
For the Chief Musician. To the tune of "Mahalath." A contemplation by David.

PSALM 53: 1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity. There is no one who does good.

The sentiments of atheists and deists, who deny Divine Providence; their character: they are corrupt, foolish, abominable, and cruel, Psa 53:1-4; God fills them with terror, Psa 53:5; reproaches these for their oppression of the poor, Psa 53:5. The psalmist prays for the restoration of Israel, Psa 53:6.

The title, To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, an instructive Psalm of David. The word מחלת machalath, some translate the president; others, the master or leader of the dance; others, hollow instruments; others, the chorus. A flute pipe, or wind instrument with holes, appears to be what is intended. "To the chief player on the flute;" or, "To the master of the band of pipers."

Verse 1

The fool hath said in his heart - The whole of this Psalm, except a few inconsiderable differences, is the same as the fourteenth; and, therefore, the same notes and analysis may be applied to it; or, by referring to the fourteenth, the reader will find the subject of it amply explained. I shall add a few short notes.

Have done abominable iniquity - Instead of עול avel, evil or iniquity, eight of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. have עלילה alilah, work, which is nearly the same as in Psa xiv.

PSALM 53: 2 God looks down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

PSALM 53: 3 Every one of them has gone back. They have become filthy together. There is no one who does good, no, not one.

PSALM 53: 4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and don't call on God?

Verse 4

Have the workers of iniquity - For פועלי, poaley, workers seventy-two of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., with several ancient editions, the Chaldee, though not noticed in the Latin translation in the London Polyglot, the Syriac, Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, and the Arabic, with the Anglo-Saxon, add the word כל col, all, - All the workers of iniquity; which is the reading in the parallel place in Psa 14:1-7 : It may be necessary to observe, that the Chaldee, in the Antwerp and Paris Polyglots, and in that of Justinianus, has not the word כל col, All.

Have not Called upon God - אלהים Elohim; but many MSS. have יהוה Jehovah, Lord.

PSALM 53: 5 There they were in great fear, where no fear was, for God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you. You have put them to shame, because God has rejected them.

Verse 5

For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them - The reader will see, on comparing this with the fifth and sixth verses of Psa 14:1-7, that the words above are mostly added here to what is said there; and appear to be levelled against the Babylonians, who sacked and ruined Jerusalem, and who were now sacked and ruined in their turn. The sixth verse of Psa 14:1-7, "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge," is added here by more than twenty of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS.

PSALM 53: 6 Oh that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God brings back his people from captivity, then Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Verse 6

O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! - I have already shown that the proper translation is, "Who shall give from Zion salvation to Israel?" The word salvation is in the plural here, deliverances: but many MSS., with the Septuagint, Vulgate, Arabic, and Anglo-Saxon, have it in the singular.

When God bringeth back - When Jehovah bringeth back, is the reading of more than twenty of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., with the Septuagint, Syriac, and Chaldee, and Justinianus' Polyglot Psalter.

For larger notes and an analysis, the reader is requested to refer to Psa 14:1-7; and for a comparison of the two Psalms he may consult Dr. Kennicott's Hebrew Bible, where, under Psa 14:1-7, in the lower margin, the variations are exhibited at one view.