup>1</sup>. It is in harmony with

<sup>1</sup> The suggestions that *Muth-labben* (1) refers to the death of Ben (a Levite referred to in 1 Chron. 15. 18); or (2) indicates some unknown prince, or a mystical personage, hardly merit consideration. A psalm endorsed by the Chief Musician for Temple use, and apparently designed to commemorate some great event, must be associated with a person or occurrence of national importance. Nations do not celebrate fireside fame or private heroism. To explain the title as relating to the death of Absalom, whom David mourned in the pathetic words of 2 Sam. 18. 33, 'Would God I had died for thee, my son,' &c., is also unsatisfactory; for it is clear that the king's conduct

what we know of Israelitish practice that the Philistine should not be *named* here. When he came forth there was an end of his boasting ; but David lived to praise the Lord for a mighty victory.

was unpopular with the leaders in Israel (2 Sam. 19. 5-8). That being so, the event was not one for subsequent commemoration.

## CHAPTER XI

### DAVID IN THE PSALTER

#### (3) THE VICTORY OVER THE PHILISTINES

##### MAHALATH (PSALM 52)

THE word מַלְאָה, as pointed here and in Psalm 87, occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament except as a proper name (Gen. 28. 9 ; 2 Chron. II. 18). Acknowledged authorities regard the meaning of the word as 'dubious' and 'extremely obscure,' though some venture suggestions. Having brought the title into association with its proper psalm, we may hope to learn something about both. We must not lose sight of David's commanding place in the Psalter ; and assuredly we have no reason to put complete confidence in the Massoretic points. Long before the text was punctuated, the 'key' to the titles 'was lost,' to recall words already quoted from Delitzsch and others.

As pointed, the word has no indisputable meaning ; so in any case there must be investigation. The Septuagint translators do not help us ; they transferred the mysterious word, thus—*ὑπὲρ μαελέθ*. The Greek version of Aquila (2nd cent. A.D.), however, gives an important indication by rendering the word *ἐπὶ χορείᾳ*, 'on a dancing.' This means that they read the Hebrew as מַלְאָה (m'hóláth), 'dancings'<sup>1</sup>. Symmachus, just

<sup>1</sup> That is, the plural of מַלְאָה (m'hóláh), the occurrences of

afterwards, seems to have read the word similarly. Now, dancing stands for rejoicing, which, in the life of Israel, was generally associated with intense religious commotion, and excitement occasioned by national victories.

Seeking occasions in the career of David when the people gave themselves up to a 'great dancing,' we cannot but be struck with the relevance of this psalm to the incident recorded in 1 Sam. 18. 6, 7, and referred to in chaps. 21. 11; 29. 5. What is the scene? David has returned from the slaughter of Goliath and the rout of the Philistine hosts, when he receives a sort of national ovation: 'The women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing (לְשִׁיר וְהַמְחֵלוֹת), to meet king Saul, with timbrels, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women sang one to another in their play, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands' (18. 6, 7).

We cannot overlook the incidents that follow. Saul 'was very wroth,' for this saying of the women displeased him; he sought to slay David, and his intrigues are set forth in detail (chs. 19, 20). Escaped from the place of danger, David receives the sword of Goliath from Ahimelech at Nob, in the presence of Doeg the Edomite, a follower of Saul (ch. 21). Doeg reported what he had witnessed, and at the command of Saul slew the priests of Nob. This period of David's life, though full of

which are: Sing. const., Song of Songs, 7. 1; plural, Exod. 15. 20; 32. 19; Judges 11. 34; 21. 21; 1 Sam. 18. 6; 21. 11 (12); 29. 5. In all cases the word is *defective* as to the *hôlem* of the root-syllable; and the same applies also to the plural ending of the occurrences in the Book of Exodus, as shown in the most correct editions of the Massoretic text.

incident, deals mainly with the fight with Goliath and the consequences which ensued. By the subscript line 'To the Chief Musician, relating to *Mahalath*,' Psalm 52 is apparently appointed to be sung in honour of the great victory, the event being recalled in simple fashion by the 'Great Dancing' which followed it. One may well conceive David holding in his hand the sword of the fallen giant, and writing this psalm :

## PSALM 52.

Maschil of David : when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

**Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?** 1

The mercy of God *endureth* continually.

**Thy tongue deviseth very wickedness;** 2

**Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.**

**Thou lovest evil more than good;** 3

**And lying rather than to speak righteousness.** [Selah

**Thou lovest all devouring words,** 4

<sup>a</sup> Or, And <sup>a</sup> O thou deceitful tongue.

<sup>b</sup> Or, break thee down **God shall likewise <sup>b</sup> destroy thee for ever,** 5

**He shall take thee up, and pluck thee out of thy tent,**

**And root thee out of the land of the living.** [Selah

The righteous also shall see *it*, and fear, 6

And shall laugh at him, *saying*,

<sup>c</sup> Or, strong hold **Lo, this is the man that made not God his <sup>c</sup> strength;** 7

**But trusted in the abundance of his riches,**

**And strengthened himself in his wickedness.**

But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God : 8

I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

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9 I will give thee thanks for ever, because thou hast done it :

And I will wait on thy name, for it is good, in the presence of thy saints.

For the Chief Musician ; set to Mahalath<sup>1</sup>.

It is not clear what we are to understand by the historical heading, 'When Doeg the Edomite came, &c.' Maybe it simply indicates the scene in which the poem was written ; the real subject remains—Goliath of Gath. In the words of Perowne : ' This psalm is a lofty challenge, a defiance conceived in the spirit of David when he went forth to meet the champion of Gath. The calm courage of faith breathes in every word. There is no fear, no trembling, no doubt as to the end which will come upon the tyrant. How vain is his boast in presence of the lovingkindness of God, which protects His people ; in presence of the power of God, which uproots the oppressor ! Such is briefly the purport of the psalm<sup>2</sup>.'

And it is to this conclusion that we are guided by the word מַחֲלָת, so pointed as to find its counterpart and response in the general language of Holy Scripture : *M'hólóth*, 'dancings<sup>3</sup>.' However it may be understood, the word bears no relation whatever to the psalm which

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, on or relating to *Mahalath* (for *M'hólóth*)—'Dancings' (or 'Great Dancing'). See 1 Sam. 17. 37—18. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Psalms*, eighth edition, vol. i. 439, 440.

<sup>3</sup> Of course the *dancing* stood for all the jubilation of which it was the token and expression. There was a sacredness about the exercise which we can hardly understand to-day. A time of dancing would be remembered in Israel as a day of thanksgiving would stand out in the round of modern life. (See J. Millar, s.v. 'Dancing,' in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*.)



follows it. Here are some of the definitions that have been given :

#### MAHALATH.

GESENIUS: Apparently a catchword in a song giving name to tune [renderings of Aquila and Symmachus also indicated: a great service] (*Heb. Lex. s.v.*, Oxford edition). Possibly a special kind of song or a musical instrument. . . . (Buhl's German edition).

DELITZSCH: 'Set to a sad melody,' whether it be that *Mahalath* itself is the name of such an elegiac melody, or that the latter is indicated by means of the opening word of some popular song (*Commentary on the Psalms*, Eaton's translation, vol. ii. p. 170).

FÜRST: The name of a musical choir that dwelt in Abel-Meholah (*Heb. Lex. s.v.*, Davidson's edition).

HAUPT: Perhaps the catchword of an older hymn, the first line of which may have been: 'The sickness of Thy people heal, O God!' It is possible, however, that *Mahalath* is the name of a musical instrument (*Polychrome Bible: Psalms*, p. 186).

Against these conjectures we oppose a reasonable re-reading of the word<sup>1</sup>. Following the lead of Aquila and Symmachus, which antedate by hundreds of years the Received Massoretic Text, we find ourselves referred to a striking event in Israelitish history, which, in turn, proves itself to be the subject of the psalm! The lexical facts, then, as here developed, are simply these: מַחֲלָה has been pointed מַחֲלָה (Māḥālāth) in error; it should

<sup>1</sup> On dealing thus with the Hebrew text, Chwolson, the Russian orientalist, writes: 'In explaining the books of the Old Testament we have the right, where necessary, of disregarding, not only the vowel signs but also the vowel letters, and of not allowing ourselves to be bound by them. The expositor must have before his mind the ancient grammatical forms also, in order to see whether one or other of these forms

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have stood מִלִּים (M'liólóth, 'dancings'). The word refers us to a story in the history of David, which was recalled by Psalm 52 being rendered in the Temple worship.

may not have been mistaken by the Sopherim and the Massorettes, and wrongly interpreted' (*Hebraica*, vol. vi. 108).

## CHAPTER XII

### DAVID IN THE PSALTER

#### (4) THE ARK BROUGHT TO ZION

#### MAHALATH LEANNOTH (PSALM 87)

THE second *Mahalath* psalm has another catchword combined with it, which means 'Shoutings'—the chanting songs of the dancers. Here, then, is a psalm which, in the service of the Temple, is, we presume, to recall a memorable time, an event characterized by great rejoicings. Again we look to the life of David to supply the historical fact, and a glance at the psalm itself suggests quite easily the appropriate story, as recorded in 2 Sam. 6. 5, 14, 15 (also in 1 Chron. 13. 8; 15. 16, 28).

The Ark of the Testimony, after being in the hands of the Philistines for seven months, had been sent to Kirjath-jearim, and there it remained for twenty years—till the time of David, in fact (1 Sam. 4. 3-11; 5. 7, 8; 6. 15; 7. 1, 2; 1 Chron. 13. 6-14; 15. 1-16. 1 ff.). Removal having been begun, there came 'the breach upon Uzzah,' who 'put forth his hand to the ark of God'; and, in consequence of this, the Ark was left for a period of three months in the house of Obed-edom in Gath-rimmon (2 Sam. 6. 1-11). At the end of that time, David removed it in a grand procession to Jerusalem, where it was kept in a tent till a place should be prepared for it (verses 12-19).

This procession became historic in Israel. There was dancing and shouting such as made a profound impression. 'David and all the house of Israel played before

the Lord with all manner of instruments made of fir wood, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with castanets, and with cymbals. . . . And David danced before the Lord with all his might. . . . So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet' (2 Sam. 6. 5, 14, 15). It is admitted that the word used for 'dance' here is distinctive—*כִּרְכֵר* (*kirkér*) the pilpel of *כָּרַר* (*kārār*) 'to circle' [in 1 Chron. 15. 29 we find a form of *רָקַד* (*rākād*) 'to leap']; but, all the same, it is beyond question that the general term *חיל* (*hîl*), whence we have *m'hôlôth*, covers and embraces all the various exercises. Also it is admitted that the word rendered 'shouting' in 2 Sam. 6. 15 is *תְּרוּעָה* (*t'ruá'h*); but this, with the other forms of jubilation, may well be included in the more common and comprehensive term *עָנָה* (*'ánáh*), whence comes the catchword *עָנֹת* (*'ánôth*) of the subscript line. The verb *עָנָה* (*'ánáh*) is associated with dancing as expressed by *מְחֹלֶת* (*m'hôlôth*) in the following places: 1 Sam. 18. 7; 21. 11 (12); 29. 5. The R.V. renders 'sing' in each case.

Bearing in mind that the incident to which we have been thus directed is the bringing of the ark to Mount Zion, after its long stay at Kirjath-jearim (in Benjamin), and its brief sojourn at Beth-shemesh and Gath-rimmon (in Dan), let us look at the psalm itself :

PSALM 87.

A Psalm of the sons of Korah ; a Song.

- 1 <sup>a</sup> His foundation is in the holy mountains.  
 2 **The LORD loveth the gates of Zion**  
**More than all the dwellings of Jacob.**

G 2

\* Or, *His foundation in the holy mountains the LORD loveth, even the gates &c.*

Glorious things are spoken of thee, 3  
 O city of God. [Selah

<sup>a</sup> Or, *Egypt* I will make mention of <sup>a</sup> Rahab and Babylon as among  
 them that know me : 4

<sup>b</sup> Heb. *Cush*. Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with <sup>b</sup> Ethiopia ;  
 This one was born there.

Yea, of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one  
 was born in her ; 5

And the Most High himself shall establish her.

The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the  
 peoples, 6

This one was born there. [Selah

<sup>c</sup> Or, *the players on instruments shall be there* They that sing as well as <sup>c</sup> they that dance *shall say*, 7  
 All my fountains are in thee.

A Song, a Psalm of the sons of Korah ; for the Chief Musician ;  
 set to Mahalath <sup>d</sup> Leannoth <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>d</sup> Or, *for singing*

The relevancy of the psalm to the occasion which it was selected (if not indeed *written*) to commemorate, is as beautiful as it is obvious. The note is very much that of Ps. 132. 13, 14 : ' The Lord hath chosen Zion ; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my resting place for ever : here will I dwell ; for I have desired it.' ' The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.' How, then, can the ark be allowed to rest in Kirjath-jearim or any other of the ' dwellings of Jacob ' ? No ; Benjamin will not do ; Dan will not do. Zion is ' the city of God ' (3) ; ' the Most High himself shall establish her ' (5). Great kingdoms and empires may have ' this one ' born in them (4) ; but Zion has ' this one

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, on or relating to *Mahalath* (for *M'hôlôth*) *Leannoth*—' Dancings (or Great Dancing) with Shoutings.' See 2 Sam. 6. 4, 14, 15, and 1 Chron. 13. 8 ; 15. 16, 28.

and that one 'born in her' (5). It is the city of which all should desire to be citizens; and 'when the Lord writeth up the peoples,' there will be nothing to compare with having been 'born there,' or being a citizen of Zion (6). Of no other place could the psalmist say: 'They that sing as well as they that dance' <sup>1</sup> shall say, 'All my fountains are in thee'—all my sources of delight are in thee <sup>2</sup>!

<sup>1</sup> 'They that dance,' חֲלִילִים, from חָלַל, 'to dance'; whence comes the word of the subscript title, מְחַלְלֵת.

<sup>2</sup> Or possibly those participating in the rejoicings are represented as declaring that all their *descendants* shall assuredly be citizens of Zion. See this sense of יָצַד in Deut. 33. 28.

## CHAPTER XIII

### DAVID IN THE PSALTER

#### (5) A NATIONAL ANTHEM

#### AIJELETH HASH-SHAHAR (PSALM 21)

THIS psalm, one of the favourites of the collection, seems to have been chosen to recall the coronation of David. Mindful of national blessings, the people praise God for their King. This is their National Anthem, in which the 'politics' and 'knavish tricks' of the enemies of Israel are not left out of sight (8-12), and confidence in Jehovah the Strong is earnestly expressed (13). The title, as given in the musical line, is אֵילַת הַשָּׁחַר (*Aijeleth hash-Shahar*), 'The Hind of the Dawn.' A figure, at once delicate and splendid, is wrapt in the words. The 'Hind of the Morning' glow—this is an Oriental word-picture of the sun as he sheds his rising rays. The traveller watches with keen desire for the first beams of light, and he warmly greets the 'Dawn Hind' as he dances on the distant horizon. The opening verses of the psalm provide a response to the title.

#### PSALM 21.

A Psalm of David.

**The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD ;** 1  
**And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice !**  
**Thou hast given him his heart's desire,** 2  
**And hast not withholden the request of his lips. [Selah**  
**For thou preventest him with the blessings of**  
**<sup>a</sup> goodness :** 3

<sup>a</sup> Or, good things

**Thou settest a crown of fine gold on his head.**

4 He asked life of thee, thou gavest it him ;  
Even length of days for ever and ever.

5 His glory is great in thy salvation :  
**Honour and majesty dost thou lay upon him.**

6 For thou <sup>a</sup> makest him most blessed for ever :  
**Thou makest him glad with joy in thy presence.**

<sup>a</sup> Heb. *settest*  
*him to be*  
*blessings.*  
See Gen.  
12. 2.

7 For the king trusteth in the LORD,  
And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he  
shall not be moved.

8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies :  
Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery furnace in the time of  
thine <sup>b</sup> anger.

The LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath,  
And the fire shall devour them.

<sup>b</sup> Or,  
*presence*  
Heb.  
*countenance.*

10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,  
And their seed from among the children of men.

11 For they intended evil against thee :  
They imagined a device, which they are not able to  
perform.

12 For thou shalt make them turn their back,  
Thou shalt make ready with thy bowstrings against  
the face of them.

13 Be thou exalted, O LORD, in thy strength :  
So will we sing and praise thy power.

For the Chief Musician ; set to <sup>c</sup> Aijeleth hash-Shahar <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>c</sup> That is,  
*The hind*  
*of the*  
*morning.*

The 'Hind of the Morning' represents, in a word, an  
object of grace and beauty, towards which the soul goes

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, on or relating to *Aijeleth hash-Shahar*—The Hind of the Dawn—recalling God's goodness to David in giving him his heart's desire (2) ; perhaps also embodying an allusion to the king as the pride and glory of his people.



out in passionate desire. *Hind* stands for love (see Prov. 5. 19), and *Morning* implies waiting; 'HEART'S DESIRE' interprets the title as a whole. And the psalmist does not keep us waiting long for the words which, by this title, are proclaimed as the most striking of the poem: 'Thou hast given him (the king) HIS HEART'S DESIRE, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.' How warm is the language! What follows in the psalm is but an unfolding of these words, in which David paints the Dawn Hind in royal beauty. As designating a psalm which is laden with ideas of satisfaction, no title could have been more striking and graceful. And verses 3-6 justify the inference that the psalm was associated with the commemoration of Israel's greatest king—David.

A somewhat divergent view of this psalm is thus expressed by Delitzsch:

'In the preceding psalm (20), the people, interceding for their king, cried for him, "May Jehovah fulfil all thy desires"; in this they can say thankfully to God, "the desire of his heart hast thou granted him." In both psalms the people appear before God in connexion with matters that concern their king; in the former desiring and praying, in the latter thanking and hoping; here as well as there in the midst of war; here, however, now that the king has recovered, in the assurance that the war will be brought to a victorious issue<sup>1</sup>.'

Yet it is permissible to ask whether the HEART'S DESIRE of the people, as well as that of the king, had not been graciously granted by Jehovah? If so, may not the title do more than recall the *words* of verses 1-4, and

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. i. 365, 366.

bring to mind KING DAVID himself<sup>1</sup>, who was the glory of the people, captivating their vision like the 'morning glow'? Assuredly, they offer for him a noble prayer in this beautiful psalm.

<sup>1</sup> That the word 'Hind' is feminine, is no bar to this suggestion. The subsidiary features of a figure do not limit its application along the lines of some outstanding quality. It is well known that in Hebrew and cognate dialects feminine titles and figures of speech are at times applied to masculine objects, when there is a desire to express intense affection, or profound esteem to one in high station. Besides that, we should bear in mind that a parable is not an allegory. Christ said He was the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Door, the Vine—using so many Greek words that were all feminine. There was no impropriety, no confusion. Neither would it be improper, in speaking of David as the 'Heart's Desire' of his people, to say that he was as 'the Hind of the Dawn' to them. (See Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Heb. Gram.*, Oxford edition, pp. 412, 413.)

## CHAPTER XIV

### DAVID IN THE PSALTER

#### (6) CONFLICTS COMMEMORATED

#### JONATH ELEM REHOKIM (PSALM 55)

THAT the words *Jonath elem rehokim* belong to Psalm 55, as they are placed in this edition, must assuredly have been suspected by many a student. It has become quite general for expositors to support arguments for the substantial compactness of the Psalter by expressing themselves in some such words as these, by the late W. H. Green, of Princeton: 'It is a most significant circumstance that the link which binds Psalm 56 to 55 is the correspondence between the title of the former and the text of the latter. The former is set to the tune of "The silent dove of them that are afar off"; in the latter the psalmist exclaims, verses 6, 7, "Oh that I had wings like a dove . . . lo, then would I wander afar off<sup>1</sup>."'

It is a pleasure to see the title associated, at length, with what is unquestionably its own psalm. There is no need to argue the propriety of the combination. Let us see the psalm as properly set out :

#### PSALM 55.

Maschil of David.

Give ear to my prayer, O God ; I  
And hide not thyself from my supplication.

<sup>1</sup> *Old and New Testament Student* (now *Biblical World*, of Chicago), vol. xi. p. 163. See also Jebb, Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Kay, and others, in commenting on the psalms specified.

- 2 Attend unto me, and answer me :  
I am restless in my complaint, and moan ;
- 3 Because of the voice of the enemy,  
Because of the oppression of the wicked ;  
For they cast iniquity upon me,  
And in anger they persecute me.
- 4 My heart is sore pained within me :  
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
- 5 **Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,  
And horror hath overwhelmed me.**
- 6 **And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove!**  
**Then would I fly away, and be at rest.**
- 7 **Lo, then would I wander far off,**  
**I would lodge in the wilderness.** [Selah
- 8 **I would <sup>a</sup>haste me to a shelter**  
**From the stormy wind and tempest.** <sup>a</sup> Or, *hasten my escape*
- 9 <sup>b</sup> Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongue : <sup>b</sup> Heb. *Swallow up.*  
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
- 10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls  
thereof :  
Iniquity also and mischief are in the midst of it.
- 11 Wickedness is in the midst thereof :  
<sup>c</sup> Oppression and guile depart not from her streets. <sup>c</sup> Or, *Fraud*
- 12 For it was not an enemy that reproached me ;  
Then I could have borne it :  
Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify  
himself against me ;  
Then I would have hid myself from him :
- 13 But it was thou, a man mine equal,  
My companion, and my familiar friend.
- 14 We took sweet counsel together,  
We walked in the house of God with the throng.
- 15 <sup>d</sup> Let death come suddenly upon them, <sup>d</sup> Or, as otherwise read, *Desolations be upon them!*

<sup>a</sup> Heb. *Sheol*. Let them go down alive into <sup>a</sup> the pit :

<sup>b</sup> Or, *their inward part* For wickedness is in their dwelling, in <sup>b</sup> the midst of them.

As for me, I will call upon God ; 16

And the LORD shall save me.

Evening, and morning, and at noonday, will I complain,  
and moan : 17

And he shall hear my voice.

<sup>c</sup> Or, *so that none came nigh me* He hath redeemed my soul in peace <sup>c</sup> from the battle  
that was against me : 18

For they were many *that strove* with me.

Or, *afflict* God shall hear, and <sup>d</sup> answer them, 19

Even he that abideth of old, [Selah

*The men* who have no changes,

And who fear not God.

He hath put forth his hands against such as were at  
peace with him : 20

He hath profaned his covenant.

His mouth was smooth as butter, 21

But his heart was war :

His words were softer than oil,

Yet were they drawn swords.

<sup>e</sup> Heb. *that he hath given thee*. Cast <sup>e</sup> thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain  
thee : 22

He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit  
of destruction : 23

Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half  
their days ;

<sup>f</sup> That is, *The silent dove of them that are afar off* But I will trust in thee.

or, as otherwise read, *The dove of the distant terebinths*

For the Chief Musician ; set to <sup>f</sup> *Jonath elem rehokim* <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, on or relating to *Jonath elem rehokim*—'The Dove

The rebellion of Absalom furnishes the subject of the psalm, the allusions of which are in striking harmony with the occurrences recorded in 2 Sam. 15-19. The betrayal of David by Ahithophel, 'his familiar friend' with whom he had 'taken sweet counsel,' may be styled the traditional explanation of the psalm. It was also the explanation adopted by Delitzsch, who wrote :

' Psalm 55 belongs, like Psalm 41, to the four years of the growth of Absalom's rebellion ; only it belongs to a somewhat later time, when Absalom's party were already so certain of their cause that they no longer required to make any secret of it. . . . In David's surroundings there are wild ongoings that aim at his destruction. He would fain flee away from these and hide himself, like a dove with its noiseless yet persevering flight, which betakes itself to a hole in a rock from the storm or from the claws of the bird of prey . . . It is not open foes, who might have had cause, that are opposed to him, but faithless friends, among them Ahithophel the Gilonite, the scum of perfidious ingratitude.<sup>1</sup>'

These characteristics justify the title<sup>2</sup> given to the of the Distant Terebinths'—apparently a commemoration of David's conflicts and distresses. The word 'moan' in verse 17 is *הָמָה* (*hâmâh*), used in Ezek. 7. 16 of the cooing (or mourning) of a dove.

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, Eaton's translation, vol. ii. pp. 178, 181, 182.

<sup>2</sup> The line is variously rendered according to the pointing that is adopted for the central word: *The Oxford Hebrew Lexicon* (after Olshausen, Cheyne, and others): 'The Dove of Distant Terebinths'; Delitzsch, 'The Silent Dove among the Afar-off'; Wellhausen, 'The Dove of Far Off Islands'; Perowne, 'The Silent Dove in Far-off Lands.' From each and all of these pictures we can gather impressions of the severity of David's trials at the time indicated in the psalm.

psalm by the Chief Musician. And that David's trials should have been commemorated is not unreasonable, in view of the fact that the psalm selected for the purpose affirms unwavering faith in Jehovah, as witness the concluding verses:—'Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved,' &c.

## CHAPTER XV

### PSALMS FOR A SEASON OF HUMILIATION

#### AL-TASHHETH (PSALMS 56, 57, 58, 74)

THE *Al-tashheth* psalms are four in number, and have features in common. A study of the contents affords a fair indication of the meaning of the subscript title; of which 'Destroy not' gives the plain sense. Among the early versions, the Septuagint and Vulgate render no suggestive help. The Syriac Peshito, however, which for the most part exhibits fanciful headings, unquestionably of Christian origin, follows a singular course. It ignores the title *Al-tashheth* in every case; but in an inscription over Psalm 74, which according to our arrangement of the material is related to the *Al-tashheth* title, it says: 'A *psalm* of Asaph: when David saw the angel destroying the people, and wept and said, *Let thine hand* be against me, and against my seed, and not against these innocent sheep,' &c.

A glance at the Psalm itself will show that it was intended for other times. Mount Zion was not in the hands of the enemy, as implied in verses 2 and 3, when David's sin of numbering the people was followed by divine judgement and sorrow unto repentance. Doubtless the Syriac inscription was built on the similarity of the language of the opening verse of the psalm with that of 2 Sam. 24. 17 (and 1 Chron. 21. 14 ff.): 'Lo, I have sinned, and I have done perversely; but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.' All



four psalms speak of adversity in greater or less degree. It matters not what the individual occasions of writing; it seems evident from the *Al-tashheth* title that these psalms were used as Prayers of Humiliation.

## PSALM 56.

*A Psalm of David: Michtam: when the Philistines took him in Gath.*

**Be merciful unto me, O God; for man would swallow  
me up: 1**

**All the day long he fighting oppresseth me.**

<sup>a</sup> Or, *They  
that lie in  
wait for me*

**<sup>a</sup> Mine enemies would swallow me up all the day long: 2**

**For they be many that fight proudly against me.**

**What time I am afraid, 3**

**I will put my trust in thee.**

**In God I will praise his word: 4**

**In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid;**

**What can flesh do unto me?**

**All the day long they wrest my words: 5**

**All their thoughts are against me for evil.**

**They gather themselves together, they hide them-  
selves, 6**

**They mark my steps,**

<sup>b</sup> Or, *Inas-  
much as*

**<sup>b</sup> Even as they have waited for my soul.**

<sup>c</sup> Or, *They  
think to  
escape*

**<sup>c</sup> Shall they escape by iniquity? 7**

**In anger cast down the peoples, O God.**

**Thou tellest my wanderings: 8**

**Put thou my tears into thy bottle;**

<sup>d</sup> Or, *record*

**Are they not in thy <sup>d</sup> book?**

**Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day that**

**I call: 9**

<sup>e</sup> Or, *for*

**This I know, <sup>e</sup> that God is for me.**

**In God will I praise *his* word: 10**

In the LORD will I praise *his* word.

11 In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid;

What can man do unto me ?

12 Thy vows are upon me, O God:

I will render thank offerings unto thee.

13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death :

*Hast thou not delivered* my feet from falling ?

That I may walk before God

In the light of <sup>a</sup> the living.

<sup>a</sup> Or, *life*

For the Chief Musician; *set to* Al-tashheth<sup>1</sup>.

### PSALM 57.

*A Psalm* of David : Michtam : when he fled from Saul,  
in the cave.

1 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me ;

For my soul taketh refuge in thee :

Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge,

Until *these* <sup>b</sup> calamities be overpast.

<sup>b</sup> Or,  
*wicked-*  
*nesses*

2 I will cry unto God Most High ;

Unto God that performeth *all things* for me.

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me,

*When he that would swallow me up* reproacheth ; [Selah

God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

4 My soul is among lions ;

<sup>c</sup> I lie among them that are set on fire,

Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and  
arrows,

<sup>c</sup> Or, *I must*  
*lie*

And their tongue a sharp sword.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ;

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, *Al-tashheth*, 'Destroy not,' an appeal or prayer for deliverance from danger and adversity (Exod. 32. 11-14; Deut. 9. 26).

*Let thy glory be above all the earth.*

**They have prepared a net for my steps ;** 6

**My soul is bowed down :**

**They have digged a pit before me ;**

**They are fallen into the midst thereof themselves.**

**My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed :** [Selah 7

**I will sing, yea, I will sing praises.**

**Awake up, my glory ; awake, psaltery and harp :** 8

<sup>a</sup> Or, *I will  
awake the  
dawn*

<sup>a</sup> I myself will awake right early.

**I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the  
peoples :** 9

**I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.**

**For thy mercy is great unto the heavens,** 10

**And thy truth unto the skies.**

**Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ;** 11

*Let thy glory be above all the earth.*

For the Chief Musician ; *set to Al-tashheth*<sup>1</sup>.

### PSALM 58.

*A Psalm of David : Michtam.*

<sup>b</sup> Or, *Is the  
righteous-  
ness ye  
should  
speak  
dumb ?*  
<sup>c</sup> Or, as  
otherwise  
read, *O ye  
gods  
or, O ye  
mighty ones*  
<sup>d</sup> Or, *judge  
uprightly  
the sons  
of men*

<sup>b</sup> Do ye indeed <sup>c</sup> in silence speak righteousness ? 1

**Do ye <sup>d</sup> judge uprightly, O ye sons of men ?**

**Yea, in heart ye work wickedness ;** 2

**Ye weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.**

**The wicked are estranged from the womb :** 3

**They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.**

**Their poison is like the poison of a serpent :** 4

*They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear ;*

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, *Al-tashheth*, 'Destroy not,' an appeal or prayer for deliverance from danger and adversity (Exod. 32. 11-14 ; Deut. 9. 26).

- 5 Which hearkeneth not to the voice of <sup>a</sup> charmers,  
Charming never so wisely. <sup>a</sup> Or,  
enchanters
- 6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth:  
Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O  
LORD.
- 7 Let them melt away as water that runneth apace:  
When he aimeth his arrows, let them be as though  
they were cut off.
- 8 Let them be as a snail which melteth and passeth  
away:  
Like the untimely birth of a woman, <sup>b</sup> that hath not  
seen the sun. <sup>b</sup> Or, like  
them that  
have not  
seen the  
sun
- 9 Before your pots can feel the thorns,  
<sup>c</sup> He shall take them away with a whirlwind, the  
green and the burning alike. <sup>c</sup> Or, Even  
as raw  
flesh, even  
so, shall  
fury sweep  
them away
- 10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the ven-  
geance:  
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
- 11 So that men shall say, Verily there is <sup>d</sup> a reward for <sup>d</sup> Heb. fruit  
the righteous:  
Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.  
For the Chief Musician; set to Al-tashheth <sup>1</sup>.

## PSALM 74.

Maschil of Asaph.

- 1 O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?  
Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of  
thy pasture?
- 2 Remember thy congregation, which thou hast pur-  
chased of old,

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, *Al-tashheth*, 'Destroy not,' an appeal or prayer for deliverance from danger and adversity (Exod. 32. 11-14; Deut. 9. 26).

**Which thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of thine inheritance;**

*And mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.*

Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual ruins, 3

<sup>a</sup> Or, *The enemy hath wrought all evil*

<sup>a</sup> All the evil that the enemy hath done in the sanctuary.

Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly; 4

They have set up their ensigns for signs.

<sup>b</sup> Or, *made themselves known*

They <sup>b</sup> seemed as men that lifted up 5

Axes upon a thicket of trees.

And now all the carved work thereof together 6

They break down with hatchet and hammers.

They have set thy sanctuary on fire; 7

They have profaned the dwelling place of thy name even to the ground.

They said in their heart, Let us make havoc of them altogether: 8

<sup>c</sup> Or, *places of assembly*

They have burned up all the <sup>c</sup>synagogues of God in the land.

We see not our signs: 9

There is no more any prophet;

Neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

**How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach?** 10

**Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?**

**Why drawest thou back thy hand, even thy right hand?** 11

*Pluck it out of thy bosom and consume them.*

Yet God is my King of old, 12

Working salvation in the midst of the earth.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. *break up.*  
<sup>e</sup> Or, *sea-monsters*

Thou didst <sup>d</sup>divide the sea by thy strength: 13

Thou brakest the heads of the <sup>e</sup>dragons in the waters.

- 14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces,  
Thou gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting  
the wilderness.
- 15 Thou didst cleave fountain and flood :  
Thou driedst up <sup>a</sup> mighty rivers.
- 16 The day is thine, the night also is thine :  
Thou hast prepared the <sup>b</sup> light and the sun.
- 17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth :  
Thou hast made summer and winter.
- 18 Remember this, that the enemy <sup>c</sup> hath reproached,  
**O LORD,**  
And that a foolish people have blasphemed thy  
name.
- 19 O deliver not <sup>d</sup> the soul of thy turtledove unto the  
wild beast :  
Forget not the <sup>e</sup> life of thy poor for ever.
- 20 Have respect unto the covenant :  
For the dark places of the <sup>f</sup> earth are full of the  
habitations of violence.
- 21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed :  
Let the poor and needy praise thy name.
- 22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause :  
Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee  
all the day.
- 23 Forget not the voice of thine adversaries :  
The tumult of those that rise up against thee <sup>g</sup> as-  
cendeth continually.

<sup>a</sup> Or, ever-flowing<sup>b</sup> Heb. luminary.<sup>c</sup> Or, hath reproached the LORD<sup>d</sup> Or, thy turtledove unto the greedy multitude<sup>e</sup> Or, multitude<sup>f</sup> Or, land<sup>g</sup> Or, which ascendeth

For the Chief Musician; set to Al-tashheth<sup>1</sup>.

But why 'Destroy not' ? Surely there could be no

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, *Al-tashheth*, 'Destroy not,' an appeal or prayer for deliverance from danger and adversity (Exod. 32. 11-14; Deut. 9. 26).

prayer more becoming a people whose God was Jehovah, in days of judgement and tribulation. They had been taught that they were the heritage of the Lord, who would nevertheless chastise them for iniquity and transgression. In days of visitation, therefore, how could they help invoking the Divine mercy, in some such words as *Al-tashheth*—‘Destroy not!’? In the early days of the nation, when Aaron made a golden calf and the people worshipped it, was not Jehovah’s anger turned away by the prayer of Moses? And had not that all-prevailing prayer come down in the words of the great lawgiver himself: ‘O Lord God, DESTROY NOT (*Al-tashheth*) thy people and thine inheritance,’ &c.? How could such a petition, as a consequence of which ‘the Lord repented him of the evil which he thought to do unto his people,’ pass out of mind<sup>1</sup>?

Again, could Israel forget the days of David, when pestilence raged over the land, and swept away seventy thousand? The king confessed his sin in numbering the people, and besought Jehovah to stay the hand of judgement. Do we not read that then, ‘when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough; now stay thine hand’? As the verbal forms here are from the same root, *חָשַׁב*, it would appear that the prayer of David was like unto that of Moses before him. And the result was the same in each case: ‘Jehovah repented him of the evil’ (Deut. 9. 26; 2 Sam. 24. 16). Neither could Israel forget the great promise by Moses: ‘When thou art in tribulation . . . thou shalt return to the Lord thy God . . . he will not fail thee, NEITHER

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 32. 11–14; Deut. 9. 26.

DESTROY THEE, nor forget the covenant,' &c. (Deut. 4. 30, 31).

In the psalms classed *Al-tashheth*, a nation, and not an individual, implores Divine clemency. The hand of judgement is again upon Israel, and the God who has often delivered is approached with prayers of 'Be merciful' (Pss. 56. 1, 57. 1), 'deliver from enemies' (Ps. 59. 1), 'remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old' (Ps. 74. 2). Jehovah is asked to 'have respect unto the covenant'—the covenant which, in an earlier time, He said HE WOULD NOT FORGET (Ps. 74. 20; Deut. 4. 31). In other words, the note of prayer was, 'DESTROY NOT thine inheritance, O Lord!'<sup>1</sup>.

The judgements of God and the warnings of the prophets sometimes brought Israel face to face with destruction. In a memorable passage, Jeremiah wrote: 'Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth . . . For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall turn aside to ask of thy welfare? Thou hast rejected me saith the Lord, thou art gone backward: therefore have

<sup>1</sup> We have passed by the general explanation of *Al-tashheth* as 'possibly the title of a vintage song,' to which the psalms were set! The reason given for this suggestion is that, in substance, the words appear in Isa. 65. 8. It is not, however, by any means clear that a song is there quoted; and nothing can be adduced to show that the psalms of sadness and sorrow classed as *Al-tashheth* were sung to melodies of such a type as is assumed by the explanation referred to. The incidents in the life of Moses and David give an explanation of the title which cannot but be regarded as appropriate, and moreover seems to be adequate on distinctly religious grounds.



I stretched out my hand against thee, and destroyed thee ; I am weary with repenting ' (Jer. 15. 1, 5, 6).

In presence of such denunciations, in times when sorrow and suffering for sin came upon the people, how should the Chief Musician class the psalms in which Israel mourned their calamities and prayed for the turning away of judgement ? There was, indeed, no Moses or Samuel to ' stand before Jehovah ' ; but the God of the fathers was Israel's Lord, and to Him they presented their *Al-tashheth* (' Destroy not ! ' ) prayers in the words of men who had found favour with Jehovah. The common desire was expressed in the prevailing plea of Moses—' Destroy not ! ' The words of the petitions were taken from the psalms of David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, and the writings of Asaph, the leader of Temple song.

## CHAPTER XVI

### PSALMS FOR SPECIAL CHOIRS

#### ALAMOTH—SHEMINITH—JEDUTHUN

THERE can be no doubt that there were male and female choirs, in a distinctive sense, in the Temple service. The provisions in the time of Solomon find their counterpart in those that were made after the return from Babylon. Apart altogether from such arrangements as resulted from the division of the Levites into orders, some of them for leading the praise of the people; and apart also from the distinction between instrumental music and ordinary singing, there were choirs that were specifically female as well as such as were properly called male. The psalm titles refer to these, as well as witness to the place occupied by stringed instruments in divine worship:

#### THE FEMALE CHOIR: ALAMOTH (PSALM 45).

It would appear that Miriam and Deborah had their successors in many generations. In Ps. 68—a psalm recalling the jubilations of the people in years of God's mighty working for Israel—there is clear recognition of the way in which each sex had its proper part:

They have seen thy goings, O God,  
Even the goings of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.

The singers went before, the minstrels followed  
after,

In the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels.

(Ps. 68. 24, 25<sup>1</sup>; and cp. Ps. 148. 12.)

<sup>1</sup> Singers lead the procession, after them players upon lyres

The Chronicler's account of Solomon's Temple and its services gives a prominent place to song and music—2 Chron. 5. 12, 13; 20. 28; 29. 25, 26; 35. 15. Coming to the 'Return,' it will be noted that Ezra mentions two hundred singing men and singing women among those who came back to Jerusalem; and we know no reason why the statement should not be received in its unvarnished simplicity (Ezra 2. 65). In social life the voices of women were heard as well as those of men, in times of joy no less than in times of sorrow (2 Sam. 19. 35; 2 Chron. 35. 25). They were also heard in the Temple service, if the mark, 'To the Chief Musician—Maidens,' conveys any meaning as following Ps. 45. Can there be any question as to the propriety of this selection for female voices?

## PSALM 45.

*A Psalm of the sons of Korah. Maschil. A Song of loves.*

My heart overfloweth with a goodly matter : 1

<sup>a</sup> Or, *I speak;* <sup>a</sup> I speak the things which I have made touching the  
*my work is*  
*for a king* king :

My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

Thou art fairer than the children of men ; 2

<sup>b</sup> Or, *upon* Grace is poured <sup>b</sup> into thy lips :

Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one, 3

Thy glory and thy majesty.

And in thy majesty ride on prosperously, 4

<sup>c</sup> Or, *In*  
*behalf of* <sup>c</sup> Because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness :

and harps, and on both sides maidens with timbrels—a retrospective allusion to the song by the Sea, which Miriam and the women of Israel sang to the accompaniment of timbrels. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Psalms* (vol. ii. p. 304).

- And <sup>a</sup> thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
- 5 Thine arrows are sharp ;  
The peoples fall under thee ;  
*They are* in the heart of the king's enemies.
- 6 <sup>b</sup> Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever :  
A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom.
- 7 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness :  
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee  
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
- 8 All thy garments *smell of* myrrh, and aloes, and cassia ;  
Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad.
- 9 Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women :  
At thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir.
- 10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear ;  
Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house ;
- 11 So shall the king desire thy beauty ;  
For he is thy Lord ; and worship thou him.
- 12 And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift ;  
Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.
- 13 The king's daughter <sup>c</sup> *within the palace* is all glorious :  
Her clothing is inwrought with gold.
- 14 She shall be led unto the king <sup>d</sup> in brodered work :  
The virgins her companions that follow her  
Shall be brought unto thee.
- 15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be led :  
They shall enter into the king's palace.

<sup>a</sup> Or, let thy right hand teach

<sup>b</sup> Or, Thy throne is the throne of God &c.

<sup>c</sup> Or, in the inner part of the palace

<sup>d</sup> Or, upon

Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, 16

Whom thou shalt make princes in all the earth.

I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations : 17

Therefore shall the peoples give thee thanks for ever and ever.

For the Chief Musician ; a *Psal'm* of the sons of Korah ;  
set to *Alamoth*<sup>1</sup>.

'A song of loves'—a nuptial ode—every line of this psalm is characterized by delicacy and grace. The special justification of the title is found in verses 9 to 15 ; but from first to last the psalm is out of the question for male voices. The words are largely about females, and by females they could well be sung—moreover, be sung best. The women's choir in the Temple precincts would appear to have been the special charge of skilled leaders, whose names have come down to us in 1 Chron. 15. 20. Those placed over the damsels (*Alamoth*) had psalteries, as distinguished from those over the *Sheminith* choir (of which presently), who had harps. The word *Alamoth* is simple and commonplace ; and, seeing that its plain meaning makes good sense, we should not be justified in looking afield for a technical signification<sup>2</sup>.

#### ALAMOTH.

GESENIUS : '*al-Alamoth* : to (the voice of) young women, either literally or of soprano or falsetto of boys (*Heb. Lex.* s.v., Oxford edition).

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, on or relating to *Alamoth*, 'Maidens' (as a choir).

<sup>2</sup> That לַי ('*al*) should precede *Alamoth* presents no difficulty. In each and every case in the psalm titles, this particle may be rendered 'on' or 'relating to'—sometimes as to a season, at other times as to a subject, and at other times as to a choir. See note on p. 36.

DELITZSCH: We approve of Perret-Gentil's *chant avec voix de femmes*, and still more of Armand de Mestral's *en soprano* (*Commentary*, vol. ii, p. 109).

KIRKPATRICK: The term appears to mean *in the manner of maidens*, or, *for maidens' voices: soprano* (*Psalms: Cambridge Bible*, p. xxv).

FÜRST: A musical choir, dwelling perhaps in  $\text{עֲלֵמוֹת}$ , over whom was placed a  $\text{מְנַצֵּחַ}$  (director) (*Heb. Lex. s.v.*, Davidson's edition).

WELLHAUSEN: With Elamite instruments (*Polychrome Bible: Psalms*, p. 46).

A failure to see the relation of the musical line to its *proper* psalm sufficiently explains the confusion that has prevailed regarding the use of  $\text{עֲלֵמוֹת}$  (*Alamoth*). Finding no echo or response in Ps. 46, expositors felt driven to seek a definition along abstract lines. Being thrown off the scent by the misplacement of which we have spoken so frequently, they have given ample rein to the faculty of conjecture, with confusing results. Among other suggestions advanced is one that would bring the *Muth-labben* psalm (9 in ordinary editions) into association with this, because of manuscript variations consequent upon the nature and intention of the line being unrecognized by copyists. Still others have argued for Ps. 49 being of the same class because of the concluding words of its predecessor ('*al-muth* = 'unto death') having been pointed in different ways by the Massoretes, so as to yield divergent significations. The unfortunate misplacement of the musical line throughout the Psalter is answerable for these and other adventurous speculations.

A minute examination of all the titles makes it evident that Ps. 45 is the only one that can properly bear the *Alamoth* mark. If, at length, we are satisfied that the musical titles bear some relation to the sub-

stance of the psalms to which they are affixed, then by reading with care the two just specified, we shall speedily arrive at a definite conclusion, denying them a suitability for the Female Choir. Further, when Dr. Paul Haupt (in the *Polychrome Bible: Psalms*) makes Ps. 48 to end with lost words, thus, 'He will guide [ ]' in order to place over Ps. 49 the notice, 'With Elamite instruments,' he robs one psalm and does not enrich its successor. As, moreover, the musical titles, without a single exception, are introduced by the formula לַמְנַצֵּחַ, we are assuredly not justified in assuming the propriety of a *reverse order of words*, as Dr. Haupt has done, by treating as a title the phrase עַל־סוּחַ, at the end of Ps. 48.

#### THE MALE CHOIR: SHEMINITH (PSALMS 5, 11).

Next comes the Male Choir, designated by a word which undoubtedly gives difficulty. As to הַשְּׁמִינִית, taken simply, it means 'the eighth.' If we had only the occurrences in the psalm titles, we might feel compelled to adopt the explanation, 'the octave, or the bass part in singing,' although there seems to be no adequate grounds on which to conclude that music in the Israelitish sense knew anything of the standard implied. It is impossible, however, to ignore the occurrence of the word in 1 Chron. 15. 21, where it is used in contradistinction to the word עַלְמֹת (Maidens). Two facts are there brought before us: (1) certain skilled men were appointed 'with psalteries, over maidens'; and (2) certain other skilled men were appointed 'with harps, over the *Sheminith*.' If the maidens are spoken of in one clause, should we not expect the males to be

\* 1 Chron. 15<sup>20-21</sup> reads most naturally as though  
 8 men (named) played psalteries set-to treble, and  
 6 other (named) played harps tuned "eight" in a low lower.

specified *per contra*? Whatever 'the eighth' may mean, it would seem to describe the Male Choir.

*Sheminith* may point in one of several directions. A *time* might be intended; but the passage in 1 Chron. 15 is against that. A *place* might be intended; but here again the way is barred. A *class* seems the inevitable intention; and such a signification is agreeable to the psalm titles as well as to the decisive passage in 1 Chron. 15. In Ps. 68. 25 (26), we have the זָרִים, male singers, and the עַלְמֹת, maidens; here in 1 Chron. 15, we seem to have the same classes again, with the masculine character presented under another aspect. With fanciful explanations, Talmudical writers have found in 'the eighth' a reference to the rite of circumcision<sup>1</sup>. The circumcised are, of course, the males; and in 1 Chron. 15. 21, it is affirmed that they are 'to lead,' to have pre-eminence, which is precisely what we should suppose in view of the peculiar privileges of the males in Israel.

The word was obviously a puzzle to the early translators. In the Psalms, the Septuagint renders it literally, 'the eighth'; in 1 Chron. 15, it does less—both *Alamoith* and *Sheminith* are transferred thus: ἀλαιμῶθ and ἀμασενίθ. Some have interpreted *Sheminith* as meaning an instrument of eight strings; others as meaning 'on the octave,' or to be sung by the bass voice. Regarding these explanations, it is sufficient to say that they are mere guesses; we never meet with such an instrument anywhere else, and we have no information whatever as to such a musical standard as is implied in 'the octave'<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, art. Circumcision.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Stainer, it may be remarked, writes on this



Both the contrast suggested by the passage under notice (1 Chron. 15. 20, 21), and similar statements elsewhere (2 Chron. 35. 25; Ezra 2. 65; Neh. 7. 67), support our view that, whatever *Sheminith* may specify in its quality of *eighth*, it stands for Male Choir in its practical intention. If the circumcision, or consecration mark is alluded to, then we have an admirable counterpart of *Alamoth*, the two words being singularly free from naturalism. In that case, moreover, the choir would be confined to descendants of Abraham in the line of Isaac<sup>1</sup>, their eligibility being also based on an act of piety of supreme importance in Israel.

Possibly, however, the Male Choir may have been described as *Sheminith* on other grounds. We remember that some of the most solemn seasons of worship in Israel were on the *eighth* day (Lev. 23. 36; Num. 29. 35; Neh. 8. 18). The 'solemn assembly' עֲצֵרֶת of the Feast of Tabernacles may have been typical, and thus have given name and character to a particular choir. In that case, *the eighth* would imply association with special solemnities<sup>2</sup>. Certain point: 'Although it is true that the *octave* is not only one of the best known intervals in music, as being the distance between the singing pitch of men and women, but also the most important naturally, being produced by the simplest ratio of vibrations 1: 2; yet the name *octave* could only be given to it by those who possessed a scale in which eight steps led from a note to its octave. Such a sound-ladder is of comparatively modern origin' ('Music of the Bible,' in *The Bible Educator*, vol. i. p. 298).

<sup>1</sup> Thus the children of Ishmael, or the Edomites, and others who, though circumcised, submitted to the ordinance on any other than the *eighth* day, were excluded.

<sup>2</sup> How this comes about, seeing that the word is feminine, is no less a difficulty with us than with expositors who have

it is that the *Sheminith* psalms have features agreeable to this view.

PSALM 5.

A Psalm of David.

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD,  
Consider my meditation.

2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my  
God :

For unto thee do I pray.

3 O LORD, in the morning shalt thou hear my voice ;  
In the morning will I order *my prayer* unto thee,  
and will keep watch.

4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wicked-  
ness :

<sup>a</sup> Evil shall not sojourn with thee.

5 <sup>b</sup> The arrogant shall not stand in thy sight :  
Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak lies :  
The LORD abhorreth the bloodthirsty and deceitful  
man.

7 But as for me, in the multitude of thy lovingkindness  
will I come into thy house :

In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of  
<sup>c</sup> mine enemies ;

Make thy way plain before my face.

<sup>a</sup> Or, *The  
evil man*  
<sup>b</sup> Or, *Fools*

<sup>c</sup> Or, *them  
that lie in  
wait for me*

explained it as an eight-stringed *harp* or *lyre*, in each case relating it to substantives that are of the masculine gender : The word to be *understood* seems for the present to elude capture. *Sheminith* cannot represent a musical instrument, for in 1 Chron. 15, 21 we read that harps were put *over it*—which is comprehensible if a choir is in question.

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- <sup>a</sup> Or, *steadfastness* For there is no <sup>a</sup> faithfulness in their mouth ; 9  
<sup>b</sup> Or, *a yawning gulf* Their inward part is <sup>b</sup> very wickedness :  
 Their throat is an open sepulchre ;  
<sup>c</sup> Heb. *make smooth their tongue.* They <sup>c</sup> flatter with their tongue.  
 Hold them guilty, O God ; 10  
<sup>d</sup> Or, *from their counsels* Let them fall <sup>d</sup> by their own counsels :  
 Thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions ;  
 For they have rebelled against thee.  
<sup>e</sup> Or, *So shall all those . . . rejoice, they shall ever shout . . . and thou shalt defend them : they also . . . shall be joyful in thee* <sup>e</sup> But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice, 11  
 Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them :  
 Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.  
 For thou wilt bless the righteous ; 12  
 O LORD, thou wilt compass him with favour as with a shield.

For the Chief Musician ; on stringed instruments,  
 set to <sup>f</sup> the Sheminith <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>f</sup> Or, *the eighth*

PSALM II.

*A Psalm of David.*

- In the LORD put I my trust : 1  
 How say ye to my soul,  
<sup>g</sup> Or, *ye birds* Flee <sup>g</sup> as a bird to your mountain ?  
 For, lo, the wicked bend the bow, 2  
 They make ready their arrow upon the string,  
 That they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.  
<sup>h</sup> Or, *For the foundations are destroyed ; what hath the righteous wrought ?* <sup>h</sup> If the foundations be destroyed, 3  
 What can the righteous do ?  
<sup>1</sup> Or rather, on stringed instruments, relating to the *Sheminith*, or Male Choir.

4 The LORD is in his holy temple,  
The LORD, his throne is in heaven;  
His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

5 The LORD trieth the righteous :  
But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul  
hateth.

6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares ;  
Fire and brimstone and burning wind shall be the  
portion of their cup.

7 For the LORD is righteous ; he loveth <sup>a</sup> righteous-  
ness :

<sup>b</sup> The upright shall behold his face.

For the Chief Musician ; set to <sup>c</sup> the Sheminith <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Or, *righteous deeds*

<sup>b</sup> Or, *His countenance doth behold the upright*

<sup>c</sup> Or, *the eighth*

These psalms for the Male Choir, though not so distinctive as that assigned to 'Maidens,' bear the requisite marks of judicious selection on the part of the precentor. Points of gender are not to be pressed as features ; the Male Choir represented all Israel, and the common note is that of worship in the immediate presence of Jehovah. The Temple is mentioned in both psalms. The words 'In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple' (Ps. 5. 7) forcibly remind one of 1 Kings 8. 30, 33, 38 (also 2 Chron. 6. 29). Moreover, the former psalm seems to be for morning prayer (verse 3), the latter for evening worship (verse 2).

Whatever our difficulties may be in understanding the word *Sheminith*, there can be little doubt of the actual application of the term. The passage in 1 Chron. 15 seems to decide that matter. The extent to which lexicographers and expositors have speculated on the term is shown by the following excerpts :

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, relating to the *Sheminith*, or Male Choir.

## SHEMINITH.

GESENIUS: *The eighth*, the octave, a technical musical term of which the significance is doubtful; opposed to '*al Alamoth*, which is equally obscure (*Heb. Lex. s. v.*, Robinson's edition). The Oxford edition has not yet reached this word. Buhl's German edition (1899): Perhaps a deeper octave."

DELITZSCH: The bass . . . the lower octave (*Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. i. p. 162).

FÜRST: The eighth; the eighth division (*Heb. Lex. s. v.*).

KIRKPATRICK: Probably denotes that the setting was to be an octave lower, or on the lower octave—*tenor* or *bass* (*The Psalms*: Cambridge Bible, p. xxxv).

WALLHART: Probably the number of the mode or key which indicated (*Polyphonic Bible: Psalms*, p. 165).

From the above it will be seen that we set aside no consensus of opinion. The obvious meaning of *Alamoth*, when connected with Ps. 45, as in this edition, shows the way out of a difficulty which expositors have long laboured to surmount. The occurrence of *Sheminith*, in obvious contradistinction to *Alamoth*, leaves nothing to be desired excepting an *explanation* of 'the eighth.' Possibly one or other of the various abstract terms for Praise, Thanksgiving, or Service may have imposed a feminine name upon the choir.

## PRAISE AND CONFESSION CHOIR: JEDUTHUN

(PSALMS 38, 61, 76).

There seems to have been a third choir, especially designed for thanksgiving and praising God—the choir of Jeduthun. In 1 Chron. 15. 16–22 we read that David requested the Levites to appoint choirs and orchestras, with the result that duties were imposed upon Asaph, Heman and Ethan. In further arrangements, for

leading purposes, certain men were given psalteries (for the Maidens' Choir) and others harps (for the Male Choir). When next these musical organizers are met with, Ethan is named Jeduthun (16. 41); and a little later we read of them in another light—as musical households or guilds, to 'prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals' (25. 1).

We have already met with David making it the chief work of Asaph and his brethren to give thanks unto the Lord (16. 7). Now we read that they prophesied 'according to the order of the king' (25. 2, 6. See also Ezra 3. 10). All the choirs were for the service of God; but of Jeduthun's it is specifically recorded that it was to prophesy 'IN GIVING THANKS AND PRAISING THE LORD' (25. 3). Others, of course, would do the same; but, none the less, this appears to have been the part of Jeduthun's choir along lines of its own; and, if we would know why this name of the former Ethan persisted in Temple history, it may be found in the duty of the choir, for יְדֻתָּן (Jeduthun) and הִדְוֹת (hîdôth) 'give thanks'; both come from יָדָה (yâdâh) to give thanks, confess, *Judah* praise. And the Jeduthun psalms are in this note:

PSALM 38.

A Psalm of David, <sup>a</sup> to bring to remembrance.

<sup>a</sup> Or, *to make memorial*

1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath:

Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2 For thine arrows <sup>b</sup> stick fast in me,

And thy hand <sup>b</sup> presseth me sore.

<sup>b</sup> Heb, *lighted on me.*

3 **There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine indignation;**

**Neither is there any <sup>c</sup> health in my bones because of <sup>c</sup> Or, *res.* my sin.**

For mine iniquities are gone over mine head :	4
As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.	
My wounds stink and are corrupt,	5
Because of my foolishness.	
<sup>a</sup> Heb. <i>bent</i> . I am <sup>a</sup> pained and bowed down greatly ;	6
I go mourning all the day long.	
For my loins are filled with burning ;	7
And there is no soundness in my flesh.	
I am faint and sore bruised :	8
I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.	
LORD, all my desire is before thee ;	9
And my groaning is not hid from thee.	
My heart throbberh, my strength faileth me :	10
As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.	
My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my plague ;	11
And my kinsmen stand afar off.	
They also that seek after my life lay snares <i>for me</i> ;	12
And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things,	
And imagine deceits all the day long.	
But I, as a deaf man, hear not ;	13
And I am as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.	
Yea, I am as a man that heareth not,	14
And in whose mouth are no <sup>b</sup> reproofs.	
<sup>b</sup> Or, <i>arguments</i> For in thee, O LORD, do I hope :	15
Thou wilt answer, O LORD my God.	
For I said, Lest they rejoice over me :	16
When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.	
For I am ready to halt,	17
And my sorrow is continually before me.	
For I will declare mine iniquity ;	18

**I will be sorry for my sin.**

19 But mine enemies are lively, *and* are strong :

And they that hate me <sup>a</sup> wrongfully are multiplied, <sup>a</sup> Heb. *falsely*.

20 They also that render evil for good

Are adversaries unto me, because I follow the thing  
that is good.

21 Forsake me not, O LORD :

O my God, be not far from me.

22 Make haste to help me,

O Lord my salvation.

For the Chief Musician, for Jeduthun <sup>1</sup>.

This is emphatically a psalm of confession (3-8, 18). The Lord is the psalmist's hope and desire (9, 15, 21, 22). The heading, 'to bring to remembrance,' may mean more than at first appears. It is a personal heart-searching ; it is also an appeal to Jehovah. The word thus rendered (לְהַזְכִּיר) represents an act of worship ; in 1 Chron. 16. 4 we read that certain Levites appointed by David were to 'celebrate [same word] and to thank and praise Jehovah.' In such an act as this, man recalls his sin and weakness, and takes hold of God's holiness and power.

PSALM 61.

*A Psalm of David.*

1 Hear my cry, O God ;

Attend unto my prayer.

2 From the end of the earth will I call unto thee,  
when my heart <sup>b</sup> is overwhelmed :

Lead me to <sup>c</sup> the rock that is higher than I.

<sup>b</sup> Or, *fainteth*  
<sup>c</sup> Or, *a rock that is too high for me*

<sup>1</sup> The *lamed* (ל) of possession comes before the name. Jeduthun is presumably the master of the choir. In the other psalms of this class the usual preposition, לְ, relating to, is employed.



	For thou hast been a refuge for me,	3
	A strong tower from the enemy.	
<sup>a</sup> Heb. <i>tent.</i>	I will dwell in thy <sup>a</sup> tabernacle for ever :	4
	I will take refuge in the covert of thy wings. [Selah	
	<b>For thou, O God, hast heard my vows :</b>	5
<sup>b</sup> Or, <i>given an heritage unto those &amp;c.</i>	Thou hast <sup>b</sup> given <i>me</i> the heritage of those that fear thy name.	
	Thou wilt prolong the king's life :	6
	His years shall be as many generations.	
	He shall abide before God for ever :	7
	O prepare lovingkindness and truth, that they may preserve him.	
	<b>So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever,</b>	8
	<b>That I may daily perform my vows.</b>	

For the Chief Musician ; after the manner of Jeduthun <sup>1</sup>.

## PSALM 76.

A Psalm of Asaph, a Song.

	<b>In Judah is God known :</b>	1
	<b>His name is great in Israel.</b>	
<sup>c</sup> Or, <i>covert</i>	<b>In Salem also is his <sup>c</sup> tabernacle,</b>	2
<sup>d</sup> Or, <i>lair</i>	<b>And his <sup>d</sup> dwelling place in Zion.</b>	
<sup>e</sup> Or, <i>fiery shafts</i>	<b>There he brake the <sup>e</sup> arrows of the bow ;</b>	3
Or, <i>lightnings</i>	<b>The shield, and the sword, and the battle.</b> [Selah	
<sup>f</sup> Or, <i>more than</i>	<b>Glorious art thou <i>and</i> excellent, <sup>f</sup>from the mountains of prey.</b>	4
	The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep ;	5
	And none of the men of might have found their hands.	
	At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,	6
	Both chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.	

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, relating to Jeduthun (as a choir)

- 7 **Thou, even thou, art to be feared :**  
 And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art  
 angry ?
- 8 Thou didst cause sentence to be heard from heaven ;  
 The earth feared, and was still,
- 9 When God arose to judgement,  
 To save all the meek of the earth. [Selah
- 10 **Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee :**  
 The residue of wrath shalt thou <sup>a</sup> gird upon thee. <sup>a Or, re-  
 strain</sup>
- 11 **Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God :**  
**Let all that be round about him bring presents unto  
 him that ought to be feared.**
- 12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes :  
 He is terrible to the kings of the earth.

For the Chief Musician ; after the manner of Jeduthun<sup>1</sup>.

There are common elements in these psalms ; in the former, note ' Thou hast heard my vows ' (5), and ' That I may daily perform my vows ' (8). In the latter, note ' Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God : Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared ' (11). Confession of sin ; reparation for wrong ; with a firm reliance upon God : these are harmonious notes. See how praise comes in (61. 8 ; 76. 1-4).

In an earlier chapter<sup>2</sup> we called attention to the confused condition of the title material over Psalm 88 in ordinary editions, that psalm being apparently set forth as by the sons of Korah as well as by Heman the Ezrahite. A like confusion has been detected by some in connexion with the Jeduthun psalms ; in consequence of which such expositors have readily assumed that

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, relating to Jeduthun (as a choir).

<sup>2</sup> See p. 13.

literary consistency was an unknown sense among Hebrew writers and editors. The criticism has been stated briefly as follows : ' Two of the Jeduthun psalms are also ascribed to David, and the third to Asaph.' Those who have followed the contention of these pages, will be prepared to allow that the confusion cannot be placed to the account of the psalm writers or of the Chief Musician. Once more we see reason to deplore the misplacement whereby the subscript and superscript lines were so combined as to rob each of its distinctive purpose, and effectually to cover from view every sign of the earliest classification and appropriation of certain psalms for special occasions in the Temple worship.

## CHAPTER XVII

### OTHER MUSICAL TITLES

#### NEHILOTH (PSALM 4).

SETTING out with an impression that the psalm titles must in a large degree relate to musical terms, expositors have followed one another in explaining נְחִילוֹת as meaning 'flutes.' Although on the face of it the word suggests 'inheritance,' and although the Septuagint and other early Greek versions point indubitably in that direction, the word has been associated with לָלַחַד (halal) 'to perforate,' hence flutes or pipes, and has been explained as a virtual synonym of לָלַל (halil). By way of justification, the fact is emphasized that flutes or reeds were in use in the Temple service; and Isa. 30. 29, 1 Sam. 10. 5, and 1 Kings 1. 40, have been quoted in proof. In all these cases, however, we meet with לָלַל; and there is nothing to prove that the title *Nehiloth* is in any way related to that word, or to any other having the meaning of 'flute.'

If not the name of a musical instrument, may not *Nehiloth* mean a tune or melody? So far, we have found no instance of a tune or melody, or a catchword, or some popular song, being essential to a rational view of the psalm titles; and there is no obvious reason why we should assume such in this case. But we have consistently compared the titles with the preceding, as distinguished from the succeeding, psalms; and that has made all the difference in affording clues as to the meaning of the musical lines. Let us note, then, the

renderings of *Nehiloth* in the early versions : Septuagint, ' Her that inherits ' ; Aquila, ' Divisions of inheritance ' ; Symmachus, ' Allotments.' The Old Latin and Vulgate versions are similar.

Our first inference from these renderings is, that in early times, before the Sopherim and Massoretes did their work on the Hebrew text, the title word was composed of four consonants, namely נחלה. These were understood to stand for a word which was afterwards written full with points, as follows : נְחִלּוֹת (*n' hālōth*) ' inheritances.' Hence the renderings in the early versions, as just quoted. Jewish tradition, however, in succeeding centuries, conceived the idea of a musical instrument being implied, and the word was accordingly pointed by the Massoretes in a way which made it possible, as already shown, to collate it with another word meaning ' flute.' We are under no obligation to follow a reading having such an origin—a reading which only gives us a puzzle of a word after all. The old versions indicate a better way, and suggest that, at periodical or stated times in public worship, the Daughter of Zion praised God in a definite manner for the inheritance which He had caused them to possess—in fact, for the inheritances of the tribes as a whole (Num. 26. 53-56 ; 33. 54 ; 36. 2 ; Joshua II. 23 ; 14. 1, 2).

The significance of the holding of the land by the tribes is stated in forcible terms by Keil :

' The way and manner in which Israel received the land of Canaan in possession, corresponds to its calling to be God's people. Though Israel had become master of the land by force of arms, it was not their own might, but the arm of the Lord which had wonderfully helped them and smitten the Canaanites, to

fulfil the promise given to the fathers—Jehovah's hand, which had extirpated the Canaanites and planted Israel (Ps. 44. 3 f.). To this corresponded the division of the land by lot to the tribes of Israel, and the right of property attached to possession . . . The land was and remained the property of Jehovah, the Covenant God, in which the Israelites dwelt with Him as strangers and sojourners (Lev. 25. 23), lived on the produce of its soil, and enjoyed its products and fruits <sup>1</sup>.

In these circumstances, it was quite to be expected that Israel would, on fitting occasions, avouch itself the people of God in some such terms as these—

## PSALM 4.

A Psalm of David.

1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness ;  
Thou hast set me at large *when I was* in distress :

<sup>a</sup> Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

<sup>a</sup> Or, *Be  
gracious  
unto me*

2 O ye sons of men, how long shall my glory be turned  
into dishonour ?

*How long* will ye love vanity, and seek after falsehood ?

[Selah]

3 **But know that the LORD hath set apart <sup>b</sup> him that is  
godly for himself :**

<sup>b</sup> Or *one  
that he  
favoureth*

**The LORD will hear when I call unto him.**

4 <sup>c</sup> Stand in awe, and sin not :

Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and  
be still.

[Selah]

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,  
And put your trust in the LORD.

6 **Many there be that say, Who will shew us *any* good ?**

<sup>1</sup> *Biblical Archaeology*, vol. ii. p. 304.

LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon  
us.

Thou hast put gladness in my heart, 7  
More than *they have* when their corn and their wine  
are increased.

In peace will I both lay me down and sleep : 8  
For thou, LORD, <sup>a</sup> alone makest me dwell in safety.

<sup>a</sup> Or, *in  
solitude*  
<sup>b</sup> Or, *wind  
instruments*

For the Chief Musician ; with the <sup>b</sup> Nehiloth <sup>1</sup>.

Whether this psalm was sung frequently or not, we do not know. It was, anyway, a timely reminder of some of the deeper truths involved in Jehovah's solicitude for His people. That Israel was Jehovah's portion was by no means new teaching ; the tribes had been trained to live in the consciousness of that great conviction. What possession could be compared with the condition of mind expressed by the heart-gladness induced by the smile of Jehovah (6, 7) ? The joys of harvest were not to be mentioned in comparison. With these conceptions and assurances the soul may rest in perfect peace.

From first to last the psalm is a suitable commemoration of Israel's perpetual obligation to God for the

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, For the *Nehiloth* (for *N' hālôth*), Inheritances (as a commemoration). Again the particle לְ, which is quite suitable for the sense given, but would not so well apply to a musical instrument. As a fact, in the two cases in which *with* is understood before the word לְיָדָי (flute or pipe), in 1 Kings 1. 40 and Isa. 30. 29, the particle used is אֶ, which we shall presently show is employed in most of the cases in which a musical instrument is beyond question spoken of in the psalm titles. Thence we infer that, if in this case a musical instrument were intended, we should have had the preposition אֶ.

inheritance into which the tribes had come. And its concluding verse, 'I will lay me down in peace,' would suggest that it was sung every night <sup>1</sup>.

NEGINOTH (PSALMS 3, 5, 53, 54, 60, 66, 75).

The word *Neginoth* is the one undoubted reference to musical instruments in the psalm titles. It occurs seven times: Pss. 3, 5, 53, 54, 60<sup>2</sup>, 66, and 75 (also in Hab. 3. 19). In every case the Chief Musician note precedes, and the meaning is 'with stringed instruments.' In every case also, except Ps. 60, the 'with' is expressed by the prefix ׀; in the exceptional case, לִּי is used, suggesting that (recognizing the singular form of the substantive) we should understand the notice as relating to 'a stringed instrument choir,' as in the case of the other choirs, which follow after לִּי.

The presence of this note, 'with stringed instruments,' raises interesting questions. If we understand the subscript lines of Pss. 5, 11, and 46 in the light of 1 Chron. 15. 20, 21, we shall conclude that they at least were performed 'with stringed instruments';

<sup>1</sup> The celebration of God's goodness in the matter of the fatherland, might either recall the original settlement or any reinstatement in the inheritance. The word יָרַשׁ (to inherit) with its derivatives, would serve both purposes. Other familiar Hebrew words suitable either for a first act or its repetition—with the sense of *again* being understood and not expressed—are מִלֵּא to fill, or replenish; בָּנָה to build, or rebuild; חָיָה to live, or revive.

<sup>2</sup> In this case it stands as נְגִינֹת, apparently the construct form of the singular substantive. In some MSS., however, it stands as the plural *Neginoth*, written defectively; while in others it is fully written as a plural. So also was it read by the Septuagint, other early versions following.



the Chronicler speaks of the psalteries and harps. Doubtless, the same is true of many of the psalms; it was the work of the Chief Musician to attend to these arrangements, and the intimation that the psalms had been included in his repertory should be a guarantee that the psalteries and harps and other 'instruments of music' came in somewhere.

May not 'with stringed instruments' have implied something definite as to the time of day when particular psalms were rendered? May not the expression have specified the piece, say, as for *morning* worship, or for the *opening* exercises of divine service? It is assuredly remarkable that of the two *Sheminith* psalms, only the former (5) is 'with stringed instruments'; and that is evidently for morning worship (see verse 3). The same observation applies to Ps. 3 (see verse 5); and of none of the *Neginoth* psalms can it be said that they are obviously unsuitable for the opening exercises of daily service. Whatever instrumental music there was, it served (in the words of Edersheim<sup>1</sup>) 'only to accompany and sustain the song.' Therefore, as the stringed instruments would not be used by themselves, but in connexion with choirs, it would seem almost certain that some practical intention lies behind the simple classification 'with stringed instruments.' And that only one of the *Sheminith* (or Male Choir) psalms is so described (and that for morning worship in particular), may help in some measure to an appreciation of the intention.

Some impressions have come down to us of the glorious harmonies of the Temple service, both in

<sup>1</sup> *The Temple: its Ministry and Service*, ch. 3.

David's purpose and the achievements of his successors. Whether the musical instruments were few or varied, certain it is that the psaltery and the harp were given leading parts (see 1 Chron. 15. 20, 21; Ps. 81. 2, 3; 108. 2). As to the degree of perfection developed, we have no exact information<sup>1</sup>. In the words of Keil, however :

‘ We are not to think of the Temple singing as limited to mere cantillation, but must suppose real melodies; for we dare not reason back from the character of the later synagogue singing to the singing of the Temple with musical accompaniment. This singing was lost with the extinction of the theocratic life and the destruction of Solomon's Temple, so that in the post-exilic Temple-worship only feeble remnants survived (Ezra 3. 10; comp. 2. 44, 65; Neh. 7. 73, 12. 27 f., 36; Ps. 150; Sirach 49. 20 [18]<sup>2</sup>).

Of David, *the* Psalmist, we read : ‘ He appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to celebrate and to thank and praise the Lord, the God of Israel ’ (1 Chron. 16. 4). ‘ With his whole heart he sang praise, and loved him that made him. Also he set singers before the altar, and to make sweet melody by their music ’ (Ecclus. 47. 8, 9). And

<sup>1</sup> The extent to which ‘ The Music of the Bible, ’ as popularly explained, is music of another kind, is illustrated by the fact that in one such treatment hardly any information was presented regarding instruments that were actually Israelitish; but engravings were given of such as had obtained in Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Arabia, Persia, Greece, Rome, India, Burma, China, Peru, and the South Sea Islands, with a few specimens of the horns used by Jews in modern times! As a fact, the music of old Israel, like the Temple itself, has long passed beyond recall.

<sup>2</sup> *Biblical Archaeology*, vol. ii. 281.

of a later time, when the Temple had been 'strengthened' by Simon the Just (died B.C. 291), we read: 'Then shouted the sons of Aaron, they sounded the trumpets of beaten work, they made a great noise to be heard, for a remembrance before the Most High. . . . The singers also praised him with their voices; in the whole house was there made sweet melody' (Ecclus. 50. 16-18).

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE LITERARY AND HISTORICAL HEADINGS

OUR purpose in these pages has been to distinguish the so-called Musical Titles from such as are generally recognized as literary and historical in character. It has, we think, been made plain that, with the exception of *Neginoth*, the former can no longer be regarded as designating musical instruments, or even as indicating tunes or melodies. On the contrary, in association with their proper psalms, they render a good account of themselves as marking (1) the reasons for which psalms were used in public worship<sup>1</sup>; (2) national commemorations, and other special purposes, for which psalms were selected<sup>2</sup>; (3) choirs to which certain psalms were particularly assigned<sup>3</sup>; (4) the topical description of psalms which easily lent themselves to such treatment<sup>4</sup>.

Not only would a measure of direction be thus secured in the general use and application of the psalms; but by reducing the entire body to classes, it became easy for leaders and choristers to recall a particular psalm as it might be desired. The first line of a psalm hardly individualized it when included in a large number; but to demand psalm 'Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel' in the *Gittith* class, at once

<sup>1</sup> As *Gittith* and *Shoshannim*.

<sup>2</sup> As *Muth-labban*, *Mahalath*, *Nehiloth*, and *Al-tashheth*.

<sup>3</sup> As *Sheminith*, *Alamoth*, and *Jeduthun*.

<sup>4</sup> As *Aijeleth hash-Shahar* and *Jonath elem rehokim*.

directed attention to Ps. 80 ; and again, if, to quote another psalm, 'Give ear to my prayer, O God,' was wanting in definiteness, through similar words appearing elsewhere <sup>1</sup>, there could be no doubt as to which was intended when the title of the psalm was added, *Jonath elem rehokim* (55). Whatever may have been the purpose of classification in the Temple liturgy, it is obvious that the general arrangement would subserve practical convenience along the lines indicated.

The other titles, which properly form headings of the psalms, fall into two main classes. In the first, we would place those which deal with the compositions themselves, as to their character and authors ; in the second, those which set forth the historical origin or religious purpose of particular psalms. A psalm may be without any such headings, and yet be none the less precious as to contents or beautiful in form <sup>2</sup> ; on the other hand, it may have a formal superscription which the most sympathetic student may find of little value for any help it may yield in the understanding of the psalm <sup>3</sup>.

The intimations as to authorship claim respectful attention, if for no other reason than that they accompany the text as it has come down to us in its most reliable form. The Massoretic text attributes seventy-three psalms to David ; twelve to Asaph ; eleven to the sons of Korah <sup>4</sup> ; two to Solomon ; and one each to

<sup>1</sup> In first verse of Ps. 17.

<sup>2</sup> See some of the 'orphan' psalms in the fourth and fifth books (90 to 150).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, Ps. 34, when David 'changed his behaviour,' &c.

<sup>4</sup> These are reduced to nine in this work, by the discrimination of the titles which have hitherto stood over Pss. 46 and 88. The latter psalm is 'Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.' See note on p. 14.

Ethan, Heman, and Moses<sup>1</sup>. On examining the Septuagint text, we find divergencies that are more than curious; some psalms which in the Massoretic text are anonymous are there ascribed to David, others are attributed to Haggai and Zechariah: while lines descriptive of occasion or purpose are prefixed in a number of instances, additional to those found in the Hebrew Psalter<sup>2</sup>.

In the literary description of the psalms there is considerable variety; but this does not matter so much as some have been disposed to think. In modern literary style the same freedom of expression is continually exercised, without giving rise to criticism or causing confusion. A poem is not less a psalm because it is described as a *song*; nor is it any less a *prayer* because it has no heading at all. On careful examination, a psalm may appeal to us as a Song, a Prayer, a Meditation, a Thanksgiving, a Homily, an Exhortation, a Plea, an Expostulation. Which shall we call it? Perhaps one day one aspect will prevail; another day we may be impressed in a different manner<sup>3</sup>. Though called *Michtam*, a poem may be a psalm never-

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that these single psalms follow each other, and as it were comprise a group by themselves.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these are given as footnotes in the Psalter that follows this Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> Note, by way of illustration, the following forms of speech: 'David *spake* . . . the words of this *song*' (2 Sam. 22. 1); 'Consider my *meditation* . . . unto thee do I *pray*' (Ps. 5. 1, 2); 'David . . . *spake* unto the Lord the words of this *song*' (superscription of Ps. 18). Again and again invocation is followed by thanksgiving, and meditation by rebuke. Any one of these aspects may be asserted in the heading. Note the number of cases in which Psalm-Song and Song-Psalm appear:

theless; call it *Maschil*, and it belongs to the same great class. The genus includes the species, the general the particular.

Hence we would not regard such terms as expressive of refined poetical distinctions, but rather as indicating the dominant note or obvious intention of the psalm as practically estimated and analysed. We are not without help in assuming this standpoint. Ps. 14 ('The fool hath said in his heart') is headed simply *l' David* (David's). When it appears again, as Ps. 53, it is styled *Maschil of David*. So there may be *Maschil* psalms without that word standing over them. Again, the early part of Ps. 108 (1-5) reappears in Ps. 57 (7-11). In the former it is part of a *Song-Psalm of David*; in the latter, part of a *Michtam of David*. The latter part of Ps. 108 (6-13) is included in Ps. 60 (5-12); a part of a *Song-Psalm* now has the character of a *Michtam*. From these facts one seems justified in concluding that no nice points of poetical theory or literary structure are implied in such words as *Maschil* and *Michtam*, for in some cases the compositions which are so described actually embody portions of ordinary psalm-songs.

Speaking generally, it must be admitted that variety of designation is no monopoly of a remote antiquity. Modern hymnals include psalms and songs, solos and choruses, canticles and melodies, chants and anthems. In these terms the *musical* features are emphasized in a way that affords but slight indication of the character of the words—whether the note be prayer or praise, exhortation or appeal, designed to stir up emotion or e.g. 30, 48, 65, 66, 67, 68, 75, 76, 83, 87 (repeated in subscript line), 92, 108.

to provoke enthusiasm. The psalm headings, however, appear to point in another direction. Far from indicating musical distinctions, they emphasize the character of the pieces, or the moral and spiritual intent of the poet. Many of the psalms are strongly personal, others are of the nature of homilies ; yet all have their place in 'the praises of Israel.' In the Massoretic text thirty-four psalms are without any literary designation ; forty-three are styled *Mizmôr*, rendered 'psalm' in the English versions ; two are simply designated *Shîr* ('song') ; twelve *Mizmôr shîr* or *Shîr mizmôr*, 'a psalm or song,' 'a song or psalm' ; fifteen *Shîr hammă 'âlôth*, 'song of degrees' (R.V. 'ascents') ; five are *T'philâh*, 'a prayer' ; six are *Michtam*, thirteen *Maschil*, and one *Shiggaion*, all three words transferred without translation into our English versions ; one is *T'hillâh*, 'a praise' ; and one *Mizmôr l'Thôdâh*, 'a psalm of praise.'

With the psalm titles discriminated, as advocated in these pages, something is done to focus light upon words that have long been discussed but with little definite result. Already we may be sure that *Michtam* and *Maschil* are not musical terms ; they are attached to the name of the psalm writer, and not to the Chief Musician's mark of appropriation. Standing as they do in relation to the poems, they displace such general terms as 'psalm' and 'song.'

#### MICHTAM : MASCHIL.

Take *Michtam* first. It occurs in the headings of six psalms, and in each case it is followed by 'of David'<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The *Michtam* psalms are—16, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60.



The Septuagint translators rendered it *στηλογραφία*, or *εἰς στηλογραφίαν*—‘an inscription,’ or ‘for an inscription.’ A variety of fanciful interpretations have competed for acceptance from time to time. Some have held the words to describe the associated psalms as specially epigrammatic in character, although no sufficient evidence is forthcoming to justify the description. Others, as the A. V. *margin*, have suggested ‘a golden psalm,’ ‘a gem,’ from *דָּהָב*, ‘gold’ (because *hidden away* in treasuries), although the psalms in question are by no means alone in displaying features that are attractive and thoughts that are precious in a high degree.

If we examine the *Michtam* psalms themselves, we shall not be long in gathering impressions as to their special qualities; and the first thing that will strike us is that they are *personal*. Four of them are in the first person singular of the pronoun, and have the nature of private prayers (16, 56, 57, 59); the others have the character of meditations, but are very direct in phrase. These exhibit the plural pronoun, and in one instance the reason seems to be given, for Ps. 60 is described as *Michtam, to teach*. May this mean that a prayer that was personal and private was put forth, in special circumstances, as a model for general worship—to *teach*? The other *Michtam* psalm, 58, is a combination of expostulation with sinners and appeal to Jehovah to visit judgement upon them. All are very direct, and the sense of being covered, concealed, which lies in the root-word, may imply the PERSONAL and PRIVATE nature of these psalms, in their origin and first intention.

Alike in its meaning and use, the word *Maschil* is

much wider. It seems, in fact, to be the opposite of *Michtam*, and to describe a psalm of instruction, A PUBLIC HOMILY<sup>1</sup>. The word is found over thirteen psalms. It comes from a verb (*sâchâl*) meaning to be prudent and intelligent, and has been explained as signifying a *didactic* poem. In the Septuagint, it is rendered by forms of *ούνοεις*, 'understanding,' 'discernment,' implying a purpose of instruction in the psalms. Some have held the Hebrew word to mean 'skilful,' but the *Maschil* psalms present no features corresponding to such a distinction. Moreover, this latter suggestion brings in a poetical nicety; and, for ourselves, we find no such tendency in any of the terms employed in the headings. What is the object of a psalm? what was the intention of its writer? These are the questions which the various designations seem to answer.

As it is not measure only that makes an epic, nor simply rhyme that makes an elegy, so it is not the mere disposition of lines that made and distinguished the Psalms of David. The spirit and aim of the poet gave character to the compositions, and name as well. Whether actually in the form of prayers or meditations, or reduced to public statements or appeals, the *Maschil* psalms would all of them be well suited for the instruction of the people; and, if they were set forth with that object, then their title becomes fully justified. Afterwards they might be sung—as in some cases they unquestionably were—but that would make no differ-

<sup>1</sup> The *Maschil* psalms are: six by David—32, 52, 53, 54, 55, 142; three by the sons of Korah—42, 44, 45; two by Asaph—74, 78; and one each by Heman the Ezrahite—88, and Ethan the Ezrahite—89.

ence to the antecedent circumstance of their being given forth as homilies for the religious instruction of the people.

#### SHIGGAION.

If *Michtam* and *Maschil* may find explanation in the matter or purpose of the poems to which they are attached, what shall be said of *Shiggaion*? This word occurs in the heading of Ps. 7, and in the plural form, *Shigionoth*, in Hab. 3. 1. It has for some time been the habit to derive it from a word meaning 'to wander,' and thence to infer a peculiar style of poetry or music. Hence the word has been explained to mean 'a dithyrambic poem, in wild ecstatic wandering rhythms, with corresponding music'! No one has found any such special features either in psalm or prayer; no one has found any such accompaniment for the pieces, or any categorical statement regarding these 'dithyrambic poems' having been set to 'corresponding music.' The words at the head of psalm and prayer constitute the sole material for criticism or speculation.

Suffice it to say that the explanation is purely speculative. The 'wild ecstatic wandering rhythms' are not in these pieces in any manifest degree. In Ps. 7 we have an address to Jehovah, the Object of trust, the Defence of those whose hope is in Him, and the One to whom all praise is due. So the psalm was selected for the Feast of Tabernacles, when Israel was put in mind that Jehovah was his Keeper, all-sufficient and abiding. In Hab. 3 the prophet extols Jehovah in His majesty, His might, and His ways and judgements, concluding with a passionate declaration of his trust in the Strong One. A common experience underlies the

two utterances. Both psalmist and prophet are in distress and perplexity, finding their faith contradicted by their experiences. Hence they call upon Jehovah—and they call aloud.

Those who would read *Shiggaion* as from שָׁגָה (*shâgâh*), 'to wander,' inevitably import ideas that are out of harmony with the headlines of Hebrew songs as we know them. If musical instruments are not to be found in the titles, neither are poetical distinctions of the strictly classic order. We should rather expect in the headings words expressive of calm and self-respecting characteristics, and not to read of a 'wild ecstatic wandering' something, of which it must be said that absolutely nothing is known of its having a place in 'the praises of Israel.' If David 'sang before the Lord' in the circumstances of Ps. 7, we might expect in *Shiggaion* ideas of personal distress or strong faith in God. As for Habakkuk's prayer, it is obviously an extollation of Jehovah, and its lines are full of power and passion. We are glad to realize that we need not look far for an interpretation of *Shiggaion* in harmony with the facts, and on other grounds amply justified. The 'dithyrambic' explanation, which is now so prevalent, introduces ideas that are discordant, and find no response in Hebrew poetry. The psalm titles seem to deal as little with metre as with music.

A glimpse at Gesenius's *Thesaurus* shows the varied senses that were contended for half a century ago, both as regards *Shiggaion* and *shâgâh*. On the one hand, *Shiggaion* was rendered 'hymn,' as coming from a root meaning 'to extol'; on the other hand, 'elegy,' or 'song of sadness,' through association with a root presumably akin to שָׁאָג (*shâ'âg*), 'to call out, cry out, sing aloud.'

Either of these meanings is agreeable to the substance of the psalm and the prayer. We have extollation and complaint. Psalm 7 speaks of a strong appeal to God on the part of David, as when he cried out 'in the disquietness of his heart' (see Ps. 38. 8). The plural form in Hab. 3 gives the same impression only emphasized; and the preposition *בְּ*, which is so frequently found in the psalm titles, may do no more than introduce the subject, 'Concerning loud cries,' or simply 'Loud cries.' In a word, the heading of Psalm 7 brings under notice one of the loud and bitter cries of David when pursued by enemies who threatened to 'tear his soul like a lion' (verse 2).

#### HISTORICAL AND OTHER HEADINGS.

The other main element in the psalm headings—the historical particulars—has occasioned considerable difficulty to expositors<sup>1</sup>. Sometimes these intimations have been construed too narrowly—in a way that we should not address ourselves to other writings. As representing—to say the least—a venerable tradition, these headings should command our careful attention. For one thing, however, we should not expect the Psalms to exhibit the narrative style of folk-songs or popular ballads. For

<sup>1</sup> The historical headings, as given in the Massoretic text, are thirteen in number, and all of them relating to David: Psalms—3 (when he fled from Absalom); 7 (concerning the words of Cush); 18 (when delivered from the hand of Saul); 30 (at the dedication of the house); 34 (when Abimelech drove him away); 51 (when Nathan came to him); 52 (when Doeg told Saul); 54 (when the Ziphites said to Saul); 56 (when the Philistines took him); 57 (when he fled from Saul); 59 (when they watched the house to kill him); 60 (when he strove with Aram-naharaim); 142 (when he was in a cave).

a psalm to stand associated with an incident, means that some special feature of the story afforded the occasion for its being written. The mere study of our own poets should teach us to look for no more than this in work which is characterized by strong feeling and passion—not to say spiritual thought and fervour. Much of our best poetry in no wise reflects to the reader the circumstances in which it was written. Why should we think it a fault that the psalms do no more ?

The headings indicating object or purpose are a division of some interest. They number five, and two of them are ascribed to David : Psalm 38, A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance ; 70, Of David, to bring to remembrance ; 92, A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day ; 100, A Psalm of thanksgiving ; 102, A Prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord<sup>1</sup>. From the Septuagint, and other sources, the list might be extended, and some of these additions will be given in the margin of the Psalter itself.

In studying the headings of the psalms, we do well to guard against exclusive inferences, or definitions that are precise in the modern sense of the word. The extent to which psalms of shape and character are allowed to go without headings, and the degree in which those that have headings appear to have been supplied with them on anything but technical grounds, such as are generally recognized, should induce a guarded

<sup>1</sup> We feel almost disposed to add to this list Psalm 145, A Praise ; of David. That, however, is better classed with the Prayer psalms, five in number, one of which already appears in our list, on the ground of its more explicit statement of purpose (17, 86, 90, 102, 142).

attitude. Some psalms without titles may be *Michtam*, and others may be *Maschil*. It would seem that our judgement as to the meaning of the terms must be formed (1) from what we can ascertain of the words in the headings, and (2) from what we can observe in the psalms affected. On finding the psalms to respond in a general way to their headings, we reach conclusions that are at least more practical than some that have been put forward, and moreover, such as are commended by a simplicity in harmony with what we have found to be the general characteristics of the psalm titles and headings as a whole.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SELAH—HIGGAION<sup>1</sup>

IF the musical element becomes more definite by the arrangement here advocated, certain it is that it is confined within very narrow limits. It is no longer a matter of course that a difficult term is 'musical.' We may look in another direction with more promise of light upon the sacred text. However intimate may be the musical relation of the book, it is certain the Psalter is not a music-book. And it is not in a book of words that we expect to find all kinds of instrumental directions.

Apart from the instances in which psalms are entitled 'To the Chief Musician, with stringed instruments,' we have found no musical directions among the superscript or subscript lines of the psalter. Why then should the words *Selah* and *Higgaion* be written down at once as *musical* directions? The presumption will point another way with those who agree with the contention of these pages.

#### SELAH.

The word *Selah* occurs seventy-one times in the Psalter, and three times in Hab. 3. Of the thirty-nine psalms in which it is found, most are marked 'For

<sup>1</sup> Though not strictly on Psalm Titles, this brief chapter has seemed necessary by reason of the outcome of our general investigations. If the titles, properly so called, are not related to musical instruments or tunes, how about *Selah* and *Higgaion*? We anticipate the inevitable question.



the Chief Musician,' but some are not so. The word is distributed as follows: In Book I (1-41), seventeen times in nine psalms; in Book II (42-72), thirty times in seventeen psalms; in Book III (73-89), twenty times in eleven psalms; in Book IV (90-106), never; in Book V (107-150), four times in two psalms<sup>1</sup>. Distinction of authorship, or a special character of composition, does not seem to have qualified for the presence of *Selah*. The Septuagint rendered the word *διάψαλμα*, which is generally understood to indicate 'an instrumental interlude.' This, however, is not an indisputable meaning of the word.

The oldest Jewish tradition gave to *Selah* the sense of 'for ever'; and for other terms of mystery an explanation similarly arbitrary in origin was readily forthcoming. Like 'Amen,' the word seemed to be interjectional in form—then let it be an ejaculation, 'So be it!' This view satisfies no one to-day<sup>2</sup>. Having found so little about music in the psalm titles, we may with reason suspect the interpretation which assumes 'an interlude when the singing has ceased.' We know nothing whatever about such practices in Hebrew psalmody; and the theory cannot be built upon such a doubtful foundation as a word so essentially controverted as *Selah*. Open the book. Why should there be 'interludes' in Ps. 32 (three *Selaha*s), and not in Ps. 33, which opens with a call to

<sup>1</sup> Details regarding occurrences, and other particulars, appear in the Appendix, § 4.

<sup>2</sup> This is proved by an article of conspicuous worth in *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* ('Hebraica'), vol. xvi (1899), pp. 1-29, by Emilie Grace Briggs, of New York.

give thanks unto the Lord with harp and psaltery of ten strings? Why should there be interludes in Ps. 3 (three *Selabs*), which is 'with stringed instruments,' and not in Ps. 5, which is also 'with stringed instruments'? Why no *Selah* in Ps. 108, and yet when portions of that very psalm appear in others (57 and 60), *Selah*-marks immediately precede?

To explain the etymology of the word is not so urgent as to understand its purpose; and it should be enough to ascertain this without presuming to make a verbal picture. Does it mean 'pause'? Then, why extend pause to 'interlude'? Does it mark a section, then why explain it as meaning 'let the trumpets sound'? In the most perfect alphabetic psalms, 111, 112, 119, 145, which are in a mechanical way divided into sections, there are no *Selabs*. In Ps. 136, bound together by the refrain 'For his mercy endureth for ever,' the note is also absent; and the same may be said of the 'Songs of Ascents,' psalms of individual ideas, whatever else they may be. While not justified in looking for musical marks, however, we might well expect literary divisions in hymns designed for singing in unison. And in view of the ancient custom of writing—the material being run on without break or division—how should a new paragraph be indicated? The days of systematic punctuation had not yet arrived. But why should not a word be employed to serve the purpose of the modern ¶?

This appears to be the simple intention of *Selah*. Quite likely it is correctly derived, as in the Oxford Edition of Gesenius's *Hebrew Lexicon*, from שָׁלַל (šālāl), 'to lift up,' hence, to extol. As appearing in Ps. 68. 5 (4), and Prov. 4. 8, other forms of the verb point the

religious and moral sense of the formula which has so long been the object of speculative interest. If in the former passage we may have 'EXTOL Him that rideth upon the heavens,' and in the latter 'EXALT her,' that is, Wisdom; then we arrive at a rendering of the word which answers all purposes in the psalm divisions. We suggest that, standing in the midst of poems, it was designed to divide them off into sections; not so much to call a halt that other performances might begin, as to instruct the singers to *proceed*—in other words, at the beginning of a new stanza (as these were recognized in Hebrew poetry, and not as we might conceive of them), to *resume*, to continue to 'lift up' heart and voice in song! In reading prose, the same need for direction would not exist; in poetry, however, designed for singing, several considerations would make it desirable: for instance, when passing to a new subject or phase of subject, or a change of sentiment, or reaching a line specially suitable for a renewed *lifting up* on the part of the choir. Hence the word is not instrumental, but touches the subject-matter of song. Like our old English mark *written beside* ('paragraph'), the word *Selah* would serve an important purpose; and, studied in this light, it gives a better account of itself than when weighted with unproveable assumptions.

We cannot, in the nature of things, argue from every individual case of absence; but taking the actual occurrences of the word, we are compelled to approve the divisions, in many cases, as regulated with remarkable precision, topical and logical. Look at Ps. 66. Could it be better divided than at verses 5, 8, 16? See also Pss. 39, 59, 62. The lines following the

*Selah* are the most natural for the renewed 'lifting up' of song. When it is said that in individual cases difficulty arises through the word appearing in the middle of verses<sup>1</sup>, the answer is to hand—that the Massoretes overlooked the service that *Selah* offered them, and in such cases divided the material imperfectly<sup>2</sup>.

Viewed in this light, the proper place of *Selah*, like our modern paragraph mark (§), is at the *opening* of a stanza. That it should have been given a place at the end of preceding stanzas, is not surprising after what we have found in the unfortunate amalgamation of subscript titles and superscript lines into confused headings over so many psalms. With the use and meaning of *Selah* lost to knowledge, little else was to be expected. The fate of the psalm titles has been shared by the note of stanza division. As for the cases in which *Selah* appears at the *close* of psalms<sup>3</sup>, seeming to threaten the view here expressed no less effectually than it stands in the way of the 'interlude' interpretation, this may be said: It would appear that in at least three cases the word is out of place. The

<sup>1</sup> For instance, Pss. 55. 19; 57. 4 (also Hab. 3. 3, 9).

<sup>2</sup> The occurrences of the word in the *Psalms of Solomon*, and the *Sh'moneh Esreh* and other early Jewish prayers, make no definite contribution to the subject. In the Psalter the use of *Selah* is systematic, however we may be disposed to limit the sense of the word. In the cases now referred to, the same cannot be said; but, on the contrary, one is tempted to infer, certainly from the *Sh'moneh Esreh*, that a sense less distinctive than any that can be supposed to underlie the use of *Selah* in the Psalter is represented by the word as it appears in the Jewish prayers.

<sup>3</sup> Pss. 3, 9, 24, 46.

Septuagint translators, who attest more occurrences of the word than appear in the Massoretic text, have no *διάψαλμα* after Pss. 3, 24, 46. With regard to Ps. 9 the case is different; it is followed by an untitled psalm, which possibly formed part of it originally. In fact, the two are one in the Septuagint and Vulgate versions, and also in a few MSS. Therefore the presence of *Selah* here gives no substantial difficulty.

Reference has already been made to Ps. 108. Its earlier verses make a section of Ps. 57; and the *Selah* precedes, indicating a new stanza. Its latter portion appears in Ps. 60, and again the *Selah* precedes. When together in one compact psalm, on a single topic or note, they have no *Selah*. These are indications in the same direction. When a poem deals with varied topics or phases of a subject, the divisions might be marked, and for this purpose *Selah* was at hand. At other times, the divisions might not be marked; then there would be no *Selah*. In modern literature there is the same freedom in the indication of paragraphs. It is largely a matter of individual judgement or taste—sometimes of momentary intention rather than essential implication.

There is reason to believe that we have in *Selah* the earliest attempt to divide the material of the Hebrew Psalter. All other punctuation and division have come since; and sometimes may, with advantage, be scrutinized in the light of this ancient ordering of the contents of the Psalms.

## HIGGAION.

The word *Higgaion* has also been designated 'musical.' No proof is forthcoming. The occurrences in the Psalter are: Pss. 9. 16; 19. 14; 92.  $\mathcal{A}^3$ . In the first passage it is simply transliterated, both in the A.V. and R.V. In the second it is rendered 'meditation'; and in the third 'solemn sound.' It occurs, in the plural, in Lam. 3. 62, and is translated 'devices' in the A.V., 'imagination' in the R.V. Only through an antecedent assumption in favour of a musical instrument, has the word come to be regarded as meaning 'resounding music' or 'a deep-toned performance on harps.'

This word doubtless comes from  $\text{הִגָּאָה}$  in its sense of 'meditate'; and there is no insuperable difficulty in regarding it in Psalm 9, after verse 16, as implying the same as it means elsewhere. If in Ps. 19. 14 it means 'meditation,' why not in the passage in which it is transferred to the text, in Psalm 9? Assuredly a *meditation* is provided in the section of the psalm which follows. David has been praising God for the judgement He executeth, and he calls upon others to do the same. A new stanza begins at verse 17, and *Selah* announces the fact. Before the *Selah*, however, stands *Higgaion*—'meditation.' The four verses that follow are a reckoning up of what has been said—first about the wicked, and secondly about the afflicted righteous. This is the *envoi*, the *moral*, the *meditation*.

Whether or not the word *Higgaion* is of editorial origin, such as we should suppose *Selah* to be, does not matter much. A musical intention is out of the question. The psalm titles being, at length, so largely liberated

from such associations, we can hardly expect to trace them in a line like this, which, whether a cross-heading or a marginal note, is sufficiently explained when its simple meaning, a 'meditation,' is taken into account.

If it is objected that there are no other such side- or cross-headings in the Psalms, then our answer is that the objection is not of great force, inasmuch as the Psalter is replete with features that are found nowhere else in the Old Testament.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE AGE OF THE PSALTER

THIS is a proper place to ask an important question. We have presented a number of psalms in a new relation; thus bringing the collection as a whole into associations that have not been recognized by Biblical research, either ancient or modern. The place of the Chief Musician, or precentor of Temple worship, has been reasserted, and considerable traces of his work have been disclosed. What bearing have these facts upon the age of the Psalter? The question must be faced; and although this is not the time to develop an answer in detail, some words are pertinent to our immediate studies.

Let us briefly review what has been unfolded in these pages; and we do so by placing the facts in an order different from that already followed. We have found in Psalm 55 the 'dove' mentioned in the musical line which has hitherto stood over Psalm 56. The misplaced word provides the title of the preceding psalm; and the preposition *בְּ* which introduces it at once challenges attention. We translate it naturally 'on,' 'about,' 'relating to'; and at once the practice of rendering it 'set to,' and assuming a tune in any word that may follow, is called in question, and, in fact, placed under suspicion. More than that follows. We have dispensed with a fiction which has insinuated itself into some of the most valuable expositions, categorically affirming that the words 'The Dove of the Distant Terebinths' constitute 'the name of a melody, or poem after which the Psalm 56 was sung.'



Next we address ourselves to *Alamoth* over Psalm 46. The preceding psalm presents the response, and that beyond dispute ; and in the light of 1 Chron. 15. 20 we conclude that the title specifies a choir. We render 'on,' 'about,' 'relating to Maidens (as a choir).' How now with the so-called technical use of  $\text{לָּ}$  in the sense of 'set to,' a tune being assumed ? And how now with speculations about 'soprano voices' and 'Elamite instruments' ? Already we feel ourselves on the track of a solution of the entire problem of psalm titles, and a solution that is agreeable to what we *know* of Israelitish antiquities. Moreover, we are realizing the intimate connexion that subsists between the history of Israel as set forth in the Books of Chronicles and the period to which the Psalter belongs.

Passing on, we find our course clear beyond expectation. The *Gittith* psalms proclaim their character at a glance ; and those marked *Shoshannim* suggest the meaning of the title as explained in these pages. It has been the same with the other words examined, which we have found, in some cases, to indicate psalms as chosen for the commemoration of great events in the history of Israel, in other cases to supply topical or pictorial titles marvellously appropriate to their attendant poems. The 'musical instruments' which were assumed when the A.V. was made, and the 'airs and melodies' that lay behind the E.V. renderings, are thus dispensed with. Of these antiquated positions, may it not be said with truth that neither of them has made any contribution of value to the interpretation of the psalms, either individually or as a whole ?

We repeat that a number of psalms are now before us in a new relation ; the Psalter itself is brought into

associations that have not been taken into account by those who have discussed its poetry or debated the age of its component parts. The Temple arrangements, as disclosed in the musical titles, now present themselves as factors to be considered. And we have to deal with these, not simply as we find them in the Hebrew text, but as they impressed ancient translators and expositors. We have to view them in tradition, or as left out of tradition ; we have to weigh facts as well as number them. And, in a manner not as yet realized, the question presses for answer—How are we to account for the ignorance shown by the early translators on the subject of the musical titles of the psalms ?

To begin with, we remark that, in our view, the Seventy were not so far wrong as modern expositors have generally supposed. They aimed at a simple rendering, and in a number of cases they give us a very fair suggestion of the undoubted meaning. But, none the less, the Chief Musician, precentor, or director, was no actual personality to them ; and when a psalm ended with such a line as ‘ For the Chief Musician, concerning the Winepresses,’ they perpetrated the error of placing the line *over the psalm that followed*. In a word, no tradition of the order of Temple psalmody seems to have reached them, and consequently they presented their translation in a disordered state. And their mistake having been perpetuated by the Massorettes, the displacement has persisted until this day. Two centuries ago, the Septuagint was declared inaccurate because it did not render the titles as ‘ musical instruments ’ ; of late, it has been pronounced faulty because it did not render them as names of ‘ airs and melodies.’ As here set forth, their error lies in another direction.

Through lack of knowledge of the liturgical conditions of the Temple at Jerusalem, they present the titles in a chaotic state; and the formula 'For the Chief Musician' they rendered 'For the end' (*Eis τὸ τέλος*), as to the precise meaning of which expression there has ever since been speculation and dispute!

Two general explanations have been advanced regarding early stumbling at the musical titles. The first of these is that the terms were *new*—that their novelty puzzled the translators. Obviously, the purpose of this explanation is to bring the affected psalms as far as possible down to the times of the translators themselves. If this means anything, it means this—that the Hebrew Old Testament, a book which, as literature, was deemed sufficiently important for translation in the circumstances that attended the production of the Septuagint, was disfigured by immature expressions and unaccustomed technicalities; and that these terms were beyond the combined diligence and knowledge of translators who could not have been wanting in a sense of curiosity any more than we are to-day. Is this reasonable? How do we treat novelties? Do we give them up? or do we pursue them, and bring them to close quarters with unremitting zeal? Do scholars like to be discomfited by things that are 'newly come up'? To allege the newness of the titles, is singularly inadequate to meet the circumstances; and, what is more, it places the translators in a very unworthy light, thus raising a question for previous investigation as to the character of men whom it is so easy to libel since they are unable to say a word in self-defence. That they made mistakes, is one thing; that they restrained investigation regarding things that were *new*,

is another, and implies a charge for which no substantial evidence is forthcoming.

The other explanation of the errors, real or assumed, of the Septuagint, is that, by reason of their relation to a past age, the psalms brought with them problems connected with an antiquity which the translators did not understand, and regarding which neither literature nor tradition offered any real help. The psalms stood as documents in an age when Temple music had certain characteristics; there was the precentor, there were choirs, and particular psalms were assigned for use at specific times and seasons. The translators, however, found themselves in a very different age, in which these things had, to a considerable extent, been lost to sight and passed out of mind. Customs had changed; the old order had given place to new. In such circumstances, investigation being fruitless, there was nothing for it but that the translators should do their best, though poor and unequal.

Lapse of time explains the defects of the Septuagint translation, both as to the misplacement of the musical line and the failure to render לְמִנְחָה in a way which properly indicated the liturgical associations of such psalms as bore that mark. But, of course, 'lapse of time' cannot be predicated of a mere generation. Customs do not go both out of fashion and out of memory in a single lifetime. What do we find? In the midst of the Greek or Macedonian period of Israel's history—from the death of Alexander the Great till the time of the Maccabees—the psalms were misunderstood as to their shape, and important features of the worship of the old days were utterly beyond recall. The best that could be done in translating the Psalter into the

world-language of the age was faulty and misleading where context failed and the analogy of common things had nothing to say. If this was the condition of things from 323 to 164 B.C.—if then the psalms as a collection had features that baffled the translators—how can it be supposed that the Maccabean period, say the generation of 160 to 130 B.C., should account for important contributions to the Psalter?

We have found fifty-five psalms bearing the mark of the 'Chief Musician,' and as far as we can apply any test we find the mark where it ought to be: there can be no doubt that the psalms which are marked *Shoshannim* respond to the designation, and the same with *Gittith*, and so forth. Then the psalms upon which the precen-tor's mark has been placed, are not all of one book of the Psalter, but in every book except the fourth (90-106), being distributed as follows (according to the arrange-ment of this edition): Book I—Psalms 1-41, twenty; Book II—Psalms 42-72, twenty-four; Book III—Psalms 73-89, eight; Book V—Psalms 107-150, three<sup>1</sup>. And singular to say, the one book (IV) which bears no mark of this kind upon its component parts, has the distinction of being specified in the historical writings as forming part of the service of praise on the occasion of the Ark being brought by David from Gath-rimmon to Mount Zion. See 1 Chron. 16. 8-36, where Asaph and his brethren are declared to have thanked the Lord in the words of Ps. 105. 1-15, and 96. 1-13, and a hint seems to be given in verses 34-36, that Psalms 106, 107, 118, and 136 were also sung. It may be said that this is 'merely the record of the Chronicler.' Precisely; and it is to the Chronicler that we look for anything in the

<sup>1</sup> For further details, see Appendix, § 3.

way of historical sidelights upon 'the praises of Israel.'

In these very books of Chronicles, moreover, we meet with the Chief Musician, the Maidens, and Male Choirs, also Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, with the cymbals, harps, and psalteries, and much other psalm 'material.' Musical details that reach us from no other quarter are found here; and there is no reason to suppose that the writer did not know his subject intimately. When the Septuagint translation came to be made, however, the story had passed beyond comprehension. The words *Alamoth* and *Sheminith* had lost their respective associations with the Temple choir, and nothing was possible to the translators beyond transferring them in Greek letters, as words of doubtful meaning, in 1 Chron. 15. 20, 21. If the words were puzzling by reason of novelty, when were they new? When they came before the Septuagint translator? When, at an earlier date, they were written by the Chronicler? When, at a still earlier period, they were affixed to the psalms, and given a mysterious position which they have maintained ever since? Clearly they were archaic when the translators met with them. If they were old in the Chronicles, how could they be *new* in the Psalter? Does not the Chronicler mention them when dealing with the singers of David, and describing psalmody in its most glorious expression?

If the title marks were old, what about the psalms that bore them? If the precentor adopted psalms that stood in David's name, we may almost as well admit the authorship as allow the endorsement for Temple use. We are told that the musical titles are 'very obscure,' 'dubious,' &c.: and, their antiquity being conceded, there is reason for the judgement; but if the psalms

originated in the Greek and Maccabean periods, then other problems have to be faced ; and among them this : How came these titles to stand where they do ? At no time within reach of tradition have they been understood with certainty ; and yet, now that they are found to sustain a relation to psalms from which they have been sundered for two millenniums, they vindicate their position. Clearly they must have been placed where they are in times when they were fully understood —when their meaning was not ‘dubious’ or ‘very obscure.’ And, moreover, in days when the psalms were read from a definite standpoint, when their intense spirituality was allowed, and their prophetic elements recognized.

This discussion, however, is not simply a question of terms. The primitive relation of things has not been recovered by the application of linguistic keys, but by the rearrangement of materials that had become disordered in a vital detail. With this comes a new point of view from which to examine the psalms. We stand in presence of a literary judgement which has not so far been consulted. Such psalms were allotted for such times and seasons. What is the measure of their harmony with those times and seasons ? Is it delicate, or the contrary ? Let any psalm that we have examined be selected and studied in this light ; and truth and taste will be compelled to admire the selections and appropriations of the Chief Musician for the purposes indicated in the titles. Look at the *Muth-labben* psalm (8). Who has ever read *out* of it David’s thanksgiving for the victory over Goliath ? And yet it is assuredly there. The links between the psalm and the story are as neat and refined as any of our great poets ever forged

in the celebration of a great event. And if we see these relations in poetry, may we not expect them in Holy Scripture? Surely even more so.

Two other remarks. The simplicity of the designations given in the musical titles also seems to point to the early date of the Psalter. Such terms as *Shoshannim*, *Gittith*, and *Mahalath* belong to days when Israel had not become greatly affected by the customs of the surrounding nations. Again, the psalms selected for use by the Chief Musician, were not such as could be taken on the lips of a people who, as a whole, sought alliance or ready co-operation with neighbouring tribes.

Once more, as we have already pointed out, the Psalter nowhere refers to the Feast of Purim (473 B.C.); the psalm which in after years became associated with that fixture, is by its liturgical note in the Psalter itself, earmarked for the Feast of Tabernacles<sup>1</sup>. So the movement is ever backward, to the days of David and his band of singers, of whom the Chronicler speaks, and some of whom are named as authors of the psalms<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See note on p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> If Ps. 137 is post-exilic, it gives us a glimpse of the old times. 'When we remembered Zion . . . we hanged up our harps . . . They that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' In the words of James Robertson: 'Here at least we have a psalmist who looked back fondly to the *old* songs—songs of Zion, songs of the Lord of pre-exilian times' (*Poetry and Religion of the Psalms*, p. 122).



## CHAPTER XXI

### OTHER THINGS THAT FOLLOW

WITH the psalm titles discriminated, the director, or precentor, or Chief Musician, is presented to view in a new light ; and his choirs become more real now that we know some of the psalms that were assigned to them. The orchestral arrangements have not grown in proportion, however; in fact, there is more said of musical instruments in ten short verses, scattered in a less number of psalms, than in all the titles put together<sup>1</sup>. If the orchestra played a general part, there was little need to specify its work repeatedly. Even although out of sight, 'the instruments of David' were not disused. Some curtain hides them, and they have their fitting place in the songs of the House. We proceed to indicate some things that appear to emerge out of our investigations.

#### (I) THE COMPACTNESS OF THE PSALTER.

From the time when it was first put together, the material composing the Psalter has maintained a marvellous cohesion ; there can never have been anything of the nature of a shaking up of the psalms. The order to-day is what it was two thousand years ago ; and our present studies make it evident that before ever the psalms were divided into books, sections, or verses, while as yet they followed one another without a break, they stood in the same relation one to another which we find them occupying to-day. Hence it comes about

<sup>1</sup> Pss. 33. 2 ; 45. 8 ; 71. 22 ; 98. 5 ; 108. 2 ; 144. 9 ; 149. 3 ; 150. 3-5.

that, on placing the musical lines *after* the psalms which immediately precede those over which, in error, they have stood for so long a time, we find in every distinctive instance a cogent relation, a manifest response. The precentor's mark has, in a way, kept the psalms together, and even while it has been misunderstood, its right to a place in the text has not been called in question.

That the division of the Psalter into books took place after the unfortunate amalgamation of the titles, is made obvious by a glance at the opening of Book II. There, at the top of Psalm 42, stands the line 'For the Chief Musician.' It belongs, as subscript, to the last Psalm of the First Book. No difficulty results from the fact that a doxology precedes it; for it is by no means certain that, as is generally supposed, the doxologies were *added* to give formal completeness to the various books. It is just as reasonable to believe that the book divisions took place at those junctures where the doxologies were found. And it is quite likely that, in the earliest times, no less than in later days, some form of doxology, though unwritten, followed most (if not all) of the psalms in the service of the Temple. Moreover, such was the nature of the musical line that it could very properly follow a doxology. The same may be said of 'Hallelujah,' which is found after the doxology with which Book IV closes (Ps. 106). Although, as Ginsburg has shown, the word has a liturgical meaning<sup>1</sup>, and naturally stood at the be-

<sup>1</sup> See *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (pp. 379, 380). It will be observed that the 'Hallelujah,' with which Ps. 105 should open, has been placed by the Massorettes at the end of Ps. 104 (which, like its predecessor, should begin and end with the line, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul!'). See Appendix, § 1.

ginning of psalms that were antiphonous, Pss. 105, 106 have the peculiarity of ending as well as beginning with 'Hallelujah.' Again, the colophon, 'The Prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended,' appears, in like manner, after the doxology of Psalm 72. These features, and such displacements as have attended them in MSS. and Versions, bear an indirect witness to the cohesion of the Psalter as a collection. Though times have changed, the Book of Psalms is, in substance, as it was in the days when there were, so to speak, bound about it verbal and other cords, which have kept it together none the less effectually because they have been unobserved, or misunderstood as to their purpose.

## (2) THE INNER CHARACTER OF THE PSALTER.

The inner character of the Psalter is in a way explained by our investigations; and the tendency to decide the date of psalms by verbal notes, more or less trifling, is assuredly rebuked by the features disclosed. The more we make the Psalms our own, the less satisfied shall we be with reading small events into (or out of) great thoughts. If Psalm 18 had not been embodied in 2 Sam. 22 we should most likely have doubted the heading—'By David . . . in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.' But we learn from the psalm something of David's interpretation of the ways of God in delivering His people. Without historical heading, and in the absence of any other clues, we should probably have run through the annals of Israel in vain to find an occasion suited for the language of the poem. Surely that

one psalm should prepare us for great things in the writings of David. We may search later times in vain for such a man as well as for such poetry. If we look for ballads in the Psalter, we shall be disappointed<sup>1</sup>. David wrote not for a reign, or a generation, but for all time. Hence he has been called 'a prophet' (Acts 2. 30).

For literary refinement in the treatment of great national incidents, take the *Muth-labben* (8) and *Mah-lath Leannoth* (87) psalms. Who ever set down the former as written after the victory over Goliath, or the latter as describing the bringing of the ark to Zion? Yet, upwards of two thousand years ago, they were

<sup>1</sup> The unreliable nature of much that passes for historical criticism, in order to determine the circumstances in which particular psalms were written, led W. T. Davison to make the following remarks: 'When external evidence fails, and critics are left to use their own judgement, we know what to expect. The diversity would be amusing, if it were not bewildering. Ewald ascribes to David a psalm which Cheyne pronounces to have been written in honour of Simon the Maccabee. The 90th Psalm has been assigned by critics of highest repute alike to Moses and to a post-exilic writer, separated from one another by more than a thousand years. The 68th Psalm is described at the same time as one of the earliest and as one of the latest psalms; Delitzsch refers it to the time of David, Hitzig to the time of Jehoshaphat, and Reuss to the pre-Maccabean Greek age. As Riehm observes, who could tell from internal evidence alone whether a familiar hymn were by Luther or Paul Gerhardt, Tersteegen or Angelus Silesius? Who would have ascribed the well-known German hymn, "Jesus, meine Zuversicht," to Princess Louise of Brandenburg? And, we might add, what keenly critical hymnologist could discover from internal evidence that "The God of Abraham praise" was written by Thomas Olivers, an obscure Methodist shoemaker?'—(*The Praises of Israel*, ch. 2.)

associated with these events. In fact, it would seem that they were written to celebrate these events. When at length we read them, in the light of the disclosure made by a readjustment of the musical lines, we cannot but admire them for the neatness and appropriateness, not to say spiritual power, which they exhibit. As for another psalm, *Mahalath* (52), all unconscious of any relation between it and the musical line standing over its successor, eminent expositors have found the combat with Goliath to be its subject. Their judgement receives unexpected support in the fact that, if the title directs us aright, that famous encounter is the subject of the psalm.

### (3) QUESTIONS OF GRAMMAR AND PROPRIETY.

There is a grammar of the psalm titles ; and questions of propriety have been raised in some directions by expositors. Only a few sentences can find a place here on these aspects of our subject.

(1) *Grammar*. The musical lines are, in no case, of the nature of sentences, but, as it were, catchwords—not, however, of tunes, but of seasons and occasions, topical titles, and so forth. For the most part, these forms will not submit to construction as sentences. If we realize this, we shall find the lines of service ; if we misunderstand them, they will prove a snare rather than a help. The Massoretic guilds, who reduced the Hebrew text to the form in which we now have it, were at no advantage when dealing with the psalm titles <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> On the special work of these guilds, Chwolson wrote some years ago : 'The Hebrew language, in the form in which we have it, gives the impression of an old man with a dyed beard, in whom, however, the dye ill-conceals the wrinkles in the face and the grey roots of the hair. The

Traditional knowledge failed them, and they were misled by prejudices and fanciful notions. Hence, though the Septuagint read the letters ננח as נחוח (*Gittith*), 'winepresses,' we find the Massorettes reading it נחית (*Gittith*)—evidently because they thought it to speak of something that had *come from Gath*—a harp, according to the Targum. Again, though Aquila and Symmachus read מנחל as מנחלה (*M'hablath*), 'dancings,' we find the Massorettes reading it מנחלת (*Mahalath*), associating it somehow with the idea of 'illness.' In other ways, it is made clear that the Massorettes were unfamiliar with the grammar of the titles; and as it was with them, so was it also with Jewish expositors in general. In the words of Neubauer :

'Of the best Jewish commentators, like Ibn Ezra and David Qamhi, the former treats them as the opening words of popular melodies, the other as names of instruments, both confessing that the real meanings are unknown<sup>1</sup>.'

In dealing with *Muth-labben* and *Nehiloth* we have had occasion to allude to other cases of evident misdirection on the part of the Massorettes, through whose act several of the titles have been reduced to unmean-

Sopherim and the Massorettes have covered the ancient language with a youthful but happily tolerably transparent veil, so that the ancient form is still in many ways to be seen through it, like the old writing in a palimpsest. They altered the ancient grammatical forms, and fixed the later pronunciation by vowel signs; but fortunately were not altogether consistent in their work—so that they allowed the old forms to remain in many places; and where this was not done they can often be restored with the help of comparative grammar and of the general laws of language.'—(*Hebraica*, vol. vi. p. 105.)

<sup>1</sup> *Studia Biblica*, vol. ii. p. 57.

ing forms. Consequently, in studying the inscriptional material, we must give special attention to the readings of the Early Versions.

(2) *Propriety*. Both from Jewish and Christian sources have come interpretations of the titles that are not only improbable in the light of what we know of Israelitish history, but out of the question when judged from the point of view of a common patriotism. We are asked to believe, in fact, that in the Temple worship Israel followed a *Gittite* melody, and used *Elamite* and *Susian* instruments. Who knows anything of the music of Gath? Why should instruments from Elam or Susa have been introduced into Israelitish devotion? Is it likely that the worship of Jehovah would be promoted by such importations? The very thought is repellent.

Is it conceivable that the Temple precentor should endorse songs of praise as 'to be sung with Susian instruments,' recalling days of captivity when 'they that wasted Israel required of them mirth, saying: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion"'? And so with Elam and Gath—what place was there for complimentary recognition of those heathen centres in the service of praise in the House of Jehovah? Are there any psalms whose sentiment is agreeable to such an idea? Could *Gittite*, *Elamite*, *Susian* instruments or tunes be used in a place of worship in which the psalms that are called 'vindictive' were sung? Who could imagine the Hebrews of to-day praising God with musical instruments bearing a hateful name, say *Tisza-Eszlar* or *Kischeneff*?

## CHAPTER XXII

### CONCLUSION

OUR survey of the psalm titles has led us along an untrodden path. Having, at the outset, distinguished the musical from the literary, we found that, however much the latter may have been discussed, titles of the former class have been for some time given up as involved in hopeless confusion. 'The key to their comprehension must have been lost very early <sup>1</sup>.' Whether Jewish or Christian, the leading expositors have had nothing to offer in the way of intelligent theory or consistent explanation. Hence, with a clear course before us, we have unfolded views along altogether new lines. Whether or not our explanations in detail are received, we judge there will be little hesitation in recognizing the importance of the point of departure—that the inscriptions require discrimination; so that, while that which is literary may be left where it is, the musical portion may be restored to what is obviously its proper place, as subscript to the preceding psalm. This is our main contention; all else is secondary—by way of explanation, illustration, vindication, proof.

We claim that what has hitherto been complex is now rendered simple in the matter of the psalm titles. We have propounded the solution of an old riddle, and have not been careful to advance all the justifying grounds and reasons that arise in the mind. In

<sup>1</sup> Franz Delitzsch, quoted with precision on p. 8.



some respects the subject is interminable; but as books must not be so, this treatise nears its end.

Though no quality of canonicity inheres in them, the familiar titles have deserved attention, if for no other reason than that, for more than two thousand years, they have held close company with some of the most precious portions of Holy Writ. Ages have come and gone, however, and they have given no coherent account of themselves. They have not only been unfruitful but baffling; and the large literature that has gathered about them has been little more than monumental of the ingenuity and learning of Biblical scholars. Now, at length, the titles begin to speak. They bring us messages from a venerable antiquity regarding God's Word and People. They bear an important witness, and they demand to be heard.

The relation of our investigations to modern controversies is for others to ascertain and set forth. We are satisfied that the psalm titles, as now explained, make their contribution to some of the most interesting problems of Israelitish history. That history, with its sunshine and shadow—without parallel of privilege and without example of suffering—is not only a great chapter of experience, but a grand object-lesson of instruction. Let all possible light be shed upon it, for the confirmation in faith, hope, and love of all who, in studying the Psalms or the other Scriptures, seek to be occupied, in heart and mind, with David's Son and David's Lord.

## APPENDIX I

### § I. PSALM DIVISIONS AND CLASSES

#### DIVISIONS OF THE PSALTER.

Five Books: Bk. I, Pss. 1-41; II, 42-72 (31 in number); III, 73-89 (17); IV, 90-106 (17); V, 107-150 (44).

#### CLASSIFICATION OF THE PSALMS.

1. PSALM (*Mizmôr*): Pss. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 29, 31, 38, 39, 40, 41, 47, 49, 50, 51, 62, 63, 64, 73, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 85, 98, 101, 109, 110, 139, 140, 141, 143. A

PSALM OF PRAISE (*Mizmôr l'Thôddâh*): Ps. 100 (forty-four in all—21 in Bk. I; 7 in II; 7 in III; 3 in IV; 6 in V). See also under SONG.

2. SONG (*Shîr*): Pss. 18 (*Shîrâh*), 45 (also *Maschil*), 46. A PSALM; A SONG (*Mizmôr Shîr*): Pss. 30, 65, 67, 68, 75, 76, 87, 92. A SONG; A PSALM (*Shîr Mizmôr*): Pss. 48, 66, 83, 108. SONG OF ASCENTS (*Shîr hammâ-'âlôth*): Pss. 120-134 (fifteen in all).

3. MASCHIL (a psalm of instruction): Pss. 32, 42, 44, 45 (also *Song*), 52, 53, 54, 55, 74, 78, 88, 89, 142 (thirteen in all—some in each Book except the Fourth).

4. MICHAM (a private prayer or personal meditation): Pss. 16, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60 (six in number—all except the first in Bk. II).

5. A PRAYER (*T'phildâh*): Pss. 17, 86, 90, 102, 142 (five in all—see also Ps. 72. 20).

One psalm is *Shiggaion* (a hymn of praise), 7; one is *T'hillâh* (a praise), 145.

#### PSALMS WITHOUT ANY INSCRIPTIONS.

The following psalms have no headings whatever in the Hebrew text: Pss. 1, 2, 10, 33, 43, 71, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 104, 105, 106, 107, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 135, 136, 137, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150 (thirty-four in all—4 in Bk. I; 2 in II; none in III; 10 in IV; 18 in V).

#### PSALMS WITH HISTORICAL HEADINGS.

Pss. 3, 7, 18, 30, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 142 (thirteen in number, and all by David; all 'For the Chief Musician,' excepting 34 and 142).

#### PSALMS FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES OR OCCASIONS.

Pss. 38, 70 (both by David, and 'to bring to remembrance'), 92 ('for the Sabbath'), 100 ('of thanksgiving'), 102 ('of the afflicted when overwhelmed,' &c.). By the headings in the Septuagint, and Talmudical intimations, the psalms for weekdays may be added to that assigned for the Sabbath (92). They are—Sunday, 24; Monday, 48; Tuesday, 82; Wednesday, 94; Thursday, 81; Friday, 93.

## HALLELUJAH PSALMS.

Three groups of psalms are known by this name. In the first group, 111-113, each psalm begins with the word, as rendered, 'Praise ye the Lord'; in the second, 115-117, each ends with it; and in the third, 146-150, each begins and ends with the word. Of the three psalms, 105-107, called from their opening word *Hôdâ* ('O give thanks'), two have a like character. With the last line of Psalm 104 brought over its successor, Psalms 105 and 106 constitute a 'Hallelujah' section, each beginning and ending with that word. (See note on p. 161.) 'Hallelujah' had a liturgical meaning, and as such it naturally stood at the beginning of the respective psalms which are antiphonous, and in the recital of which the congregation repeated the first verse after each consecutive verse recited by the prelector' (*Ginsburg*).

## ALPHABETIC PSALMS.

These psalms are such as exhibit an alphabetic order in the opening letter of their succeeding lines or series of lines. The psalms of this form are—9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145 (nine in all). The two psalms 9 and 10 appeared to have been one originally; in the process of time the alphabetic structure has become disordered. In Psalms 25 and 34 the series is more complete; and Psalm 37 is still more regular, although some variations are seen. The composition of 111 and 112 is theoretically precise; each psalm is composed of eight couplets and two triplets, and the succeeding lines begin with the proper letters of the alphabet. In Psalm 119, a stanza of eight verses, all beginning alike, is assigned to each letter of the alphabet in regular succession. In Psalm 145 the series is again complete, with the exception of the verse beginning with the letter N.

## § 2. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PSALMS

BY DAVID—Pss. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68, 69, 70, 86, 101, 103, 108, 109, 110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145 (seventy-three in all—37 in Bk. I; 18 in II; 1 in III; 2 in IV; 15 in V).

BY ASAPH—Pss. 50, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83 (twelve in all—1 in Bk. II; 11 in III).

BY THE SONS OF KORAH—Pss. 42, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87 (nine in all—6 in Bk. II; 3 in III). The name also appears in the inscriptions over Psalms 46 and 88, as hitherto set out; but in those instances it belongs to the Musical Title of the preceding psalms. (See note on p. 14.)

BY SOLOMON—Pss. 72, 127.

BY HEMAN THE EZRAHITE—Ps. 88.

BY ETHAN THE EZRAHITE—Ps. 89.

BY MOSES THE MAN OF GOD—Ps. 90.

## § 3. THE MUSICAL TITLES

AS DISCRIMINATED AND PLACED IN CONNEXION WITH  
THEIR PROPER PSALMS

**THE CHIEF MUSICIAN PSALMS**  
—Pss. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 30, 35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 74, 75, 76, 79, 80, 83, 84, 87, 108, 138, 139 (fifty-five in all—20 in Bk. I; 24 in II; 8 in III; none in IV; 3 in V). Of these psalms 23 are described as Psalms; 7 as Psalm-Songs; 3 as Song-Psalms; 3 as Songs; 1 as a Prayer; 1 as Shiggaion; 5 as Michtam; 8 as Maschil, one also styled 'Song'; while 5 are undescribed. As to authorship, 39 are by David, 7 by Asaph, 6 by the Sons of Korah, and 3 have no author assigned (46, 66, 67).

**AIJELETH HASH-SHAHAR:** *The Hind of the Dawn*; an object of grace and beauty, to which the soul goes out in earnest desire. Ps. 21. A National Anthem, recalling God's goodness to the king in giving him his heart's desire (1, 2). Possibly the title may express, in terms of affection and honour, the fact that the king was the pride and delight of his people.

**ALAMOTH:** *Maidens*. Ps. 45; a 'Song of loves' (see heading) for the Maidens' Choir. Cf. 1 Chron. 15. 20; Ps. 68. 24, 25. Note the language of the psalm (verses 9 to 16) as justifying the title.

**AL-TASHHETH:** *Destroy not*. Pss. 56, 57, 58, 74. Psalms for a season of humiliation, praying for deliverance from danger and adversity. The title recalls the

prevailing prayers of Moses and David, as recorded in Exod. 32. 11-14; Deut. 9. 26; 2 Sam. 24. 16, 17.

**GITTITH** (for *Gittith*): *Wine-presses*. Pss. 7, 80, 83. For the Autumn Feast, Tabernacles, designed to commemorate God's goodness to Israel as Keeper, especially as pledged and shown in the early days of the nation (Lev. 23. 43).

**JEDUTHUN:** the name of a choir leader, appointed by David to prophesy 'in giving thanks and praising the Lord' (see 1 Chron. 15. 16, 17; 16. 41; 25. 3). Hence a choir for praise, confession, and thanksgiving. Pss. 38, 61, 76.

**JONATH ELEM REHOKIM:** *The Dove of the Distant Terebinths*. Ps. 55. Note verses 5-8, 16, 17. Probably sung in commemoration of the conflicts of David's career.

**MAHALATH** (for M'HÔLÔTH): *Dancings*. Ps. 52, celebrating the victory over the Philistines (see 1 Sam. 18. 6; 21. 11; 29. 5).

**MAHALATH** (for M'HÔLÔTH)  
**LEANNOTH:** *Dancings with Shoutings*. Ps. 87, celebrating the bringing of the Ark to Zion (2 Sam. 6. 4, 14, 15).

**MUTH-LABBEN:** *The Death of the Champion*. Ps. 8, in which the victory over Goliath is ascribed to Jehovah, who 'stilled the enemy and avenger,' and gave dominion to the one who encountered the giant 'in the name of the Lord of hosts' (1 Sam. 17. 4, 45).

NEGINOTH: *Stringed Instruments*. Pss. 3, 5, 53, 54, 60, 66, 75.

NEHILOTH (for N'HĀLŌTH): *Inheritances*. Ps. 4, in commemoration of the coming into possession of the Land of Promise as the people of God (Num. 26. 53, 56; 33. 54; 36. 2; Josh. 11. 23; 14. 1, 2).

SHEMINITH: *The Eighth*, the Male Choir, as contradistinguished from *Alamoth*, the Maidens' Choir (see 1 Chron. 15. 20, 21; cf. Ps. 68. 24, 25). Pss. 5, 11.

SHOSHANNIM: *Lilies*. Pss. 44, 68. For the Spring Festival,

Passover, designed to commemorate God's goodness to Israel as Redeemer, and thereby to bring to mind the days of the making of the nation (Exod. 12. 3 ff.; Num. 9. 5; Joshua 5. 10).

SHOSHANNIM (or SHUSHAN) EDUTH: *Lilies* (or *Lily*): *Testimony*. Pss. 59, 79. For the Feast of Weeks, which marked the conclusion of the grain harvest, and commemorated the Giving of the Law on Sinai (Exod. 19. 1-16; 31. 18; 34. 22; Lev. 23. 10-17; Deut. 16. 9-12).

#### § 4. SELAH

The word SELAH ('lift up') gives notice of the beginning of a new section or stanza in a hymn or poem designed for singing. Properly it should be placed at the beginning of such section or stanza. It occurs seventy-one times in the Psalter, and three times in Hab. 3. The occurrences in the Psalms are as follow—Pss. 3. 2, 4, 8; 4. 2, 4; 7. 5; 9. 16, 20; 20. 3; 21. 2; 24. 6, 10; 32. 4, 5, 7; 39. 5, 11; 44. 8; 46. 3, 7, 11; 47. 4; 48. 8; 49. 13, 15; 50. 6; 52. 3, 5; 54. 3; 55. 7, 19; 57. 3, 6; 59. 5, 13; 60. 4; 61. 4; 62. 4, 8; 66. 4, 7, 15; 67. 1, 4; 68. 7, 19, 32; 75. 3; 76. 3, 9; 77. 3, 9, 15; 81. 7; 82. 2; 83. 8; 84. 4, 8; 85. 2; 87. 3, 6; 88. 7, 10; 89. 4, 37, 45, 48; 140. 3, 5, 8; 143. 6.

Of these psalms, nine (with 17 Selahs) are in Bk. I; seventeen (30 Selahs) in II; eleven (20 Selahs) in III; none in IV; and two (4 Selahs) in V. The psalms thus

marked are by David (21), Asaph (6), the Sons of Korah (8); Heman the Ezrahite (1); and two are anonymous (66, 67). In all cases, excepting 55. 19 and 57. 3, the word Selah comes at the end of a verse; in the exceptional cases, the more recent point-marking has included it in the verses. The occurrences in Hab. 3 are, verses 3, 9, 13, in the first two instances in the verses specified. The Septuagint translators seem to have found the *Selah* mark in some places where it no longer appears. They omit the word in three of the four cases in which the Massoretic text exhibits it at the end of a Psalm (3. 8; 24. 10; 46. 11). In the other case (9. 20) they retain it; and it serves to join Ps. 10 with its predecessor, the position which it actually sustains, not only in the Septuagint and other early versions, but also in a few Hebrew manuscripts.

## HIGGAION

The word HIGGAION, which is rendered 'meditation' in Ps. 19. 14, occurs as a solitary note after verse 16 of Ps. 9. There is no reason why it should not be rendered 'meditation' there also, for the four verses that

follow constitute the *moral* of the preceding portion of the psalm. It stands before *Selah*, the sign for a new stanza or paragraph, and is virtually a heading for the *envoi* of the psalm.

## § 5. THE PSALM OF HABAKKUK

## HAB. 3.

This psalm indicates with clearness the features of a standard psalm. There was no predecessor to which any portion could be erroneously attributed; and no successor from which anything could be improperly taken. It stands alone—with the literary description as a heading, and the musical assignment as a subscript line.

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, set to Shigionoth.

- 2 O LORD, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid:  
O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years,  
In the midst of the years make it known;  
In wrath remember mercy.
- 3 God came from Teman,  
And the Holy One from mount Paran. [Selah  
His glory covered the heavens,  
And the earth was full of his praise.
- 4 And *his* brightness was as the light;  
He had rays *coming forth* from his hand:  
And there was the hiding of his power.

- 5 Before him went the pestilence,  
And fiery bolts went forth at his feet.
- 6 He stood, and measured the earth;  
He beheld, and drove asunder the nations:  
And the eternal mountains were scattered,  
The everlasting hills did bow;  
His goings were *as* of old.
- 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction:  
The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.
- 8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers?  
Was thine anger against the rivers,  
Or thy wrath against the sea,  
That thou didst ride upon thine horses,  
Upon thy chariots of salvation?
- 9 Thy bow was made quite bare;  
The oaths to the tribes were a *sure* word. [Selah  
Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.
- 10 The mountains saw thee, and were afraid;  
The tempest of waters passed by:

- The deep uttered his voice,  
And lifted up his hands on  
high.
- 11 The sun and moon stood still  
in their habitation ;  
At the light of thine arrows as  
they went,  
At the shining of thy glitter-  
ing spear.
- 12 Thou didst march through the  
land in indignation,  
Thou didst thresh the nations  
in anger.
- 13 Thou wentest forth for the  
salvation of thy people,  
For the salvation of thine  
anointed ;  
Thou woundedst the head out  
of the house of the wicked,  
Laying bare the foundation  
even unto the neck. [Selah
- 14 Thou didst pierce with his  
own staves the head of his  
warriors :  
They came as a whirlwind to  
scatter me :  
Their rejoicing was as to de-  
vour the poor secretly.
- 15 Thou didst tread the sea with  
thine horses,  
The heap of mighty waters.
- 16 I heard, and my belly trem-  
bled,  
My lips quivered at the voice ;  
Rottenness entered into my  
bones, and I trembled in  
my place :  
That I should rest in the day  
of trouble,  
When it cometh up against  
the people which invadeth  
him in troops.
- 17 For though the fig tree shall  
not blossom,  
Neither shall fruit be in the  
vines ;  
The labour of the olive shall  
fail,  
And the fields shall yield no  
meat ;  
The flock shall be cut off from  
the fold,  
And there shall be no herd in  
the stalls :
- 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,  
I will joy in the God of my  
salvation.
- 19 Jehovah, the Lord, is my  
strength,  
And he maketh my feet like  
hinds' feet,  
And will make me to walk  
upon mine high places.
- For the Chief Musician, on my  
stringed instruments.
- [NOTE. For 'set to,' in verse 1,  
read 'on,' or 'concerning.' The  
chapter is a prayer made up of  
'loud cries' or 'extollations'—  
*Shigionoth*. This latter word  
appears in the singular number  
(*Shiggaion*) in the heading of  
Psalm 7. The subscript line  
corresponds with the Musical  
Titles found in the Psalter; only  
the word 'my' seems to indicate  
the assignment to the Chief  
Musician as specific and first  
hand, in a sense not found in the  
Book of Psalms. Compare also  
the Psalm of Hezekiah in Isa.  
38, noting the literary opening  
(v. 9), and the (informal) musical  
ending (v. 20).