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For the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A Psalm by Asaph. A song.

PSALM 76: 1 In Judah, God is known. His name is great in Israel.

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The true God known in Judah, Israel, Salem, and Zion, Psa 76:1, Psa 76:2. A description of his defeat of the enemies of his people, Psa 76:3-6. How God us to be worshipped, Psa 76:7-9. He should be considered as the chief Ruler: all the potentates of the earth are subject to him, Psa 76:10-12.

The title, "To the chief Musician on Neginoth, a Psalm or Song of Asaph." See the titles to Psa 4:1-8 : and 6: The Vulgate, Septuagint, and others have, "A Psalm for the Assyrians;" and it is supposed to be a thanksgiving for the defeat of the Assyrians. The Syriac says it is a thanksgiving for the taking of Rabbah, belonging to the children of Ammon. It is considered by some of the best commentators to have been composed after the defeat of Sennacherib. That it was composed after the death of David, and after the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah were separated, is evident from the first verse. If Asaph was its author, it could not be the Asaph that flourished in the days of David but some other gifted and Divinely inspired man of the same name, by whom several others of the Psalms appear to have been composed during the captivity.

Verse 1

In Judah is God known - The true God revealed himself to the Jews. The Israelites, after the separation of the tribes, had the same knowledge, but they greatly corrupted the Divine worship; though still God was great, even in Israel.

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PSALM 76: 2 His tabernacle is also in Salem; His dwelling place in Zion.

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Verse 2

In Salem also is his tabernacle - Salem was the ancient name of Zebus, afterward called Jerusalem. Here was the tabernacle set up; but afterwards, when the temple was built on Mount Zion, there was his habitation. The Psalm was evidently composed after the building of Solomon's temple.

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PSALM 76: 3 There he broke the flaming arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the weapons of war. Selah.

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Verse 3

There brake he the arrows of the bow - רִשְׁפֵי rishphey, the fiery arrows. Arrows, round the heads of which inflammable matter was rolled, and then ignited, were used by the ancients, and shot into towns to set them on fire; and were discharged among the towers and wooden works of besiegers. The Romans called them phalaricae; and we find them mentioned by Virgil, Aen. lib. ix., ver. 705: -

Sed magnum stridens contorta phalarica venit,

Fulminis acta modo.

On this passage Servius describes the phalarica as a dart or spear with a spherical leaden head to which fire was attached. Thrown by a strong hand, it killed those whom it hit, and set fire to buildings, etc. It was called phalarica from the towers called phalae from which it was generally projected. In allusion to these St. Paul speaks of the fiery darts of the devil, Eph 6:16, to the note on which the reader is requested to refer.

The shield and the sword - If this refers to the destruction of Sennacherib's army, it may be truly said that God rendered useless all their warlike instruments, his angel having destroyed 185,000 of them in one night.

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PSALM 76: 4 Glorious are you, and excellent, more than mountains of game.

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Verse 4

Than the mountains of prey - This is an address to Mount Zion. Thou art more illustrious and excellent than all the mountains of prey, i.e., where wild beasts wander, and prey on those that are more helpless than themselves. Zion was the place where God dwelt; the other mountains were the abode of wild beasts.

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PSALM 76: 5 Valiant men lie plundered, they have slept their last sleep. None of the men of war can lift their hands.

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Verse 5

The stout-hearted are spoiled - The boasting blasphemers, such as Rab-shakeh, and his master Sennacherib, the king of Assyria.

They have slept their sleep - They were asleep in their tent when the destroying angel, the suffocating wind, destroyed the whole; they over whom it passed never more awoke.

None of the men of might - Is not this a strong irony? Where are your mighty men? their boasted armor, etc.?

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PSALM 76: 6 At your rebuke, God of Jacob, both chariot and horse are cast into a deep sleep.

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Verse 6

At thy rebuke - It was not by any human means that this immense army was overthrown; it was by the power of God alone. Not only infantry was destroyed, but the cavalry also.

The chariot and horse - That is, the chariot horses, as well as the men, were

Cast into a dead sleep - Were all suffocated in the same night. On the destruction of this mighty host, the reader is requested to refer to the notes on 2 Kings 19.

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PSALM 76: 7 You, even you, are to be feared. Who can stand in your sight when you are angry?

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Verse 7

Thou, even thou, art to be feared - The Hebrew is simple, but very emphatic: אתה נורא אתה attah nora attah, "Thou art terrible; thou art." The repetition of the pronoun deepens the sense.

When once thou art angry? - Literally, From the time thou art angry. In the moment thy wrath is kindled, in that moment judgment is executed. How awful is this consideration! If one hundred and eighty-five thousand men were in one moment destroyed by the wrath of God, canst thou, thou poor, miserable, feeble sinner, resist his will, and turn aside his thunder!

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PSALM 76: 8 You pronounced judgement from heaven. The earth feared, and was silent,

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Verse 8

Thou didst cause judgment to be heard - When God declared by his prophet that the enemy should not prevail, but on the contrary be destroyed, the earth the land, and by metonymy the inhabitants of the land, were struck with astonishment and terror, so as not to be able to move. The great boaster Sennacherib, who carried terror, dismay and desolation every where, was now struck with dumb amazement; and the angel of the Almighty, in a moment, stopped the breath of those hosts in which he confided.

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PSALM 76: 9 when God arose to judgement, to save all the afflicted ones of the earth. Selah.

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Verse 9

The meek of the earth - The humbled or oppressed people of the land. The poor Jews, now utterly helpless, and calling upon the Lord for succor.

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PSALM 76: 10 Surely the wrath of man praises you. The survivors of your wrath are restrained.

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Verse 10

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee - The rage of Sennacherib shall only serve to manifest thy glory. The stronger he is, and the more he threatens, and the weaker thy people, the more shall thy majesty and mercy appear in his destruction and their support.

The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain - The Hebrew gives rather a different sense: "Thou shalt gird thyself with the remainder of wrath." Even after thou hast sent this signal destruction upon Sennacherib and his army, thou wilt continue to pursue the remnant of the persecutors of thy people; their wrath shall be the cause of the excitement of thy justice to destroy them. As a man girds himself with his girdle, that he may the better perform his work, so thou wilt gird thyself with wrath, that thou mayest destroy thy enemies. A good maxim has been taken from this verse: "God often so counterworks the evil designs of men against his cause and followers, that it turns out to their advantage and his glory; nor does he permit them to go to the extent of what they have purposed, and of what they are able to perform. He suffers them to do some mischief, but not all they would or can do." But how different is the reading of the Vulgate! Quoniam cogitatio hominis confitebitur tibi: et reliquiae cogitationis diem festum agent tibi: "The thought of man shall praise thee; and the remains of thought shall celebrate a feast day to thee." The Septuagint and the Ethiopic have understood the text in the same way. Some translate thus: "Certainly, the ferocity of the man (Sennacherib) shall praise thee: and thou shalt gird thyself with the spoils of the furious." The spoils of this great army shall be a booty for thy people. Probably this is the true notion of the place. The old Psalter renders it thus: For thoght of man sal schrife (confess) to the, and levyns (remains) of thoght a feste day till the sal wirk. The paraphrase is curious, of which this is the substance: "When man forsakes perfity his synne, and sithen (afterwards) rightwisness werks; it is a feste day; whenne the conscience is clered, and makes feste with the swetnes of goddes lufe, restand fra besynes of any creatur in erth: Than is God at hame with his spouse dwelland."

PSALM 76: 11 Make vows to the LORD your God, and fulfil them! Let all of his neighbours bring presents to him who is to be feared.

#### Verse 11

Vow, and pay unto the Lord - Bind yourselves to him, and forget not your obligations.

Let all that be round about him - All the neighboring nations, who shall see God's judgments against his enemies, should

Bring presents unto him - Give him that homage which is due unto him.

That ought to be feared - למורא lammora, "to the terrible One;" lest they be consumed as the Assyrians have been.

PSALM 76: 12 He will cut off the spirit of princes. He is feared by the kings of the earth.

#### Verse 12

He shall cut off the spirit of princes - Even in the midst of their conquests, he can fill them with terror and dismay, or cut them off in their career of victory.

He is terrible to the icings of the earth - "He is the only Ruler of princes;" to him they must account. And a terrible account most of them will have to give to the great God; especially those who, instigated by the desire of dominion, have, in the lust of conquest which it generates, laid countries

waste by fire and sword, making widows and orphans without number, and extending the empire of desolation and death.

Thus all are under his dominion, and are accountable to him. Even those whom man cannot bring to justice, God will; and to judge them is one grand use of a final judgment day.