

PSALM 90

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 90

A Prayer of Moses the man of God.

Here begins the fourth part of the book of Psalms, and with the most ancient psalm throughout the whole book, it being written by Moses; not by one of that name that lived in later times; nor by one of his posterity; nor by some one who composed it, agreeably to his words and doctrines, and called it by his name; but by that Moses by whom the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, led them through the wilderness to the borders of Canaan's land, and by whom he delivered to them the lively oracles; and who is described as the man of God, a title given to Moses, (^{<1630>}Deuteronomy 33:1), so called, not as a creature of his make, so all men are; nor as a man of grace, born of God, so is every saint; but a man of more than ordinary gifts received from the Lord, a prophet of the Lord, and the chief of the prophets, and a type of the great Prophet; so inspired men and prophets under the Old Testament bear this name, and ministers of the Gospel under the New, (^{<1178>}1 Kings 17:18,24 ^{<602>}2 Peter 1:21 ^{<817>}2 Timothy 3:17). It is a conceit of Bohlius, that this prayer of his (so it is called, as several other psalms are, (see ^{<970>}Psalm 17:1,86:1,102:1,142:1)) was made by him when he was about seventy years of age, ten years before he was sent to Pharaoh, while he was in Midian, which he gathers from (^{<900>}Psalm 90:10); others think it was written towards the end of his life, and when weary of it, and his travels in the wilderness; but it is more generally thought that it was penned about the time when the spies brought a bad report of the land, and the people fell a murmuring; which provoked the Lord, that he threatened them that they should spend their lives in misery in the wilderness, and their carcasses should fall there; and their lives were cut short, and reduced to threescore years and ten, or thereabout; only Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, lived to a greater age; and on occasion of this Moses wrote this psalm, setting forth the brevity and misery of human life; so the Targum,

“a prayer which Moses the prophet of the Lord prayed, when the people of the house of Israel sinned in the wilderness.”

Jarchi and some other Jewish writers ^{f1292} not only ascribe this psalm to Moses, but the ten following, being without a name; but it is certain that Psalm 95 was written by David, as appears from (^{<3047>}Hebrews 4:7) and Psalm 96 is his, compared with (^{<3163>}1 Chronicles 16:23) and in Psalm 99 mention is made of Samuel, who lived long after the times of Moses.

Ver. 1. *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations,* etc.] Even when they had no certain dwelling place in the world; so their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, dwelt in tabernacles in the land of promise, as in a strange land; and their posterity for many years served under great affliction and oppression in a land that was not theirs; and now they were dwelling in tents in the wilderness, and removing from place to place; but as the Lord had been in every age, so he now was the dwelling place of those that trusted in him; being that to them as an habitation is to man, in whom they had provision, protection, rest, and safety; (see ^{<3312>}Psalm 31:2 71:3) so all that believe in Christ dwell in him, and he in them, (^{<4166>}John 6:56), they dwelt secretly in him before they believed; so they dwelt in his heart's love, in his arms, in him as their head in election, and as their representative in the covenant of grace from eternity; and, when they fell in Adam, they were preserved in Christ, dwelling in him; and so they were in him when on the cross, in the grave, and now in heaven; for they are said to be crucified, buried, and risen with him, and set down in heavenly places in him, (^{<4221>}Galatians 2:20 ^{<5122>}Colossians 2:12 3:1 ^{<4116>}Ephesians 2:6), and, being converted, they have an open dwelling in him by faith, to whom they have fled for refuge, and in whom they dwell safely, quietly, comfortably, pleasantly, and shall never be turned out: here they have room, plenty of provisions, rest, and peace, and security from all evils; he is an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm. Some render the word "refuge"; ^{f1293} such is Christ to his people, being the antitype of the cities of

refuge; and others "helper", as the Targum; which also well agrees with him, on whom their help is laid, and is found.

Ver. 2. *Before the mountains were brought forth,* etc.] Or "were born" ^{f1294}, and came forth out of the womb and bowels of the earth, and were made to rise and stand up at the command of God, as they did when he first created the earth; and are mentioned not only because of their firmness and stability, but their antiquity: hence we read of the ancient mountains and everlasting hills, (^{<0426>}Genesis 49:26 ^{<6315>}Deuteronomy 33:15), for they

were before the flood, and as soon as the earth was; or otherwise the eternity of God would not be so fully expressed by this phrase as it is here, and elsewhere the eternity of Christ, (^{<1085>}Proverbs 8:25), or “ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world”; the whole terraqueous globe, and all the inhabitants of it; so the Targum; or “before the earth brought forth; or thou causedst it to bring forth”^{f1295} its herbs, plants, and trees, as on the third day:

even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God; and so are his love, grace, and mercy towards his people, and his covenant with them; and this is as true of Jehovah the Son as of the Father, whose eternity is described in the same manner as his; (see ^{<1082>}Proverbs 8:22-30 ^{<1004>}Revelation 1:4,8), and may be concluded from his name, the everlasting Father; from his having the same nature and perfections with his Father; from his concern in eternal election, in the everlasting covenant of grace, and in the creation of all things; and his being the eternal and unchangeable I AM, yesterday, today, and for ever, is matter of comfort to his people.

Ver. 3. *Thou turnest man to destruction*, etc.] Or to death, as the Targum, which is the destruction of man; not an annihilation of body or soul, but a dissolution of the union between them; the words may be rendered, “thou turnest man until he is broken”^{f1296}; and crumbled into dust; thou turnest him about in the world, and through a course of afflictions and diseases, and at last by old age, and however by death, returns him to his original, from whence he came, the dust of the earth, which he becomes again, (^{<1089>}Genesis 3:19 ^{<1117>}Ecclesiastes 12:7) the grave may be meant by destruction:

and sayest, return, ye children of men, or “Adam”; from whom they all sprung, and in whom they all sinned, and so became subject to death; to these he says, when by diseases he threatens them with a dissolution, return by repentance, and live; and sometimes, when they are brought to the brink of the grave, he returns them from sickness to health, delivers them from the pit, and enlightens them with the light of the living, as he did Hezekiah: or this may refer to the resurrection of the dead, which will be by Christ, and by his voice calling the dead to return to life, to rise and come to judgment; though some understand this as descriptive of death, when by the divine order and command man returns to his original dust; thus the frailty of man is opposed to the eternity of God. Gussetius understands all

this of God's bringing men to repentance, contrition, and conversion; and takes the sense to be,

“thou turnest till he becomes contrite, and sayest, be ye converted, ye sons of Adam;”

which he thinks ^{f1297} best agrees with the mind of the Apostle Peter, who quotes the following passage, (~~6088~~ 2 Peter 3:8,9). Some, as Arama observes, connect this with the following verse; though men live 1000 years, yet they are but as yesterday in the sight of God.

Ver. 4. *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday*, etc.] Which may be said to obviate the difficulty in man's return, or resurrection, from the dead, taken from the length of time in which some have continued in the grave; which vanishes, when it is observed, that in thy sight, esteem, and account of God, a thousand years are but as one day; and therefore, should a man lie in the grave six or seven thousand years, it would be but as so many days with God; wherefore, if the resurrection is not incredible, as it is not, length of time can be no objection to it. Just in the same manner is this phrase used by the Apostle Peter, and who is thought to refer to this passage, to remove an objection against the second coming of Christ, taken from the continuance of things as they had been from the beginning, and from the time of the promise of it: (see ~~6084~~ 2 Peter 3:4-8), though the words aptly express the disproportion there is between the eternal God and mortal man; for, was he to live a thousand years, which no man ever did, yet this would be as yesterday with God, with whom eternity itself is but a day, (~~23813~~ Isaiah 43:13), man is but of yesterday, that has lived the longest; and were he to live a thousand years, and that twice told, it would be but “as yesterday when it is past”; though it may seem a long time to come, yet when it is gone it is as nothing, and can never be fetched back again:

and as a watch in the night; which was divided sometimes into three, and sometimes into four parts, and so consisted but of three or four hours; and which, being in the night, is spent in sleep; so that, when a man wakes, it is but as a moment with him; so short is human life, even the longest, in the account of God; (see Gill on “~~4045~~ Matthew 14:25”).

Ver. 5. *Thou carriest them away as with a flood*, etc.] As the whole world of the ungodly were with the deluge, to which perhaps the allusion is; the phrase is expressive of death; so the Targum,

“if they are not converted, thou wilt bring death upon them;”

the swiftness of time is aptly signified by the flowing gliding stream of a flood, by the rolling billows and waves of it; so one hour, one day, one month, one year, roll on after another: moreover, the suddenness of death may be here intended, which comes in an hour unlooked for, and unaware of, as a flood comes suddenly, occasioned by hasty showers of rain; as also the irresistible force and power of it, which none can withstand; of which the rapidity of a flood is a lively emblem, and which carries all before it, and sweeps away everything that stands in its course; as death, by an epidemic and infectious disease, or in a battle, carries off thousands and ten thousands in a very little time; nor does it spare any, as a flood does not, of any age or sex, of any rank or condition of life; and, like a flood, makes sad destruction and devastation where it comes, and especially where it takes off great numbers; it not only turns beauty to ashes, and strength into weakness and corruption, but depopulates towns, and cities, and kingdoms; and as the flowing flood and gliding stream can never be fetched back again, so neither can life when past, not one moment of time when gone; (see ~~1044~~ 2 Samuel 14:14), besides this phrase may denote the turbulent and tempestuous manner in which, sometimes, wicked men go out of the world, a storm being within and without, as in (~~8271~~ Job 27:20,21), “they are as a sleep”; or dream, which soon passeth away; in a sound sleep, time is insensibly gone; and a dream, before it can be well known what it is, is over and lost in oblivion; and so short is human life, (~~8318~~ Job 20:8) there may be, sometimes, a seeming pleasure enjoyed, as in dreams, but no satisfaction; as a man in sleep may dream that he is eating and drinking, and please himself with it; but, when he awakes, he is hungry and empty, and unsatisfied; and so is man with everything in this life, (~~2398~~ Isaiah 29:8 ~~21008~~ Ecclesiastes 1:8 5:10), and all things in life are a mere dream, as the honours, riches, and pleasures of it; a man rather dreams of honour, substance, and pleasure, than really enjoys them. Wicked men, while they live, are “as those that sleep”; as the Targum renders it; they have no spiritual senses, cannot see, hear, smell, taste, nor feel; they are without strength to everything that is spiritually good; inactive, and do none; are subject to illusions and mistakes; are in imminent danger, and unconcerned about it; and do not care to be jogged or awaked, and sleep on till they sleep the sleep of death, unless awaked by powerful and efficacious grace; and men when dead are asleep, not in their souls, but in their bodies; death is often in Scripture signified by a sleep, under which men continue until the resurrection, which is an awaking out of it:

in the morning they are like grass, which groweth up or “passeth away”, or “changeth”^{f1298}; or is changed; some understand this of the morning of the resurrection, when there will be a change for the better, a renovation, as Kimchi interprets the word; and which, from the use of it in the Arabic language, as Schultens observes^{f1299}, signifies to be green and flourishing, as grass in the morning is; and so intends a recovery of rigour and strength, as a man after sleep, and as the saints will have when raised from the dead. The Targum refers it to the world to come,

“and in the world to come, as grass is cut down, they shall be changed or renewed;”

but it is rather to be understood of the flourishing of men in the morning of youth, as the next verse shows, where it is repeated, and where the change of grass is beautifully illustrated and explained.

Ver. 6. *In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up*, etc.] That is, the grass, through the dew that lay all night on it, and by the clear shining of the sun after rain, when it appears in great beauty and verdure; so man in the morning of his youth looks gay and beautiful, grows in the stature and strength of his body, and in the endowments of his mind; and it may be also in riches and wealth; it is well if he grows in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ:

in the evening it is cut down, and withereth; the Targum adds, “through heat”; but it cannot be by the heat of the sun, when it is cut down at evening; but it withers in course, being cut down. This respects the latter part of life, the evening of old age; and the whole expresses the shortness of life, which is compared to grass, that now is in all its beauty and glory, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, (^{<405D>}Matthew 6:30). This metaphor of grass, to set forth the frailty of man, and his short continuance, is frequently used; (see ^{<487D>}Psalm 37:2 102:11 ^{<230E>}Isaiah 40:6-8) (^{<402E>}1 Peter 1:24). It may be observed, that man’s life is represented but as one day, consisting of a morning and an evening, which signifies the bloom and decline of life.

Ver. 7. *For we are consumed by thine anger*, etc.] Kimchi applies this to the Jews in captivity; but it is to be understood of the Israelites in the wilderness, who are here introduced by Moses as owning and acknowledging that they were wasting and consuming there, as it was threatened they should; and that as an effect of the divine anger and

displeasure occasioned by their sins; (see ^{<0443>}Numbers 14:33,35). Death is a consumption of the body; in the grave worms destroy the flesh and skin, and the reins of a man are consumed within him; hell is a consumption or destruction of the soul and body, though both always continue: saints, though consumed in body by death, yet not in anger; for

when flesh and heart fail, or “is consumed”, “God is the strength of their hearts, and their portion for ever”, (^{<0736>}Psalm 73:26), their souls are saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, and their bodies will rise glorious and incorruptible; but the wicked are consumed at death, and in hell, in anger and hot displeasure:

and by thy wrath are we troubled; the wrath of God produces trouble of mind, whenever it is apprehended, and especially in the views of death and eternity; and it is this which makes death the king of terrors, and men subject to bondage in life through fear of it, even the wrath to come, which follows upon it; nothing indeed, either in life or at death, or death itself, comes in wrath to the saints; nor is there any after it to them, though they have sometimes fearful apprehensions of it, and are troubled at it.

Ver. 8. *Thou hast set our sins before thee*, etc.] The cause of all trouble, consumption, and death; these are before the Lord, as the evidence, according to which he as a righteous Judge proceeds; this is opposed to the pardon of sin, which is expressed by a casting it behind his back, (^{<2387>}Isaiah 38:17),

our secret sins in the light of thy countenance; the Targum and Jarchi interpret it of the sins of youth; the word is in the singular number, and may be rendered, “our secret sin”^{f1300}; which has led some to think of original sin, which is hidden from, and not taken notice of by, the greatest part of the world, though it is the source and spring of all sin. It is not unusual for the singular to be put for the plural, and may intend all such sins as are secretly committed, and not known by other men, and such as are unobserved by men themselves; as the evil thoughts of their hearts, the foolish words of their mouths, and many infirmities of life, that are not taken notice of as sins: these are all known to God, and will be brought to light and into judgment by him, and will be set in “the light of his countenance”; which denotes not a gracious forgiveness of them, but his clear and distinct knowledge of them, and what a full evidence they give against men, to their condemnation and death; and intends not only a

future, but the present view the Lord has of them, and his dealings with men in life, and at death, according to them.

Ver. 9. *For all our days are passed away in thy wrath*, etc.] The life of man is rather measured by days than by months or years; and these are but few, which pass away or “decline”^{f1301} as the day does towards the evening; (see ~~2006~~ Jeremiah 6:4) or “turn away their face”, as the word^{f1302} may be rendered: they turn their backs upon us, and not the face to us; so that it is a hard thing to get time by the forelock; and these, which is worst of all, pass away in the “wrath” of God. This has a particular reference to the people of Israel in the wilderness, when God had sworn in his wrath they should not enter into the land of Canaan, but wander about all their days in the wilderness, and be consumed there; so that their days manifestly passed away under visible marks of the divine displeasure; and this is true of all wicked men, who are by nature children of wrath, and go through the world, and out of it, as such: and even it may be said of man in general; the ailments, diseases, and calamities, that attend the state of infancy and youth; the losses, crosses, and disappointments, vexations and afflictions, which wait upon man in riper years; and the evils and infirmities of old age, do abundantly confirm this truth: none but God’s people can, in any sense, be excepted from it, on whom no wrath comes, being loved with an everlasting love; and yet these, in their own apprehensions, have frequently the wrath of God upon them, and pass many days under a dreadful sense of it:

we spend our years as a tale that is told; or as a “meditation”^{f1303} a thought of the heart, which quickly passes away; or as a “word”^{f1304}, as others, which is soon pronounced and gone; or as an assemblage of words, a tale or story told, a short and pleasant one; for long tales are not listened to; and the pleasanter they are, the shorter the time seems to be in which they are told: the design of the metaphor is to set forth the brevity, and also the vanity, of human life; for in tales there are often many trifling and vain things, as well as untruths told; men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree a lie, in every state; and, in their best state, they are altogether vanity: a tale is a mere amusement; affects for a while, if attended to, and then is lost in oblivion; and such is human life: in a tale there is oftentimes a mixture, something pleasant, and something tragic; such changes are there in life, which is filled up with different scenes of prosperity and adversity: and perhaps this phrase may point at the idle and unprofitable way and manner in which the years of life are spent, like that of consuming time by

telling idle stories; some of them spent in youthful lusts and pleasures; others in an immoderate pursuit of the world, and the things of it; very few in a religious way, and these with great imperfection, and to very little purpose and profit; and particularly point to the children of Israel in the wilderness, who how they spent their time for thirty eight years there, we have no tale nor story of it. The Targum is,

“we have consumed the days of our life as the breath or vapour of the mouth in winter,”

which is very visible, and soon passes away; (see ~~5044~~ James 4:14).

Ver. 10. *The days of our years are threescore years and ten*, etc.] In the Hebrew text it is, “the days of our years in them are”, etc. ^{f1305}; which refers either to the days in which we live, or to the persons of the Israelites in the wilderness, who were instances of this term of life, in whom perhaps it first took place in a general way: before the flood, men lived to a great age; some nine hundred years and upwards; after the flood, men lived not so long; the term fixed then, as some think, was an hundred and twenty years, grounding it on the passage in (~~000B~~ Genesis 6:3), but now, in the time of Moses, it was brought to threescore years and ten, or eighty at most: of those that were numbered in the wilderness of Sinai, from twenty years and upwards, there were none left, save Joshua and Caleb, when the account was taken in the plains of Moab; (see ~~044C9~~ Numbers 14:29 26:63-65), so that some must die before they were sixty; others before seventy; and perhaps all, or however the generality of them, before eighty: and, from that time, this was the common age of men, some few excepted; to the age of seventy David lived, (~~000B~~ 2 Samuel 5:4), and so it has been ever since; many never come up to it, and few go beyond it: this is not only pointed at in revelation, but is what the Heathens have observed. Solon used to say, the term of human life was seventy years ^{f1306}; so others; and a people called Berbiccae, as Aelianus relates ^{f1307}, used to kill those of them that lived above seventy years of age, having exceeded the term of life. The Syriac version is, “in our days our years are seventy years”; with which the Targum agrees,

“the days of our years in this world are seventy years of the stronger;”

for it is in them that such a number of years is arrived unto; or “in them”, that is, in some of them; in some of mankind, their years amount hereunto,

but not in all: “and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years”; through a good temperament of body, a healthful and strong constitution, under a divine blessing, some may arrive to the age of eighty; there have been some instances of a strong constitution at this age and upwards, but not very common; (see ^{<644>}Joshua 14:11 ^{<634>}Deuteronomy 34:7), for, generally speaking, such who through strength of body live to such an age,

yet is their strength labour and sorrow; they labour under great infirmities, feel much pain, and little pleasure, as Barzillai at this age intimates, (^{<1095>}2 Samuel 19:35), these are the evil days ^{f1308}, in which is no pleasure, (^{<211>}Ecclesiastes 12:1), or “their largeness or breadth is labour and sin” ^{f1309}; the whole extent of their days, from first to last, is spent in toil and labour to live in the world; and is attended with much sin, and so with much sorrow:

for it is soon cut off; either the strength of man, or his age, by one disease or incident or another, like grass that is cut down with the scythe, or a flower that is cropped by the hand; (see ^{<844>}Job 14:2),

and we fly away; as a shadow does, or as a bird with wings; out of time into eternity; from the place of our habitation to the grave; from a land of light to the regions of darkness: it is well if we fly away to heaven and happiness.

Ver. 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* etc.] Expressed in his judgments on men: as the drowning of the old world, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, the consumption of the Israelites in the wilderness; or in shortening the days of men, and bringing them to the dust of death; or by inflicting punishment on men after death; they are few that take notice of this, and consider it well, or look into the causes of it, the sins of men: such as are in hell experimentally know it; but men on earth, very few closely attend to it, or rarely think of it:

even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath; or who knows thy wrath, so as to fear thee? who considers it so, as that it has such an influence upon him to fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him, and fear to offend him, and seek to please him? or rather the wrath of God is answerable to men’s fear of him; and that, in some things and cases, men’s fears exceed the things feared; as afflictions viewed beforehand, and death itself: the fears of them are oftentimes greater, and more distressing, than they themselves, when they come; but so it is not with the wrath of God; the greatest fears, and

the most dreadful apprehensions of it, do not come up to it; it is full as great as they fear it is, and more so.

Ver. 12. *So teach us to number our days*, etc.] Not merely to count them, how many they are, in an arithmetical way; there is no need of divine teachings for that; some few instructions from an arithmetician, and a moderate skill in arithmetic, will enable persons not only to count the years of their lives, but even how many days they have lived: nor is this to be understood of calculating or reckoning of time to come; no man can count the number of days he has to live; the number of his days, months, and years, is with the Lord; but is hid from him: the living know they shall die; but know not how long they shall live, and when they shall die: this the Lord teaches not, nor should we be solicitous to know: but rather the meaning of the petition is, that God would teach us to number our days, as if the present one was the last; for we cannot boast of tomorrow; we know not but this day, or night, our souls may be required of us: but the sense is, that God would teach us seriously to meditate on, and consider of, the shortness of our days; that they are but as a shadow, and there is no abiding; and the vanity and sinfulness of them, that so we may not desire to live here always; and the troubles and sorrows of them, which may serve to wean us from the world, and to observe how unprofitably we have spent them; which may put us upon redeeming time, and also to take notice of the goodness of God, that has followed us all our days, which may lead us to repentance, and engage us in the fear of God:

that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom; to consider our latter end, and what will become of us hereafter; which is a branch of wisdom so to do; to seek the way of salvation by Christ; to seek to Christ, the wisdom of God, for it; to fear the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom; and to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; to all which an application of the heart is necessary; for wisdom is to be sought for heartily, and with the whole heart: and to this divine teachings are requisite, as well as to number our days; for unless a man is taught of God, and by his Spirit convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, he will never be concerned, in good earnest, about a future state; nor inquire the way of salvation, nor heartily apply to Christ for it: he may number his days, and consider the shortness of them, and apply his heart to folly, and not wisdom; (see [22:21](#)) Isaiah 22:21).

Ver. 13. *Return, O Lord,* etc.] Either from the fierceness of thine anger, according to Aben Ezra and Jarchi; of which complaint is made, (^{<1900>}Psalm 90:7,9), or unto us, from whom he had departed; for though God is everywhere, as to his being and immensity, yet, as to his gracious presence, he is not; and where that is, he sometimes withdraws it; and when he visits again with it, he may be said to return; and when he returns, he visits with it, and which is here prayed for; and designs a manifestation of himself, of his love and grace, and particularly his pardoning mercy; (see ^{<1804>}Psalm 80:14 85:2,3)

how long? this is a short abrupt way of speaking, in which something is understood, which the affection of the speaker would not admit him to deliver; and may be supplied, either thus,

how long wilt thou be angry? God is sometimes angry with his people, which, when they are sensible of, gives them a pain and uneasiness they are not able to bear; and though it endures but for a moment, yet they think it a long time; (see ^{<1816>}Psalm 30:5 85:5). Arama interprets it,

“how long ere the time of the Messiah shall come?”

or “how long wilt thou hide thyself?” when he does this, they are troubled; and though it is but for a small moment he forsakes them, yet they count it long, and as if it was for ever; (see ^{<1931>}Psalm 13:1 89:46), or “how long wilt thou afflict us?” as the Targum; afflictions come from the Lord, and sometimes continue long; at least they are thought so by the afflicted, who are ready to fear God has forgotten them and their afflictions, (^{<1943>}Psalm 44:23,24), or “how long wilt thou defer help?” the Lord helps, and that right early, at the most seasonable time, and when difficulties, are the greatest; but it sometimes seems long first; (see ^{<1918>}Psalm 6:3,4),

and let it repent thee concerning thy servants; men are all so, of right, by creation, and through the benefits of Providence; and many, in fact, being made willing servants by the grace of God; and this carries in it an argument for the petition: repentance does not properly belong to God; it is denied of him, (^{<0239>}Numbers 23:19 ^{<0159>}1 Samuel 15:29), yet it is sometimes ascribed to him, both with respect to the good he has done, or promised, and with respect to the evil he has brought on men, or threatened to bring; (see ^{<0016>}Genesis 6:6 ^{<0151>}1 Samuel 15:11 ^{<2488>}Jeremiah 18:8,10), and in the latter sense it is to be understood here; and intends not any change of mind or will in God, which cannot be; but a change of his

dispensations, with respect to desertion, affliction, and the like; which the Targum expresses thus,

“and turn from the evil thou hast said thou wilt do to thy servants:”

if this respects the Israelites in the wilderness, and their exclusion from Canaan, God never repented of what he threatened; he swore they should not enter it, and they did not, only their children, excepting two persons: some render the words, “comfort thy servants”^{f1310}; with thy presence, the discoveries of thy love, especially pardoning grace, and by removing afflictions, or supporting under them.

Ver. 14. *O satisfy us early with thy mercy*, etc.] Or “grace”^{f1311}; the means of grace, the God of all grace, and communion with him, Christ and his grace; things without which, souls hungry and thirsty, in a spiritual sense, cannot be satisfied; these will satisfy them, and nothing else; namely, the discoveries of the love of God, his pardoning grace and mercy, Christ and his righteousness, and the fulness of grace in him; (see ^{<968B>}Psalm 63:3-5 103:2-5), this grace and mercy they desire to be satisfied and filled with betimes, early, seasonably, as soon as could be, or it was fitting it should: it may be rendered “in the morning”^{f1312}, which some understand literally of the beginning of the day, and so lay a foundation for joy the whole day following: some interpret it of the morning of the resurrection; with which compare (^{<994>}Psalm 49:14) and (^{<975>}Psalm 17:15) others of the day of redemption and salvation, as Kimchi and Jarchi: it may well enough be applied to the morning of the Gospel dispensation; and Christ himself, who is “the mercy promised” unto the fathers, may be meant; “whose coming was prepared as the morning”; and satisfied such as were hungry and thirsty, weary and faint, with looking for it, (^{<868>}Hosea 6:3 ^{<814>}Jeremiah 31:14) The Targum is,

“satisfy us with thy goodness in the world, which is like to the morning;”

and Arama interprets it of the time of the resurrection of the dead.

that we may rejoice and be glad all our days; the love, grace, and mercy of God, his presence, and communion with him, the coming of Christ, and the blessings of grace by him, lay a solid foundation for lasting joy in the Lord’s people, who have reason always to rejoice in him; and their joy is such that no man can take from them, (^{<104>}Philippians 4:4 ^{<862>}John 16:22).

Ver. 15. *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us*, etc.] The days of affliction are times of sorrow; and days of prosperity make glad and joyful; and the psalmist here seems to desire an equal number of the one as of the other; not that an exact precise number of the one with the other is intended; but that there might be a proper proportion of the one to the other; and commonly God does “set the one over against the other”: there is a mixture of both in the believer’s life, which is like unto a chequer of black and white, in which there is a proper proportion of both colours; and so prosperity and adversity are had in turns, “and work together for good” to them that love the Lord: and when it is said “make us glad”, that is, with thy favour and presence, it suggests, that these are a sufficient recompence for all affliction and trouble; and if so here, what must the enjoyment of these be in heaven! Between this and present afflictions there is no proportion, neither with respect to the things themselves, nor the duration of them; (see ^{<B1818>}Romans 8:18 ^{<A0417>}2 Corinthians 4:17) and “the years” wherein “we have seen evil”; afflictions are evils; they flow from the evil of sin, and to some are the evil of punishment; and even chastisements are not joyous, but grievous: this may have respect to the forty years’ travel in the wilderness, in which the Israelites saw or had an experience of much affliction and trouble; and even to the four hundred years in which the seed of Abraham were afflicted in a land not their’s; (see ^{<B443>}Numbers 14:33,34 ^{<B1513>}Genesis 15:13). Hence the Jews ^{f1313} make the times of the Messiah to last four hundred years, answerable to those years of evil, and which they take to be the sense of the text; and so Jarchi’s note on it is,

“make us glad in the days of the Messiah, according to the number of the days in which thou hast afflicted us in the captivities, and according to the number of the years in which we have seen evil.”

Ver. 16. *Let thy work appear unto thy servants*, etc.] Either the work of Providence, in conducting the people of Israel through the wilderness, and bringing them into the land of Canaan; which God had promised to do for them, especially for their posterity, and therefore their “children” are particularly mentioned in the next clause; or the work of salvation, as Kimchi; even the great work of redemption by the Messiah, which is the work of God, which he determined should be done, appointed his Son to do, and gave it him for that purpose now this was spoken of, and promised, as what should be done; but as yet it did not appear; wherefore it is prayed for, that it might; that the Redeemer might be sent, and the work

be done: or else the work of grace upon the heart, which is God's work, and an internal one, and not so obvious to view; and hence it is entreated, that, being wrought by him, he would shine upon it, bear witness to it, and make it manifest that it was really wrought, and a genuine and true work; and moreover this may reach to and include the great work of God, to be brought about in the latter day, respecting the conversion of the Jews, the bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, the destruction of antichrist, and the establishment and glory of the kingdom of Christ:

and thy glory unto their children; the glory of God, displayed in the above works of providence and grace, particularly in the work of redemption, in which all the divine perfections are glorified; or Christ himself, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, that he would appear to them in human nature, and dwell among them; and they behold his glory, as they afterwards did, (¹³¹⁴John 1:14), or else the sense is, that the glorious grace of God might appear unto them, and upon them, by which they would be made all glorious within, and be changed into the image of Christ, from glory to glory; or that the Shechinah, the glorious majesty and presence of God, might be among them, and be seen by them in his sanctuary, (¹³¹⁵Psalm 63:2).

Ver. 17. *And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us*, etc.] Either the grace and favour of God, his gracious presence vouchsafed in his ordinances, which makes his tabernacles amiable and lovely, and his ways of pleasantness; or the righteousness of Christ, which is that comeliness he puts upon his people, whereby they become a perfection of beauty; or the beauty of holiness, which appears on them, when renewed and sanctified by the Spirit; every grace is beautiful and ornamental: or Christ himself may be meant; for the words may be rendered, "let the beauty of the Lord be with us"^{f1314}; he who is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand altogether lovely, fairer than the children of men, let him appear as the Immanuel, God with us:

and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it; or "direct it"^{f1315}; though God works all works of grace for us, and in us, yet there is a work of duty and obedience to him for us to do; nor should we be slothful and inactive, but be the rather animated to it by what he has done for us: our hands should be continually employed in service for his honour and glory; and, whatever we find to do, do it with all the might of grace we have; and in which we need divine direction and

strength, and also establishment, that we may be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: and this petition is repeated, to show the sense he had of the necessity of it, and of the vehemence and strength of desire after it. Jarchi interprets this of the work of the tabernacle, in which the hands of the Israelites were employed in the wilderness; so Arama of the tabernacle of Bezaleel.