
PSALM 136: 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his loving kindness endures forever.

An exhortation to give thanks to God for various mercies granted to all men, Psa 136:1-9; particularly to the Israelites in Egypt, Psa 136:10-12; at the Red Sea, Psa 136:13-15; in the wilderness, Psa 136:16-20; and in the promised land, Psa 136:21, Psa 136:22; for the redemption of the captives from Babylon Psa 136:23, Psa 136:24; and for his providential mercies to all, Psa 136:25, Psa 136:26.

This Psalm is little else than a repetition of the preceding, with the burden, **כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ** ki leolam chasdo, "because his mercy endureth for ever," at the end of every verse. See below. It seems to have been a responsive song: the first part of the verse sung by the Levites, the burden by the people. It has no title in the Hebrew, nor in any of the Versions. It was doubtless written after the captivity. The author is unknown.

Verse 1

O give thanks unto the Lord: for he is good - This sentiment often occurs: the goodness of the Divine nature, both as a ground of confidence and of thanksgiving.

For his mercy endureth for ever - These words, which are the burden of every verse, **כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ** ki leolam chasdo, might be translated: "For his tender mercy is to the coming age:" meaning, probably, if the Psalm be prophetic, that peculiar display of his compassion, the redemption of the world by the Lord Jesus. These very words were prescribed by David as an acknowledgment, to be used continually in the Divine worship, see 1Chr 16:41 : also by Solomon, 2Chr 7:3, 2Chr 7:6, and observed by Jehoshaphat, 2Chr 20:21; all acknowledging that, however rich in mercy God was to them, the most extensive displays of his goodness were reserved for the age to come; see 1Pet 1:10-12 : "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, - unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that preached the Gospel unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," etc.

PSALM 136: 2 Give thanks to the God of gods; for his loving kindness endures forever.

Verse 2

The God of gods - **לַאֲדֹנָי הָאֱלֹהִים** l'adonai haadonim. As adonai signifies director, etc., it may apply here, not to idols, for God is not their god; but to the priests and spiritual rulers; as Lord of lords may apply to kings and magistrates, etc. He is God and ruler over all the rulers of the earth, whether in things sacred or civil.

PSALM 136: 3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords; for his loving kindness endures forever:

PSALM 136: 4 To him who alone does great wonders; for his loving kindness endures forever:

Verse 4

Who alone doeth great wonders - Miracles. No power but that which is almighty can work miracles, נִפְּלוּת niphlaoth, the inversion, or suspension, or destruction of the laws of nature.

PSALM 136: 5 To him who by understanding made the heavens; for his loving kindness endures forever:

Verse 5

By wisdom made the heavens - In the contrivance of the celestial bodies, in their relations, connexions, influences on each other, revolutions, etc., the wisdom of God particularly appears.

PSALM 136: 6 To him who spread out the earth above the waters; for his loving kindness endures forever:

Verse 6

Stretched out the earth above the waters - Or, upon the waters. This seems to refer to a central abyss of waters, the existence of which has not been yet disproved.

PSALM 136: 7 To him who made the great lights; for his loving kindness endures forever:

Verse 7

Great lights - See the notes on the parallel passages in Gen 1:1, etc.

PSALM 136: 8 The sun to rule by day; for his loving kindness endures forever;

PSALM 136: 9 The moon and stars to rule by night; for his loving kindness endures forever:

PSALM 136: 10 To him who struck down the Egyptian firstborn; for his loving kindness endures forever;

Verse 10

Smote Egypt in their first-born - This was one of the heaviest of strokes: a great part of the rising generation was cut off; few but old persons and children left remaining.

PSALM 136: 11 And brought out Israel from among them; for his loving kindness endures forever;

PSALM 136: 12 With a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm; for his loving kindness endures forever:

PSALM 136: 13 To him who divided the Red Sea apart; for his loving kindness endures forever;

Verse 13

Divided the Red Sea into parts - Some of the Jews have imagined that God made twelve paths through the Red Sea, that each tribe might have a distinct passage. Many of the fathers were of the same opinion; but is this very likely?

PSALM 136: 14 And made Israel to pass through its midst; for his loving kindness endures forever;

PSALM 136: 15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea; for his loving kindness endures forever:

PSALM 136: 16 To him who led his people through the wilderness; for his loving kindness endures forever:

Verse 16

Which led his people through the wilderness - It was an astonishing miracle of God to support so many hundreds of thousands of people in a wilderness totally deprived of all necessaries for the life of man, and that for the space of forty years.

PSALM 136: 17 To him who struck great kings; for his loving kindness endures forever;

PSALM 136: 18 And killed mighty kings; for his loving kindness endures forever:

PSALM 136: 19 Sihon king of the Amorites; for his loving kindness endures forever;

PSALM 136: 20 Og king of Bashan; for his loving kindness endures forever;

PSALM 136: 21 And gave their land as an inheritance; for his loving kindness endures forever;

PSALM 136: 22 Even a heritage to Israel his servant; for his loving kindness endures forever:

PSALM 136: 23 Who remembered us in our low estate; for his loving kindness endures forever;

Verse 23

Who remembered us in our low estate - He has done much for our forefathers; and he has done much for us, in delivering us, when we had no helper, from our long captivity in Babylon.

PSALM 136: 24 And has delivered us from our adversaries; for his loving kindness endures forever:

PSALM 136: 25 Who gives food to every creature; for his loving kindness endures forever.

Verse 25

Giveth food to all flesh - By whose universal providence every intellectual and animal being is supported and preserved. The appointing every living thing food, and that sort of food which is suited to its nature, (and the nature and habits of animals are endlessly diversified), is an overwhelming proof of the wondrous providence, wisdom, and goodness of God.

The Vulgate, Arabic, and Anglo-Saxon, add a twenty-seventh verse, by repeating here Psa 136:3 very unnecessarily.

PSALM 136: 26 Oh give thanks to the God of heaven; for his loving kindness endures forever.
