

PSALM 11

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 11

To the chief Musician, [A Psalm] of David

This psalm has no name; it is neither called a psalm, nor hymn, nor song, nor prayer, only said to be David's; and is inscribed and directed as others to the chief musician, or master of the song, to be used in public service; and seems to be written much upon the same subject with the two preceding psalms. According to Theodoret it was written when David was persecuted by Saul, and was advised by some to flee for his safety.

Ver. 1. *In the Lord put I my trust*, etc.] Not in himself, in his own heart, nor in his own righteousness and strength; nor in men, the greatest of men, the princes of the earth; nor in his armies, or any outward force; but in the Lord, as the God of providence and of grace; and in the Messiah, in his person and righteousness; so the Chaldee paraphrase renders it, “in the Word of the Lord do I hope”: and the phrase denotes a continued exercise of faith in the Lord; that he was always looking to him, staying himself on him, and committing himself and all his concerns to him; for he does not say, I “have”, or I “will”, but I “do”, put my trust in the Lord; at all times, even in the worst of times, and in the present one; wherefore he is displeased with his friends for endeavouring to intimidate him, persuading him to flee and provide for his safety, when he had betaken himself to the Lord, and was safe enough;

how say ye to my soul, flee [as] a bird to your mountain? they compare him to a little, fearful, trembling bird, wandering from its nest, moving through fear from place to place, whereas his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord; and this gave him a disgust: they advise him to flee either “from” his mountain, so Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it; that is, either from Judea, which was a mountainous country, especially some parts of it; or from Mount Zion, or rather from the mountain in the wilderness of Ziph, or the hill of Hachilah, where David sometimes was, (^{<02314>}1 Samuel 23:14 26:1); or it may be rendered “to your mountain”, as we, so the Targum; that is, to the said place or places where he had sometimes hid himself; and

this they said to his “soul”, which was very cutting and grieving to him; the word rendered “flee” in the “Cetib”, or writing of the text, is *wcdwn*, in the plural, “flee ye”; but is pointed for, and in the “Keri”, or marginal reading, is *ycdwn*, “flee thou”; the latter agrees with this being said to David’s soul, the former with the phrase “your mountain”, and both are to be taken into the sense of the words; not as if the one respected David’s soul only, and the other both soul and body, as Kimchi and Ben Melech observe; but the one regards David’s person, and the other his companions, or the people with him; and contains an advice, both to him and them, to flee for their safety; the reasons follow.

Ver. 2. *For, lo, the wicked bend [their] bow*, etc.] Are devising mischief, and making preparations to accomplish it;

they make ready their arrow upon the string; of the bow, and are just about to execute their wicked designs;

that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart; such as David, and those that were with him, were; they were men whose hearts were upright before God, and were of upright conversations before men, and so became the butt of the malice and resentment of wicked men; against these they formed evil purposes, delivered out bitter words, which were like sharp arrows of the mighty; threatened them with ruin and destruction, and took methods to bring about their designs and make good their words, in the most private and secret manner. Hence some of David’s friends thought it most advisable for him to make his escape; adding,

Ver. 3. *If the foundations be destroyed*, etc.] Or, “for the foundations are destroyed”^{f192}; all things are out of order and course both in church and state; the laws, which are the foundations of government, are despised and disregarded; judgment is perverted, and justice stands afar off; the doctrines and principles of religion are derided and subverted; so that there is no standing, either in a political or religious sense. Jarchi interprets this of the priests of the Lord, the righteous, who are the foundations of the world, particularly the priests of Nob, slain by Doeg. Other Jewish writers, as Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, understand it of the purposes and counsels, nets and snares, laid by the wicked for the righteous, which are broken and destroyed; not by them, for what can they do? but by the Lord, who is in his holy temple. So it

what can the righteous do? or “what does the righteous one do”^{f193}? that is, the righteous Lord, he sits in the heavens, he beholds all the actions of the wicked, he distinguishes the righteous from them, and rains a violent storm of wrath upon them, as in the following verses; or “what has the righteous man done”^{f194}? what has David done, that the priests of Nob should be slain? nothing that was criminal; nor shall he bear the sin, but they, according to Jarchi’s sense; or rather, what has he done that the wicked should bend their bow, prepare their arrow, and attempt to shoot privily at him, and to overturn the foundations of justice and equity? nothing that deserves such treatment: or if the fundamental doctrines of true religion and everlasting salvation be subverted, what can the righteous do? he can do nothing to obtain salvation, nor do any good works of himself; the Chaldee paraphrase is, “wherefore does he do good?” he can have no principle, motive, or end to do good, if fundamental truths are destroyed: or “what should he do”^{f195}? something the righteous ones may do, and should do, when men are attempting to undermine and sap the foundation articles of religion; they should go to the throne of grace, to God in his holy temple, who knows what is doing, and plead with him to put a stop to the designs and attempts of such subverters of foundations; and they should endeavour to build one another up on their most holy faith, and constantly affirm it while others deny it; and should contend earnestly for it, and stand fast in it.

Ver. 4. *The Lord [is] in his holy temple*, etc.] Not in the temple at Jerusalem, which as yet was not built; nor in the temple of Christ’s human nature; but rather in the church, where he dwells, which is an holy temple to the Lord; and which is an argument for trust in him, and a reason against the fears of men in the worst of times; (see ^{<940>} Psalm 46:1-5). Though it may be best to understand it of heaven, the habitation of God’s holiness, and which is the true sanctuary; and which the holy places made with hands were only a figure of; since it follows,

the Lord’s throne [is] in heaven; yea, the heaven is his throne; here he sits on a throne of grace, and here he has prepared his throne for judgment; and both this and the preceding clause are expressive of his glory and majesty; and are said to command awe and reverence of the Divine Being, and to inject terror into the wicked; and to show that God is above the enemies of his people, and to encourage the saints’ trust and confidence in him; and are mentioned as a reason why David put his trust in him; and are, with

what follows in (⁴⁹¹⁰⁵Psalm 11:5), opposed to the advice and reasonings of some of his friends in the preceding ones;

his eyes behold; all men, and all their actions; he sees what the wicked are doing in the dark, what preparations for mischief they are making, and beholds them when they shoot privily at the upright in heart; he can turn the arrow another way, and cause it to miss the mark: his eyes run to and fro throughout the earth, in favour of those whose hearts are perfect and sincere. God's omniscience, which is denied by wicked men, who are therefore hardened in sin, and promise themselves impunity, is used by the saints as an argument to encourage their faith and trust in God, with respect to their preservation and deliverance. The Septuagint and Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, read, "his eyes look unto the poor"; but this is an addition to the text not suitable to the context;

his eyelids try the children of men; he tries their reins, he searches into their very hearts, and into the inmost recesses of them, and takes cognizance of their thoughts, intentions, and designs; and confounds and disappoints them, so that they cannot perform their enterprises.

Ver. 5. *The Lord trieth the righteous*, etc.] As gold is tried in the fire, by afflictive providences; hereby he tries their graces, their faith, and patience, their hope, and love, and fear; and, by so doing, expresses his love to them, since this is all for their good: and therefore, when he suffers the wicked to go great lengths in persecuting and distressing them, this should not weaken, their confidence in him; he still loves them, and loves when he rebukes and chastises them;

but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth; that is, such who live in a course of sin and wickedness, and who not only do injury to the persons, characters, and properties of men, but love it, and delight therein, and also take pleasure in them that do the same: these God has a continued and inward aversion to; sin and wickedness being the abominable thing his righteous soul hates: and he shows his hatred to them, by not chastising them now, as he does his own people, but reserving everlasting punishment for them hereafter; (see ⁴⁹¹³⁴Proverbs 13:24).

Ver. 6. *Upon the wicked*, etc.] The wicked one, the man of sin, antichrist, and upon all that worship the beast and his image, on all persecutors, and upon all wicked men in general:

he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this will be in hell, as Jarchi observes. The allusion is to the Lord's raining fire and brimstone from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, which was an example and emblem of eternal fire; (see ^{<01E2>}Genesis 19:24 ^{<6007>}Jude 1:7). For the beast and the false prophet, and all the antichristian party, and all wicked men, will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. The phrases used express the dreadful and horribleness of their punishment; the suddenness, violence, and force, with which it will come; and the rise of it, it will be from heaven; God himself will rain this shower of wrath upon them, (^{<8023>}Job 20:23); nor will there be any escaping it, it will be inevitable: therefore "snares" are said to be "rained"; the wicked will be snared in the works of their own hands; they will be taken and held in the cords of their own sins; and full and deserved punishment will be inflicted on them, which will be very severe and terrible. All that is dreadful in a storm is here expressed, even in a storm of fire. The word rendered "snares" is by some thought to be the same with *μυμj p*, "burning coals"; and may signify burning stones, hot thunderbolts; (see ^{<01E3>}Psalm 18:13,14); "fire" may signify lightning, with its dreadful flashes, and which burn and consume in an instant; and "brimstone" the nauseous scent and smell, which always attend lightning and thunder, as naturalists observe ^{f196}; and the words for "an horrible tempest" signify a burning wind: so that they all serve to convey horrible ideas of the punishment of the wicked in hell. The Targum calls them "showers of vengeance";

[this shall be] the portion of their cup; which will be measured out to them in proportion to their sins, and which God, in righteous judgment, has appointed for them; and which they shall all drink of, and wring out the very dregs of it.

Ver. 7. *For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness*, etc.] The Lord is righteous in himself, and in all his ways and works; and therefore righteousness, as it lies both in punishing the wicked, and in maintaining the righteous cause of his people, must be loved by him, it being agreeable to his nature: he loves to exercise righteousness in the earth, to administer it to and among men; this he delights in. He is well pleased with the righteousness of his Son, it being satisfactory to his justice, and that by which his law is magnified and made honourable; and he is well pleased with his people, as they are clothed with it: and he approves of their righteous actions, as they are done in obedience to his righteous law, in

faith, from a principle of love, and with a view to his glory; these are acceptable to him in Christ;

his countenance doth behold the upright; whom wicked men privily shoot at, (^{<3910>}Psalm 11:2); God looks with pleasure upon them, and takes delight in them, and takes care of them, protects and defends them, and at last saves them; and which, with all that goes before, was an encouragement to David to trust in the Lord; (see ^{<3970>}Psalm 7:10); and moreover, the Lord lifts up the light of his countenance on such, and indulges them with his gracious presence, than which nothing is more comfortable and desirable. Some choose to render the word, “their countenance”^{f197}, meaning the trinity of Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, who all have a gracious regard to such: others render the clause thus, “the upright shall see his face”, the face of God; so the Chaldee paraphrase and the Arabic version; (see ^{<3975>}Psalm 17:15).