PSALM 60

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 60

To the chief Musician upon Shushaneduth, Michtam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aramnaharaim, and with Aramzobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of Salt twelve thousand

The words "shushaneduth" are thought, by Aben Ezra, to be the beginning of a song, to the tune of which this psalm was set; though others, as he observes, take them to be the name of a musical instrument, on which it was sung. Some take "shushan" to be an instrument of six chords, an hexachord; and "eduth", which signifies a "testimony", to be the title of the psalm, it being a testimony, or lasting memorial, of the victory obtained over the Syrians and Edomites; though rather they may be considered as expressing the subject matter of the psalm; and so the Targum interprets them,

"concerning the ancient testimony of the sons of Jacob and Laban;"

referring to (⁴⁰³⁴⁷Genesis 31:47); they may be rendered, as they are by some, "concerning the lily of the testimony"^{f797}; and be applied to the Gospel, the testimony of our Lord Jesus, the pure, lily white, and unblemished testimony it bears to him, his person, office, and grace; and particularly to salvation as alone in him, and to which witness is borne in this psalm, (⁴⁰⁰¹Psalm 60:11,12). This psalm is a "michtam", or golden psalm of David, and its use is "to teach". It is of the instructive kind, and teaches where help and salvation are to be expected; (see ⁵⁰⁰⁶Colossians 3:16); it was written when David "strove", or fought, with Aramnaharaim, the Syrians of Mesopotamia, which lay between the two rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, from whence is the name; hence the Septuagint render it Mesopotamia of Syria; and the Targum is,

"he made war with Aram, which is by Euphrates;"

and at the same time David also fought with Aramzobah, or the Syrians of Zobah, as they are called in (⁴⁰⁰⁰⁵2 Samuel 10:6); with Josephus ^{f798}, Zobah is the same with Sophene; but wrongly, as is thought by learned men ^{f799}:

for though this is a name which some part of Syria goes by in Mela^{f800}; and Ptolemy^{f801} makes mention of a place of this name; yet that was beyond Euphrates, and in Armenia; whereas this must be nearer the land of Israel; for it is said ^{f802} that Aramzobah is the country of Syria, which David subdued, and joined to the land of Israel; concerning which the Jews so often say, that in some things it was the same with it: according to Hillerus ^{f803}, it is the same country which the Arabians call Kinnosrina, the chief city of which is Haleb, or Aleppo; and R. Benjamin Tudelensis^{f804} making mention of Haleb, says, this is Aramzobah. Moreover, this psalm was written "when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand"; the "valley of salt" was near the Dead Sea, and upon the borders of Idumea; the battle fought here by Joab was either the same with the former, or different from it, at or about the same time; and accounts seemingly different from this are given in (****2 Samuel 8:13 *****1 Chronicles 18:12); in the first of these the number is said to be eighteen thousand Syrians, and the victory is ascribed to David; and in the latter the same number as there, but said to be Edomites, as here, and the slaughter ascribed to Abishai. The note of R. Abendana^{f805}, for the reconciling of this, is worth transcribing: Our Rabbins of blessed memory say there were two battles; that Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, slew eighteen thousand, and after that Joab came and smote of them twelve thousand; and this is what is said; and "Joab returned", etc. the sense is, he returned after Abishai: and in the book of Samuel the battle is ascribed to David, because he was the root or chief (that is, under whom Joab and Abishai fought); but R. David Kimchi writes, that there were between them all eighteen thousand only; that Abishai began the battle, and smote of them six thousand, and after that Joab returned, and smote of them twelve thousand; but of a truth the wise R. Joel Ben Sueb gives the right sense of this affair, which is this; when David was fighting with the Syrians of Naharaim and Zobah, it was told him that Edom was come out to meet him, and help the Syrians; and then he veiled himself in prayer, and said this psalm; and Joab returned from the army, and went to meet the Edomites, that they might not pass over to help the Syrians, and join them, and he smote of them twelve thousand; and David was left fighting with the Syrians of Naharaim and Zobah, and subdued them under him, and he turned to help Joab; and Abishai, the son of Zeruiah was over the army, and he smote of them eighteen thousand, and they were in all thirty thousand, according to our Rabbins of blessed memory; and the text in (4083-2 Samuel 8:13); should be inverted and explained thus;

"when he returned from smiting the Syrians, he got him in the valley of salt a name; for his fame went abroad, because he smote there eighteen thousand, and this was in Edom."

The Targum very wrongly renders it,

"and there fell of the armies of David and Joab twelve thousand."

The title of this psalm, in the Syriac version, is,

"which David gave out, saying, if I should come into the hands of Saul, I shall perish; and he fled, and those that were with him: but to us it declares the conversion of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews."

The former part of which is quite foreign; but the latter seems to be right; for reference is had to both in this psalm, and to Christ, the banner displayed, or ensign lifted up, and to his dominion over Jews and Gentiles in the latter day, and to that salvation which is alone in him.

thou hast scattered us; as they were by the Romans among the various nations of the world, and among whom they are dispersed to this day; or "thou hast broken us" ^{f806}, as in (^{JBND}Psalm 80:12); not only the walls of their city were broken by the battering rams of the Romans, but their commonwealth, their civil state, were broke to pieces by them. Jarchi applies this to the Romans; his note is this;

"when Edom fell by his hand (David's), he foresaw, by the Holy Ghost, that the Romans would rule over Israel, and decree hard decrees concerning them;" *thou hast been displeased*; not only with their immorality and profaneness, with their hypocrisy and insincerity, with their will worship and superstition, and the observance of the traditions of their elders; but also with their rejection of the Messiah, and contempt of his Gospel and ordinances;

O turn thyself to us again; which prayer will be made by them, when they shall become sensible of their sins, and of their state and condition, and shall turn unto the Lord; and when he will turn himself to them, and turn away iniquity from them, and all Israel shall be saved, (**IZ*Romans 11:25,26); or "thou wilt return unto us" ^{f807}; who before were cast off, broken, and he was displeased with; or others to us.

Ver. 2. *Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it*, etc.] As is frequently done by an earthquake; which, whatever natural causes there may be of it, is always to be ascribed to God. The ancient Heathens ^{f808} were of opinion that all earthquakes were of God. This respects not the whole earth, but the land of Israel only; and so the Targum,

"thou hast moved the land of Israel, thou hast shaken and rent it;"

and it does not design a natural earthquake in it, but a figurative one; a shaking and rending of their civil and church state; (see Hebrews 12:26,27);

heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh; which will be done in the latter day, when they shall return into their own land, and be restored as at the beginning, (²³³⁰⁰Isaiah 30:30).

Ver. 3. *Thou hast showed thy people hard things*, etc.] As to have their city and temple burial, multitudes of them slain, and the rest carried captive, and put into the hands of cruel lords and hard masters, and made a proverb, a taunt, and a curse, in all places; and all this done to a people that were the Lord's by profession, who called themselves so, though now a "loammi", (2009 Hosea 1:9); and these were hard things to flesh and blood, yet no other than what they deserved;

thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment; or "of trembling", ^{f809}, (²⁵¹¹⁷Isaiah 51:17); that is, to endure such troubles as made them tremble, and astonished and stupefied them; took away their senses, and made them unfit for anything, being smitten with madness, blindness, and astonishment

of heart, as is threatened them, (*****Deuteronomy 28:28); (see ******Romans 11:7,8).

Ver. 4. Thou hast given a banner, etc.] The word Sn is, by Jarchi, taken to signify "temptation" or "trial" ^{f810}; and he interprets it of many troubles which they had, that they might be tried by them, whether they would stand in the fear of God, and so considers these words as a continuation of the account of the distresses of the people of Israel; but they are rather to be considered as declaring a peculiar blessing and favour bestowed upon some among them, who are here described, when the rest were involved in the greatest calamities, signified by a "banner" or "ensign" given them; by which is meant, not so much David literally, and the victory he obtained over the Syrians and Edomites, of which the banner displayed might be a token; but the Messiah, who is said to be given for a banner, or set up as an ensign for the people, (²⁰¹⁰Isaiah 11:10); for the gathering of them to him, to prepare them for war, and animate them to fight the good fight of faith, and oppose every enemy; to direct where they should stand to be on duty, where they should go, and whom they should follow; and is expressive of the victory over sin, Satan, and the world, they have through him: and this is given

to them that fear thee; who have the grace of fear put into their hearts; who fear the Lord and his goodness, and serve him with reverence and godly fear; who worship him both inwardly and outwardly, in spirit and in truth, whether among Jews or Gentiles, though the former may be chiefly intended; such as old Simeon, Anna the prophetess, and others, to whom Christ was made known; and especially the apostles of Christ, and those to whom their ministry became useful; whose business it was to display this banner, set up this ensign, and hold out this flag; as it follows:

that it may be displayed because of the truth; not because of the truth of Abraham, as the Targum; nor because of the truth, sincerity, and uprightness, of those that fear the Lord; but because of his own truth and faithfulness in the performance of his promises made concerning the displaying of this banner; or the sending of his son into the world, and the preaching of his Gospel in it; (see *4558* Romans 15:8).

Selah; on this word, (see Gill on "-Psalm 3:2").

Ver. 5. *That thy beloved may be delivered*, etc.] Some think that these words express the effect or end of the banner being displayed; but because

of the word "Selah" at the end of (*****Psalm 60:4), which makes so full a stop; rather they are to be considered in construction with the following clause. By the Lord's "beloved" ones are meant, not so much the people of Israel, who were loved and chosen by the Lord above all people on the face of the earth, as the elect of God, both among Jews and Gentiles, who are the chosen of God, and precious, and are loved of him with a free, sovereign, everlasting, and unchangeable love: these are the beloved of Father, Son, and Spirit; who, falling into a state of condemnation and death in Adam, and being under the power of sin, and involved in the guilt and faith of it; and being fallen into the hands of many enemies, sin, Satan, and the world; stood in need of deliverance out of all this, which they could not work out of themselves, nor any creature for them; wherefore, that they might be delivered, the following request is made;

save [with] thy right hand; from sin, the cause of damnation; from the law, which threatens with condemnation and death; from Satan, that would devour and destroy; and from all their enemies; from wrath to come, from hell and the second death; or from going down to the pit of corruption. The persons for whom this petition is put up are not only David himself, but all the beloved ones; and these God has appointed unto salvation; Christ is the Saviour of them, and to them salvation is applied in due time by the Spirit, and in a little while they will be in the full possession of it: and this is wrought out by the "right hand" of the Lord; either by his mighty power, the saving strength of his right hand, who is mighty to save; or by his Son, the man of his right hand, made strong for himself, who able to save to the uttermost; and by whom God has determined to save, and does save all his people; or the words may be rendered, "save thy right hand, [thy] Benjamins"¹⁸¹¹ who are as near and dear to thee as thy right hand, being his mystical self, to whom salvation is brought by him, (²⁶⁰⁾Isaiah 63:1,5);

and hear me; in so doing, he suggests he would hear and answer him his prayers would be ended and accomplished; this being the sum of them, his own salvation, and the salvation of the Lord's beloved ones. The "Cetib", or writing of this clause, is, "hear us"; the "Keri", or reading of it, "hear me".

Ver. 6. *God hath spoken in his holiness*, etc.] Or "in his holy place" ^{f812}; in heaven, the habitation of his holiness and of his glory; or "in the house of the sanctuary", as the Targum: in the tabernacle, in the holy place by Urim

and Thummim; and in the most holy place by his sacred oracle, from between the mercy seat: or "by his Holy Ones", as the Arabic version; by his holy prophets, Samuel and Nathan, by whom he spoke to David concerning the kingdom; and by his Holy Spirit dictating this psalm, and the rest unto him; and by his Son, his Holy One, by whom he has spoken in these last times unto his people, to which this psalm has reference: or it may be understood of the perfection of his holiness in which he has spoken, and by which he has swore; not only to David literally, concerning the extent of his dominion, the perpetuity and stability of it; but to David's son and antitype, the Messiah, concerning his seed, possession, and inheritance, (****Psalm 89:19,20,35,36 2:8,9);

I will rejoice; at the holiness of the Lord, which is matter of joy to the saints, especially as the is displayed and glorified in salvation by Christ, (*PPD*Psalm 97:12); and at what he said in his holiness to David, concerning his temporal kingdom, and the duration of it; because he knew that what he said he would perform; and at what was spoken to him by the Messiah, in council and covenant, concerning his seeing his seed, and prolonging his days; which was the joy set before him, which carried him through his sorrows and sufferings, (*PPD*Hebrews 12:2); wherefore he believed his kingdom should be enlarged, both among Jews and Gentiles, as follows;

"I will divide the prey with the children of Joseph, that dwell in Shechem;"

and mete out the valley of Succoth; with a measuring line, so taking possession of it, (****2 Samuel 8:2 *****Zechariah 2:1-4); Succoth was near

to Shechem, (⁴⁰³³⁷Genesis 33:17,18); and was in the tribe of Gad, and in a valley, (⁴⁰³²⁷Joshua 13:27); there was a Succoth in the plain of Jordan, (⁴⁰³⁶⁹ Kings 7:46); it signifies booths, tents, or tabernacles, and may mystically signify the churches of Christ, wherein he dwells and exercises his dominion.

and Manasseh [is] mine; Ephraim also [is] the strength of mine head: these two were also under Saul's son when David first came to the throne, but afterwards became his, as was promised him, and he believed, (⁴⁰⁰⁹⁻² Samuel 2:9 5:1-3). And the concord and harmony of the people of God among themselves, and under David their Prince, the King Messiah, are signified and Ephraim being one in the hand of the by the ceasing of the envy of the one, and of the vexation of the other, (⁴⁵⁰⁹Ezekiel 37:19,24 ⁴⁰¹⁰Isaiah 11:13); Ephraim was more numerous and populous than Manasseh, and abounded with mighty men, which are the strength of a prince, and therefore called here the strength of his head;

Judah [is] my lawgiver; manifestly referring to (⁴⁰⁰Genesis 49:10); which furnished out persons fit to be counsellors in enacting laws, and proper to be employed in the execution of them. The great Lawgiver is Christ himself, who came of this tribe, (²⁰⁰²Isaiah 33:22); All this is expressive of dominion over the whole land of Judea, Ephraim, and Manasseh, with the places mentioned with them; the house of Joseph being, as Aben Ezra observes, in the north part of it, and Judah in the south. Next mention is made of the subjection of the Gentiles, and dominion over them.

Ver. 8. *Moab [is] my washpot*, etc.] To wash hands and feet in: and so the Syriac version, "and Moab the washing of my feet"; a vessel for low and mean service, and so denotes the servile subjection of the Moabites to David; (see ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ 2 Samuel 8:2); and as the words may be rendered, "the pot of my washing"⁽¹⁸¹³⁾. Great numbers of the Moabites might be at this time servants to the Israelites, and to David and his court particularly; and might be employed, as the Gibeonites were, to be drawers of water, to fill their

pots, in which they washed their hands and feet, and their bathing vessels, in which they bathed themselves: Aben Ezra explains it,

"I wilt wash their land as a pot;"

and so may not only signify the very great subjection of the Gentiles, even the chief among them, to Christ and his church, (³⁰²³Isaiah 49:23 60:14); but as Moab was begotten and born in uncleanness, and his posterity an unclean generation, it may design the washing, cleansing, sanctifying, and justifying of the Gentiles in the name of Christ, and by his Spirit, (⁴⁰³¹) Corinthians 6:11);

over Edom will I cast out my shoe; as a token of possessing their land, (-0007-Ruth 4:7); so some; or of subduing them; putting the feet on which the shoe is upon the necks of them, (-0007-Joshua 10:24). So Kimchi interprets it,

"the treading of my foot;"

to which the Targum agrees, paraphrasing it thus;

"upon the joint of the neck of the mighty men of Edom I have cast my shoe."

It may allude to a custom^{f814} in confirming a bargain, or taking possession, to pluck off the shoe in token of it, yl [n may be rendered "my glove"; as it is by the Targum on (⁴⁰⁰⁰Ruth 4:7,8); for, as the shoe encloses and binds the foot, so the glove the hand: and the allusion may be thought to be to a custom used by kings, when they sat down before any strong city to besiege it, to throw in a glove into the city; signifying they would never depart from the city until they had took it. Hence the custom, which still continues, of sending a glove to a person challenged to fight. And indeed the custom of casting a shoe was used by the emperor of the Abyssines, as a sign of dominion ^{f815}. Take the phrase in every light, it signifies victory and power; that he should be in Edom as at home, and there pluck off his shoe, and cast it upon him; either to carry it after him, as some think, which was the work of a servant, to which the Baptist alludes, (MBL Matthew 3:11); or rather to clean it for him; for as Moab was his washpot, to wash his hands and feet, in Edom was his shoe cleaner, to wipe off and remove the dirt and dust that was upon them^{f816}; all which denotes great subjection: and this was fulfilled in David, (****2 Samuel 8:14); and may refer to the spread of the Gospel in the Gentile world, and the power

accompanying that to the subduing of many sinners in it, carried thither by those whose feet were shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace;

Philistia, triumph thou because of me: some take this to be an ironic expression, like that in (²¹¹⁰ Ecclesiastes 11:9); so R. Moses in Aben Ezra, and also Kimchi. Triumph now as thou usedst to do, or if thou canst: but rather they are seriously spoken, seeing they had reason to rejoice and be glad, because they had changed hands and masters for the better, being subject to David, (⁴⁰⁸⁰ 2 Samuel 8:1), with this compare (⁴⁹⁸⁰ Psalm 108:9), and may very well be applied to the Gentiles, subdued and conquered by Christ, who triumph in him; and because delivered out of the hands of sin, Satan, and the world, through his victorious arms.

Ver. 9. *Who will bring me [into] the strong city*? etc.] Which some understand of Rabbah of the Ammonites, which Joab besieged, and sent to David to come and take it in person, (⁴⁰²⁶2 Samuel 12:26,29). The Targum interprets it of Tyre, which was a strong fortified city, (²⁰⁰¹Ezekiel 26:4,11). It rather seems to be the same with Edom, or the metropolis of the Edomites; since it follows:

who will lead me into Edom? which was situated in the clefts of the rock, and on the height of the hill, (³¹⁰⁶Jeremiah 49:16); but is mystically to be understood of the city of Rome, the great and mighty city, as it is often called in the book of the Revelation, (⁴⁶¹⁰⁸Revelation 11:8 17:18 18:10); whose destruction is certain, being predicted; and after which there have been desires raised in the hearts of God's people in all ages; and particularly just before the time God will put it into the hearts of the kings of the earth to burn it with fire; who are here represented by David, as desirous of entering into it in triumph to destroy it, (⁴⁶⁷⁷⁶Revelation 17:16).

Ver. 10. *[Wilt] not thou, O God*? etc.] This is an answer to the question, and is made by putting another, which tacitly contains in it an affirmation that God would do it. He has foretold the destruction of the Romish antichrist; he has said it shall be: he is faithful to his purposes, predictions, and promises; he is able to effect it; strong is the Lord that judgeth Babylon, ("Revelation 18:10); He will put it into the hearts of the kings of the earth to hate her; he will encourage them to reward her double; he will give her blood to drink, because she is worthy; her destruction will be according to his righteous judgment, and will be irretrievable; he will call upon all his people to rejoice at it, whose shoutings on this occasion will be like those of persons that enter into a conquered city in triumph;

[which] hadst cast us off; who seemed in former times to have cast off his people, when they were killed all the day long; accounted as sheep for the slaughter; were slain in great numbers in the Low Countries; burnt here in England; massacred in France and Ireland: especially God seemed to have cast off his people, and to have had no regard to his interest, when antichrist so prevailed, that all the world wondered after the beast;

and [thou], O God, [which] didst not go forth with our armies: but suffered the antichristian beast to make war with the saints, and to overcome and kill them; and which was the case in many pitched battles with the Waldenses and Albigenses before the Reformation, and with the Protestants in Germany since. But this will not be always the case; he whose name is the Word of God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, will fight with the antichristian powers, and overcome them, and make his people more than conquerors over them; and his having formerly seemed to have cast them off, and not going forth with their armies, will serve as a foil to set off the glorious and complete victory that will at last be obtained.

Ver. 11. *Give us help from trouble*, etc.] To have trouble is the common lot of all men, but especially of the people of God. They have some troubles which others have not, arising from indwelling sin, Satan's temptations, and the hidings of God's face; and as for outward troubles, they have generally the greatest share of them, which are certain to them by the appointment of God, and the legacy of Christ; though they are needful and for their good, and lie in their way to heaven. But perhaps here is particularly meant the time of trouble, which will be a little before the destruction of antichrist; which will be great, and none like it; will be the time of Jacob's trouble, though he shall be saved out of it, (2007 Jeremiah 30:7). This will be the time of the slaying of the witnesses, the hour of temptation, that will try the inhabitants of the Christian world; and when the saints, as they do in all their times of trouble, will seek to the Lord for help, in whom it is, and who has promised it, and gives it seasonably, and which is owing wholly to his own grace and goodness; and therefore it is asked that he would "give" it;

for vain [is] the help of man: or "the salvation of man" ^{f817}; man himself is a vain thing; vanity itself, yea, lighter than vanity; even man at his best state, and the greatest among men; and therefore it is a vain thing to expect help and salvation from men, for indeed there is none in them; only in the Lord God is the salvation of his people, both temporal and spiritual.

Ver. 12. *Through God we shall do valiantly*, etc.] Or, "through the Word of the Lord", as the Targum; Christ, whose name is the Word of God, appearing at the head of his armies, in a vesture dipped in blood, and with a sharp sword proceeding out of his mouth, will inspire his people to fight valiantly under him; and who, in his name and strength, will get the victory over all their enemies, the beast, false prophets, and kings of the earth, and all under them; (see "PPRevelation 19:11-21);

for he [it is that] shall tread down our enemies; as mire in the street, or as grapes in a winepress; even kings, captains, mighty men, and all the antichristian nations and states; the beast, false prophet, and Satan himself, (⁴⁰⁹⁵Revelation 19:15,18-20 20:2,10); and so there will be an end of all the enemies of Christ and his people; after which they will spend an endless eternity together, in joy, peace, and pleasure. The victory is wholly ascribed to God the Word; it is not they that shall do valiantly, that shall tread down their enemies; but he by whom they shall do valiantly shall do it; even the mighty awh, "He", to whom was promised, in Eden's garden, the bruising the head of the serpent, and all enemies, (⁴⁰⁸⁶⁵Genesis 3:15); and who has the same name here as there.