
For the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. A Psalm by the sons of Korah.

PSALM 84: 1 How lovely are your dwellings, LORD of Armies!

The psalmist longs for communion with God in the sanctuary, Psa 84:1-3. The blessedness of those who enjoy God's ordinances, Psa 84:4-7. With confidence in God, he prays for restoration to his house and worship, Psa 84:8-12.

The title here is the same as that of Psalm 81, only that was for Asaph, this for the sons of Torah. This person was one of the chief rebels against Moses and Aaron; there were three, Torah, Dathan, and Abiram, who made an insurrection; and the earth opened, and swallowed them and their partisans up, Numbers 16: The children of Dathan and Abiram perished with their fathers; but by a particular dispensation of Providence, the children of Korah were spared. See Num 26:11 (note), and the note there. The family of Torah was continued in Israel; and it appears from 1 Chronicles 26:1-19 that they were still employed about the temple, and were porters or keepers of the doors. They were also singers in the temple; see 2Chr 20:19. This Psalm might have been sent to them to be sung, or one of themselves might have been its author.

Verse 1

How amiable are thy tabernacles - In this plural noun he appears to include all the places in or near the temple where acts of Divine worship were performed. The holy of holies, the holy place, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt-offering, etc., etc.; all called here God's tabernacles or dwelling-places; for wherever God was worshipped, there he was supposed to dwell.

PSALM 84: 2 My soul longs, and even faints for the courts of the LORD. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Verse 2

My soul longeth - It is a Levite that speaks, who ardently longs to regain his place in the temple, and his part in the sacred services.

My heart and my flesh - All the desires of my soul and body; every appetite and wish, both animal and spiritual, long for thy service.

PSALM 84: 3 Yes, the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young, near your altars, LORD of Armies, my King, and my God.

Verse 3

Yea, the sparrow hath found a house - It is very unlikely that sparrows and swallows, or birds of any kind, should be permitted to build their nests, and hatch their young, in or about altars which were kept in a state of the greatest purity; and where perpetual fires were kept up for the purpose of

sacrifice, burning incense, etc. Without altering the text, if the clause be read in a parenthesis, the absurdity will be avoided, and the sense be good. "My heart crieth out for the living God, (even the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow דרור deror, the ring-dove, a nest for herself, where she may lay; her young), for thine altars. O Lord of hosts!" Or, read the parenthesis last: "My heart crieth out for the living God; for thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Even the sparrow hath found out a house, and the swallow (ring-dove) a nest for herself, where she may lay her young;" but I have no place, either of rest or worship, understood. The Chaldee translates thus: "Even the pigeon hath found a house, and the turtle-dove hath a nest because their young may be offered lawfully upon thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." Or, as a comparison seems to be here intended the following may best express the meaning; "Even as the sparrow finds out (seeks) a house, and the swallow her nest in which she may hatch her young; so I, thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God."

PSALM 84: 4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house. They are always praising you. Selah.

Verse 4

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house - They who have such a constant habitation in thy temple as the sparrow or the swallow has in the house wherein it has built its nest.

They will be still praising thee - They will find it good to draw nigh unto God, as he always pours out his Spirit on his sincere worshippers.

PSALM 84: 5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you; who have set their hearts on a pilgrimage.

Verse 5

The man whose strength is in thee - "Who life and strength from thee derives;

And by thee moves and in thee lives."

In whose heart are the ways of them - This is no sense. The original, however, is obscure: מסלות מלבבם mesilloth bilebabam, "the high ways are in their hearts;" that is, the roads winding to thy temple. Perhaps there is a reference here to the high roads leading to the cities of refuge. We wish to escape from the hands and dominion of these murderers, and the roads that lead to Jerusalem and the temple we think on with delight; our hearts are with them, we long to be travelling on them.

PSALM 84: 6 Passing through the valley of Weeping, they make it a place of springs. Yes, the autumn rain covers it with blessings.

Verse 6

Passing through the valley of Baca make it a well - Instead of באכא bacha, a mulberry-tree, seven MSS. have בכה becheh, mourning. I believe Baca to be the same here as Bochim, Jdg 2:1-6, called

The Valley of Weeping. Though they pass through this barren and desert place, they would not fear evil, knowing that thou wouldst supply all their wants; and even in the sandy desert cause them to find pools of water, in consequence of which they shall advance with renewed strength, and shall meet with the God of Israel in Zion.

The rain also filleth the pools - The Hebrew may be translated differently, and has been differently understood by all the Versions. מורה גם ברכות יעטה מורה gam berachoth yaateh moreh; "Yea, the instructor is covered or clothed with blessings." While the followers of God are passing through the wilderness of this world, God opens for them fountains in the wilderness, and springs in the dry places. They drink of the well-spring of salvation; they are not destitute of their pastors. God takes care to give his followers teachers after his own heart, that shall feed them with knowledge; and while they are watering the people they are watered themselves; for God loads them with his benefits, and the people cover them with their blessings.

PSALM 84: 7 They go from strength to strength. Everyone of them appears before God in Zion.

Verse 7

They go from strength to strength - They proceed from one degree of grace to another, gaining Divine virtue through all the steps of their probation.

Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God - This is a paraphrase, and a bad one, but no translation. They shall proceed from strength to strength, יראה אל אלהים בציון yeraeh el Elohim betsiyon, "The God of gods shall be seen in Zion." God shall appear in their behalf, as often as they shall seek him; in consequence of which they shall increase in spiritual strength.

Some think there is a reference here to companies of people going up to Jerusalem from different parts of the land, bending together as they go on, so that the crowd is continually increasing. This meaning our translators have put in the margin.

PSALM 84: 8 LORD, God of Armies, hear my prayer. Listen, God of Jacob. Selah.

Verse 8

Hear my prayer - Let us be restored to thy sanctuary, and to thy worship.

PSALM 84: 9 Behold, God our shield, look at the face of your anointed.

Verse 9

Behold, O God, our shield - We have no Protector but thee. Thou seest the deadly blows that are aimed at us; cover our souls; protect our lives!

Look upon the face of thine anointed - Consider the supplications sent up by him whom thou hast appointed to be Mediator between thee and man - thy Christ. But some apply this to David, to Zerubbabel, to the people of Israel; and each has his reasons.

PSALM 84: 10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Verse 10

A day in thy courts is better than a thousand - Not only better than one thousand in captivity, as the Chaldee states, but any where else. For in God's courts we meet with God the King, and are sure to have what petitions we offer unto him through his Christ.

I had rather be a doorkeeper - O what a strong desire does this express for the ordinances of God! Who now prefers the worship of God to genteel, gay, honorable, and noble company, to mirthful feasts, public entertainments, the stage, the oratorio, or the ball! Reader, wouldst thou rather be in thy closet, wrestling in prayer, or reading the Scriptures on thy knees, than be at any of the above places? How often hast thou sacrificed thy amusement, and carnal delight, and pleasures, for the benefit of a pious heart-searching sermon? Let conscience speak, and it will tell thee.

PSALM 84: 11 For the LORD God is a sun and a shield. The LORD will give grace and glory. He withholds no good thing from those who walk blamelessly.

Verse 11

For the Lord God is a sun and shield - To illuminate, invigorate, and warm; to protect and defend all such as prefer him and his worship to every thing the earth can produce.

It is remarkable that not one of the Versions understand the שמש shemesh, as signifying sun, as we do. They generally concur in the following translation: "For the Lord loveth mercy and truth, and he will give grace and glory." The Chaldee says, "The Lord is as a high wall and a strong shield; grace and glory will the Lord give, and will not deprive those of blessedness who walk in perfection." Critics in general take the word as signifying a defense or a guard. Instead of שמש shemesh, sun, Houbigant reads שמר shemer, a keeper or guardian, and says that to represent God as the sun is without example in the sacred writings. But is not Mal 4:2, a parallel passage to this place? "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." No MS. countenances the alteration of Houbigant.

The Lord will give grace - To pardon, purify, and save the soul from sin: and then he will give glory to the sanctified in his eternal kingdom; and even here he withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly. Well, therefore, might the psalmist say, Psa 84:12, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

PSALM 84: 12 LORD of Armies, blessed is the man who trusts in you.

