
PSALM 147: 1 Praise the LORD, for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant and fitting to praise him.

The psalmist praises God for his goodness to Jerusalem, Psa 147:1-3; shows his great mercy to them that trust in him, Psa 147:4-6; he extols him for his mercies, and providential kindness, Psa 147:7-11; for his defense of Jerusalem, Psa 147:12-15; For his wonders in the seasons, Psa 147:16-18; and his word unto Jacob, Psa 147:19, Psa 147:20.

This Psalm, which is without title in the Hebrew, Chaldee, and Vulgate, is attributed by the other Versions to Haggai and Zechariah. It was probably penned after the captivity, when the Jews were busily employed in rebuilding Jerusalem, as may be gathered from the second and thirteenth verses. It may be necessary to remark that all the Versions, except the Chaldee, divide this Psalm at the end of the eleventh verse, and begin a new Psalm at the twelfth. By this division the numbers of the Psalms agree in the Versions with the Hebrew; the former having been, till now, one behind.

Verse 1

Praise is comely - It is decent, befitting, and proper that every intelligent creature should acknowledge the Supreme Being: and as he does nothing but good to the children of men, so they should speak good of his name.

PSALM 147: 2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem. He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.

Verse 2

The Lord doth build up - The psalmist appears to see the walls rising under his eye, because the outcasts of Israel, those who had been in captivity, are now gathered together to do the work.

PSALM 147: 3 He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.

Verse 3

He healeth the broken in heart - שִׁבּוּרֵי, the shivered in heart. From the root שָׁבַר shabar, to break in pieces, we have our word shiver, to break into splinters, into shivers. The heart broken in pieces by a sense of God's displeasure.

PSALM 147: 4 He counts the number of the stars. He calls them all by their names.

Verse 4

He telleth the number of the stars - He whose knowledge is so exact as to tell every star in heaven, can be under no difficulty to find out and collect all the scattered exiles of Israel.

PSALM 147: 5 Great is our Lord, and mighty in power. His understanding is infinite.

Verse 5

His understanding is infinite - To his intelligence there is no number: though he numbers the stars, his understanding is without number. It is infinite; therefore, he can know, as he can do, all things.

PSALM 147: 6 The LORD upholds the humble. He brings the wicked down to the ground.

Verse 6

The Lord lifteth up the meek - The humbled, the afflicted.

PSALM 147: 7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving. Sing praises on the harp to our God,

Verse 7

Sing unto the Lord - ענו enu, sing a responsive song, sing in parts, answer one another.

PSALM 147: 8 who covers the sky with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass grow on the mountains.

Verse 8

Who covereth the heaven with clouds - Collects the vapours together, in order to cause it to rain upon the earth. Even the direction of the winds, the collection of the clouds, and the descent of the rain, are under the especial management of God. These things form a part of his providential management of the world.

Maketh grass to grow upon the mountains - After this clause the Vulgate, the Septuagint, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Anglo-Saxon, add, and herb for the service of man. It appears that a hemistich, or half-line, has been lost from the Hebrew text; which, according to the above Versions, must have stood thus: ועשב לעבדת האדם veeseb laabodath haadam, as in Psa 104:14 : "And herbage for the service of mankind."

PSALM 147: 9 He provides food for the livestock, and for the young ravens when they call.

PSALM 147: 10 He doesn't delight in the strength of the horse. He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.

Verse 10

He delighteth not - The horse, among all animals, is most delighted in by man for beauty, strength, and fleetness. And a man's legs, if well proportioned, are more admired than even the finest features of his face. Though God has made these, yet they are not his peculiar delight.

PSALM 147: 11 The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his loving kindness.

Verse 11

The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him - That are truly religious.

In those that hope is his mercy - Who are just beginning to seek the salvation of their souls. Even the cry of the penitent is pleasing in the ear of the Lord. With this verse the hundred and forty-sixth Psalm ends in all the Versions, except the Chaldee. And the hundred and forty-seventh commences with the Psa 147:12. I believe these to be two distinct Psalms. The subjects of them are not exactly the same, though something similar; and they plainly refer to different periods.

PSALM 147: 12 Praise the LORD, Jerusalem! Praise your God, Zion!

PSALM 147: 13 For he has strengthened the bars of your gates. He has blessed your children within you.

Verse 13

He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates - He has enabled thee to complete the walls of Jerusalem. From the former part of the Psalm it appears the walls were then to progress; from this part, they appear to be completed, and provisions to be brought into the city, to support its inhabitants. The gates were set up and well secured by bars, so that the grain, etc., was in safety.

PSALM 147: 14 He makes peace in your borders. He fills you with the finest of the wheat.

Verse 14

He maketh peace - They were now no longer troubled with the Samaritans, Moabites, etc.

PSALM 147: 15 He sends out his commandment to the earth. His word runs very swiftly.

 Verse 15

He sendeth forth his commandment - His substantial word. It is here personified, מֵימְרָא meymra, Chaldee; and appears to be a very active agent running every where, and performing the purposes of his will.

PSALM 147: 16 He gives snow like wool, and scatters frost like ashes.

Verse 16

He giveth snow like wool - Falling down in large flakes; and in this state nothing in nature has a nearer resemblance to fine white wool.

Scattereth the hoar frost like ashes - Spreading it over the whole face of nature.

PSALM 147: 17 He hurls down his hail like pebbles. Who can stand before his cold?

Verse 17

He casteth forth his ice - קֶרְחוֹ korcho, (probably hailstones), like crumbs.

Who can stand before his cold? - At particular times the cold in the east is so very intense as to kill man and beast. Jacobus de Vitriaco, one of the writers in the Gesta Dei per Francos, says, that in an expedition in which he was engaged against Mount Tabor, on the 24th of December, the cold was so intense that many of the poor people, and the beasts of burden, died by it. And Albertus Aquensis, another of these writers, speaking of the cold in Judea, says, that thirty of the people who attended Baldwin 1: in the mountainous districts near the Dead Sea, were killed by it; and that in that expedition they had to contend with horrible hail and ice, with unheard-of snow and rain. From this we find that the winters are often very severe in Judea; and in such cases as the above, we may well call out, "Who can stand against his cold!"

PSALM 147: 18 He sends out his word, and melts them. He causes his wind to blow, and the waters flow.

Verse 18

He sendeth out his word - He gives a command: the south wind blows; the thaw takes place; and the ice and snow being liquefied, the waters flow, where before they were bound up by the ice.

PSALM 147: 19 He shows his word to Jacob; his statutes and his ordinances to Israel.

Verse 19

He showeth his word unto Jacob - To no nation of the world beside had God given a revelation of his will.

PSALM 147: 20 He has not done this for just any nation. They don't know his ordinances. Praise the LORD!

Verse 20

And as for his judgments - The wondrous ordinances of his law, no nation had known them; and consequently, did not know the glorious things in futurity to which they referred.