

PSALM 53

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 53

To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil, [A Psalm] of David

The word “mahalath” is only used here and in (~~3881~~ Psalm 88:1). Some, with Aben Ezra, take it to be the first word of a song, to the tune of which this psalm was set; others, with Jarchi, that it is the name of a musical instrument on which it was sung; a hollow instrument; of the same nature with “nehiloth”, (see Gill on “~~3903~~ Psalm 5:1”), title. Though it may relate to the argument or subject matter of the psalm, and be rendered, “concerning sickness” or “infirmity”¹⁷⁰⁵; and, as Jarchi observes, some interpret it, “concerning the sickness or weakness of Israel”, when the temple was destroyed. But it seems much better to understand it of the sickness and disease of sin, and the weakness following upon that, to which all mankind are subject; since the psalm manifestly treats of the general corruption and depravity of human nature. This psalm is the same with (~~3940~~ Psalm 14:1-7), and is expressed in the same words, with some little difference; the reason of its repetition is variously conjectured. Some think that the compiler of the book of Psalms, observing various readings in it occasioned by copying, thought fit to insert it both ways; but it is most likely to be composed by David himself, at different times, and it may be on different occasions, and with different views. Some think the former, namely the fourteenth psalm, was written concerning Nabal, and this concerning Doeg; according to Jarchi, that was concerning Nebuchadnezzar, this concerning Titus Vespasian; or, as others think, Antiochus Epiphanes. Kimchi is of opinion that this psalm, being placed between one that relates to Doeg, and another that refers to the Ziphites, points at the likeness there is between the case of David and the Messiah; that as David had many who sought to ensnare him, yet God rewarded them, and established him in the kingdom; so it will be with the Messiah: but it is much more reasonable with others to conclude, that it is repeated either because of the importance of it; because that as the former may refer to the corruption of the Jews in the times of David, this to the corruption of men in the times of Christ and his apostles, and under the Gospel dispensation, until the second coming of

Christ, especially under the reign of antichrist. The argument of the psalm, according to the Syriac version, is concerning Ahithophel, who gave counsel to Absalom to pursue his father David and kill him: and, according to the Arabic version, it is a prophecy concerning Babel and Sennacherib; so Theodoret: but rather concerning mystical Babylon, and the man of sin.

Ver. 1. *The fool hath said in his heart, [there is] no God*, etc.] The Targum adds, “of whom is revenge”; or there is no God to punish and avenge the wicked;

corrupt are they; the Chaldee paraphrase is, “the wicked have corrupted their ways”; as all flesh had done in the old world, (^{<9062>}Genesis 6:12);

and have done abominable iniquity; iniquity is the abominable thing that God hates, and makes men abominable in his sight; in (^{<9101>}Psalm 11:1), it is read, “abominable worlds”: the Targum paraphrases the words, “they are far from good, for iniquity is found in them”; (see ^{<9208>}Revelation 21:8,27);

[there is] none that doeth good; (see Gill on ^{<9141>}Psalm 14:1”).

Ver. 2. *God looked down from heaven upon the children of men*, etc.] In (^{<9142>}Psalm 14:2), it is read, “the Lord” or “Jehovah”; in everything else there is an agreement in this verse; (see Gill on ^{<9142>}Psalm 14:2”);

to see if there were [any] that did understand; the Targum is, “that were understanding” in the law; it doubtless means understanding in divine and spiritual things;

that did seek God; the above paraphrase is, “seeking doctrine from before the Lord”.

Ver. 3. *Every one of them is gone back*, etc.] From God, and the way of his commandments. In (^{<9143>}Psalm 14:3), it is, “they are all gone aside”; (see Gill on ^{<9143>}Psalm 14:3”);

they are altogether become filthy; [there is] none that doeth good, no, not one. What follows in this verse is the same as (^{<9143>}Psalm 14:3).

Ver. 4. *Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* etc.] In (^{<9144>}Psalm 14:4), it is, “have all the workers”, etc. There are none of them but what have, unless given up to judicial blindness, and hardness of heart, to believe a lie, as antichrist and his followers, (^{<9210>}2 Thessalonians 2:10,11); (see Gill on ^{<9144>}Psalm 14:4”);

who eat up my people, [as] they eat bread; and drink their blood, and are drunken with it, (^{6676b}Revelation 17:6);

they have not called upon God; but upon their idols, upon the Virgin Mary, and saints departed. In (^{3940b}Psalm 14:4), it is, “upon the Lord”.

Ver. 5. *There were they in great, fear, [where] no fear was*, etc.] Before; neither of God nor man, nor any dread of punishment, but the utmost security, (^{6687b}Revelation 18:7,8,10); also (see Gill on “^{1945b}Psalm 14:5”);

for God hath scattered the bones of [him] that encampeth [against] thee; either against Christ, or against his church and people; who set themselves against the person, office, and grace of Christ, and seek to distress and destroy his interest: “the bones [of such] God will scatter”: that is, he will destroy antichrist and his armies, which are his strength, as the bones are the strength of the human body; and make such a carnage of them, that the fowls of the air shall eat their flesh, and their bones shall be scattered here and there; (see ^{6697b}Revelation 19:17-21). So the Targum,

“for God scatters the strength of the armies of the wicked.”

Kimchi interprets it of the bones of the nations that shall encamp against Jerusalem, in the days of Gog; (see ^{6698b}Revelation 20:8,9); and Aben Ezra observes, that “thee” respects either God or the Messiah;

thou hast put [them] to shame; this is either an address of the psalmist unto God, declaring what he had done; or rather of God the Father to his Son Christ Jesus; and so Kimchi and Ben Melech say this refers to the Messiah: and it may be expressive of the shame and confusion that antichrist and his followers will be thrown into, when they shall make war with the Lamb, and he shall overcome them, (^{6674b}Revelation 17:14);

because God hath despised them; or rejected them as reprobates; given them up to a reprobate mind; and being ungodly men, has before ordained them to this condemnation. The Targum is,

“for the Word of the Lord hath rejected them;”

as filthy, loathsome, and abominable, and cast them alive into the lake of fire, (^{6621b}Revelation 19:20).

Ver. 6. *O that the salvation of Israel [were come] out of Zion!* etc.] Or, “who will give ¹⁷⁰⁶ out of Zion the salvation of Israel?” The Targum adds,

“except the Lord”; and this is a request to him for it: and, as in (³⁹⁴⁷Psalm 14:7), it may be a wish for the first coming of Christ, to work out salvation for his people; here it may be expressive of the desire of the church for his coming in a spiritual manner, in the latter day, to take to himself his great power, and reign; to destroy antichrist, and deliver his people from bondage and oppression by him; when the Gentiles shall be gathered in, the Jews will be converted, and all Israel saved; (see ⁶¹²⁵Romans 11:25,26). It is in the original text, “salvations”¹⁷⁰⁷; denoting the complete salvation of the church; when all her enemies will be destroyed, and all peace and prosperity shall be enjoyed by her; (see Gill on “³⁹⁴⁶Psalm 14:6”).

when God bringeth back the captivity of his people: who have been carried into it by antichrist, (⁶³⁰Revelation 13:10);

Jacob shall rejoice, [and] Israel shall be glad; for now the kingdoms of this world will become Christ’s; the marriage of the Lamb will be come, and the bride made ready, through the calling of the Gentiles, and the conversion of the Jews; which will occasion the twenty four elders, the representatives of the Christian church, to give thanks to the Lord God Almighty, and cause many voices to be heard in heaven, expressing great joy on this occasion, (⁶¹¹⁵Revelation 11:15-18 19:1-7).