
A contemplation by Asaph.

PSALM 78: 1 Hear my teaching, my people. Turn your ears to the words of my mouth.

An enumeration of the principal effects of the goodness of God to his people, vv. 1-16; of their rebellions and punishment, vv. 17-33; their feigned repentance, Psa 78:34-37; God's compassion towards them, Psa 78:38, Psa 78:39; their backsliding, and forgetfulness of his mercy, Psa 78:40-42; the plagues which he brought upon the Egyptians, Psa 78:43-51; the deliverance of his own people, and their repeated ingratitude and disobedience, Psa 78:52-58; their punishment, Psa 78:59-64; God's wrath against their adversaries, Psa 78:65, Psa 78:66; his rejection of the tribes of Israel about his choice of the tribe of Judah, and of David to be king over his people, Psa 78:67-72.

The title, Maschil of Asaph; or, according to the margin, A Psalm for Asaph to give instruction; contains nothing particular. The Arabic has, "A sermon from Asaph to the people." The Psalm was probably not written by David, but after the separation of the ten tribes of Israel, and after the days of Rehoboam, and before the Babylonish captivity, for the temple was still standing, Psa 78:69. Calmet supposes that it was written in the days of Asa, who had gained, by the aid of the Syrians, a great victory over the Israelites; and brought back to the pure worship of God many out of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon. See 2 Chronicles 15 and 2Chr 16:1-14.

Verse 1

Give ear, O my people - This is the exordium of this very pathetic and instructive discourse.

PSALM 78: 2 I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old,

Verse 2

In a parable - Or, I will give you instruction by numerous examples; see Psa 49:1-4 (note), which bears a great similarity to this; and see the notes there. The term parable, in its various acceptations, has already been sufficiently explained; but מִשַׁל mashal may here mean example, as opposed to תּוֹרָה torah, law or precept, Psa 49:1.

PSALM 78: 3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

Verse 3

Which we have heard and known - We have heard the law, and known the facts.

PSALM 78: 4 We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, his strength, and his wondrous works that he has done.

Verse 4

We will not hide them - In those ancient times there was very little reading, because books were exceedingly scarce; tradition was therefore the only, or nearly the only, means of preserving the memory of past events. They were handed down from father to son by parables or pithy sayings and by chronological poems. This very Psalm is of this kind, and must have been very useful to the Israelites, as giving instructions concerning their ancient history, and recounting the wonderful deeds of the Almighty in their behalf.

PSALM 78: 5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a teaching in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children;

PSALM 78: 6 that the generation to come might know, even the children who should be born; who should arise and tell their children,

Verse 6

A testimony in Jacob - This may signify the various ordinances, rites, and ceremonies prescribed by the law; and the word law may mean the moral law, or system of religious instruction, teaching them their duty to God, to their neighbor, and to themselves. These were commanded to the fathers - the patriarchs and primitive Hebrews, that they should make them known to their children, who should make them known to the generation that was to come, whose children should also be instructed that they might declare them to their children; to the end that their hope might be in God, that they might not forget his works, and might keep his commandments: that they might not be as their fathers, but have their heart right and their spirit steadfast with God, Psa 78:6-8. Five generations appear to be mentioned above: 1. Fathers; 2. Their children; 3. The generation to come; 4. And their children; 5. And their children. They were never to lose sight of their history throughout all their generations. Some think the testimony here may mean the tabernacle.

PSALM 78: 7 that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments,

PSALM 78: 8 and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that didn't make their hearts loyal, whose spirit was not steadfast with God.

PSALM 78: 9 The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.

Verse 9

The children of Ephraim - turned back - This refers to some defeat of the Ephraimites; and some think to that by the men of Gath, mentioned 1Chr 7:21. R. D. Kimchi says this defeat of the Ephraimites was in the desert; and although the story be not mentioned in the law, yet it is written in the Books of the Chronicles, where we read, on the occasion of "Zabad the Ephraimite, and Shuthelah, etc., whom the men of Gath, who were born in the land, slew; and Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him," 1Chr 7:20-22 : but to what defeat of

the Ephraimites this refers is not certainly known; probably the Israelites after the division of the two kingdoms are intended.

PSALM 78: 10 They didn't keep God's covenant, and refused to walk in his law.

Verse 10

They kept not the covenant; of God - They abandoned his worship, both moral and ritual. They acted like the Ephraimites in the above case, who threw down their bows and arrows, and ran away.

PSALM 78: 11 They forgot his doings, his wondrous works that he had shown them.

PSALM 78: 12 He did marvellous things in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.

Verse 12

The field of Zoan - "In campo Taneos," Vugate. Tanis was the capital of Pharaoh, where Moses wrought so many miracles. It was situated in the Delta, on one of the most easterly branches of the Nile. It was afterwards called Thanis; and from it the district was called the Thanitic Canton. See Calmet. Dr. Shaw thinks Zoan was intended to signify Egypt in general.

PSALM 78: 13 He split the sea, and caused them to pass through. He made the waters stand as a heap.

Verse 13

He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through - The reader is requested to consult the notes on the parallel passages marked in the margin on this verse and Psa 78:14-17, etc., where all these miracles are largely explained.

PSALM 78: 14 In the daytime he also led them with a cloud, and all night with a light of fire.

PSALM 78: 15 He split rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as out of the depths.

PSALM 78: 16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.

PSALM 78: 17 Yet they still went on to sin against him, to rebel against the Most High in the desert.

PSALM 78: 18 They tempted God in their heart by asking food according to their desire.

Verse 18

By asking meat for their lust - לִנְפֹשָׁם lenaphsham, "for their souls," i.e., for their lives; for they said in their hearts that the light bread, the manna, was not sufficient to sustain their natural force, and preserve their lives. It seems, however, from the expression, that they were wholly carnal; that they had no spirituality of mind; they were earthly, animal, and devilish.

PSALM 78: 19 Yes, they spoke against God. They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?

PSALM 78: 20 Behold, he struck the rock, so that waters gushed out, and streams overflowed. Can he give bread also? Will he provide flesh for his people?"

PSALM 78: 21 Therefore the LORD heard, and was angry. A fire was kindled against Jacob, anger also went up against Israel,

PSALM 78: 22 because they didn't believe in God, and didn't trust in his salvation.

Verse 22

They believed not in God - After all the miracles they had seen, they were not convinced that there was a Supreme Being! and, consequently, they did not trust in his salvation - did not expect the glorious rest which he had promised them. Their descendants in the present day are precisely in this state. Multitudes of them disbelieve the Divine origin of their law, and have given up all hopes of a Messiah.

PSALM 78: 23 Yet he commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven.

PSALM 78: 24 He rained down manna on them to eat, and gave them food from the sky.

Verse 24

The corn of heaven - The manna. It fell about their camp in the form of seeds; and as it appeared to come down from the clouds, it was not improperly termed heavenly corn, or heavenly grain, דָּגָן שָׁמַיִם degan shamayim. The word shamayim is frequently taken to express the atmosphere.

PSALM 78: 25 Man ate the bread of angels. He sent them food to the full.

Verse 25

Man did eat angels' food - לֶחֶם אַבְיִרִים אָכַל אִישׁ lechem abbirim achal ish, "Man did eat the bread of the mighty ones;" or, each person ate, etc. They ate such bread as could only be expected at the tables of the rich and great, the best, the most delicate food. How little did this gross people know of the sublime excellence of that which they called light bread, and which they said their soul loathed; Num 21:5! It was a type of Jesus Christ for so says St. Paul: "They all ate the same spiritual meat, and drank the same spiritual drink," etc., 1Cor 10:3, 1Cor 10:4. And our Lord calls himself "the bread that came down from heaven, that giveth life unto the world," Joh 6:31-35 : but a Jew sees nothing but

with the eyes of flesh. It is true their doctors or rabbins are full of allegories, mysteries, and conceits; but they are, in general, such as would disgrace the Cabinet des Fees, and would not be tolerated in the nursery. O, how thick a veil hangs over their gross and hardened hearts.

PSALM 78: 26 He caused the east wind to blow in the sky. By his power he guided the south wind.

Verse 26

He caused an east wind to blow - See the note on Num 11:31.

PSALM 78: 27 He rained also flesh on them as the dust; winged birds as the sand of the seas.

PSALM 78: 28 He let them fall in the midst of their camp, around their habitations.

PSALM 78: 29 So they ate, and were well filled. He gave them their own desire.

PSALM 78: 30 They didn't turn from their cravings. Their food was yet in their mouths,

PSALM 78: 31 when the anger of God went up against them, killed some of their fattest, and struck down the young men of Israel.

PSALM 78: 32 For all this they still sinned, and didn't believe in his wondrous works.

Verse 32

For all this they sinned still - How astonishing is this! They were neither drawn by mercies, nor awed by judgments! But we shall cease to wonder at this, if we have a thorough acquaintance with our own hearts.

PSALM 78: 33 Therefore he consumed their days in vanity, and their years in terror.

Verse 33

Their days did he consume in vanity - By causing them to wander forty years in the wilderness, vainly expecting an end to their labor, and the enjoyment of the promised rest, which, by their rebellions, they had forfeited.

PSALM 78: 34 When he killed them, then they inquired after him. They returned and sought God earnestly.

Verse 34

When he slew them - While his judgments were upon them, then they began to humble themselves, and deprecate his wrath. When they saw some fall, the rest began to tremble.

PSALM 78: 35 They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God, their redeemer.

Verse 35

That God was their rock - They recollected in their affliction that Jehovah was their Creator, and their Father; the Rock, the Source, not only of their being, but of all their blessings; or, that he was their sole Protector.

And the high God their Redeemer - **וְאֵל עֲלִיּוֹן גֹּאֲלָם** veel elyon goalam, "And the strong God the Most High, their kinsman." That one who possessed the right of redemption; the nearest akin to him who had forfeited his inheritance; so the word originally means, and hence it is often used for a redeemer. The Hebrew word **גֹּאֵל** goel answers to the Greek σωτηρ, a savior; and is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, the strong God, the Most High, the Redeemer of a lost world. After this verse there is the following Masoretic note: **חֲצִי הַסֵּפֶר** chatsi hassepher, "The middle of the book." And thus the reader has arrived at the middle of the Psalter, a book for excellence unparalleled.

PSALM 78: 36 But they flattered him with their mouth, and lied to him with their tongue.

Verse 36

Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth - What idea could such people have of God, whom they supposed they could thus deceive? They promised well, they called him their God, and their fathers' God; and told him how good, and kind, and merciful he had been to them. Thus, their mouth flattered him. And they said that, whatever the Lord their God commanded them to do, they would perform.

And they lied unto him - I think the Vulgate gives the true sense of the Hebrew: *Dilexerunt eum in ore suo; et lingua sua mentiti sunt ei*, - "They loved him with their mouth; and they lied unto him with their tongue." "That is," says the old Psalter, "thai sayde thai lufed God, bot thai lighed, als thair dedes schewes; for thai do noght als thai hight; for when God ceses to make men rad; than cese thai to do wele."

PSALM 78: 37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they faithful in his covenant.

Verse 37

Their heart was not right - When the heart is wrong, the life is wrong; and because their heart was not right with God, therefore they were not faithful in his covenant.

PSALM 78: 38 But he, being merciful, forgave iniquity, and didn't destroy them. Yes, many times he turned his anger away, and didn't stir up all his wrath.

Verse 38

But he, being full of compassion - Feeling for them as a father for his children.

Forgave their iniquity - יחפר yechapper, made an atonement for their iniquity.

And did not stir up all his wrath - Though they often grieved his Spirit, and rebelled against him, yet he seldom punished them; and when he did chastise them, it was as a tender and merciful Father. He did not stir up all his wrath - the punishment was much less than the iniquity deserved.

PSALM 78: 39 He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away, and doesn't come again.

Verse 39

He remembered that they were but flesh - Weak mortals. He took their feeble perishing state always into consideration, and knew how much they needed the whole of their state of probation; and therefore he bore with them to the uttermost. How merciful is God!

A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again - I believe this to be a bad translation and may be productive of error; as if when a man dies his being were ended, and death were an eternal sleep. The original is, רוח הולך ולא ישוב ruach holech velo yashub: and the translation should be, "The spirit goeth away, and it doth not return." The present life is the state of probation; when therefore the flesh - the body, fails, the spirit goeth away into the eternal world, and returneth not hither again. Now God, being full of compassion, spared them, that their salvation might be accomplished before they went into that state where there is no change; where the pure are pure still, and the defiled are defiled still. All the Versions are right; but the polyglot translator of the Syriac, rocho, has falsely put ventus, wind, instead of spiritus, soul or spirit. The Arabic takes away all ambiguity: "He remembered that they were flesh; and a spirit which, when it departs, does not again return." The human being is composed of flesh and spirit, or body and soul; these are easily separated, and, when separated, the body turns to dust, and the spirit returns no more to animate it in a state of probation. Homer has a saying very like that of the psalmist: - Ἄνδρος δε ψυχη παλινα ελθειν ουτε ληιστη, Ουθ' ἔλετη, επει αρ κεν αμειψεται ἔρκος οδοντων.

IL. ix., ver., 408. "But the soul of man returns no more; nor can it be acquired nor caught after it has passed over the barrier of the teeth."

Pope has scarcely given the passage its genuine meaning: - "But from our lips the vital spirit fled Returns no more to wake the silent dead."

And the Ossian-like version of Macpherson is but little better: "But the life of man returns no more; nor acquired nor regained is the soul which once takes its flight on the wind." What has the wind to do with the ἔρκος οδοντων of the Greek poet?

Several similar sayings may be found among the Greek poets; but they all suppose the materiality of the soul.

PSALM 78: 40 How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness, and grieved him in the desert!

PSALM 78: 41 They turned again and tempted God, and provoked the Holy One of Israel.

Verse 41

Limited the Holy One of Israel - The Chaldee translates, "And the Holy One of Israel they signed with a sign." The Hebrew word הִתְנוּ hithvu is supposed to come from the root תָּוָה tavah, which signifies to mark; and hence the letter ת tau, which in the ancient Hebrew character had the form of a cross X, had its name probably because it was used as a mark. Mr. Bate observes that in hithpael it signifies to challenge or accuse; as one who gives his quark or pledge upon a trial, and causes his adversary to do the same. Here it most obviously means an insult offered to God.

PSALM 78: 42 They didn't remember his hand, nor the day when he redeemed them from the adversary;

PSALM 78: 43 how he set his signs in Egypt, his wonders in the field of Zoan,

PSALM 78: 44 he turned their rivers into blood, and their streams, so that they could not drink.

Verse 44

Turned their rivers into blood - See on Exo 7:20 (note).

PSALM 78: 45 He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.

Verse 45

He sent - flies - and frogs - See on Exo 8:6 (note), and Exo 8:24 (note).

PSALM 78: 46 He gave also their increase to the caterpillar, and their labour to the locust.

Verse 46

The caterpillar and - the locust - See on Exo 10:13 (note).

PSALM 78: 47 He destroyed their vines with hail, their sycamore fig trees with frost.

 Verse 47

He destroyed their vines with hail - Though the vine was never plentiful in Egypt, yet they have some; and the wine made in that country is among the most delicious. The leaf of the vine is often used by the Egyptians of the present day for wrapping up their mince-meat, which they lay leaf upon leaf, season it after their fashion, and so cook it, making it a most exquisite sort of food, according to Mr. Maillet.

And their sycamore-trees - This tree was very useful to the ancient Egyptians, as all their coffins are made of this wood; and to the modern, as their barques are made of it. Besides, it produces a kind of fig, on which the common people in general live; and Mr. Norden observes that "they think themselves well regaled when they have a piece of bread, a couple of sycamore figs, and a pitcher of water from the Nile." The loss therefore of their vines and sycamore-trees must have been very distressing to the Egyptians.

PSALM 78: 48 He gave over their livestock also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts.

Verse 48

He gave up their cattle - See on Exo 9:23 (note).

PSALM 78: 49 He threw on them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, and a band of angels of evil.

Verse 49

By sending evil angels - This is the first mention we have of evil angels. There is no mention of them in the account we have of the plagues of Egypt in the Book of Exodus, and what they were we cannot tell: but by what the psalmist says here of their operations, they were the sorest plague that God had sent; they were marks or the fierceness of his anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble. Some think the destroying angel that slew all the first-born is what is here intended; but this is distinctly mentioned in Psa 78:61. An angel or messenger may be either animate or inanimate; a disembodied spirit or human being; any thing or being that is an instrument sent of God for the punishment or support of mankind.

PSALM 78: 50 He made a path for his anger. He didn't spare their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence,

PSALM 78: 51 and struck all the firstborn in Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tents of Ham.

PSALM 78: 52 But he led out his own people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

PSALM 78: 53 He led them safely, so that they weren't afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

PSALM 78: 54 He brought them to the border of his sanctuary, to this mountain, which his right hand had taken.

Verse 54

The border of his sanctuary - **קדש** kodsho, "of his holy place," that is, the land of Canaan, called afterwards the mountain which his right hand had purchased; because it was a mountainous country, widely differing from Egypt, which was a long, continued, and almost perfect level.

PSALM 78: 55 He also drove out the nations before them, allotted them for an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

PSALM 78: 56 Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God, and didn't keep his testimonies;

PSALM 78: 57 but turned back, and dealt treacherously like their fathers. They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

Verse 57

They were turned aside like a deceitful bow - The eastern bow, which when at rest is in the form of a [curved figure], must be recurved, or turned the contrary way, in order to be what is called bent and strung. If a person who is unskilful or weak attempt to recurve and string one of these bows, if he take not great heed it will spring back and regain its quiescent position, and perhaps break his arm. And sometimes I have known it, when bent, to start aside, and regain its quiescent position, to my no small danger, and in one or two cases to my injury. This image is frequently used in the sacred writings; but no person has understood it, not being acquainted with the eastern bow [curved figure], which must be recurved, or bent the contrary way, [figure] in order to be proper for use. If not well made, they will fly back in discharging the arrow. It is said of the bow of Jonathan, it turned not back, 2Sam 1:22, **לֹא נָשׁוּג אַחֹר** lo nasog achor, "did not twist itself backward." It was a good bow, one on which he could depend. Hosea, Hos 7:16, compares the unfaithful Israelites to a deceitful bow; one that, when bent, would suddenly start aside and recover its former position. We may find the same passage in Jer 9:3. And this is precisely the kind of bow mentioned by Homer, Odyss. xxi., which none of Penelope's suitors could bend, called **καμπυλα τοξα** and **αγκυλα τοξα**, the crooked bow in the state of rest; but **τοxon παλιντονον**, the recurved bow when prepared for use. And of this trial of strength and skill in the bending of the bow of Ulysses, none of the critics and commentators have been able to make any thing, because they knew not the instrument in question. On the **τοξου θησις** of Homer, I have written a dissertation elsewhere. The image is very correct; these Israelites, when brought out of their natural bent, soon recoiled, and relapsed into their former state.

PSALM 78: 58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their engraved images.

PSALM 78: 59 When God heard this, he was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel;

PSALM 78: 60 So that he abandoned the tent of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men;

Verse 60

He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh - The Lord, offended with the people, and principally with the priests, who had profaned his holy worship, gave up his ark into the hands of the Philistines. And so true it is that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, that he never returned to it again. See 1Sam 6:1; 2 Samuel 6; 1Kgs 8:1; where the several removals of the ark are spoken of, and which explain the remaining part of this Psalm. Because God suffered the Philistines to take the ark, it is said, Psa 78:61 : "He delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand;" and Psa 78:67, that "he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim;" for Shiloh was in the tribe of Ephraim the son of Joseph; and God did not suffer his ark to return thither, but to go to Kirjath-jearim, which was in the tribe of Benjamin, from thence to the house of Obed-edom: and so to Zion in the tribe of Judah, as it follows, Psa 78:68.

The tabernacle which Moses had constructed in the wilderness remained at Shiloh even after the ark was taken by the Philistines and afterwards sent to Kirjath-jearim. From Shiloh it was transported to Nob; afterwards to Gibeon, apparently under the reign of Saul; and it was there at the commencement of Solomon's reign, for this prince went thither to offer sacrifices, 1Kgs 3:4. From the time in which the temple was built, we know not what became of the tabernacle of Moses: it was probably laid up in some of the chambers of the temple. See Calmet.

PSALM 78: 61 and delivered his strength into captivity, his glory into the adversary's hand.

PSALM 78: 62 He also gave his people over to the sword, and was angry with his inheritance.

PSALM 78: 63 Fire devoured their young men. Their virgins had no wedding song.

Verse 63

Their maidens were not given to marriage - הוללו hullalu, were not celebrated with marriage songs. It is considered a calamity in the east if a maiden arrives at the age of twelve years without being sought or given in marriage.

PSALM 78: 64 Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows couldn't weep.

Verse 64

Their priests fell by the sword - Hophni and Phinehas, who were slain in that unfortunate battle against the Philistines in which the ark of the Lord was taken, 1Sam 4:11.

A Chaldee Targum on this passage says, "In the time in which the ark of the Lord was taken by the Philistines, Hophni and Phinehas, the two priests, fell by the sword at Shiloh; and when the news was brought, their wives made no lamentation, for they both died the same day."

PSALM 78: 65 Then the Lord awakened as one out of sleep, like a mighty man who shouts by reason of wine.

Verse 65

Then the Lord awaked - He seemed as if he had totally disregarded what was done to his people, and the reproach that seemed to fall on himself and his worship by the capture of the ark.

Like a mighty man - כגבור kegibbor, like a hero that shouteth by reason of wine. One who, going forth to meet his enemy, having taken a sufficiency of wine to refresh himself, and become a proper stimulus to his animal spirits shouts - gives the war-signal for the onset; impatient to meet the foe, and sure of victory. The idea is not taken from the case of a drunken man. A person in such a state would be very unfit to meet his enemy, and could have little prospect of conquest.

PSALM 78: 66 He struck his adversaries backward. He put them to a perpetual reproach.

Verse 66

He smote his enemies in the hinder part - This refers to the hemorrhoids with which he afflicted the Philistines. See the note on 1Sam 5:6-10 (note).

PSALM 78: 67 Moreover he rejected the tent of Joseph, and didn't choose the tribe of Ephraim,

Verse 67

He refused the tabernacle of Joseph - See the note on Psa 78:60 (note).

PSALM 78: 68 But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which he loved.

PSALM 78: 69 He built his sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which he has established forever.

Verse 69

He built his sanctuary like high palaces - כמו רמים kemo ramim, which several of the Versions understand of the monoceros or rhinoceros. The temple of God at Jerusalem was the only one in the land, and stood as prominent on Mount Zion as the horn of the unicorn or rhinoceros does upon his snout. And there he established his ark, to go no more out as long as the temple should last. Before this time it was frequently in a migratory state, not only in the wilderness, but afterwards in the promised land. See the notes on Psa 78:60 (note).

PSALM 78: 70 He also chose David his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds;

Verse 70

He chose David - See the account 1Sam 16:11 (note), etc.

PSALM 78: 71 from following the ewes that have their young, he brought him to be the shepherd of Jacob, his people, and Israel, his inheritance.

Verse 71

From following the ewes - Instances of this kind are not unfrequent in the ancient Greek and Roman history. Croesus said that Gypes, who was the first of his race, was a slave, and rose to sovereignty, succeeding his predecessor, of whose sheep he had been the pastor.

PSALM 78: 72 So he was their shepherd according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

Verse 72

So he fed them - Here David is mentioned as having terminated his reign. He had fed the people, according to the integrity of his heart, for that was ever disposed to do the will of God in the administration of the kingdom: and his hand being skillful in war, he always led them out to victory against their enemies.