

PSALM 61

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 61

To the chief Musician upon Neginah, [A Psalm] of David.

“Neginah” is either the beginning of a song, as Aben Ezra; or the musical note or tune of one: or rather the name of a musical instrument, which was touched by the hand, or with a quill or bow. It is the singular of “neginoth”, (see Gill on “^{<3901>}Psalm 4:1”). This psalm was written by David, when at the end of the earth, or land of Judea, as appears from (“^{<3902>}Psalm 61:2); either when he was fighting with the Syrians, as R. Obadiah, and so was composed about the same time with the former; or when he was in the land of the Philistines, being obliged to fly there from Saul, as Kimchi and others: or rather after he himself was king, since mention is made of the king in it; and when he fled from his son Absalom, and passed over to the other side of Jordan, and came to Mahanaim, (“^{<1072>}2 Samuel 17:22,24); where very probably he wrote this psalm. In it respect is had to the Messiah, as in (“^{<3902>}Psalm 61:2,6); though Arama thinks it was composed after the prophecy came to Nathan that David should not build the temple; (see “^{<3904>}Psalm 61:4).

Ver. 1. *Hear my cry, O God,* etc.] Being in distress; and which was vocally expressed with great fervency and importunity;

attend unto my prayer; which psalm was made by him, and not for him; inwrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, and put up by him with a true heart and full assurance of faith, and related to his own case in particular. Aben Ezra thinks that the former word designs public prayer, vocally and openly expressed; and that this intends prayer in the heart, or mental prayer; both the Lord hears and attends unto, and is here requested; which is marvellous grace and condescension in him.

Ver. 2. *From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee,* etc.] Where he now was, as is observed on the title, (see Gill on ““^{<3901>}Psalm 61:1”): though he was distant from his own house, and from the house of God, he did not restrain prayer before him, but continued to cry unto him, and determined to do so; and as the people of God are sometimes forced to flee to distant

parts, they have a God still to go to, who is a God afar off, as well as at hand. It may be the psalmist may represent the church in Gospel times, throughout the whole world, even at the further parts of it, in the isles afar off, where men may and do lift up holy hands to God without wrath and doubting:

when my heart is overwhelmed; or “covered”^{f818}; with grief and sorrow for any trouble, outward or inward, and ready to sink, and fail and die. Sometimes the saints are overwhelmed with a sense of sin, are pressed down with the weight and burden of its guilt; their faces are covered with shame and confusion; and their hearts are swallowed up and overwhelmed with overmuch sorrow, both at the number of their sins, and at the aggravated circumstances of them; and especially when they are without a view of pardoning grace and mercy, (⁻¹⁹⁰⁴Psalm 38:4,10 51:12) (⁻²¹⁸²Lamentations 3:42,43); and sometimes they are overwhelmed with afflictive providences; the Lord causes all his waves and billows to go over them, and they are just ready to sink; and did he not stay his hand, and stop contending with them, the spirit would fail before him, and the souls that he has made, (⁻¹⁹⁰⁴Psalm 42:6,7 ⁻²⁵⁷⁶Isaiah 57:16); and sometimes with divine desertions, which cause a “deliquium” of soul, and throw them into fainting fits, (⁻²¹⁸⁶Song of Solomon 5:6); and sometimes through unbelieving frames; and did not the Lord appear to them, and strengthen their faith, and remove their unbelief, they would sink and die away, (⁻¹⁹⁷¹Psalm 77:2,3,7-9 27:13). And at all such times it is right to cry unto the Lord, and make the following request to him:

lead me to the rock [that] is higher than I; not the land of Israel, as Kimchi thinks, the psalmist being now in the low lands of the Philistines; nor Jerusalem, and the fort and hill of Zion; he being now at the extreme and lower parts of the land: this sense is too low. Some think that some great difficulty is meant; which seemed insuperable, and like a rock inaccessible, which he could not get up to, and upon, and get over; and therefore desires the Lord would lead him up it, and over it, before whom every rock, mountain, and hill, becomes a plain, (⁻³⁰⁰⁷Zechariah 4:7); but rather Christ is meant, the Rock of Israel, the Rock of our salvation, and our refuge. He is higher than David, and all the kings of the earth; higher than the angels in heaven, and than the heavens themselves, (⁻³⁰⁷⁵Hebrews 7:26); and who by his height is able to protect and defend his people from all their enemies; and by the shade he casts to refresh and comfort them; and by the sufficiency in him to supply all their wants; for he is as a rock impregnable,

and well stored, (²³³⁶Isaiah 33:16 32:9). And here gracious souls desire to be led by the Spirit of God always, and especially when in distressing circumstances; and he does lead them to his blood for pardon and cleansing, and to his righteousness for justification and acceptance with God, and to his fulness for fresh supplies.

Ver. 3. *For thou hast been a shelter for me*, etc.] Or “refuge” ^{f819}, from avenging justice; a hiding place and covert from the storms and tempests of divine wrath; a shadow and a screen from the heat of Satan’s fiery darts, and the blast of his terrible temptations, (²³⁰⁴Isaiah 25:4);

[and] a strong tower from the enemy: from Satan the devouring lion, from furious persecutors, and every other enemy; (see ⁴⁸⁸⁰Proverbs 18:10); and this experience the psalmist had of protection from the Rock in former times made him desirous of being led to it now.

Ver. 4. *I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever*, etc.] Under the protection of the Lord, as in a shepherd’s tent, or as in one belonging to a general of an army, where are fulness and safety; (see Gill on “⁴²⁷⁶Psalm 27:5”); or else the tabernacle of the congregation is meant; the house of God, the place of divine and public worship, where he desired and determined always to continue, (⁴²³⁶Psalm 23:6); or else the tabernacle which was prefigured by that below, where he knew he should dwell to all eternity. Kimchi, by “for ever”, understands a long time; and Jarchi explains it both of this world and of the world to come; which is true, understanding the tabernacle of the church below, and the church above;

I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Or, “in” or “into the secret of thy wings” ^{f820}; this he determined to make his refuge for the present time, and while in this world; (see Gill on “⁴⁵⁰¹Psalm 57:1”).

Selah; on this word, (see Gill on “⁴⁹⁸⁰Psalm 3:2”).

Ver. 5. *For thou, O God, hast heard my vows*, etc.] Or “my prayers”, as the Septuagint and other versions. Vows are so called, because it was usual to make vows in trouble, when prayer was made to the Lord for help and deliverance, (⁴⁶⁶³Psalm 66:13,14 132:1,2). This is a reason why the psalmist was encouraged to put his trust in the Lord, because his prayers were heard by him; or he was sure they would be, as he had entreated, (⁴⁵⁰¹Psalm 61:1). The past is put for the future, as Kimchi and Ben Melech observe; and it may be because of the certainty of his prayers being heard; and which may be concluded from the Lord’s declaring himself a God

hearing prayer, from the prevalent mediation of Christ, from the assistance and intercession of the Spirit, and from the exercise of faith in prayer, and the divine promises; or while he was crying to God an answer was returned, and he was delivered out of his troubles, (^{<3951>}Isaiah 65:24 ^{<208>}Daniel 9:20,21,23). Another reason follows:

thou hast given [me] the heritage of those that fear thy name: not the land of Israel, as Aben Ezra and Jarchi; which was given for an inheritance to the posterity of Abraham, (^{<3951>}Psalm 105:11); and which was never more fully in their possession than in the times of David: nor the tabernacle or sanctuary of the Lord, as Kimchi; where he desired to dwell, (^{<3906>}Psalm 61:4); and now had his request granted: but the heavenly glory, the incorruptible inheritance, the inheritance of the saints in light, prefigured by them both; which is the gift of God their Father to them his children; comes to them through the death of Christ the testator; is not of the law, and the works of it; is not acquired nor purchased; but is owing to the free grace of God; to predestinating grace, as the source of it; to justifying grace, through the righteousness of Christ, as the right unto it; and to regenerating and sanctifying grace, as the meetness for it. Wherefore it manifestly belongs to those that “fear the name of the Lord”, himself, his perfections, particularly his goodness; who adore and admire, serve and worship him, internally and externally; not with a slavish fear, but with a filial godly fear. The Targum renders it,

“thou hast given an inheritance to them that fear thy name;”

that in the King’s Bible is,

“an inheritance in the world to come;”

so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and the Oriental versions; and which sense is given by Aben Ezra. It may be understood of them that fear the Lord, being the inheritance itself; as they are of Christ, David’s son and antitype, and who is designed in (^{<3906>}Psalm 61:6): (see ^{<4533>}Deuteronomy 32:9) (^{<3908>}Psalm 2:8 16:6).

Ver. 6. *Thou wilt prolong the King’s life*, etc.] Or “add days to the days of the King”^{f821}. Meaning either himself, who, though his life was in danger by fighting with the Syrians and Edomites, or rather through the conspiracy of his son; yet was assured that he should yet live many years more, and especially in his posterity; and that his kingdom would be established for ever, as was promised him, (^{<4072>}2 Samuel 7:12-16). Or rather the King

Messiah, so the Targum: and Kimchi observes, that if this psalm respects the captivity, the King is the King Messiah: it may be understood of his life as man; who, though he died, rose again, and lives for evermore; and that, as to the glory of God the Father, so to the good of his people, for whom he makes intercession; and of the continuance of his spiritual seed, in whom he may be said to live, and his days be prolonged, (²⁸³⁰Isaiah 53:10); and of the duration of his kingdom, of which there will be no end. For it is an everlasting one, as follows:

[and] his years as many generations; he living, and his posterity and kingdom continuing, age after age. The Targum is,

“his years as the generations of this world, and the generations of the world to, come.”

Ver. 7. *He shall abide before God for ever*, etc.] Or “sit” ^{f822}; or “may he sit”. Being raised from the dead he was received up to heaven into the presence of God, and sat down at his right hand; where he abides for ever, a Priest upon his throne, having an unchangeable priesthood, (³⁰⁷²Hebrews 7:24);

and prepare mercy and truth, [which] may preserve him; which, if literally understood of David, is a prayer that the Lord would show him favour and kindness, and perform his promises to him, whereby his life would be preserved from the plots and, conspiracies of his enemies, and his kingdom be established; or that he might be exalted to exercise mercy towards his subjects, and administer justice, or execute the judgment of truth among them; which would make for the preservation of his person, and the support of his throne and government, (³¹¹⁸Proverbs 20:28). But as the words may be applied to the Messiah, they are to be understood, not of the preservation of his corporeal life while here on earth; but either of the preservation of his people, in whom he lives, through the mercy and truth of God, expressed in the exertion of his power, by which they are preserved unto the heavenly kingdom and glory; or of the security of his kingdom, which not being of this world, is not supported by worldly power and policy, but in a spiritual manner, and by spiritual means; such as mercy, or “grace and truth”; that is, the doctrines of grace and truth, which came by Christ, and are preached by his ministers, and are the means of continuing, promoting, and preserving his kingdom and interest in the world, Or the words may be rendered, “may mercy and the truth of manna keep thee”; the true manna, Christ; (see ⁴¹⁶²John 6:32); or “mercy and

truth, as the manna, keep thee”^{f823}; as that was kept in the golden pot, (^{<1263>}Exodus 16:33); or rather as that kept and sustained the Israelites in the wilderness.

Ver. 8. *So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever*, etc.] Or constantly; and not only in this world, but in that to come, for the favours before mentioned; for hearing his prayers; giving him a goodly heritage; prolonging the King’s life; and preparing mercy and truth to preserve him;

that I may daily perform vows; which is done by praising the Lord, giving him the glory of all mercies, as vowed and promised; (see ^{<1804>}Psalm 50:14). The Targum adds,

“in the day of the redemption of Israel, and in the day that the King Messiah shall be anointed, that he may reign.”