
A Psalm by David, when he was in the desert of Judah.

PSALM 63: 1 God, you are my God. I will earnestly seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh longs for you, in a dry and weary land, where there is no water.

David's soul thirsts after God, while absent from the sanctuary, and longs to be restored to the Divine ordinances, Psa 63:1, Psa 63:2. He expresses strong confidence in the Most High, and praises him for his goodness, Psa 63:3-8; shows the misery of those who do not seek God, Psa 63:9, Psa 63:10; and his own safety as king of the people, Psa 63:11.

The title of this Psalm is, A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judea; but instead of Judea, the Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, Arabic, several of the ancient Latin Psalters, and several of the Latin fathers, read Idumea, or Edom; still there is no evidence that David had ever taken refuge in the deserts of Idumea. The Hebrew text is that which should be preferred; and all the MSS. are in its favor. The Syriac has, "Of David, when he said to the king of Moab, My father and mother fled to thee from the face of Saul; and I also take refuge with thee." It is most probable that the Psalm was written when David took refuge in the forest of Hareth, in the wilderness of Ziph, when he fled from the court of Achish. But Calmet understands it as a prayer by the captives in Babylon.

Verse 1

O God, thou art my God - He who can say so, and feels what he says, need not fear the face of any adversary. He has God, and all sufficiency in him.

Early will I seek thee - From the dawn of day. De luce, from the light, Vulgate; as soon as day breaks; and often before this, for his eyes prevented the night-watches; and he longed and watched for God more than they who watched for the morning. The old Psalter says, God my God, til the fram light I wake; and paraphrases thus: God of all, thurgh myght; thu is my God, thurgh lufe and devocion; speciali till the I wak. Fra light, that is, fra thy tym that the light of thi grace be in me, that excites fra night of sine. And makes me wak till the in delite of luf, and swetnes in saul. Thai wak till God, that setes all thar thoght on God, and for getns the werld. Thai slep till God, that settis thair hert on ani creatur - I wak till the, and that gars me thirst in saule and body.

What first lays hold of the heart in the morning is likely to occupy the place all the day. First impressions are the most durable, because there is not a multitude of ideas to drive them out, or prevent them from being deeply fixed in the moral feeling.

In a dry and thirsty land - בארץ beerets, In a land: but several MSS. have כארץ keerets, As a dry and thirsty land, etc.

PSALM 63: 2 So I have seen you in the sanctuary, watching your power and your glory.

Verse 2

To see thy power and thy glory - in the sanctuary - In his public ordinances God had often showed his power in the judgments he executed, in the terror he impressed, and in awakening the sinful;

and his glory in delivering the tempted, succouring the distressed, and diffusing peace and pardon through the hearts of his followers. God shows his power and glory in his ordinances; therefore public worship should never be neglected. We must see God, says the old Psalter, that he may see us. In his temple he dispenses his choicest blessings.

PSALM 63: 3 Because your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise you.

Verse 3

Thy loving-kindness is better than life - This is the language of every regenerate soul. But O how few prefer the approbation of God to the blessings of life, or even to life itself in any circumstances! But the psalmist says, Thy loving-kindness, $\gamma\tau\omicron\eta$ chasdecha, thy effusive mercy, is better מִחַיִּים mechaiyim, than Lives: it is better than, or good beyond, countless ages of human existence.

My lips shall praise thee - Men praise, or speak well, of power, glory, honor, riches, worldly prospects and pleasures; but the truly religious speak well of God, in whom they find infinitely more satisfaction and happiness than worldly men can find in the possession of all earthly good.

PSALM 63: 4 So I will bless you while I live. I will lift up my hands in your name.

Verse 4

I will lift up my hands in thy name - I will take God for my portion. I will dedicate myself to him, and will take him to witness that I am upright in what I profess and do. Pious Jews, in every place of their dispersion, in all their prayers, praises, contracts, etc., stretched out their hands towards Jerusalem, where the true God had his temple, and where he manifested his presence.

PSALM 63: 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with the richest food. My mouth shall praise you with joyful lips,

Verse 5

My soul shall be satisfied - I shall have, in the true worshipping of thee, as complete a sensation of spiritual sufficiency and happiness, so that no desire shall be left unsatisfied, as any man can have who enjoys health of body, and a fullness of all the necessaries, conveniences, and comforts of life.

PSALM 63: 6 when I remember you on my bed, and think about you in the night watches.

Verse 6

When I remember thee upon my bed - I will lie down in thy fear and love; that I may sleep soundly under thy protection, and awake with a sense of thy presence and approbation; and when I awake in the night watches, or be awakened by them, I will spend the waking moments in meditation upon thee.

PSALM 63: 7 For you have been my help. I will rejoice in the shadow of your wings.

Verse 7

Therefore in the shadow of thy wings - I will get into the very secret of thy presence, into the holy of holies, to the mercy-seat, over which the cherubs extend their wings. If the psalmist does not allude to the overshadowing of the mercy-seat by the extended wings of the cherubim, he may have in view, as a metaphor, the young of fowls, seeking shelter, protection, and warmth under the wings of their mothers. See the same metaphor, Psa 61:4 (note). When a bird of prey appears, the chickens will, by natural instinct, run under the wings of their mothers for protection.

The old Psalter translates, And in hiling of thi wenges I sall joy. The paraphrase is curious. "Thou art my helper, in perels; and I can joy in gode dedes in thi hiling, (covering), for I am thi bride, (bird), and if thou hil (cover) me noght, the glede (kite) will rawis me, (carry me away.)"

PSALM 63: 8 My soul stays close to you. Your right hand holds me up.

Verse 8

My soul followeth hard after thee - נפשי אחריך דבקה dabekah naphshi achareycha, "My soul cleaves (or) is glued after thee." This phrase not only shows the diligence of the pursuit, and the nearness of the attainment, but also the fast hold he had got of the mercy of his God.

PSALM 63: 9 But those who seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

Verse 9

Lower parts of the earth - They are appointed, in the just judgment of God, to destruction; they shall be slain and buried in the earth, and shall be seen no more. Some understand the passage as referring to the punishment of hell; which many supposed to be in the center of the earth.

So the old Psalter, - Thai sall entir in till lagher pine of hell. Lahher or laigher, lower, undermost.

PSALM 63: 10 They shall be given over to the power of the sword. They shall be jackal food.

Verse 10

They shall fall by the sword - They shall be poured out by the hand of the sword, Hebrews That is, their life's blood shall be shed either in war, or by the hand of justice.

They shall be a portion for foxes - They shall be left unburied, and the jackals shall feed upon their dead bodies. Or, being all cut off by utter destruction, their Inheritance shall be left for the wild beasts. That which was their portion shall shortly be the portion of the wild beasts of the forest. If he here refers to the destruction of the Babylonians, the prediction has been literally fulfilled. Where ancient Babylon stood, as far as it can be ascertained, is now the hold of dangerous reptiles and ferocious beasts. The jackal, or chokal, is a very ravenous beast, and fond of human flesh. It devours dead bodies, steals infants out of the lap of their mothers, devours alive the sick who are left by the side of the Ganges, and even in the streets of Calcutta has been known to eat persons who were in a state of intoxication. Ward's Customs.

PSALM 63: 11 But the king shall rejoice in God. Everyone who swears by him will praise him, for the mouth of those who speak lies shall be silenced.

Verse 11

But the king shall rejoice - David shall come to the kingdom according to the promise of God. Or, if it refer to the captivity, the blood royal shall be preserved in and by Zerubbabel till the Messiah come, who shall be David's spiritual successor in the kingdom for ever.

That sweareth by him - It was customary to swear by the life of the king. The Egyptians swore by the life of Pharaoh; and Joseph conforms to this custom, as may be seen in the book of Genesis, Gen 42:15, Gen 42:16. See also 1Sam 1:26 : 1Sam 17:55, and Judith 11:7. But here it may refer to God. He is The King, and swearing by his name signifies binding themselves by his authority, acknowledging his supremacy, and devoting themselves to his glory and service alone.

The Chaldee has: "And the King shall rejoice במימר אלהא bemeymar Eloha, in the Word of God;" or, in the Word God; Meymar, Word, being taken here substantially, as in many other places, by the Targumist.

The mouth of them that speak lies - The mouth of those who acknowledge lying vanities, that worship false gods, shall be stopped. All false religions shall be destroyed by the prevalence of the truth. For he, Christ, shall reign till all his enemies are put under his feet. "Thy kingdom come, and hell's o'erpower: and to thy scepter all subdue." Amen and Amen.