
For the Chief Musician. For a stringed instrument. By David.

PSALM 61: 1 Hear my cry, God. Listen to my prayer.

The psalmist's prayer for those who were banished from their own land, and from the ordinances of God, Psa 61:1, Psa 61:2. He praises God for his past mercies, Psa 61:3; purposes to devote himself entirely to his service, Psa 61:4, Psa 61:5. He prays for the king, Psa 61:6, Psa 61:7; and promises to perform his vow to the Lord daily, Psa 61:8.

The title, To the chief Musician upon Neginath, נגינת. The verb נגן nagan signifies to strike or play on a musical instrument, especially one of the stringed kind; but the נגינות neginoth, as it is written in about thirty MSS., may signify either the players on the instruments or the instruments themselves. The Psalm appears to have been written about the close of the captivity, and the most judicious interpreters refer it to that period. On this supposition the notes are formed.

Verse 1

Hear my cry, O God - In the midst of a long and painful captivity, oppressed with suffering, encompassed with cruel enemies and insolent masters, I address my humble prayer to Thee, O my God.

PSALM 61: 2 From the end of the earth, I will call to you, when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Verse 2

From the end of the earth - ארץ arets should be here translated land, not earth, and so it should be in numerous places besides. But here it seems to mean the country beyond the Euphrates; as it is thought to do, Psa 65:5, Psa 65:8, called there also the ends of the earth or land. It may be remarked that the Jews were always more pious and devoted to God in their afflictions and captivities, than when in their own land, in ease and affluence. But who can bear prosperity? How many hearts filled with heavenly ardor in affliction and persecution have grown cold under the beams of the sun of prosperity!

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I - Direct me to a place of refuge and safety. It is a metaphorical expression; and Calmet interprets it of the liberty granted to the Jews by Cyrus to return to their own land. This was a privilege far higher than any thing they could expect. The fathers think Jesus Christ is meant by this high rock.

PSALM 61: 3 For you have been a refuge for me, a strong tower from the enemy.

Verse 3

Those have been a shelter for me - During the whole duration of the captivity God marvellously dealt with the poor Jews; so that, although they were cast down, they were not utterly forsaken.

PSALM 61: 4 I will dwell in your tent forever. I will take refuge in the shelter of your wings. Selah.

Verse 4

I will abide in thy tabernacle - The greater portion of those Psalms which were composed during and after the captivity, says Calmet, had Levites and priests for their authors. Hence we find the ardent desire so frequently expressed of seeing the temple; of praising God there; of spending their lives in that place, performing the functions of their sacred office. There I shall sojourn; - there I shall dwell, - be at rest, - be in safety, - be covered with thy wings, as a bird in its nest is covered with the wings of its mother. These simple comparisons, drawn from rural affairs and ordinary occurrences, are more pleasing and consolatory in the circumstances in question, than allegories derived from subjects the most noble and sublime.

PSALM 61: 5 For you, God, have heard my vows. You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

Verse 5

Hast heard my vows - Often have I purposed to be wholly thine, - to serve thee alone, - to give up my whole life to thy service: and thou hast heard me, and taken me at my word; and given me that heritage, the privilege of enjoying thee in thy ordinances, which is the lot of them that fear thy name. The Psalm seems to have been composed either after the captivity, or at the time that Cyrus published his decree in their favor, as has been remarked before.

PSALM 61: 6 You will prolong the king's life; his years shall be for generations.

Verse 6

Thou wilt prolong the king's life - The words are very emphatic, and can refer to no ordinary person. Literally, "Days upon days thou wilt add to the king; and his years shall be like the generations of this world, and the generations of the world to come." This is precisely the paraphrase I had given to this text before I had looked into the Chaldee Version; and to which I need add nothing, as I am persuaded no earthly king is intended: and it is Christ, as Mediator, that "shall abide before God for ever," Psa 61:7. Neither to David, nor to any earthly sovereign, can these words be applied.

PSALM 61: 7 He shall be enthroned in God's presence forever. Appoint your loving kindness and truth, that they may preserve him.

Verse 7

He shall abide before God for ever - Literally, "He shall sit for ever before the faces of God." He shall ever appear in the presence of God for us. And he ever sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high; for he undertook this office after having, by his sacrificial offering, made atonement for our sins.

Prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him - As Mediator, his attendants will ever be mercy and truth. He will dispense the mercy of God, and thus fulfill the truth of the various promises and predictions which had preceded his incarnation. There is an obscurity in this clause, **חסד ואמת מן** חסד וצדקה **ינצרו** chesed veemeth man yintseruhu, owing to the particle **מן** man, which some translate who or what; and others, number thou, from **מנה** manah, to count. Houbigant, and he is followed by Bishop Lowth, would read **מיהוה** miyehovah, Mercy and truth from Jehovah shall preserve him. The AngloSaxon has, Mildheartedness, and soothfastness his, who seeketh? which is nearly the rendering of the old Psalter: Mercy and sothfastnes of him, wha sall seke? Dr. Kennicott says, **מן** man is a Syriasm; and should be translated quaesoutinam, I beseech thee, - I wish, - O that! On this very ground Coverdale appears to have translated, O let thy lovyng mercy and faithfulnes preserve him! The sense I have given above I conceive to be the true one.

PSALM 61: 8 So I will sing praise to your name forever, that I may fulfil my vows daily.

Verse 8

So will I sing praise unto thy name for evher - For the benefits which I have received, and hope to receive endlessly from thee, I will to all perpetuity praise thee.

That I may daily perform my vows - While I live, I shall **יום יום** yom, yom, "day by day," each day as it succeeds, render to thee my vows - act according to what I have often purposed, and as often promised. The Chaldee ends remarkably: "Thus I will praise thy name for ever, when I shall perform my vows in the day of the rederaption of Israel; and in the day in which the King Messiah shall be anointed, that he may reign."

The ancient Jews were full of the expectation of the Messiah; the Jews of the present day have given up their hope.