
PSALM 114: 1 When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign language;

Miracles wrought at the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, at the Red Sea, and at Jordan, Psa 114:1-6; and at the rock of Horeb, Psa 114:7, Psa 114:8.

This Psalm has no title. The word Hallelujah is prefixed in all the Versions except the Chaldee and Syriac. It seems like a fragment, or a part of another Psalm. In many MSS. it is only the beginning of the following; both making but one Psalm in all the Versions, except the Chaldee. It is elegantly and energetically composed; but begins and ends very abruptly, if we separate it from the following. As to the author of this Psalm, there have been various opinions; some have given the honor of it to Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-nego; others to Esther; and others, to Mordecai.

Verse 1

A people of strange language - This may mean no more than a barbarous people; a people whom they did not know, and who did not worship their God. But it is a fact that the language of the Egyptians in the time of Joseph was so different from that of the Hebrews that they could not understand each other. See Psa 81:5; Gen 42:23.

The Chaldee has here מעמי ברבראי meammey barbarey, which gives reason to believe that the word is Chaldee, or more properly Phoenician. See this word fully explained in the note on Act 28:2 (note). My old Psalter understood the word as referring to the religious state of the Egyptians: In gangyng of Isrel oute of Egipt, of the house of Jacob fra hethen folke.

PSALM 114: 2 Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion.

Verse 2

Judah was his sanctuary - He set up his true worship among the Jews, and took them for his peculiar people.

And Israel his dominion - These words are a proof, were there none other, that this Psalm was composed after the days of David, and after the division of the tribes, for then the distinction of Israel and Judah took place.

PSALM 114: 3 The sea saw it, and fled. The Jordan was driven back.

Verse 3

The sea saw it, and fled - Mr. Addison has properly observed (see Spect. No. 461) that the author of this Psalm designedly works for effect, in pointing out the miraculous driving back the Red Sea and the river Jordan, and the commotion of the hills and mountains, without mentioning any agent. At last, when the reader sees the sea rapidly retiring from the shore, Jordan retreating to its source, and the mountains and hills running away like a flock of affrighted sheep, that the passage of the

Israelites might be every where uninterrupted; then the cause of all is suddenly introduced, and the presence of God in his grandeur solves every difficulty.

PSALM 114: 4 The mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs.

PSALM 114: 5 What was it, you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you turned back?

Verse 5

What ailed thee, O thou sea - The original is very abrupt; and the prosopopoeia, or personification very fine and expressive: -

What to thee, O sea, that thou fleddest away!

O Jordan, that thou didst roll back!

Ye mountains, that ye leaped like rams!

And ye hills, like the young of the fold!

After these very sublime interrogations, God appears; and the psalmist proceeds as if answering his own questions: -

At the appearance of the Lord, O earth, thou didst tremble;

At the appearance of the strong God of Jacob.

Converting the rock into a pool of waters;

The granite into water springs.

I know the present Hebrew text reads חולי chuli, "tremble thou," in the imperative; but almost all the Versions understood the word in past tense, and read as if the psalmist was answering his own questions, as stated in the translation above. "Tremble thou, O earth." As if he had said, Thou mayest well tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.

PSALM 114: 6 You mountains, that you skipped like rams; you little hills, like lambs?

PSALM 114: 7 Tremble, you earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,

PSALM 114: 8 who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of waters.

Verse 8

The flint - I have translated חלמיש challamish, Granite; for such is the rock of Horeb, a piece of which now lies before me.

This short and apparently imperfect Psalm, for elegance and sublimity, yields to few in the whole book.

It is so well translated in the old Psalter, that I think I shall gratify the reader by laying it before him. Psa 114:1 In gangyng of Isrel oute of Egipt, Of the house of Jacob fra hethen folke. Psa 114:2 Made is Jude his halawyngsrel might of hym. Psa 114:3 The se sawe and fled, Jurdan turned is agayne; Psa 114:4 Hawes gladed als wethers, And hilles als lambes of schepe. Psa 114:5 What is to the se, that thou fled? And thou Jordane that thou ert turned agayne? Psa 114:6 Hawes gladed als wethers? And hils als lambs of schepe. Psa 114:7 Fra the face of Lorde styrde is the erth, Fra the face of God of Jabob; Psa 114:8 That turnes the stane in stank of waters, And roche in wels of waters.

And, as a still more ancient specimen of our language, I shall insert the Anglo-Saxon, with a literal reading, line for line, as near to the Saxon as possible, merely to show the affinity of the languages. Psa 114:1 On outgang Israel of Egypt, House Jacob of folk foreigners; Psa 114:2 Made is Jacob holyness his; Israel andweald (government) his. Psa 114:3 Sea saw, and flew! Jordan turned underback! Psa 114:4 Mounts they fain (rejoiced) so (as) rams, And burghs (hillocks) so (as) lamb - sheep. Psa 114:5 What is the sea, that thou flew? And thou river for that thou turned is underback? Psa 114:6 Mounts ye fained (rejoiced) so so rams; And hills so so lambs - sheep. Psa 114:7 From sight Lord's stirred is earth; From sight God of Jacob. Psa 114:8 Who turned stone in mere waters; And cliffs in wells waters.

I have retained some words above in nearly their Saxon form, because they still exist in our old writers; or, with little variation, in those of the present day: - Psa 114:2 Andweald, government. Hence weal and wealth, commonweal or wealth; the general government, that which produces the welfare of the country. Psa 114:4 Faegnodon, fained - desired fervently, felt delight in expectation. Psa 114:4 Burgh, a hill - a mound or heap of earth, such as was raised up over the dead. Hence a barrow; and hence the word bury, to inhumate the dead. Psa 114:8 Mere, or meer, a large pool of water, a lake, a lough, still in use in the north of England. Gentlemen's ponds, or large sheets of water so called; and hence Winander-mere, a large lake in Westmoreland. Mere also signifies limit or boundary; hence the Mersey, the river which divides Lancashire from Cheshire, and serves as a boundary to both counties. The mere that spreads itself out to the sea.

Instead of cludas, which signifies rocks, one MS. has clyf, which signifies a craggy mountain or broken rock.

The reader will see from this specimen how much of our ancient language still remains in the present; and perhaps also how much, in his opinion, we have amplified and improved our mother tongue.