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A Song of Ascents.

PSALM 129: 1 Many times they have afflicted me from my youth up. Let Israel now say,

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The Jews give an account of the afflictions which they have passed through, Psa 129:1-3. And thank God for their deliverance, Psa 129:4. The judgments that shall fall on the workers of iniquity, Psa 129:5-8.

This Psalm was written after the captivity; and contains a reference to the many tribulations which the Jews passed through from their youth, i.e., the earliest part of their history, their bondage in Egypt. It has no title in any of the Versions, nor in the Hebrew text, except the general one of A Psalm of Degrees. The author is uncertain.

Verse 1

Many a time have they afflicted me - The Israelites had been generally in affliction or captivity from the earliest part of their history, here called their youth. So Hos 2:15 : "She shall sing as in the days of her youth, when she came up out of the land of Egypt." See Jer 2:2, and Eze 16:4, etc.

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PSALM 129: 2 many times they have afflicted me from my youth up, yet they have not prevailed against me.

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Verse 2

Yet they have not prevailed - They endeavored to annihilate us as a people; but God still preserves us as his own nation.

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PSALM 129: 3 The ploughers ploughed on my back. They made their furrows long.

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Verse 3

The plowers plowed upon my back - It is possible that this mode of expression may signify that the people, during their captivity, were cruelly used by scourging, etc.; or it may be a sort of proverbial mode of expression for the most cruel usage. There really appears here to be a reference to a yoke, as if they had actually been yoked to the plough, or to some kind of carriages, and been obliged to draw like beasts of burden. In this way St. Jerome understood the passage; and this has the more likelihood, as in the next verse God is represented as cutting them off from these draughts.

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PSALM 129: 4 The LORD is righteous. He has cut apart the cords of the wicked.

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Verse 4

The Lord - hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked - The words have been applied to the sufferings of Christ; but I know not on what authority. No such scourging could take place in his case, as would justify the expression: - "The ploughers made long furrows there,

Till all his body was one wound."

It is not likely that he received more than thirty-nine stripes. The last line is an unwarranted assertion.

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PSALM 129: 5 Let them be disappointed and turned backward, all those who hate Zion.

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Verse 5

Let them all be confounded - They shall be confounded. They who hate Zion, the Church of God, hate God himself; and all such must be dealt with as enemies, and be utterly confounded.

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PSALM 129: 6 Let them be as the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up;

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Verse 6

As the grass upon the housetops - As in the east the roofs of the houses were flat, seeds of various kinds falling upon them would naturally vegetate, though in an imperfect way; and, because of the want of proper nourishment, would necessarily dry and wither away. If grass, the mower cannot make hay of it; if corn, the reaper cannot make a sheaf of it. Let the Babylonians be like such herbage - good for nothing, and come to nothing.

Withereth afore it groweth up - Before שֶׁלֶק shalak, it is unsheathed; i.e., before it ears, or comes to seed.

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PSALM 129: 7 with which the reaper doesn't fill his hand, nor he who binds sheaves, his bosom.

PSALM 129: 8 Neither do those who go by say, "The blessing of the LORD be on you. We bless you in the LORD's name."

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Verse 8

Neither do they which go by say - There is a reference here to the salutations which were given and returned by the reapers in the time of the harvest. We find that it was customary, when the master came to them into the field, to say unto the reapers, The Lord be with you! and for them to answer, The Lord bless thee! Rut 2:4. Let their land become desolate, so that no harvest shall ever more appear in it. No interchange of benedictions between owners and reapers. This has literally taken place: Babylon is utterly destroyed; no harvests grow near the place where it stood.