

For the Chief Musician. By the sons of Korah. A contemplative psalm.

PSALM 44: 1 We have heard with our ears, God; our fathers have told us, what work you did in their days, in the days of old.

The psalmist recounts the mercies of God; shows to his people how God in ancient times gave them the victory over all their enemies, Psa 44:1-8; points out their present miserable state, Psa 44:9-16; asserts that they have not apostatized, and appeals to God for the truth of his assertion, Psa 44:17-22; and calls upon the Lord for deliverance from their enemies, Psa 44:23-26.

The title here is the same as that in Psa 42:1-11 (note); which see. The Syriac says it was "A Psalm of the sons of Korah, which the people and Moses sung at Horeb." Such titles are fancies to which no credit should be attached. Like the preceding, it appears to belong to the time of the captivity.

Verse 1

We have heard with our ears - The psalmist begins with recounting the marvellous interpositions of God in behalf of the Jewish people, that he might the better strengthen his confidence, and form a ground on which to build his expectation of additional help.

PSALM 44: 2 You drove out the nations with your hand, but you planted them. You afflicted the peoples, but you spread them abroad.

Verse 2

Thou didst drive out the heathen - The Canaanites were as a bad tree planted in a good soil, and bringing forth bad fruit with great luxuriance. God plucked up this bad tree from the roots, and in its place planted the Hebrews as a good tree, a good vine, and caused them to take root, and fill the land.

PSALM 44: 3 For they didn't get the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your face, because you were favourable to them.

Verse 3

For they got not the land - Neither by their valor, nor cunning, nor for their merit; yet, they were obliged to fight. But how did they conquer? By the right hand of the Lord, and by his arm; by his strength alone, and the light of his countenance - his favor most manifestly shown unto them.

PSALM 44: 4 You are my King, God. Command victories for Jacob!

Verse 4

Thou art my king - What thou wert to them, be to us. We believe in thee as they did; we have sinned and are in captivity, but we repent and turn unto thee; command, therefore, deliverances to Jacob, for we are the descendants of him in whose behalf thou hast wrought such wonders.

PSALM 44: 5 Through you, will we push down our adversaries. Through your name, will we tread them under who rise up against us.

Verse 5

Through thee will we push down - Through thy Word, במימרא bemeimra, "Thy substantial Word." - Chaldee. If thou be with us, who can be successfully against us? Literally "We will toss them in the air with our horn;" a metaphor taken from an ox or bull tossing the dogs into the air which attack him.

Through thy name - Jehovah; the infinite, the omnipotent, the eternal Being; whose power none is able to resist.

PSALM 44: 6 For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

Verse 6

I will not trust in my bow - As he is speaking of what God had already done for his forefathers, these words should be read in the past tense: "We have not trusted," etc.

PSALM 44: 7 But you have saved us from our adversaries, and have shamed those who hate us.

PSALM 44: 8 In God we have made our boast all day long, we will give thanks to your name forever. Selah.

Verse 8

In God we boast - We have told the heathen how great and powerful our God is. If thou do not deliver us by thy mighty power, they will not believe our report, but consider that we are held in bondage by the superior strength of their gods.

PSALM 44: 9 But now you rejected us, and brought us to dishonour, and don't go out with our armies.

Verse 9

But thou hast cast off - Our enemies have dominion over us.

And goest not forth with our armies - Were we to attempt to muster our several tribes, and form a host, like our fathers when they came out of Egypt, thou wouldst not accompany us as thou didst them: the horses and chariots of the Babylonians would soon overtake and destroy us.

PSALM 44: 10 You make us turn back from the adversary. Those who hate us take plunder for themselves.

Verse 10

Thou makest us to turn back - This thou didst: and our enemies, profiting by the occasion, finding our strength was departed from us, made us an easy prey, captivated our persons, and spoiled us of our property.

PSALM 44: 11 You have made us like sheep for food, and have scattered us among the nations.

Verse 11

And hast scattered us among the heathen - This most evidently alludes to the captivity. From the successful wars of the kings of Assyria and Chaldea against the kings of Israel and Judah, and the dispersion of the tribes under Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, and Nebuchadnezzar, Jews have been found in every province of the east; there they settled, and there their successors may be found to the present day.

PSALM 44: 12 You sell your people for nothing, and have gained nothing from their sale.

Verse 12

Thou sellest thy people for nought - An allusion to the mode of disposing of slaves by their proprietors or sovereigns. Instead of seeking profit, thou hast made us a present to our enemies.

PSALM 44: 13 You make us a reproach to our neighbours, a scoffing and a derision to those who are around us.

PSALM 44: 14 You make us a byword among the nations, a shaking of the head among the peoples.

Verse 14

Thou makest us a byword - We are evidently abandoned by thee, and are become so very miserable in consequence, that we are a proverb among the people: "See the Hebrews! see their misery and wretchedness! see how low the wrath of God has brought down an offending people!" And the worst curse that can be imprecated against a wicked nation is: "Mayest thou become as wretched as

the Jews;" or as the old Psalter: Thou has seet us reprove til our neighbors: scornynge and hethyng til tha that er in our umgang. That es, gref, tourment that es of our neighbors, and that hethyng es noight sone gave or passand, that we suffer of tha, that er al aboute us. When men sais so byfal ye, als byfel him."

PSALM 44: 15 All day long my dishonour is before me, and shame covers my face,

PSALM 44: 16 At the taunt of one who reproaches and verbally abuses, because of the enemy and the avenger.

PSALM 44: 17 All this has come on us, yet have we not forgotten you, Neither have we been false to your covenant.

Verse 17

Yet have we not forgotten thee - These are bold words; but they must be understood in a qualified sense. We have not apostatized from thee, we have not fallen into idolatry. And this was strictly true: the charge of idolatry could never be brought against the Jewish nation from the time of the captivity, with sufficient evidence to support it.

PSALM 44: 18 Our heart has not turned back, neither have our steps strayed from your path,

PSALM 44: 19 Though you have crushed us in the haunt of jackals, and covered us with the shadow of death.

Verse 19

Thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons - Thou hast delivered us into the hands of a fierce, cruel, and murderous people. We, as a people, are in a similar state to one who has strayed into a wilderness, where there are no human inhabitants; who hears nothing round about him but the hissing of serpents, the howling of beasts of prey, and the terrible roaring of the lion; and who expects every moment to be devoured.

PSALM 44: 20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or spread out our hands to a strange god;

Verse 20

If we have forgotten the name of our God - That name, יהוה Jehovah, by which the true God was particularly distinguished, and which implied the exclusion of all other objects of adoration.

Or stretched out our hands - Made supplication; offered prayer or adoration to any strange god - a god that we had not known, nor had been acknowledged by our fathers. It has already been remarked, that from the time of the Babylonish captivity the Jews never relapsed into idolatry. It

was customary among the ancients, while praying, to stretch out their hands towards the heavens, or the image they were worshipping, as if they expected to receive the favor they were asking.

PSALM 44: 21 won't God search this out? For he knows the secrets of the heart.

Verse 21

Shall not God search this out? - We confidently appeal to the true Good, the searcher of hearts, for the truth of this statement.

PSALM 44: 22 Yes, for your sake we are killed all day long. We are regarded as sheep for the slaughter.

Verse 22

For thy sake are we killed all the day long - Because of our attachment to thee and to thy religion, we are exposed to continual death; and some of us fail a daily sacrifice to the persecuting spirit of our enemies, and we all carry our lives continually in our hands. In the same state were the primitive Christians; and St. Paul applies these words to their case, Rom 8:36.

PSALM 44: 23 Wake up! Why do you sleep, Lord? Arise! Don't reject us forever.

Verse 23

A wake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? - That is, Why dost thou appear as one asleep, who is regardless of the safety of his friends. This is a freedom of speech which can only be allowed to inspired men; and in their mouths it is always to be figuratively understood.

PSALM 44: 24 Why do you hide your face, and forget our affliction and our oppression?

Verse 24

Wherefore hidest thou thy face - Show us the cause why thou withdrawest from us the testimony of thy approbation.

PSALM 44: 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust. Our body clings to the earth.

Verse 25

Our soul is bowed down - Our life is drawing near to the grave. If thou delay to help us, we shall become extinct.

PSALM 44: 26 Rise up to help us. Redeem us for your loving kindness' sake.

Verse 26

Arise for our help - Show forth thy power in delivering us from the hands of our enemies.

Redeem us - Ransom us from our thraldom.

For thy mercies' sake - **למען חסדך** lemaan chasdecha, On account of thy mercy. That we may have that proper view of thy mercy which we should have, and that we may magnify it as we ought to do, redeem us. The Vulgate has, Redime nos, propter nomen tuum, "Redeem us on account of thy name;" which the old Psalter thus paraphrases: "Help us in ryghtwysness, and by us (buy), that es, delyver us, that we be withouten drede; and al this for thi name Jehsu; noght for oure merite."