
By David.

PSALM 144: 1 Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to battle:

The psalmist praises God for his goodness, Psa 144:1, Psa 144:2. Exclamations relative to the vanity of human life, Psa 144:3, Psa 144:4. He prays against his enemies, Psa 144:5-8; and extols God's mercy for the temporal blessings enjoyed by his people, Psa 144:9-15.

The Hebrew, and all the Versions, attribute this Psalm to David. The Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, and Arabic, term it, A Psalm of David against Goliath. The Syriac says, "A Psalm of David when he slew Asaph, the brother of Goliath." Calmet thinks, and with much probability, that it was composed by David after the death of Absalom, and the restoration of the kingdom to peace and tranquillity. From a collation of this with Psalm 18, of which it appears to be an abridgment, preserving the same ideas, and the same forms of expression, there can be no doubt of both having proceeded from the same pen, and that David was the author. There is scarcely an expression here of peculiar importance that is not found in the prototype; and for explanation I must refer generally to the above Psalm.

Verse 1

Teacheth my hands to war - To use sword, battle-axe, or spear.

And my fingers to fight - To use the bow and arrows, and the sling.

PSALM 144: 2 my loving kindness, my fortress, my high tower, my deliverer, my shield, and he in whom I take refuge; who subdues my people under me.

Verse 2

Who subdueth my people - Who has once more reduced the nation to a state of loyal obedience. This may refer to the peace after the rebellion of Absalom.

PSALM 144: 3 LORD, what is man, that you care for him? Or the son of man, that you think of him?

Verse 3

Lord, what is man - See the notes on Psa 8:4, Psa 8:5. What is Adam, that thou approvest of him? Can he do any thing worthy of thy notice? Or the son of feeble perishing man, that thou shouldst hold him in repute? What care, love, and attention, dost thou lavish upon him!

PSALM 144: 4 Man is like a breath. His days are like a shadow that passes away.

Verse 4

Man is like to vanity - אדם להבל דמה Adam lahebel damah, literally, Adam is like to Abel, exposed to the same miseries, accidents, and murderers; for in millions of cases the hands of brothers are lifted up to shed the blood of brothers. What are wars but fratricide in the great human family?

His days are as a shadow - The life of Abel was promissory of much blessedness; but it afforded merely the shadow of happiness. He was pure and holy, beloved of his parents, and beloved of God; but, becoming the object of his brother's envy, his life became a sacrifice to his piety.

PSALM 144: 5 Part your heavens, LORD, and come down. Touch the mountains, and they will smoke.

Verse 5

Bow thy heavens - See the note on Psa 18:9.

PSALM 144: 6 Throw out lightning, and scatter them. Send out your arrows, and rout them.

Verse 6

Cast forth lightning - See the note Psa 18:13-14 (note).

PSALM 144: 7 Stretch out your hand from above, rescue me, and deliver me out of great waters, out of the hands of foreigners;

Verse 7

Deliver me out of great waters - See the note Psa 18:16.

PSALM 144: 8 whose mouths speak deceit, Whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

PSALM 144: 9 I will sing a new song to you, God. On a ten-stringed lyre, I will sing praises to you.

Verse 9

I will sing a new song - A song of peculiar excellence. I will pour forth all my gratitude, and all my skill, on its composition. See on Psa 33:2 (note), and Psa 33:3 (note).

PSALM 144: 10 You are he who gives salvation to kings, who rescues David, his servant, from the deadly sword.

 Verse 10

He that giveth salvation unto kings - Monarchy, in the principle, is from God: it is that form of government which, in the course of the Divine providence, has principally prevailed; and that which, on the whole, has been most beneficial to mankind. God, therefore, has it under his peculiar protection. It is by him that kings reign; and by his special providence they are protected.

PSALM 144: 11 Rescue me, and deliver me out of the hands of foreigners, whose mouths speak deceit, whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

PSALM 144: 12 Then our sons will be like well-nurtured plants, our daughters like pillars carved to adorn a palace.

Verse 12

That our sons may be as plants - God had promised to his people, being faithful, Three descriptions of Blessings, Deu 28:4.

1. The fruit of the body - sons and daughters.
2. The fruits of the ground - grass and corn in sufficient plenty.
3. Fruit of the cattle-"the increase of kine, and flocks of sheep."

These are the blessings to which the psalmist refers here, as those in which he might at present exult and triumph: blessings actually enjoyed by his people at large; proofs of his mild and paternal government, and of the especial blessing of the Almighty. The people who there in such a state, and revolted, had no excuse: they were doubly guilty, as ungrateful both to God and man.

PSALM 144: 13 Our barns are full, filled with all kinds of provision. Our sheep produce thousands and ten thousands in our fields.

Verse 13

That our garners, etc. - Our garners are full. These are not prayers put up by David for such blessings: but assertions, that such blessings were actually in possession. All these expressions should be understood in the present tense.

Ten thousands in our streets - בחצותינו bechutsotheynu should be translated in our pens or sheep-walks; for sheep bringing forth in the streets of cities or towns is absurd.

PSALM 144: 14 Our oxen will pull heavy loads. There is no breaking in, and no going away, and no outcry in our streets.

Verse 14

Our oxen may be strong to labor - We have not only an abundance of cattle; but they are of the most strong and vigorous breed.

No breaking in - So well ordered is the police of the kingdom, that there are no depredations, no robbers, house-breakers, or marauding parties, in the land; no sudden incursions of neighboring tribes or banditti breaking into fields or houses, carrying away property, and taking with them the people to sell them into captivity: there is no such breaking in, and no such going out, in the nation. My enemies are either become friends, and are united with me in political interests; or are, through fear, obliged to stand aloof.

PSALM 144: 15 Happy are the people who are in such a situation. Happy are the people whose God is the LORD.

Verse 15

Happy is that people - "O how happy are the people!" Such were his people; and they had not only all this secular happiness, but they had Jehovah for their God; and in him had a ceaseless fountain of strength, protection, earthly blessings, and eternal mercies! A people in such a case to rebel, must have the curse of God and man.