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A Psalm by David.

PSALM 29: 1 Ascribe to the LORD, you sons of the mighty, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

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The psalmist calls upon the great and mighty to give thanks unto God, and to worship him in the beauty of holiness, on account of a tempest that had taken place, Psa 29:1, Psa 29:2. He shouts the wonders produced by a thunderstorm, which he calls the voice of God, Psa 29:3-9. Speaks of the majesty of God, Psa 29:10; and points out the good he will do to his people, Psa 29:11.

In the Hebrew, this is called A Psalm for David. The Vulgate says, "A Psalm of David, when the tabernacle was completed." The Septuagint says: "A Psalm of David, at the going out or exodus of the tabernacle." The Arabic states it to be "A prophecy concerning the incarnation; and concerning the ark and the tent." Num 5:12. The Syriac, "A Psalm of David, concerning oblation." The Psalm was probably written to commemorate the abundant rain which fell in the days of David, after the heavens had been shut up for three years; 2Sam 21:1-10.

Verse 1

O ye mighty - בני אללים beney elim, "sons of the strong ones," or "sons of rams." The Chaldee has, "Ye hosts of angels, sons of God." The Vulgate has, "Offer to the Lord, ye sons of God; offer to the Lord the sons of rams;" in this rendering agree the Septuagint, Ethiopic Arabic, and Anglo-Saxon. The old Psalter has, Bringes til Lord ye goddes sonnes; brynges til Lord sonnes of wether: which it paraphrases thus: that es, yourself, sonnes of apostles, that war leders of goddes folk; qwam ye study to folow.

Glory and strength - Ascribe all excellence and might to him.

The whole Psalm is employed in describing the effects produced by a thunder-storm which had lately taken place.

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PSALM 29: 2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to his name. Worship the LORD in holy array.

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Verse 2

The glory due unto his name - Rather, the glory of his name. His name is Mercy; his nature is love. Ascribe mercy, love, power, and wisdom to him. All these are implied in the name Jehovah.

In the beauty of holiness - בהדרת קדש behadrath kodesh, "the beautiful garments of holiness." Let the priests and Levites put on their best and cleanest apparel; and let the whole service be conducted in such a way as to be no dishonor to the Divine Majesty. The Vulgate and others read, In the palace of his holiness. Let all go to the temple, and return thanks to God for their preservation during this dreadful storm. See on Psa 29:9 (note).

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PSALM 29: 3 The LORD's voice is on the waters. The God of glory thunders, even the LORD on many waters.

Verse 3

The voice of the Lord - Thunder, so called, Exo 9:23, Exo 9:28, Exo 9:29; Job 37:4; Psa 18:13; Isa 30:30. On this subject see the note on Job 37:4, where there is a particular description of the nature and generation of thunder; and of the lightning, clap, rain, and other phenomena which accompany it.

Upon many waters - The clouds, which Moses calls the waters which are above the firmament.

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PSALM 29: 4 The LORD's voice is powerful. The LORD's voice is full of majesty.

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Verse 4

Is powerful - There is no agent in universal nature so powerful as the electric fluid. It destroys life, tears castles and towers to pieces, rends the strongest oaks, and cleaves the most solid rocks: universal animate nature is awed and terrified by it. To several of these effects the psalmist here refers; and for the illustration of the whole I must refer to the above notes on Job.

Full of majesty - No sound in nature is so tremendous and majestic as that of thunder; it is the most fit to represent the voice of God.

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PSALM 29: 5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars. Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

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Verse 5

Breaketh the cedars - Very tall trees attract the lightning from the clouds, by which they are often torn to pieces. Woods and forests give dreadful proof of this after a thunderstorm.

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PSALM 29: 6 He makes them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young, wild ox.

PSALM 29: 7 The LORD's voice strikes with flashes of lightning.

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Verse 7

Divideth the flames of fire - The forked zigzag lightning is the cause of thunder; and in a thunderstorm these lightning are variously dispersed, smiting houses, towers, trees, men, and cattle, in different places.

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PSALM 29: 8 The LORD's voice shakes the wilderness. The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

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## Verse 8

The wilderness of Kadesh - This was on the frontiers of Idumea and Paran. There may be a reference to some terrible thunder-storm and earthquake which had occurred in that place.

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PSALM 29: 9 The LORD's voice makes the deer calve, and strips the forests bare. In his temple everything says, "Glory!"

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## Verse 9

Maketh the hinds to calve - Strikes terror through all the tribes of animals; which sometimes occasions those which are pregnant to cast their young. This, I believe, to be the whole that is meant by the text. I meddle not with the fables which have been published on this subject both by ancients and moderns.

Discovereth the forests - Makes them sometimes evident in the darliest night, by the sudden flash; and often by setting them on fire.

And in his temple - Does this refer to the effect which a dreadful thunder-storm often produces? Multitudes run to places of worship as asylums in order to find safety, and pray to God. See on Psa 29:2 (note).

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PSALM 29: 10 The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood. Yes, the LORD sits as King forever.

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## Verse 10

The Lord sitteth upon the flood - יהוה למבול ישב Jehovah lammabbul yasheb, "Jehovah sat upon the deluge." It was Jehovah that commanded those waters to be upon the earth. He directed the storm; and is here represented, after all the confusion and tempest, as sitting on the floods, appeasing the fury of the jarring elements; and reducing all things, by his governing influence, to regularity and order.

Sitteth king for ever - He governs universal nature; whatsoever he wills he does, in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, and in all deep places. Every phenomenon is under his government and control. There is something very like this in Virgil's description of Neptune appeasing the storm raised by Juno for the destruction of the fleet of Aeneas. See at the end of this Psalm.

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PSALM 29: 11 The LORD will give strength to his people. The LORD will bless his people with peace.

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## Verse 11

The Lord will give strength - Prosperity in our secular affairs; success in our enterprises; and his blessing upon our fields and cattle.

The Lord will bless his people with peace - Give them victory over their enemies, and cause the nations to be at peace with them; so that they shall enjoy uninterrupted prosperity. The plentiful rain which God has now sent is a foretaste of his future blessings and abundant mercies.

In the note on Psa 29:10 I have referred to the following description taken from Virgil. Did he borrow some of the chief ideas in it from the 29th Psalm? The reader will observe several coincidences.

Interea magno misceri murmure pontum,  
 Emissamque hyemem sensit Neptunus, et imis  
 Stagna refusa vadis: graviter commotus, et alto  
 Prospiciens, summa placidum caput extulit unda.  
 Disjectam Aeneae toto videt aequore classem,  
 Fluctibus oppressos Troas, coelique ruina.  
 Eurum ad se zephyrumque vocat: dehinc talia fatur  
 Sic ait: et dicto citius tumida aequora placat,  
 Collectasque fugat nubes, solemque reducit.  
 Cymothoe simul, et Triton adnixus acuto  
 Detrudunt naves scopulo; levat ipse tridenti;  
 Et vastas aperit syrtes, et temperat aequor,  
 Atque rotis summas levibus perlabitur undas.  
 Sic cunctus pelagi cecidit fragor, aequora postquam  
 Prospiciens genitor, caeloque invectus aperto,  
 Flectit equos, curruque volans dat lora secundo.  
 Aen. lib. i., ver. 124. "Mean time, imperial Neptune heard the sound  
 Of raging billows breaking on the ground.  
 Displeased, and fearing for his watery reign,  
 He rears his awful head above the main,  
 Serene in majesty; then rolled his eyes  
 Around the space of earth, of seas, and skies.  
 He saw the Trojan fleet dispersed, distressed,  
 By stormy winds and wintry heaven oppressed.  
 He summoned Eurus and the Western Blast,  
 And first an angry glance on both he cast;

Then thus rebuked.

He spoke; and while he spoke, he soothed the sea,

Dispelled the darkness, and restored the day.

Cymothoe, Triton, and the sea-green train

Of beauteous nymphs, and daughters of the main,

Clear from the rocks the vessels with their hands;

The god himself with ready trident stands,

And opes the deep, and spreads the moving sands;

Then heaves them off the shoals: where'er he guides

His finny coursers, and in triumph rides,

The waves unruffle, and the sea subsides.

So when the father of the flood appears,

And o'er the seas his sovereign trident rears,

Their fury fails: he skims the liquid plains

High on his chariot; and with loosened reins,

Majestic moves along, and awful peace maintains.

Dryden.

Our God, Jehovah, sitteth upon the flood: yea, Jehovah sitteth King for ever.

The heathen god is drawn by his sea-horse, and assisted in his work by subaltern deities: Jehovah sits on the flood an everlasting Governor, ruling all things by his will, maintaining order, and dispensing strength and peace to his people. The description of the Roman poet is fine; that of the Hebrew poet, majestic and sublime.