

# PSALM 46

## INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 46

*To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.* The word “Alamoth” is thought by some, as Aben Ezra, to be the beginning of a song, to which this psalm was set; and by others a high tune, such as virgins express; and by others the name of musical instruments, as Jarchi and Kimchi; which seems most likely, since it is mentioned with other instruments of music in (<sup><359></sup>1 Chronicles 15:19-21); and may not unfitly be rendered “virginals”, from the sound of them being like the shrill voice of virgins, which this word signifies; though others choose to render it “of hidden things”, <sup>f622</sup>, making it to design the subject matter of the psalm, the secret counsels and purposes of God, both in a way of love and grace to his people, and of judgment to his enemies. Some think this psalm was occasioned by the victories which David obtained over the Ammonites and Moabites, and other neighbouring countries; and others are of opinion that it was penned on account of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib being raised, in the times of Hezekiah: but it seems rather to be a prophecy of the church in Gospel times, and is applicable to any time of confusion and distress the nations of the world may be in through any kind of calamity, when those that trust in the Lord have no reason in the least to be afraid. Kimchi says this psalm belongs to future times; either to the gathering of the captives, or to the war of Gog and Magog; to which also R. Obadiah refers it, and Jarchi interprets it of time to come; according to the Targum it was written by the sons of Korah, when their father was hid from them, and they were delivered.

**Ver. 1.** *God [is] our refuge and strength*, etc.] That is, Christ, who is God as well as man, is the “refuge” for souls to fly unto for safety; as for sensible sinners, in a view of danger, wrath, and misery, so for saints, in every time of distress; typified by the cities of refuge, under the legal dispensation; (see Gill on “<sup><300></sup>Psalm 9:9”); and he it is from whom they have all their spiritual strength, and every renewal and supply of it, to exercise grace, perform duties, withstand enemies, bear the cross patiently, show a fortitude of mind under the sorest distresses, and hold on and out

unto the end: in short, he is the strength of their hearts, under the greatest trials, of their lives, amidst the greatest dangers; and of their salvation, notwithstanding all their enemies;

*a very present help in trouble*; whether inward or outward, of soul or body; the Lord helps his people under it to bear it, and he helps them out of it in the most proper and seasonable time: they are poor helpless creatures in themselves; nor can any other help them but the Lord, who made heaven and earth; and he helps presently, speedily, and effectually: in the Hebrew text it is, “he is found an exceeding help in trouble”<sup>f623</sup>; in all kind of trouble that the saints come into, the Lord has been found, by experience, to be an exceeding great helper of them; moreover, he is easily and always to be come at, and found by them for their help.

**Ver. 2.** *Therefore will not we fear*, etc.], The consideration of the Lord’s being the refuge, strength, and help of his people, in all times of trouble and distress, has a great influence on their faith and confidence, and makes them intrepid and fearless in the midst of the greatest dangers: nor indeed have they any reason to be afraid of men or devils, since the Lord is on their side; nor should they indulge a slavish fear on any account whatever;

*though the earth be removed*; or “changed”<sup>f624</sup>, as to its position or fruitfulness; or whatever changes, vicissitudes, and revolutions may be in the kingdoms, nations, and among the inhabitants of the earth, through wars and desolations made thereby;

*and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea*; so the destruction of kingdoms, empires, and cities, is expressed by a like phrase; as of Babylon, (<sup>245125</sup>Jeremiah 51:25); and of the Roman and Pagan empire, (<sup>4462</sup>Revelation 6:12-14), and of the city of Rome, (<sup>4488</sup>Revelation 8:8).

**Ver. 3.** [*Though*] *the waters thereof roar [and] be troubled*, etc.] The noise of which causes men’s hearts to fail them for fear, (<sup>4225</sup>Luke 21:25,26);

*[though] the mountains shake with the swelling thereof*. All these figurative expressions denote the hurlyburly, confusions, and disorders that have been or will be in the world; amidst all which the people of God have no reason to fear; for it is always well with the righteous, let it go how it will with others. The passage may be applied to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the wars preceding it, and the dispersion of the Jews upon it; when true believers in Christ found him to be their refuge, strength, and

help in that time of trouble, such as never was the like, and were safe and without fear; and Aben Ezra, a Jewish commentator, thinks it is right to interpret this psalm concerning the wars of Jerusalem: moreover, these words may be applied to any other time of calamity, through war or persecution, that has been since; as also to any that is to come; as to the slaying of the witnesses, the hour of temptation that will try all that are upon the earth; and even to the day of judgment, when heaven and earth shall flee away from the face of the Judge; when the heavens shall be folded up as a garment, and the earth, and all that is therein, shall be burnt up, and the whole world of the ungodly shall be thrown into the utmost panic, the saints will be safe with Christ, and ever happy with him; and, in the worst of times in this world, God is always their covenant God, their shield, portion, and exceeding great reward; Christ is their Redeemer and Saviour, their city of refuge, and strong hold; and though they may be plundered of their goods and property, they have a better and a more enduring substance in heaven; an estate, an inheritance there, that can never be taken away; and even should their enemies kill the body, that is the utmost they can do; their souls are safe in the hands of Christ; their life is hid with him; and when he shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory; and therefore they may well say, “we will not fear”<sup>f625</sup>.

*Selah*; on this word, (see Gill on “~~Psalm~~ Psalm 3:2”).

**Ver. 4.** [*There is a river*, etc.] The allusion is either to the river Kidron, which ran by Jerusalem; or to the waters of Shiloah, which by different courses and branches, ran through the city of Jerusalem, and supplied the several parts of it with water, to the joy and comfort of its inhabitants: but the words are to be understood in a figurative sense, as applicable to Gospel times; and this river either designs the Gospel, the streams of which are its doctrines, which are living waters that went out from Jerusalem, and which publish glad tidings of great joy to all sensible sinners; or the Spirit and his graces, which are compared to a well, and rivers of living water, in the exercise of which the saints have much joy and peace; or else the Lord himself, who is a place of broad rivers and streams to his people, and is both their refreshment and protection; or rather his everlasting love to them is here intended; (see ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 36:8 ~~Ezekiel~~ Ezekiel 47:5 ~~Revelation~~ Revelation 22:1); The head of this river is the heart of God, his sovereign goodwill and pleasure; the channel through which it runs is Christ Jesus; the rise of it was in eternity, when, like a river that runs underground, it flowed secretly, as it does before the effectual calling; when it breaks up, and appears in

large streams, and flows, and so it proceeds running on to all eternity. It is a river that is unfathomable, and cannot be passed over; it has heights and depths, and lengths and breadths, which cannot be fully comprehended: as for the quality of it, it is a pure river, clear as crystal; free of all dissimulation in the heart of God, and clear of all motives and conditions in the creature. Its water is living water; which quickens dead sinners, revives drooping saints, secures from the second death, and gives eternal life; it makes all fruitful about it, or that are planted by it;

*the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God*; the “streams” of this river are eternal election; the covenant of grace its blessings and promises; the provision and mission of Christ as a Saviour, and redemption by him; justification, pardon, adoption, regeneration, perseverance in grace, and eternal life; called “streams”, because they flow from the fountain of divine love; and because of the rapidity, force, and power of the grace of God, in the application of them in conversion, which carries all before it; and because of the abundance, continuance, and freeness of them, and the gratefulness and acceptableness of them to those who see the worth of them, and their interest in them; (see <sup>22115</sup> Song of Solomon 4:15); and these, when made known and applied, “make glad” the hearts of God’s people under a sense of sin and guilt, under divine desertions, the temptations of Satan, and the various afflictions they meet with; for these are intended by “the city of God”, as the church is often called, because of his building, and where he dwells, and where the saints are fellow citizens. And the same are signified by

*the holy [place]*; being an holy temple to God, consisting of holy persons, such who are sanctified by the Spirit of God, and live holy lives and conversations: and

*of the tabernacles of the most High*; being the dwelling places of God, Father, Son, and Spirit. All which is a reason why the saints should not fear in the worst of times.

**Ver. 5.** *God [is] in the midst of her*, etc.] The church and people of God; not merely by his essence, power, and providence, as he is in the midst of the world; but by his gracious presence, and which always continues, though not always perceived; and is a sufficient antidote against all fear of men and devils;

*she shall not be moved*; though the earth may; and when it is, (~~398D~~ Psalm 46:2), neither from the heart of God, on which his people are set as a seal; nor from the hands of Christ, from whence they can never be plucked; nor from the covenant of grace, which is immovable; nor off of the rock Christ, on which they are built; nor from the state of grace, of justification, adoption, and sanctification, in which they stand; nor out of the world, by all the cunning and power of antichrist;

*God shall help her, [and that] right early*: or “when the morning looks out” <sup>f626</sup>. When it is night with the church, it is the hour and power of darkness with the enemies of it; and this is the time of the reign of antichrist, whose kingdom is a kingdom of darkness: but the “morning cometh, and also the night”; the former being about to break forth, and the latter to be at an end; yea, at eventide it shall be light: and the Lord will be a suitable, seasonable, and timely help to his people; for though weeping endures the night, joy comes in the morning.

**Ver. 6.** *The Heathen raged*, etc.] As they did at Christ’s first coming, against him, his Gospel, and people; and which continued during the three first centuries; and then the Pagan kingdoms belonging to the Roman empire were removed; since then another sort of Heathens, the Papists, have raged, in violent persecutions and bloodshed of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, and will rage again, about and at the downfall of Babylon; (see ~~641B~~ Revelation 11:18 16:10);

*the kingdoms were moved*; either from their Pagan or Papal religion, and became subject to Christ. So it was at the downfall of Rome Pagan; and so it will be at the downfall of Rome Papal; when the kings of the earth shall hate the whore, make her desolate, and burn her flesh with fire. Or they shall be destroyed; that is, those that shall be gathered together in Armageddon, to make war with the Lamb; (see ~~644D~~ Revelation 16:14,16 17:14 19:15,20,21);

*he uttered his voice, the earth melted*; like wax, as the inhabitants of the earth do at the voice of his thunder, and as antichrist will at the breath of his mouth; and all within the Romish jurisdiction, signified by “the earth”, as it often is in the book of the Revelation, when the voice of the mighty angel shall be heard, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen”, (~~680E~~ Revelation 18:1,2,9-11,15-19).

**Ver. 7.** *The Lord of hosts [is] with us*, etc.] The Targum is, “the Word of the Lord of hosts”. He whose name is Immanuel, which is, by interpretation, “God with us”, (<sup><40123></sup>Matthew 1:23); who is King of kings, and Lord of lords; who has all creatures in heaven and earth at his command, whom all the hosts of angels obey; he is on the side of his people, and therefore they have nothing to fear from all the hosts and armies of men; seeing more are they that are for them than they that are against them;

*the God of Jacob [is] our refuge.* As, in the former clause, the argument against fear of men is taken from the power of God, and the extent of his dominion, here it is taken from the grace of God, and his people’s covenant interest in him: for by Jacob is meant the church of God, and all true believers, who are Israelites indeed; the Lord is the refuge and shelter of such in all times of distress and trouble, and therefore they need not fear; (see Gill on “<sup><39401></sup>Psalm 46:1”).

*Selah;* on this word, (see Gill on “<sup><40181></sup>Psalm 3:2”).

**Ver. 8.** *Come, behold the works of the Lord*, etc.] Of nature and grace, especially those of Providence; both in a way of judgment, as in this verse; and of mercy, as in (<sup><39401></sup>Psalm 46:9). These words are an address of the psalmist to his friends, as Apollinarius supplies it; or of the church to the fearful among them, who were dismayed at the commotions and disturbances that were in the world, (<sup><39401></sup>Psalm 46:2,3); and who are encouraged to trust in the Lord, from the consideration of his works, particularly his providential dispensations;

*what desolations he hath made in the earth;* in the land of Judea, at the time of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, foretold by Moses, (<sup><45222></sup>Deuteronomy 32:22-25); by Daniel, (<sup><2706></sup>Daniel 9:26,27); and by our Lord Jesus Christ, (<sup><4023></sup>Matthew 23:38 24:2 <sup><2094></sup>Luke 19:43,44); and which desolations being the fulfilling of prophecy, may serve to strengthen the faith of God’s people, that whatsoever he has said shall come to pass; and that seeing he made such desolations among the Jews, for their rejection of the Messiah, what may not be expected will be made in the antichristian states, for their opposition to him? and, besides, are a confirmation of the truth of his being come; since after his coming these desolations, according to Daniel, were to be made; nor was the sceptre to depart from Judah till he came, nor the second temple to be destroyed before he was in it. Moreover, these desolations may refer to those that

have been made in the Roman empire, upon the blowing of the trumpets; the first “four” of which brought in the Goths, Huns, and Vandals, into the western part of it, which made sad ravages and devastations in it; (see ~~(668)~~ Revelation 8:7-12); and the “fifth” and “sixth” brought in the Saracens and Turks into the eastern part of it, which seized and demolished it, and made dreadful havoc among men; (see ~~(690)~~ Revelation 9:1-19). Likewise the desolations that will be made in the antichristian states may be here intended; when the seven vials of God’s wrath will be poured out upon them, (~~(661)~~ Revelation 16:1-21) when the kings of the earth will hate the whore, and make her desolate, (~~(671)~~ Revelation 17:16); and all her plagues shall come upon her in one day, (~~(688)~~ Revelation 18:8,9). And a view of these desolations, even in prophecy, may serve to cheer the hearts of God’s people under the present reign of antichrist, and under all the rage, fury, and oppression of antichristian powers, since they will all in a little time become desolate. This will be the Lord’s doing, and it will be wondrous in our eyes.

**Ver. 9.** *He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth,* etc.] As at the birth of Christ, the Prince of peace, in the times of Augustus Caesar, when there was a general peace in the world, though it did not last long; and in the times of Constantine, signified by silence in heaven for half an hour, (~~(688)~~ Revelation 8:1); when for a while there was a cessation from wars and persecution; and as will be in the latter day, and which is here chiefly designed; when nations shall learn war no more, and Christ’s kingdom will take place; of which and its peace there shall be no end, (~~(2304)~~ Isaiah 2:4 9:6,7 ~~(921)~~ Psalm 72:7). The consideration of which may serve to relieve distressed minds under terrible apprehensions of present troubles and public calamities;

*he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire;* that is, “chariots”, or “carts”<sup>f627</sup> or “wagons”, in which, as Aben Ezra observes, arms and provision were carried for the use of soldiers; the Targum renders it “round shields”<sup>f628</sup>: and the destroying of all these military weapons and carriages is a token of peace, and of war’s being caused to cease, there being no more use for them; with this compare (~~(2308)~~ Ezekiel 39:8,9). It was usual to burn the arms of enemies taken in war<sup>f629</sup>.

**Ver. 10.** *Be still, and know that I [am] God,* etc.] These words are thought by some to be spoken by the Lord to the nations of the world, to “cease

from war”, as the Targum renders the words; or from going up any more against Jerusalem, as Jarchi interprets them; and that they were spoken to them before the breaking of their bows, etc. as Aben Ezra observes; or that they are an exhortation to them to cease from their evil works, and know that the Lord is God, and has power to raise up and to make low; which, is Kimchi’s sense of the words: but they are rather a continuation of the church’s address to the fearful among them, as before to behold the works of the Lord, so here to hearken to what he says, as follows, “be still”; not that they should be like sticks and stones, stupid, indolent, and unconcerned at the commotions that were in the earth, and be unaffected with the judgments of God, and be wholly silent and inactive; but that they should not be fearful, nor fretful and impatient, or restless and tumultuous; but be quiet and easy, resigned to the will of God, and live in an assured expectation of the appearance of divine Providence in their layout. And “know”; own and acknowledge that he is God, a sovereign Being that does whatsoever he pleases; that he is unchangeable in his nature, purposes, promises, and covenant; that he is omnipotent, able to help them and deliver them at the last extremity; that he is omniscient, knows their persons, cases, and troubles, and how and where to hide them till the storm is over; that he is the all wise God, and does all things after the counsel of his own will, and makes all things work together for good to them; and that he is faithful to his word and promise, and will not suffer them to be overpressed and bore down with troubles. Who further says for their encouragement, and is to be hearkened to in it,

*I will be exalted among the Heathen*; with or in the conversion of the Gentiles; when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christ’s, and all nations shall come and worship before him, (<sup>66115</sup>Revelation 11:15,17 15:4). Or in the destruction of the Gentiles; the Papists, the antichristian states; which will cause great rejoicings, hallelujahs, and attributions of honour and glory to him, (<sup>66115</sup>Revelation 16:5,6 19:1,2); so Jarchi interprets the words, “I will be exalted”, *ytmqxb*, “in my vengeance”; that I will take upon the Heathen;

*I will be exalted in the earth*; now Christ is exalted in heaven at the right hand of God, before long he will be exalted in the earth, where he was despised and rejected, crucified and slain; he will be King over all the earth; his dominion will be from one end of it to the other; his tabernacle will be among men; and his people, as kings and priests, will reign with him on earth; by whom he, and he alone, will be exalted in the dignity of his person



and offices, and, especially in his kingly office, (<sup><334D></sup>Zechariah 14:9 9:10 <sup><621B></sup>Revelation 21:3 5:10 <sup><231D></sup>Isaiah 2:17). The consideration of which may serve to remove fears and dismayings of mind under present troubles.

**Ver. 11.** *The Lord of hosts [is] with us; the God of Jacob [is] our refuge.* (See Gill on “<sup><1941D></sup>Psalm 46:7”). The Targum paraphrases it, “the Word of the Lord of hosts”, as in (<sup><1941D></sup>Psalm 46:7); and the same words are here repeated, to comfort those that were fearful and unbelieving, with which the church then comforted herself.

*Selah*; on this word, (see Gill on “<sup><498D></sup>Psalm 3:2”).