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For the Chief Musician; upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David.

PSALM 12: 1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceases. For the faithful fail from among the children of men.

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The psalmist, destitute of human comfort, craves help from God, Psa 12:1; gives the character of those who surrounded him, and denounces God's judgments against them, Psa 12:2-5; confides in the promises of God, and in his protection of him and all good men, Psa 12:6-8.

The inscription to this Psalm is: To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David. See on the title of Psa 6:1-10 (note): The Arabic has "Concerning the end (of the world which shall happen) on the eighth day. A prophecy relative to the Advent of the Messiah." Some think that this Psalm was made when Doeg and the Ziphites betrayed David to Saul, see 1 Samuel 22 and 23; but it is most likely that was written during the Babylonish captivity.

Verse 1

Help, Lord - Save me, O Lord; for merciful men fail, and faithful men have passed away from the sons of Adam. Make safe me, Lord; for haly failed, for lessed es sothfastnes fra sons of men. Old MS.

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PSALM 12: 2 Everyone lies to his neighbour. They speak with flattering lips, and with a double heart.

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Verse 2

They speak vanity every one with his neighbor - They are false and hollow; they say one thing while they mean another; there is no trusting to what they say.

Flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak - *בלב ולב* *beleb valeb*, "With a heart and a heart." They seem to have two hearts; one to speak fair words, and the other to invent mischief. The old MS. both translates and paraphrases curiously.

Trans. Dayn spak ilkan til his neghbur: swykil lippis in hert, and thurgh hert thai spak.

Par - Sothfastnes es lessed, and falsed waxes: and al sa vayn spak ilkone to bygyle his neghbur: and many spendes thair tyme in vayne speche withoutyn profyte and gastely frute. And that er swyku lippis; that er jangelers berkand ogaynes sothfastnes. And swykel, for thai speke in hert and thurgh hert; that es in dubil hert, qwen a fals man thynkes ane, and sais another, to desaif hym that he spekes with.

This homely comment cannot be mended.

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PSALM 12: 3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that boasts,

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Verse 3

Proud things - גדלות gedoloth, great things; great swelling words, both in their promises and in their commendations.

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PSALM 12: 4 who have said, "With our tongue we will prevail. Our lips are our own. Who is lord over us?"

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Verse 4

Our lips are our own - Many think, because they have the faculty of speaking, that therefore they may speak what they please.

Old MS - The qwilk sayd, our tounge we sal wyrchip, our lippes er of us, qwas our Lorde? Tha Ypocrites worchepes thair tounge; for that hee tham self janglyng and settes in thaire pouste to do mykil thyng and grete: and thai rose tham that thair lippes that es thair facund and thair wyls er of tham self, nought of God, ne of haly menes lare; for thi that say qua es our Lord? that es, qwat es he to qwas rewle and conversacioun we sal be undir lout? and confourme us til? Als so to say, That es none.

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PSALM 12: 5 "Because of the oppression of the weak and because of the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the LORD; "I will set him in safety from those who malign him."

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Verse 5

For the oppression of the poor - This seems to refer best to the tribulations which the poor Israelites suffered while captives in Babylon. The Lord represents himself as looking on and seeing their affliction; and, hearing their cry, he determines to come forward to their help.

Now will I arise - I alone delivered them into the hands of their enemies, because of their transgressions; I alone can and will deliver them from the hands of their enemies; and the manner of their deliverance shall show the power and influence of their God.

From him that puffeth at him - Here is much interpolation to make out a sense. Several of the versions read, "I will give him an open salvation." My work shall be manifest.

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PSALM 12: 6 the LORD's words are flawless words, as silver refined in a clay furnace, purified seven times.

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Verse 6

The words of the Lord are pure words - None of his promises shall fall to the ground; the salvation which he has promised shall be communicated.

Silver tried in a furnace of earth - A refer ence to the purification of silver by the cupel. This is a sort of instrument used in the purification of silver. It may be formed out of a strong iron ring or hoop,

adjusted in width and depth to the quantum of silver to be purified, and rammed full of well pulverized calcined bone. The metal to be purified must be mingled with lead, and laid on the cupel, and exposed to a strong heat in an air furnace. The impurities of the metal will be partly absorbed, and partly thrown off in fume. The metal will continue in a state of agitation till all the impurities are thrown off; it will then become perfectly still, no more motion appearing, which is the token that the process is completed, or, according to the words of the text, is seven times, that is, perfectly purified.

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PSALM 12: 7 You will keep them, LORD. You will preserve them from this generation forever.

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#### Verse 7

Thou shalt keep them - thou shalt preserve them - Instead of the pronoun them in these clauses, several MSS., with the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Arabic, have us. The sense is equally good in both readings. God did bring forth the Israelites from Babylon, according to his word; he separated them from that generation. and reinstated them in their own land, according to his word; and most certainly he has preserved them from generation to generation to the present day, in a most remarkable manner.

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PSALM 12: 8 The wicked walk on every side, when what is vile is exalted among the sons of men.

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#### Verse 8

The wicked walk on every side - The land is full of them. When the vilest men are exalted; rather, As villany gains ground among the sons of Adam. See the Hebrew. The Vulgate has, "In circuito impii ambulat; secundum altitudinem tuam multiplicasti filios hominum;" which is thus translated and paraphrased in my old MS.: -

Trans. In umgang wiked gos: eftir thy heenes thu has multiplied the sons of man.

Par - Us thy kepes; bot wiked gas in umgang; that es, in covatyng of erdley gudes, that turned with the whele of seven daies: in the qwilk covatys, thai ryn ay aboute; for that sett nane endyng of thaire syn: and tharfor settes God na terme of thair pyne, but sons of men that lyfs skilwisly and in ryghtwisnes, thu has multiplied, aftir thi heghnes in vertus; aftir the heghnes of thi consayll, thou hast multiplied men bath il and gude; for na man may perfetely witt in erd, qwy God makes so many men, the qwilk he wote well sal be dampned: bot it es the privete of his counsayle, so ryghtwis, that no thyng may be ryghtwiser.

In this we find a number of singular expressions, which, while they elucidate the text, will not be uninteresting to the antiquary. Here, for instance, we see the true etymology of the words righteous and righteousness, i.e., right wise and right wiseness. For we have it above as a noun, "ryghtwisnes": as an adjective, "ryghtwis"; and as an adjective in the comparative degree, "ryghtwiser": and we should have had it as an adverb, ryghtwisely, had not the word "skilwisly" occurred to the author.

Righteousness is right wiseness, or that which is according to true wisdom. A righteous man is one who is right wise; properly instructed in Divine wisdom, and acts according to its dictates; and

among them who act rightwisely, there are some who act rightwiser than others; and nothing can be rightwiser than ever to think and act according to the principles of that wisdom which comes from above.

Right, rectus, straight, is opposed to wrong, from injury, and that from to twist. As rehtan signifies to direct, so wrangen signifies to twist, or turn out of a straight or direct line. Right is straight, and wrong, crooked. Hence the righteous man is one who goes straight forward, acts and walks by line and rule; and the unrighteous is he who walks in crooked paths, does what is wrong, and is never guided by true wisdom. Such a person is sometimes termed wicked, from the Anglo-Saxon to act by witch-craft, (hence wicca, a witch), that is to renounce God and righteousness, and to give one's self to the devil, which is the true character of a wicked man. Let him that readeth understand.

The vilest men are exalted - Were we to take this in its obvious sense, it would signify that at that time wickedness was the way to preferment, and that good men were the objects of persecution.