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For the Chief Musician. For Jeduthun. A Psalm by David.

PSALM 39: 1 I said, "I will watch my ways, so that I don't sin with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me."

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The psalmist's care and watchfulness over his thoughts, tongue, and actions, Psa 39:1-3. He considers the brevity and uncertainty of human life, Psa 39:4-7; prays for deliverance from sin, Psa 39:8-11; and that he may be protected and spared till he is fitted for another world, Psa 39:12, Psa 39:13.

The title says, To the chief Musician, Jeduthun himself, A Psalm of David. It is supposed that this Jeduthun is the same with Ethan, 1Chr 6:44, compared with 1Chr 16:41; and is there numbered among the sons of Merari. And he is supposed to have been one of the four masters of music, or leaders of bands, belonging to the temple. And it is thought that David, having composed this Psalm, gave it to Jeduthun and his company to sing. But several have supposed that Jeduthun himself was the author. It is very likely that this Psalm was written on the same occasion with the preceding. It relates to a grievous malady by which David was afflicted after his transgression with Bath-sheba. See what has been said on the foregoing Psalm.

Verse 1

I said, I will take heed to my ways - I must be cautious because of my enemies; I must be patient because of my afflictions; I must be watchful over my tongue, lest I offend my God, or give my adversaries any cause to speak evil of me.

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PSALM 39: 2 I was mute with silence. I held my peace, even from good. My sorrow was stirred.

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Verse 2

I held any peace, even from good - "I ceased from the words of the law," says the Chaldee. I spoke nothing, either good or bad. I did not even defend myself.

My sorrow was stirred - My afflictions increased, and I had an exacerbation of pain. It is a hard thing to be denied the benefit of complaint in sufferings, as it has a tendency to relieve the mind, and indeed, in some sort, to call off the attention from the place of actual suffering: and yet undue and extravagant complaining enervates the mind, so that it becomes a double prey to its sufferings. On both sides there are extremes: David seems to have steered clear of them on the right hand and on the left.

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PSALM 39: 3 My heart was hot within me. While I meditated, the fire burned: I spoke with my tongue:

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Verse 3

My heart was hot within me - A natural feeling of repressed grief.

While I was musing - What was at first a simple sensation of heat produced a flame; the fire broke out that had long been smothered. It is a metaphor taken from vegetables, which, being heaped together, begin to heat and ferment, if not scattered and exposed to the air; and will soon produce a flame, and consume themselves and every thing within their reach.

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PSALM 39: 4 "LORD, show me my end, what is the measure of my days. Let me know how frail I am.

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Verse 4

Lord, make me to know mine end - I am weary of life; I wish to know the measure of my days, that I may see how long I have to suffer, and how frail I am. I wish to know what is wanting to make up the number of the days I have to live.

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PSALM 39: 5 Behold, you have made my days hand breadths. My lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely every man stands as a breath." Selah.

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Verse 5

My days as a handbreadth - My life is but a span; σπιθαμη του βλου.

And mine age is as nothing - כאין keein, as if at were not before thee. All time is swallowed up in thy eternity.

Verily every man at his best state - כל אדם נצב col adam nitstab, "every man that exists, is vanity." All his projects, plans, schemes, etc., soon come to nothing. His body also moulders with the dust, and shortly passes both from the sight and remembrance of men.

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PSALM 39: 6 "Surely every man walks like a shadow. Surely they busy themselves in vain. He heaps up, and doesn't know who shall gather.

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Verse 6

Walketh in a vain show - בצלם betselem, in a shadow. He is but the semblance of being: he appears for a while, and then vanisheth away. Some of the fathers read, "Although every man walketh in the image of God, yet they are disquieted in vain."

He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them - He raketh together. This is a metaphor taken from agriculture: the husbandman rakes the corn, etc., together in the field, and yet, so uncertain is life, that he knows not who shall gather them into the granary!

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PSALM 39: 7 Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you.

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Verse 7

And now, Lord, what wait I for? - Have I any object of pursuit in life, but to regain thy favor and thine image.

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PSALM 39: 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions. Don't make me the reproach of the foolish.

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Verse 8

Deliver one from all may transgressions - I seek the pardon of my sins; I expect it from thy mercy. Grant it, "that I be not the reproach of the foolish," (the godless and the profane), who deride my expectation, and say no such blessings can be had. Let them know, by thy saving me, that there is a God who heareth prayer, and giveth his Holy Spirit to all them that ask him.

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PSALM 39: 9 I was mute. I didn't open my mouth, because you did it.

PSALM 39: 10 Remove your scourge away from me. I am overcome by the blow of your hand.

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Verse 10

Remove thy stroke away from me - This seems to be a figure taken from gladiators, or persons contending in single combat. One is wounded so as to be able to maintain the fight no longer: he therefore gives in, and prays his adversary to spare his life. I am conquered; I can hold the contest no longer: thou art too powerful for me. He cries what our ancestors used to term craven; the word spoken by him who was conquered in the battle ordeal, or trial by combat.

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PSALM 39: 11 When you rebuke and correct man for iniquity, You consume his wealth like a moth. Surely every man is but a breath." Selah.

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Verse 11

When thou with rebukes dost correct man - תוכחות *tochachoth* signifies a vindication of proceedings in a court of law, a legal defense. When God comes to maintain the credit and authority of his law against a sinner, he "causes his beauty to consume away:" a metaphor taken from the case of a culprit, who, by the arguments of counsel, and the unimpeachable evidence of witnesses, has the facts all proved against him, grows pale, looks terrified; his fortitude forsakes him, and he faints in court.

Surely every man is vanity - He is incapable of resistance; he falls before his Maker; and none can deliver him but his Sovereign and Judge, against whom he has offended.

Selah - This is a true saying, an everlasting truth.

PSALM 39: 12 “Hear my prayer, LORD, and give ear to my cry. Don't be silent at my tears. For I am a stranger with you, a foreigner, as all my fathers were.

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Verse 12

Hear my prayer - Therefore, O Lord, show that mercy upon me which I so much need, and without which I must perish everlastingly.

I am a stranger with thee - I have not made this earth my home; I have not trusted in any arm but thine. Though I have sinned, I have never denied thee, and never cast thy words behind my back. I knew that here I had no continuing city. Like my fathers, I looked for a city that has permanent foundations, in a better state of being.

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PSALM 39: 13 Oh spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go away, and exist no more.”

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Verse 13

O spare me - Take me not from this state of probation till I have a thorough preparation for a state of blessedness. This he terms recovering his strength - being restored to the favor and image of God, from which he had fallen. This should be the daily cry of every human spirit: Restore me to thine image, guide me by thy counsel, and then receive me to thy glory!