

PSALM 114

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 114

The title of this psalm in the Arabic version is “hallelujah”, as in some preceding ones; it is part of the great “Hallel” sung at the passover, and with great propriety; since the subject matter of it is the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt, typical of our spiritual redemption by Christ; and of the effectual calling of God’s elect out of a state of nature into a state of grace; and particularly of the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them from Paganism to Christianity: the inscription of the Syriac version is,

“a psalm without a name, out of the ancient writing; concerning Moses, who sung praise at the sea; but unto us the calling of the Gospel, by which we become a new people; spiritual to God, who is incarnate; to Jesus Christ, who redeemed us by his blood from the curse of the Scripture (the law), and hath cleansed us from sin by his Spirit.”

Ver. 1. *When Israel went out of Egypt*, etc.] The people of Israel in a body, publicly, openly, and not by stealth; freely and willingly, not forced and drove out; though urged by the Egyptians to go, through the hand of God upon them; and so went out with the mighty hand and outstretched arm of the Lord, and with great riches, and in health, not one feeble or sick among them.

The house of Jacob from a people of strange language; or barbarous; as every language was reckoned by the Jews but their own; the Egyptian language they did not understand; (see ^{<1816>}Psalm 81:5 ^{<0423>}Genesis 42:23), no doubt many of them learned it during their long stay there, but in general they retained their own language. This was an emblem of the Lord’s people in effectual calling, coming out of bondage into liberty, out of darkness into light, out of superstition, and idolatry and profaneness, to the service of the true God in righteousness and true holiness; and from a people of a strange language to those that speak the language of Canaan, a pure language, in which they can understated one another when they

converse together, either about experience or doctrine; and the manner of their coming out is much the same, by strength of hand, by the power of divine grace, yet willingly and cheerfully, with great riches, the riches of grace, and a title to the riches of glory, and with much spiritual strength; for, though weak in themselves, yet are strong in Christ.

Ver. 2. *Judah was his sanctuary*, etc.] Meaning not the tribe of Judah only, though that in many things had the preeminence; the kingdom belonging to it, the chief ruler being out of it, especially the Messiah; its standard was pitched and moved first; it offered first to the service of the Lord; and the Jews have a tradition, mentioned by Jarchi and Kimchi, that this tribe, with its prince at the head of it, went into the Red sea first; the others fearing, but afterwards followed, encouraged by their example: but rather all the tribes are meant, the whole body of the people; for this is not to be understood of the tabernacle or temple in the tribe of Judah, sometimes called a sanctuary; for neither of these were in being when Israel came out of Egypt; but it may be rendered, “Judah was his holiness”^{f1599}, or was holiness to the Lord, the Lord’s holy people; (see ~~400~~ Jeremiah 2:2,3), not all internally holy; for there were many that came out of Egypt that were unholy, rebellious, and disobedient, and whose carcasses fell in the wilderness; but externally, when brought out of Egypt they were separated from all other people, and in this sense sanctified, and became a holy and special people, chosen by the Lord to be so; with whom, he made a covenant, and to whom he gave holy laws and righteous statutes: and in this they were typical of those who are effectually called by grace with an holy calling, and unto holiness; have principles of grace and holiness wrought in them, and have Holiness to the Lord written upon them; they have the sanctification of the Spirit, and Christ is made sanctification to them; and they are the Lord’s sanctuary, in which he dwells.

And Israel his dominion: for, though all the world is his kingdom and his government, yet the people of Israel were in a very particular and remarkable manner his dominion; from the time of their coming out of Egypt to their having a king, their government was properly a theocracy; God was their King, and by him they were immediately ruled and governed, and had a body of laws given them from him, and were under his immediate care and protection, (~~0005~~ Exodus 19:5 ~~0007~~ 1 Samuel 8:7 12:12). In this they were typical of the saints called by grace, who are then translated from the power of Satan into the kingdom of Christ; whom they acknowledge to be their Lord and King, and whose laws, commands, and

ordinances, they willingly observe; the people of God are often represented as a kingdom, and Christ as King of saints; the Targum is

“the congregation of the house of Judah was united to his holiness, and Israel to his power.”

Ver. 3. *The sea saw it, and fled*, etc.] When the Word of the Lord appeared at it, as the Targum in the king’s Bible; the Red sea, to which the Israelites came when they went out of Egypt; this saw that Judah was the Lord’s holy and peculiar people, and that Israel were the subjects of his kingdom; it saw the presence of the Lord among them; it saw him in the glory of his perfections, and felt his power; (see ^{<9716>}Psalm 77:16), at which its waters fled and parted, and stood up as a wall to make way for Israel to pass through as on dry land, (^{<0121>}Exodus 14:21,29). This was typical of the nations of the Gentile world, comparable to the sea, (^{<2012>}Daniel 7:2,3), who saw the work of God going on among them under the ministry of the Gospel in the first times of it, whereby multitudes were turned from idols to serve the living God; this they saw and trembled at, and they and their kings fled for fear; (see ^{<2415>}Isaiah 41:5 ^{<6165>}Revelation 6:15-17), and of the stop put to the ocean of sin in a man’s heart, and to the torrent of wickedness that breaks out from thence, by powerful and efficacious grace, much more abounding where sin has abounded.

Jordan was driven back; this was done not at the time of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, but just before their entrance into the land of Canaan, and in order to it; and being an event similar to the former is here mentioned, and done by the power and presence of God; for as soon as the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the Lord, the symbol of the divine Presence, were dipped in the brim of the waters, the waters below were cut off from those above, and stood up on an heap, and all the Israelites passed through on dry ground, (^{<6113>}Joshua 3:13-17), this was an emblem of death, through which the saints pass to glory, which is abolished by Christ, its sting and curse taken away; which when the saints come to, they find it like Jordan driven back, and have an easy and abundant passage through it; and when on the brink of it, and even in the midst of it, sing, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (^{<6155>}1 Corinthians 15:55).

Ver. 4. *The mountains skipped like rams*, etc.] The mountains of Sinai and Horeb quaked and moved at the presence of the Lord, when he descended thereon to give the law; these saw his glory and trembled, (^{<0198>}Exodus 19:18 ^{<0918>}Psalm 68:8 ^{<3116>}Habakkuk 3:6,10).

And the little hills like lambs; very beautiful are the larger mountains of Sinai and Horeb compared to rams, and the motion of them to their skipping; and the little hills adjacent to them to lambs: these may represent the greater and lesser governors in the Roman empire at the time when such large conversions were made in it as before observed; and which skipped, and trembled, and fled, and were moved out of their places at the downfall of Paganism and progress of Christianity, (~~664~~ Revelation 6:14) and also may be an emblem of the difficulties which lie like mountains and hills in the way of a sinner's conversion and effectual calling, which yet give way to and are surmounted by the efficacious grace of God; all mountains become a plain before him, and when he works none can let.

Ver. 5. *What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?* etc.] What was the matter with thee? what appeared to thee? what didst thou see? what didst thou feel, which caused thee to flee in such haste?

Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? what is the meaning that thou didst not continue to flow as usual? what was it that stopped thy flowing tide? that cut off thy waters? that drove them back as fast or faster than they came?

Ver. 6. *Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams*, etc.] Not for joy, but fear; what caused these trembling motions, these violent agitations, and quakings, and movings to and fro like the skipping of rams?

And ye little hills, like lambs? what was it that disturbed you, and put you into a panic, that you skipped like frightened lambs? These questions are put, by a beautiful and poetical figure, to inanimate creatures; the Red sea, the river of Jordan, the mountains of Sinai and Horeb, and the hills about them; to which an answer is turned in the next verse.

Ver. 7. *Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord*, etc.] Or, “the earth has trembled at the presence of the Lord”; so the Syriac and Arabic versions render it; the imperative is sometimes put for the preterite or past tense, (see ~~1021~~ Psalm 22:9), likewise the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions thus render it, “the earth is moved at the presence of the Lord”; and then the sense is by a prosopopoeia. Is it to be wondered at, that we, the sea, the river of Jordan, the mountains and hills, have fled, or have been driven back, or have skipped like rams and lambs, when the whole earth, of which we are a part, has trembled at the presence of God? who, when he does but look, the earth trembles; and when he touches the hills, they

smoke, (~~1942~~ Psalm 104:32 68:8). It is at the same presence of God we have been thus moved, the power of which we have felt, even

at the presence of the God of Jacob; who brought Jacob out of Egypt, led him through the sea, and gave him the law on Sinai. This is not to be understood of the general and common presence of God, which is everywhere, and with all his creatures for this is not attended with such wonderful phenomena as here mentioned, either in the literal or mystic sense; but of the majestic, powerful, and gracious presence of God; such as he sometimes causes to attend his ministers, his word, his churches, his martyrs and confessors; and so as to strike an awe upon, and terror into, their greatest enemies, as well as to convert his own people.

Ver. 8. *Which turned the rock into a standing water*, etc.] Both at Rephidim and at Kadesh; which being smitten, streams of water flowed out like rivers, as if the rock itself was changed into water; and which came a constant and continual supply for the Israelites, for it is said to follow them; (see ~~1276~~ Exodus 17:6 ~~1011~~ Numbers 20:11 ~~1985~~ Psalm 78:15,16 105:41 ~~6104~~ 1 Corinthians 10:4).

The flint into a fountain of waters; referring to the same thing, the rocks were flinty ones. This was a type of Christ the Rock; who has an abiding fulness of grace in him; is the fountain of it, from whence it flows in great abundance for the supply of his people's wants, while passing through this wilderness to Canaan's land.