
PSALM 91: 1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

The safety of the godly man, and his confidence, Psa 91:1, Psa 91:2. How he is defended and preserved, Psa 91:3-10. The angels of God are his servants, Psa 91:11, Psa 91:12; and he shall tread on the necks of his adversaries, Psa 91:13. What God says of, and promises to, such a person, Psa 91:14-16.

This Psalm has no title in the Hebrew; nor can it be determined on what occasion or by whom it was composed. It is most likely by the author of the preceding; and is written as a part of it, by fifteen of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., commencing before the repetition of the four last words of the ninetieth. It is allowed to be one of the finest Psalms in the whole collection. Of it Simon de Muis has said: "It is one of the most excellent works of this kind which has ever appeared. It is impossible to imagine any thing more solid, more beautiful, more profound, or more ornamented. Could the Latin or any modern languages express thoroughly all the beauties and elegancies as well of the words as of the sentences, it would not be difficult to persuade the reader that we have no poem, either in Greek or Latin, comparable to this Hebrew ode."

Verse 1

He that dwelleth in the secret place - The Targum intimates that this is a dialogue between David, Solomon, and Jehovah. Suppose we admit this, - then

David asserts: "He who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," Psa 91:1.

Solomon answers: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust," Psa 91:2.

David replies, and tells him what blessings he shall receive from God if he abide faithful, Psa 91:3-13.

Then the Supreme Being is introduced, and confirms all that David had spoken concerning Solomon, Psa 91:14-16 : and thus this sacred and instructive dialogue ends.

In the secret place of the Most High - Spoken probably in reference to the Holy of holies. He who enters legitimately there shall be covered with the cloud of God's glory - the protection of the all-sufficient God. This was the privilege of the high priest only, under the law: but under the new covenant all believers in Christ have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; and those who thus enter are safe from every evil.

PSALM 91: 2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."

Verse 2

I will say of the Lord - This is my experience: "He is my fortress, and in him will I continually trust."

PSALM 91: 3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly pestilence.

Verse 3

Surely he shall deliver thee - If thou wilt act thus, then the God in whom thou trustest will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, from all the devices of Satan, and from all dangerous maladies. As the original word, דַּבָּר *dabar*, signifies a word spoken, and דֵּבַר *deber*, the same letters, signifies pestilence; so some translate one way, and some another: he shall deliver thee from the evil and slanderous word; he shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence - all blasting and injurious winds, effluvia, etc.

PSALM 91: 4 He will cover you with his feathers. Under his wings you will take refuge. His faithfulness is your shield and rampart.

Verse 4

He shall cover thee with his feathers - He shall act towards thee as the hen does to her brood, - take thee under his wings when birds of prey appear, and also shelter thee from chilling blasts. This is a frequent metaphor in the sacred writings; see Psa 17:8 (note), Psa 57:1 (note), Psa 61:4 (note), and the notes on them. The Septuagint has *Εν τοις μεταφρενοις αυτου επισκιασει σοι*. He will overshadow thee between his shoulders; alluding to the custom of parents carrying their weak or sick children on their backs, and having them covered even there with a mantle. Thus the Lord is represented carrying the Israelites in the wilderness. See Deu 32:11-12 (note), where the metaphor is taken from the eagle.

His truth shall be thy shield and buckler - His revelation; his Bible. That truth contains promises for all times and circumstances; and these will be invariably fulfilled to him that trusts in the Lord. The fulfillment of a promise relative to defense and support is to the soul what the best shield is to the body.

PSALM 91: 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day;

Verse 5

The terror by night - Night is a time of terrors, because it is a time of treasons, plunder, robbery, and murder. The godly man lies down in peace, and sleeps quietly, for he trusts his body, soul, and substance, in the hand of God; and he knows that he who keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. It may also mean all spiritual foes, - the rulers of the darkness of this world. I have heard the following petition in an evening family prayer: "Blessed Lord, take us into thy protection this night; and preserve us from disease, from sudden death, from the violence of fire, from the edge of the sword, from the designs of wicked men, and from the influence of malicious spirits!"

Nor for the arrow - The Chaldee translates this verse, "Thou shalt not fear the demons that walk by night; nor the arrow of the angel of death which is shot in the day time." Thou needest not to fear a sudden and unprovided-for death.

PSALM 91: 6 nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that wastes at noonday.

Verse 6

Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday - The rabbins supposed that the empire of death was under two demons, one of which ruled by day, the other by night. The Vulgate and Septuagint have - the noonday devil. The ancients thought that there were some demons who had the power to injure particularly at noonday. To this Theocritus refers, Id. 1: ver. 15: - Ου θεμις, ω ποιμαν, το μεσαμβρινον, ου θεμις αμμιν Συρισθεν· τον Πανα δεδοικαμες· η γαρ απ' αγρας Τανικα κεκμακως αμπαυεται, εντι γε πικρος, και οί αι δριμεια χολα ποτι ρινι καθηται. "It is not lawful, it is not lawful, O shepherd, to play on the flute at noonday: we fear Pan, who at that hour goes to sleep in order to rest himself after the fatigues of the chase; then he is dangerous, and his wrath easily kindled."

Lucan, in the horrible account he gives us of a grove sacred to some barbarous power, worshipped with the most horrid rites, refers to the same superstition: -

Lucus erat longo nunquam violatus ab aevo,

Non illum cultu populi propiore frequentant,

Sed cessere deis: medio cum Phoebus in axe est.

Aut coelum nox atra tenet, pavet ipse sacerdos

Accessus, dominumque timet deprendere luci.

Lucan, lib. iii., ver. 399. "Not far away, for ages past, had stood

An old inviolated sacred wood:

The pious worshippers approach not near,

But shun their gods, and kneel with distant fear:

The priest himself, when, or the day or night

Rolling have reached their full meridian height,

Refrains the gloomy paths with wary feet,

Dreading the demon of the grove to meet;

Who, terrible to sight, at that fixed hour

Still treads the round about this dreary bower."

Rowe.

It has been stated among the heathens that the gods should be worshipped at all times, but the demons should be worshipped at midday: probably because these demons, having been employed during the night, required rest at noonday and that was the most proper time to appease them. See Calmet on this place. Both the Vulgate and Septuagint seem to have reference to this superstition.

The Syriac understands the passage of a pestilential wind, that blows at noonday. Aquila translates, of the bite of the noonday demon.

PSALM 91: 7 A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you.

Verse 7

A thousand shall fall at thy side - Calmet thinks this place should be translated thus: "A thousand enemies may fall upon thee on one side, and ten thousand may fall upon thee on thy right hand: but they shall not come nigh thee to take away thy life." It is a promise of perfect protection, and the utmost safety.

PSALM 91: 8 You will only look with your eyes, and see the recompense of the wicked.

Verse 8

The reward of the wicked - Thou shalt not only be safe thyself, but thou shalt see all thy enemies discomfited and cast down.

PSALM 91: 9 Because you have made LORD your refuge, and the Most High your dwelling place,

Verse 9

Because thou hast made the Lord - Seeing thou hast taken Jehovah, the Most High, for thy portion and thy refuge, no evil shall come nigh thy dwelling; thou shalt be safe in thy soul, body, household, and property, Psa 91:10. Every pious man may expect such protection from his God and Father.

PSALM 91: 10 no evil shall happen to you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling.

PSALM 91: 11 For he will put his angels in charge of you, to guard you in all your ways.

Verse 11

He shall give his angels charge over thee - Evil spirits may attempt to injure thee; but they shall not be able. The angels of God shall have an especial charge to accompany, defend, and preserve thee; and against their power, the influence of evil spirits cannot prevail. These will, when necessary, turn

thy steps out of the wag of danger; ward it off when it comes in thy ordinary path; suggest to thy mind prudent counsels, profitable designs, and pious purposes; and thus minister to thee as a child of God, and an heir of salvation.

To keep thee in all thy ways - The path of duty is the way of safety.

Thou canst not reasonably expect protection if thou walk not in the way of obedience. Thy ways are the paths of duty, which God's word and providence have marked out for thee. The way of sin is not thy way - thy duty, thy interest. Keep in thy own ways, not in those of sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh; and God will take care of thee.

PSALM 91: 12 They will bear you up in their hands, so that you won't dash your foot against a stone.

Verse 12

They shall bear thee up in their hands - Take the same care of thee as a nurse does of a weak and tender child; lead thee, - teach thee to walk, - lift thee up out of the way of danger, "lest thou shouldst dash thy foot against a stone," receive any kind of injury, or be prevented from pursuing thy path with safety and comfort.

Let us remember that it is God, whose these angels are; He gives them charge from Him they receive their commission, - to Him they are responsible for their charge. From God thou art to expect them; and for their help he alone is to receive the praise. It is expressly said, He shall give his angels charge; to show that they are not to be prayed to nor praised but God alone, whose servants they are. See the note on Mat 4:6.

PSALM 91: 13 You will tread on the lion and cobra. You will trample the young lion and the serpent underfoot.

Verse 13

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder - Even the king of the forest shall not be able to injure thee; should one of these attack thee, the angels whom God sends will give thee an easy victory over him. And even the asp, (פֶּתֶן pethen), one of the most venomous of serpents, shall not be able to injure thee.

The asp is a very small serpent, and peculiar to Egypt and Libya. Its poison kills without the possibility of a remedy. Those who are bitten by it die in about from three to eight hours; and it is said they die by sleep, without any kind of pain. Lord Bacon says the asp is less painful than all the other instruments of death. He supposes it to have an affinity to opium, but to be less disagreeable in its operation. It was probably on this account that Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, chose to die by the asp, as she was determined to prevent the designs of Augustus, who intended to have carried her captive to Rome to grace his triumph.

The dragon shalt thou trample - The תַּנִּין tannin, which we translate dragon, means often any large aquatic animal; and perhaps here the crocodile or alligator.

PSALM 91: 14 "Because he has set his love on me, therefore I will deliver him. I will set him on high, because he has known my name.

Verse 14

Because he hath set his love upon me - Here the Most High is introduced as confirming the word of his servant. He has fixed his love - his heart and soul, on me.

Therefore will I deliver him - I will save him in all troubles, temptations, and evils of every kind.

I will set him on high - I will place him out of the reach of all his enemies. I will honor and ennoble him, because he hath known my name - because he has loved, honored, and served me, and rendered me that worship which is my due. He has known me to be the God of infinite mercy and love.

PSALM 91: 15 He will call on me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him, and honour him.

Verse 15

He shall call upon me - He must continue to pray; all his blessings must come in this way, when he calls, I will answer him - I will give him whatever is best for him.

I will be with him in trouble - Literally, I am with him. עִמּוֹ אֲנִי immo anochi; as soon as the trouble comes, I am there.

I will deliver him - For his good I may permit him to be exercised for a time, but delivered he shall be.

And honor him - אֶכְבְּדֵהוּ acabbedehu, "I will glorify him." I will load him with honor; that honor that comes from God. I will even show to men how highly I prize such.

PSALM 91: 16 I will satisfy him with long life, and show him my salvation."

Verse 16

With long life - Literally, With length of days will I fill him up.

He shall neither live a useless life, nor die before his time. He shall live happy and die happy.

And show him my salvation - וְאֶרְאֶהוּ בְשׁוּעָתִי vearehu bishuathi, "I will make him see (or contemplate) in my salvation." He shall discover infinite lengths, breadths, depths, and heights, in my salvation. He shall feel boundless desires, and shall discover that I have provided boundless gratifications for them. He shall dwell in my glory, and throughout eternity increase in his resemblance to and enjoyment of me. Thus shall it be done to the man whom the Lord delighteth to

honor; and he delights to honor that man who places his love on him. In a word, he shall have a long life in this world, and an eternity of blessedness in the world to come.