

PSALM LX.

TITLE.—Here is a lengthy title, but it helps us much to expound the Psalm. To the Chief Musician upon Shushan-eduth, or the Lily of Testimony. The forty-fifth was on the lilies, and represented the kingly warrior in his beauty going forth to war; here we see him dividing the spoil and bearing testimony to the glory of God. Tunes have strange names apparently, but this results from the fact that we do not know what was in the composer's mind, else they might seem to be touchingly appropriate; perhaps the music or the musical instruments have more to do with this title than the Psalm itself. Yet in war-songs roses and lilies are often mentioned, and one remembers Macaulay's Song of the Huguenots, though perhaps we err in mentioning so carnal a verse—

*"Now by the lips of those ye love, fair gentlemen of France,
Charge for the golden lillies now, upon them, with the lance."*

Michtam of David, to teach. David obeyed the precept to teach the children of Israel; he recorded the Lord's mighty acts that they might be rehearsed in the ears of generations to come. Golden secrets are to be told on the house-tops; these things were not done in a corner and ought not to be buried in silence. We ought gladly to learn what inspiration so beautifully teaches. When he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah. The combined Aramean tribes sought to overcome Israel, but were signally defeated. When Joab returned. He had been engaged in another region, and the enemies of Israel took advantage of his absence, but on his return with Abishai the fortunes of war were changed. And smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand. More than this appear to have fallen according to 1 Chron. xviii. 12, but this commemorates one memorable part of the conflict. Terrible must have been the battle, but decisive indeed were the results, and the power of the enemy was utterly broken. Well did the Lord deserve a song from his servant.

DIVISIONS.—Properly the song may be said to consist of three parts: the complimentary verses, 1—3; the glad some, 4—8; the prayerful, 9—12. We have divided it as the sense appeared to change.

EXPOSITION.

O GOD, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.

2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh.

3 Thou hast showed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.

1. Before the days of Saul, Israel had been brought very low; during his government it had suffered from internal strife, and his reign was closed by an overwhelming disaster at Gilboa. David found himself the possessor of a tottering throne, troubled with the double evil of faction at home, and invasion from abroad. He traced at once the evil to its true source, and began at the fountainhead. His were the politics of piety, which after all are the wisest and most profound. He knew that the displeasure of the Lord had brought calamity upon the nation, and to the removal of that displeasure he set himself by earnest prayer. "O God, thou hast cast us off." Thou hast treated us as foul and offensive things, to be put away; as mean and beggarly persons, to be shunned with contempt; as useless dead boughs, to be torn away from the tree which they disfigure. To be cast off by God is the worst calamity that can befall a man or a people; but the worst form of it is when the person is not aware of it and is indifferent to it. When the divine desertion causes mourning and repentance, it will be but partial and temporary. When a cast-off soul sighs for its God it is not indeed cast off at all. "Thou hast scattered us." David clearly sees the fruits of the divine anger, he traces the flight of Israel's warriors, the breaking of her power, the division in her body politic,

to the hand of God. Whoever might be the secondary agent of these disasters, he beholds the Lord's hand as the prime moving cause, and pleads with the Lord concerning the matter. Israel was like a city with a breach made in its wall, because her God was wroth with her. These first two verses, with their depressing confession, must be regarded as greatly enhancing the power of the faith which in the after verses rejoices in better days, through the Lord's gracious return unto his people. "*Thou hast been displeased.*" This is the secret of our miseries. Had we pleased thee, thou wouldst have pleased us; but as we have walked contrary to thee, thou hast walked contrary to us. "*O turn thyself to us again.*" Forgive the sin and smile once more. Turn us to thee, turn thou to us. Aforetime thy face was towards thy people, be pleased to look on us again with thy favour and grace. Some read it, "*Thou wilt turn to us again,*" and it makes but slight difference which way we take it, for a true-hearted prayer brings a blessing so soon that it is no presumption to consider it as already obtained. There was more need for God to turn to his people than for Judah's troops to be brave, or Joab and the commanders wise. God with us is better than strong battalions; God displeased is more terrible than all the Edomites that ever marched into the valley of salt, or all the devils that ever opposed the church. If the Lord turn to us, what care we for Aram-naharaim or Aram-zobah, or death, or hell? but if he withdraw his presence we tremble at the fall of a leaf.

2. "*Thou hast made the earth to tremble.*" Things were as unsettled as though the solid earth had been made to quake; nothing was stable; the priests had been murdered by Saul, the worst men had been put in office, the military power had been broken by the Philistines, and the civil authority had grown despicable through insurrections and intestine contests. "*Thou hast broken it.*" As the earth cracks, and opens itself in rifts during violent earthquakes, so was the kingdom rent with strife and calamity. "*Heal the breaches thereof.*" As a house in time of earthquakes is shaken, and the walls begin to crack, and gape with threatening fissures, so was it with the kingdom. "*For it shaketh.*" It tottered to a fall; if not soon propped up and repaired it would come down in complete ruin. So far gone was Israel, that only God's interposition could preserve it from utter destruction. How often have we seen churches in this condition, and how suitable is the prayer before us, in which the extremity of the need is used, as an argument for help. The like may be said of our own personal religion, it is sometimes so tried, that like a house shaken by earthquake it is ready to come down with a crash, and none but the Lord himself can repair its breaches, and save us from utter destruction.

3. "*Thou hast showed thy people hard things.*" Hardships had been heaped upon them, and the Psalmist traces these rigorous providences to their fountain-head. Nothing had happened by chance, but all had come by divine design and with a purpose, yet for all that things had gone hard with Israel. The Psalmist claims that they were still the Lord's own people, though in the first verse he had said, "*thou hast cast us off.*" The language of complaint is usually confused, and faith in time of trouble ere long contradicts the desponding statements of the flesh. "*Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.*" Our afflictions have made us like men drunken with some potent and bitter wine; we are in amazement, confusion, delirium; our steps reel, and we stagger as those about to fall. The great physician gives his patients potent potions to purge out their abounding and deep-seated diseases. Astonishing evils bring with them astonishing results. The grapes of the vineyard of sin produce a wine which fills the most hardened with anguish when justice compels them to quaff the cup. There is a fire-water of anguish of soul which even to the righteous makes a cup of trembling, which causes them to be exceeding sorrowful almost unto death. When grief becomes so habitual as to be our drink, and to take the place of our joys, becoming our only wine, then are we in an evil case indeed.

4 Thou has given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

5 That thy beloved may be delivered; save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.

4. Here the strain takes a turn. The Lord has called back to himself his servants, and commissioned them for his service, presenting them with a standard to be

used in his wars. "*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.*" Their afflictions had led them to exhibit holy fear, and then being fitted for the Lord's favour, he gave them an ensign, which would be both a rallying point for their hosts, a proof that he had sent them to fight, and a guarantee of victory. The bravest men are usually intrusted with the banner, and it is certain that those who fear God most have less fear of man than any others. The Lord has given us the standard of the gospel, let us live to uphold it, and if needful die to defend it. Our right to contend for God, and our reason for expecting success, are found in the fact that the faith has been once committed to the saints, and that by the Lord himself. "*That it may be displayed because of the truth.*" Banners are for the breeze, the sun, the battle. Israel might well come forth boldly, for a sacred standard was borne aloft before them. To publish the gospel is a sacred duty, to be ashamed of it a deadly sin. The truth of God was involved in the triumph of David's armies, he had promised them victory; and so in the proclamation of the gospel we need feel no hesitancy, for as surely as God is true he will give success to his own word. For the truth's sake, and because the true God is on our side, let us in these modern days of warfare emulate the warriors of Israel, and unfurl our banners to the breeze with confident joy. Dark signs of present or coming ill must not dishearten us; if the Lord had meant to destroy us he would not have given us the gospel; the very fact that he has revealed himself in Christ Jesus involves the certainty of victory. *Magna est veritas et prevalebit.*

"Hard things thou hast upon us laid,
And made us drink most bitter wine;
But still thy banner we've display'd,
And borne aloft thy truth divine.

"Our courage fails not, though the night
No earthly lamp avails to break,
For thou wilt soon arise in might,
And of our captors captives make."

"*Selah.*" There is so much in the fact of a banner being given to the hosts of Israel, so much of hope, of duty, of comfort, that a pause is fitly introduced. The sense justifies it, and the more joyful strain of the music necessitates it.

5. "*That thy beloved may be delivered.*" David was the Lord's beloved, his name signifies "dear, or beloved," and there was in Israel a remnant according to the election of grace, who were the beloved of the Lord; for their sakes the Lord wrought great marvels, and he had an eye to them in all his mighty acts. God's beloved are the inner seed, for whose sake he preserves the entire nation, which acts as a husk to the vital part. This is the main design of providence, "*That thy beloved may be delivered;*" if it were not for their sakes he would neither give a banner nor send victory to it. "*Save with thy right hand, and hear me.*" Save at once, before the prayer is over; the case is desperate unless there be immediate salvation. Tarry not, O Lord, till I have done pleading; save first and hear afterwards. The salvation must be a right royal and eminent one, such as only the omnipotent hand of God linked with his dexterous wisdom can achieve. Urgent distress puts men upon pressing and bold petitions such as this. We may by faith ask for and expect that our extremity will be God's opportunity; special and memorable deliverances will be wrought out when dire calamities appear to be imminent. Here is one suppliant for many, even as in the case of our Lord's intercession for his saints. He, the Lord's David, pleads for the rest of the beloved, beloved and accepted in him the Chief Beloved; he seeks salvation as though it were for himself, but his eye is ever upon all those who are one with him in the Father's love. When divine interposition is necessary for the rescue of the elect it must occur, for the first and greatest necessity of providence is the honour of God, and the salvation of his chosen. This is fixed fate, the centre of the immutable decree, the inmost thought of the unchangeable Jehovah.

6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver;

8 Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me.

6. "*God hath spoken in his holiness.*" Faith is never happier than when it can fall back upon the promise of God. She sets this over against all discouraging circumstances; let outward providences say what they will, the voice of a faithful God drowns every sound of tear. God had promised Israel victory, and David the kingdom: the holiness of God secured the fulfilment of his own covenant, and therefore the king spake confidently. The goodly land had been secured to the tribes by the promise made to Abraham, and that divine grant was an abundantly sufficient warrant for the belief that Israel's arms would be successful in battle. Believer make good use of this, and banish doubts while promises remain. "*I will rejoice,*" or "*I will triumph.*" Faith regards the promise not as fiction but fact, and therefore drinks in joy from it, and grasps victory by it. "*God hath spoken; I will rejoice;*" here is a fit motto for every soldier of the cross. "*I will divide Shechem.*" As a victor David would allot the conquered territory to those to whom God had given it by lot. Shechem was an important portion of the country which as yet had not yielded to his government; but he saw that by Jehovah's help it would be, and indeed was all his own. Faith divides the spoil, she is sure of what God has promised, and enters at once into possession. "*And mete out the valley of Succoth.*" As the east so the west of Jordan should be allotted to the proper persons. Enemies should be expelled, and the landmarks of peaceful ownership set up. Where Jacob had pitched his tent, there his rightful heirs should till the soil. When God has spoken, his divine *shall*, our "*I will,*" becomes no idle boast, but the fit echo of the Lord's decree. Believer, up and take possession of covenant mercies, "*Divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.*" Let not Canaanitish doubts and legalisms keep thee out of the inheritance of grace. Live up to thy privileges, take the good which God provides thee.

7. "*Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.*" He claims the whole land on account of the promise. Two other great divisions of the country he mentions, evidently delighting to survey the goodly land which the Lord had given him. All things are ours, whether things present or things to come; no mean portion belongs to the believer, and let him not think meanly of it. No enemy shall withhold from true faith what God has given her, for grace makes her mighty to wrest it from the foe. Life is mine, death is mine, for Christ is mine. "*Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.*" All the military power of the valiant tribe was at the command of David, and he praises God for it. God will bow to the accomplishment of his purposes all the valour of men: the church may cry, "the prowess of armies is mine," God will overrule all their achievements for the progress of his cause. "*Judah is my lawgiver.*" There the civil power was concentrated: the king being of that tribe sent forth his laws out of her midst. We know no lawgiver, but the King who came out of Judah. To all the claims of Rome, or Oxford, or the councils of men, we pay no attention; we are free from all other ecclesiastical rule, but that of Christ; but we yield joyful obedience to him: "*Judah is my lawgiver.*" Amid distractions it is a great thing to have good and sound legislation, it was a balm for Israel's wounds, it is our joy in the church of Christ.

8. Having looked at home with satisfaction, the hero-king now looks abroad with exultation. "*Moab,*" so injurious to me in former years, "*is my washpot.*" The basin into which the water falls when it is poured from an ewer upon my feet. A mere pot to hold the dirty water after my feet have been washed in it. Once she defiled Israel, according to the counsel of Balaam, the son of Beor; but she shall be no longer able to perpetrate such baseness; she shall be a washpot for those whom she sought to pollute. The wicked as we see in them the evil, the fruit, and the punishment of sin, shall help on the purification of the saints. This is contrary to their will, and to the nature of things, but faith finds honey in the lion, and a washpot in filthy Moab. David treats his foes as but insignificant and inconsiderable; a whole nation he counts but as a footbath for his kingdom. "*Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.*" As a man when bathing throws his shoes on one side, so would he obtain his dominion over haughty Esau's descendants as easily as a man casts a shoe. Perhaps he would throw his shoe as nowadays men throw their glove, as a challenge to them to dare dispute his sway. He did not need draw a sword to smite his now crippled and utterly despondent adversary, for if he dared revolt he would only need to throw his slipper at him, and he would tremble. Easily are we victors when Omnipotence leads the way. The day shall come when the church shall with equal ease subdue China and Ethiopia to the sceptre of the Son of David. Every believer also may by faith triumph over all difficulties, and reign

with him who hath made us kings and priests. "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb," shall yet be said of all who rest in the power of Jesus. "*Philistia, triumph thou because of me.*" Be so subdued as to rejoice in my victories over my other foes. Or does he mean, I who smote thy champion have at length so subdued thee that thou shalt never be able to rejoice over Israel again; but if thou must needs triumph it must be with me, and not against me; or rather is it a taunting defiance, a piece of irony? O proud Philistia, where are thy vaunts? Where now thy haughty looks, and promised conquests? Thus dare we defy the last enemy, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" So utterly hopeless is the cause of hell when the Lord comes forth to the battle, that even the weakest daughter of Zion may shake her head at the enemy, and laugh him to scorn. O the glorying of faith! There is not a grain of vainglory in it, but yet her holy boastings none can hinder. When the Lord speaks the promise, we will not be slow to rejoice and glory in it.

9 Who will bring me *into* the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

10 *Wilt* not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off? and *thou*, O God, *which* didst not go out with our armies?

9. As yet the interior fortresses of Edom had not been subdued. Their invading bands had been slain in the valley of salt, and David intended to push his conquests even to Petra the city of the rock, deemed to be impregnable. "*Who will bring me into the strong city?*" It was all but inaccessible, and hence the question of David. When we have achieved great success it must be a stimulus to greater efforts, but it must not become a reason for self-confidence. We must look to the strong for strength as much at the close of a campaign as at its beginning. "*Who will lead me into Edom?*" High up among the stars stood the city of stone, but God could lead his servant up to it. No heights of grace are too elevated for us, the Lord being our leader, but we must beware of high things attempted in self-reliance. EXCELSIOR is well enough as a cry, but we must look to the highest of all for guidance. Joab could not bring David into Edom. The veterans of the valley of salt could not force the passage, yet was it to be attempted, and David looked to the Lord for help. Heathen nations are yet to be subdued. The city of the seven hills must yet hear the gospel. Who will give the church the power to accomplish this? The answer is not far to seek.

10. "*Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off?*" Yes, the chastising God is our only hope. He loves us still. For a small moment does he forsake, but with great mercy does he gather his people. Strong to smite, he is also strong to save. He who proved to us our need of him by showing us what poor creatures we are without him, will now reveal the glory of his help by conducting great enterprises to a noble issue. "*And thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?*" The self-same God art thou, and to thee faith cleaves. Though thou slay us, we trust in thee, and look for thy merciful help.

11 Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man.

12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

11. "*Give us help from trouble.*" Help us to overcome the disasters of civil strife and foreign invasion; save us from further incursions from without and division within. Do thou, O Lord, work this deliverance, "*for vain is the help of man.*" We have painfully learned the utter impotence of armies, kings, and nations without thine help. Our banners trailed in the mire have proven our weakness without thee, but yonder standard borne aloft before us shall witness to our valour now that thou hast come to our rescue. How sweetly will this verse suit the tried people of God as a frequent ejaculation. We know how true it is.

12. "*Through God we shall do valiantly.*" From God all power proceeds, and all we do well is done by divine operation; but still we, as soldiers of the great king, are to fight, and to fight valiantly too. Divine working is not an argument for human inaction, but rather is it the best excitement for courageous effort. Helped in the past, we shall also be helped in the future, and being assured of this we resolve to play the man. "*For he it is that shall tread down our enemies.*" From him shall the might proceed, to him shall the honour be given. Like straw on the thrashing-floor beneath the feet of the oxen shall we tread upon our abject foes,

but it shall rather be *his* foot which presses them down than ours; his hand shall go out against them so as to put them down and keep them in subjection. In the case of Christians there is much encouragement for a resolve similar to that of the first clause. "*We shall do valiantly.*" We will not be ashamed of our colours, afraid of our foes, or fearful of our cause. The Lord is with us, omnipotence sustains us, and we will not hesitate, we dare not be cowards. O that our King, the true David, were come to claim the earth, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—There are some difficulties attendant upon the title of this Psalm, when it is compared with the contents. We naturally expect after such an inscription, joy, congratulation, and praise for victory; but the Psalmist breaks out into lamentations and bitter complaints: his strains are, however, changed, when he has proceeded as far as verse three, where he begins to feel confidence, and to employ the language of exultation and triumph. The best means of removing this discrepancy seems to be by remarking, that this Psalm was written after some of the battles of which mention is made in the title, but that the author does not restrict himself to those events without taking a wider range, so as to embrace the afflictive condition both of Israel and Judah during the latter part of Saul's life, and the former years of David's reign. In the concluding years of Saul, the Philistines obtained a superiority over him, and finally destroyed him with his army. Subsequently to these events the whole land was in a very disturbed and agitated condition, arising out of the contentions between the partisans of Saul's family, and those who were attached to David. The nations which inhabited the regions adjacent to the land of Canaan were at all times inimical to the Jews, and seized every opportunity of attacking and injuring them. But when David had succeeded in uniting the whole nation under his authority, he proceeded to avenge the injuries and insults that had been inflicted on his countrymen by the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Syrians; and God was pleased to give him signal success in his undertakings. He appears, therefore, to have combined all these transactions, and made them the subject of this Psalm.—*William Walford.*

Title.—"Shushan-eduth." *The lilies of the testimony*—means, that this Psalm has for its chief subject something very lovely and cheering in the law: namely, the words of promise quoted in the beginning of verse six, according to which the land of Canaan belonged to the Israelites, upon which is thus established the confidence expressed in verses 6—8, with respect to their right of property over the land, and their possession of it. This promise, not to cite many other passages which occur in the Five Books of Moses, and even so early as the patriarchs, is contained in Genesis xlix., and Deut. xxxiii. It is evident of what value and importance this promise was, and particularly the remembrance of it at this time.—*T. C. Barth's "Bible Manual,"* 1865.

Title.—The only other "*eduth*" or "*testimony*" in the Psalter, Psalm lxxx., makes mention by name of the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, and is a witness against those tribes for forsaking the Shepherd of Israel who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp, M.A., in "An Introduction to the Study and Use of the Psalms,"* 1860.

Title.—*Aram-naharaim.*—The name *Aram* corresponds to *Syria* in its widest and vaguest sense, and is joined with other names to designate particular parts of that large country. It even includes Mesopotamia, which is a term of physical rather than political geography, and denotes the space between the Tigris and Euphrates, corresponding to *Aram-Naharaim*, or *Syria of the Two Rivers*, in the verse before us. The king of this country was tributary to the king of *Aram-Zobah*, as appears from the account of David's second Aramean war (2 Sam. x. 16, 19).—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Title.—"When he strove with *Aram-naharaim* and with *Aram-zobah.*" An insult offered to David's ambassadors by Hanun, king of the Ammonites, led to a serious war. Hanun obtained mercenaries from Syria to reinforce his army, Joab and

Abishai his brother, David's generals, gave them battle. Joab, opposed to the Syrians, gained the first success, and the Ammonites, seeing their allies routed, took to flight into their town. But this defeat provoked a great coalition, embracing all the people between the Jordan and the Euphrates. David, however, fearlessly marched against them at the head of his army; he vanquished all his enemies, and made himself master of the small Aramæan kingdoms of Damascus, Zobah, and Hamath, and subjugated the Eastern Idumæans, who met their final defeat in the Valley of Salt.—*François Lenormant and E. Chevallier, in "A Manual of the Ancient History of the East," 1869.*

Title.—"Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand," compared with 2 Sam. viii. 13, "David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men," and 1 Chron. xviii. 12, where this very service was performed by Abishai. Answer. It is one thing to attribute the victory for the honour of the king that was the cause. But the mentioning of these chief generals, by whom the service was performed, is another. David, under God, must have the honour of the work, for the increase of his name, being set for the typing out of Christ, who must have all the glory of the day, whatever conquest he gets by instruments of that service here, who likewise are typed out in David's worthies, of whom Joab and Abishai were chief. By these he obtained that great victory over Hadadezer. In returning from which Joab found his brother Abishai engaged "in the valley of salt" against eighteen thousand Edomites or Syrians (all one), whose valour the Almighty so looked on, as he attributes the whole slaughter to him, because first attempting it. Joab, it seems, took this in his return from the former slaughter, and fell in for the assistance of his brother Abishai (for that was their usual course: though they divided their armies, they did not divide their hearts). But if the enemies were too strong, one would help the other. 1 Chron. xix. 12. And of this eighteen thousand attributed to David and Abishai before, Joab slew twelve thousand of them; the memory of which service is here embalmed with a Psalm; first showing the extremes they were in, doubtful at first they should not get the victory. Secondly, applying it to the kingdom of Christ. Lastly, ascribing all the honour of the conquest to God; saying, through God this valiant service was done; it was he that trod down our enemies; and will do (last verse).—*William Streat, in "The Dividing of the Hoof," 1654.*

Title.—"The Valley of Salt." The ridge of Usdum exhibits more distinctly its peculiar formation; the main body of the mountain being a solid mass of rock salt. . . . We could at first hardly believe our eyes, until we had several times approached the precipices, and broken off pieces to satisfy ourselves, both by the touch and taste. The salt, where thus exposed, is everywhere more or less furrowed by the rains. As we advanced, large lumps and masses, broken off from above, lay like rocks along the shore, or were fallen down as *débris*. The very stones beneath our feet were wholly of salt. . . . The position of this mountain, at the south end of the sea, enables us also to ascertain the place of "The Valley of Salt" mentioned in Scripture, where the Hebrews under David, and again under Amaziah, gained decisive victories over Edom. This valley could have been no other than the Ghôr south of the Dead Sea, adjacent to the mountain of salt; it separates indeed the ancient territories of Judah and Edom.—*Edward Robinson's "Biblical Researches in Palestine."*

Title.—The historic record mentions *eighteen thousand* slain, and here but *twelve thousand*. The greater of course includes the less. The discrepancy may be explained by supposing that the title contains the numbers slain by one division of the army, or that the *twelve thousand* were slain in the battle, and the residue in the flight. Or an error may have crept into the text. Every scholar admits that there is sometimes serious difficulty in settling the numbers of the Old Testament. In this place Calvin has *two and twenty thousand*, the common version *twelve thousand*, while the original is *two ten thousand*, which taken in one way would mean *twenty thousand, i.e., two tens of thousands*. Hammond refers the numbers slain to different battles, and so avoids the difficulty.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—"O God, thou hast cast us off." The word here used means properly to be foul, rancid, offensive; and then, to treat anything as if it were foul or rancid; to repel, to spurn, to cast away. It is strong language, meaning that God had seemed to treat them as if they were loathsome or offensive to him.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—“*Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.*” They pray that this may be done with the utmost speed, because there was danger in delay, for the kingdom was already pressed down with a heavy calamity, and on the brink of ruin, which is signified by the word שָׁדַד whose origin is in a very strong and tremulous inclination to one side, properly from the application of a *lever*, and is applied to those who are leaning so far to one side that they are just on the point of falling; figuratively, therefore, it expresses a *most perilous condition*, in which one is on the edge of destruction.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—“*Heal the breaches thereof.*” Even Israel is subject to “*breaches.*” So it was with the literal typical Israel, David’s kingdom; so it may be with spiritual mystical Israel, the kingdom of Christ, the church of God upon earth. There are “*breaches*” from *without*, and “*breaches*” from *within*. I will invert the order. From *without*, by open persecution; from *within*, by intestine and home-bred divisions. Of both these the church of God in all ages hath had sufficient experience. Look we upon the *primitive* times, during the infancy of the church, however the *soundest* and *entirest* church that ever was, yet how was it *broken!* Broken, as by foreign persecutions, so by home-bred divisions. Both these ways was the church during the apostles’ times broken, distressed by enemies from without who persecuted it.—*John Brinsley* (1600—1665), in “*The Healing of Israel’s Breaches.*”

Verse 2.—“*It shaketh.*” That is, presaging nothing but *ruin and downfall*, unless it be speedily underpropped, and “*the breaches thereof*” made up and “*healed.*” Thus did David look upon Israel’s disease, and hereupon it was that he was so deeply affected with it, so earnestly desiring the cure of it. The reference, as interpreters conceive, is to those *home-bred divisions*, those civil wars betwixt the two houses of Saul and David, after the death of Saul; then did the “*earth,*” the land, that land of Israel (as the Chaldee explains it), *quake and tremble*, being *broken, riven* (as the word in the original signifieth): even as the earth sometimes by earthquakes is riven, and torn asunder with prodigious chasms, openings, or gapings: so was that kingdom divided in those civil commotions, the nobles and commons taking parts and siding, some with David, some with Ishbosheth.—*John Brinsley.*

Verse 3.—“*Thou hast showed thy people hard things,*” God will be sure to plough his own ground, whatsoever becometh of the waste; and to weed his own garden, though the rest of the world should be let alone to grow wild.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—“*Thou hast given us to drink infatuation, or bewilderment, as men drink wine.*” So Hupfeld explains the construction, referring to Psalm lxxx. 5, “*Thou hast made them feed upon weeping like bread;*” 1 Kings xxii. 27, “*Feed him with affliction as bread, and with affliction as water*” ($\text{לֶחֶם וַיִּשְׁתֶּה$); Isaiah xxx. 20. But the apposition is capable of being explained in another way, for the second noun may in fact be a predicate further defining the first: “*Thou hast given us wine to drink which is (not wine, but) bewilderment.*”—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—“*The wine of astonishment.*” “*Intoxicating wine.*” Hebrew, “*Wine of staggering,*” that is, which causeth staggering, or, in other words, intoxicating. Some render, “*wine of stupor,*” or stupefying. Symmachus, “*wine of agitation,*” and this sense I have adopted, which is also that of the Syriac.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 4.—“*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.*” Perhaps the delivery of a banner was anciently esteemed an obligation to protect, and that the Psalmist might consider it in this light, when, upon a victory over the Syrians and Edomites, after the public affairs of Israel had been in a bad state, he says, “*Thou hast shewed thy people hard things,*” etc. “*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.*” Though thou didst for a time give up thine Israel into the hands of their enemies, thou hast now given them an assurance of thy having received them under thy protection.—*Thomas Harmer* (1715—1788), in “*Observations on Divers Passages of Scripture.*”

Verse 4.—“*Thou hast given a banner,*” etc. Thou hast given us by the recent victory, after our prostrate condition, a banner of triumph to *lift up* (so the Hebrew), because of thy faithfulness to thy promise. “*The truth*” here answers to God’s “*holiness*” (ver. 6). So long as soldiers see their banner *uplifted*, they flock round it with confidence. But when it is prostrate their spirits and hopes fall. The “*banner*” is a pledge of safety, and a rallying point to those who fight under it.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 4.—“*Thou hast given a banner,*” etc. The Psalmist compares the *salvation* which the Lord bestows upon his people to a highly excellent “*banner,*” which serves as a signal to one lying prostrate in his misery, to rise up, with an allusion perhaps to Numbers xxi. 8. “*And the Lord said to Moses, Make thee a serpent and set it upon a standard-pole; and it happened that every one who was bitten, and looked at it, lived.*” At any rate, that passage in which the serpent is a symbol of the healing power of God, may serve to illustrate the passage before us. Compare “*heal thy breaches.*”—E. W. Hengstenberg.

Verse 4.—“*A banner,*” which is a sign or instrument:—1. Of union. This people, who were lately divided and under several banners, thou hast now gathered together and united under one banner; to wit, under my government. 2. Of battle. Thou hast given us an army and power to oppose our enemies. We had our banner to set against theirs. 3. Of triumph. We have not lost our banner but gained theirs, and brought it away in triumph. Comp. Ps. xx. 5.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 6.—“*God hath spoken in his holiness.*” That is, by Samuel he hath promised, as he is an holy God, and true of his word, that I should be king of all Israel, and now he hath performed it. (Sam. v.) Yet Calvin speaks of it as not yet performed; but the course of the history makes it plain that David was now king over the parts of which he here speaketh. “*I will divide Shechem,*” as subject to me, as Joshua having the land under him, divided it amongst his people: so David being king over all the parts of the land, divides to his followers such portions as belonged unto them by inheritance, from which happily some of them had been expelled in the time of Ish-bosheth his reign; or some families in the time of those wars might be utterly washed away, and so the king having free power to dispose of their lands, might give them amongst his men, and take part to himself.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 6.—“*God hath spoken in his holiness.*” That is, he hath given out his word from heaven, the habitation of his holiness and of his glory; or, he hath spoken it certainly, there is nothing but holiness in his word (and that is the strength of words). David having received this word stands assured, that as Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah would willingly submit to him and yield obedience: so, also, that Moab, Edom, and Philistia, who were his professed enemies, should be subdued to him. He expected to conquer and triumph over them, to put them to the basest offices, as his vassals, because God had decreed and spoken it in his holiness. God hath spoken the word, saith he, therefore it shall be done, yea, ’tis done; and therefore David cried, *All’s mine, Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine, Moab and Edom are mine,* as soon as God had spoken the word,—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—“*I will divide Shechem.*” It is as much as if he should say, I will not look to have my share measured out by others, but I will divide it, and measure myself, and will be the right owner and possessor thereof.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 6.—“*I will divide Shechem,*” etc. Of *Shechem* and the *Valley of Succoth*, or *booths*, so called from Jacob’s making *booths*, and *feeding his cattle* there. (See Genesis xxxiii. 17, 18.) By these are meant Samaria; and *David’s dividing or meting them out*, is a phrase to express his *dominion* over them, in being part of the *regal* power to *distribute* his province into cities and regions, and place judges and magistrates over them. To these the addition of *Gilead* (which contains the whole region of *Bashan*, etc., on the *other side of Jordan*), and then the mention of *Manasseh* and *Ephraim*, are designed, as by so many parts, to denote the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes; and their being *his*, and “*the strength of his head,*” notes him to be the *Lord* over them, and to make use of their strength of his wars, for the defending or enlarging his dominions. And then “*Judah* (יְהוּדָה) *is my law-giver;*” as it refers to Jacob’s prophecy of the *sceptre and lawgiver not departing from Judah*, denoting that to be the *royal* tribe; so by it is signified the *kingdom of Judah* (under which *Benjamin* is comprehended), that David is possessed of that also.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 6.—“*Succoth.*” If the preceding views are correct, we may rest in the result, that the present Sâkût represents the name and site of the ancient Succoth . . . We passed obliquely along the northern slope of the same broad swell, where the ground was covered only by a thick crop of thistles. On our right was a region of lower ground to which we gradually descended; full of grass, wild oats, and thistles, with an occasional thornbush. The soil was like that of an Ohio bottom. The grass.

intermingled with tall daisies and the wild oats, reached to the horses' backs; while the thistles sometimes overtopped the riders' heads. All was now dry; and in some places it was difficult to make our way through the exuberant growth. At last we came to the cause of this fertility, a fine brook winding along the bottom. We crossed it, and passed up again obliquely over another like swell, covered as before only with thistles. Here was an ancient oil vat, very large and of a single stone; it was evidently brought hither, and indicates the former growth of the olive in these parts. We struck the same stream again at its source, called 'Ain el-Beida, a large and fine fountain surrounded with gardens of cucumbers, and watering an extensive tract. We were here on the edge of the higher portion of the Ghôr, where low ridges and swells project out from the foot of the western mountains, and form a rolling plain or plateau, which is well watered, arable, and very extensively cultivated for wheat. The tract further east, which we had now crossed, may be said to extend to the high bank of the lower Jordan valley. It is less elevated, is more generally level, though crossed by low swells between the water-courses, and has little tillage. The inhabitants of Tôbâs are divided into three hostile parties; and they carry their divisions into their agriculture in the Ghôr. One party sows at 'Ain el-Beida, where we now were; another around 'Ain Mak-hûz, more in the north; and the third at Ridghah, Sâkût, and further south. The people of Teyâsir also sow on the south of Mâlih; the water of which is used for irrigation. The whole tract north of Wady Mâlih was said to be farmed from the government by one of the Sheikhs of the Jenâr family, who live at Jeba' and in its neighbourhood. By him it is again let to the different villages.—*Robinson's "Biblical Researches in Palestine."*

Verses 6, 7.—The chief and principal places where the seditious party had their residence and abode, were those which the Psalmist mentioneth in the sixth and seventh verses, namely *Shechem*, a city in the tribe of Ephraim; *Succoth*, a city in the tribe of Gad; *Gilead* and *Manasseh*, the utmost borders of the land of Canaan, beyond Jordan. These were some of the chief places which sided with Ish-bosheth whilst he lived, as you may see, 2 Sam. ii.; and, as it seemeth, they still cleaved to the house of Saul after he was dead, not acknowledging David for their king.—*John Brinsley.*

Verse 7.—“*Gilead is mine and Manasseh is mine.*” That is to say, I will possess myself of them and rule over them; not as a conqueror over slaves, but as a lord over subjects, as a father over children, owning and acknowledging them as mine. They are my inheritance, and shall be my people, my subjects.—*John Brinsley.*

Verse 7.—“*Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.*” The strong and warlike tribe of Ephraim being to the state what the helmet is to the warriors in battle; or, perhaps the allusion is to Deut. xxxiii. 17: “His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the nations.”—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 7.—“*Judah is (or shall be) my lawgiver,*” i.e., all his subjects should be brought under one *Head*, one governor, who should give them laws, according to which they should be ordered or governed, which power and authority belonged to the tribe of *Judah*, according to that prophecy of Jacob (Gen. xlix. 10), to which the Psalmist here alludeth. No way, no means to bring the people unto unity, to bring them into one *body*, but by bringing them under one *head*, one *lawgiver*, by whose laws they may be regulated and governed. Now in the church, and in matters of religion, this one *Head* is *Christ*, even that “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” as he is called (Rev. v. 5). He is the *Law-giver* of his church, and let him so be. This will be found one, ay, and the only means to breed an holy and religious unity, and bring home straying, wandering sheep.—*John Brinsley.*

Verse 7.—No government could stand which was not resident in Judah.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—“*Moab is my washpot.*” Implying that Moab should be reduced to slavery, it being the business of a slave to present the wash-hand basin to his master. With the Greeks, *πλύνει τινά*, to wash down any one, was a slang term, signifying to ridicule, abuse, or beat; hence we have the word *washpot* applied to the subject of such treatment.

“You don't appear to be in your right senses, who make a washpot of me in the presence of many men.” *Aristophanes.*—*Thomas S. Millington*, in “*The Testimony of the Heathen to the Truths of Holy Writ,*” 1863.

Verse 8 (second clause).—When, keeping in view the idea of washing the feet, a person throws his shoes, which he has taken off, to any one to be taken away or to be cleaned—*לְרַגְלֵי* with *וְ* and also with *וְ*, 1 Kings xix. 19, is “to throw to any one”—the individual to whom it belongs to perform such an office must be a slave of the lowest kind.—E. W. Hengstenberg.

Verse 8.—“Over Edom will I cast out my shoe,” which notes either contempt of them, as if he had said, I look upon them as worthy only to scrape and make clean my shoes. Or secondly, conquest over them—I will walk through Edom and subdue it.—Joseph Caryl.

Verse 8.—“Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.” By extension, immission, or projection of the shoe either upon the necks of people, or over their countries, is meant nothing else but to overcome, subdue, bring under power, possess, and subject to vileness such men and such countries. The very vulgar acceptance of the word *possession*, in the grammatical sense, importeth as much; for the etymology of *possessio* is no more but *pedum positio*. This manner of speaking hath also allusion to the positive law recorded in Deuteronomy (xxv. 6—10); for the letter of the law is, that if the kinsman would not marry the brother's widow and raise up seed unto his brother; the widow loosing his shoe, and spitting in his face, he lost the claim and interest of such possessions as belonged to the woman in right of her husband. And the house of such a man was called *domus discalceati*, that is to say, “The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.” The practice also of this law we find recorded in the book of Ruth, in the case of Elimelech's land, between Boaz and the kinsman, about the widow Ruth, who had her interest by right of her husband in the said land. Moreover the frequent use of this phrase meeting us very often in the book of God, makes this to be the meaning of the words, as clear as the day. This king elsewhere singing his trophies, saith, “They are fallen under my feet.” “Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon.” But the people must “not meddle with Mount Seir; for God would not give them thereof so much as a foot's breadth;” yet even the place whereon the soles of their feet should tread, from the wilderness of Lebanon and from the river Euphrates unto the utmost sea, should be theirs. Psalm xviii. 38; Deut. i. 36.; ii. 5.—William Loe, in “A sermon before the King at Theobalds,” entitled, “The King's Shoe, made and ordained to trample on, and to tread down enemies,” 1623.

Verse 8.—“Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.” Turnus, having slain Pallas—
“Bestrode the corpse, and pressed it with his foot.”

Virgil.

Verse 8.—Of the Philistines he says, *Over Philistia it is mine to boast*; for so I would translate, and not, as is usual, *Philistia, triumph thou over me*, which does not yield a consistent meaning.—Hermann Venema.

Verse 8 (last clause).—Let not our adversaries triumph over our breaches. “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy.” Or, if they will, let them triumph: “Triumph thou, O Philistia, because of me, or, over me.”—John Brinsley.

Verses 8—10.—Moab in the East, Edom in the South, and Philistia in the West (the North is not mentioned, because the banner of David had already been victorious there).—Augustus F. Tholuck.

Verse 9.—“Who will lead me into Edom?” The entrance of Petra is by a narrow gorge, lined by lofty precipices, formed by the channel of a rivulet. This defile is nearly two miles in length. At some places the overhanging rocks approach so near to each other that only two horsemen can proceed abreast.—Dr. Tweedie, in “Ruined Cities of the East,” 1859.

Verse 9.—The believer, when he promiseth to himself great things, must neither be senseless of the difficulties of opposition which he is to meet with, nor of his own inability to overcome difficulties; but being sensible of both, most look to God for assistance and furniture to overcome; for when David considered the strength of the fenced royal cities of the enemy, he saith, “Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? Will not thou, O God?”—David Dickson.

Verse 11.—“For vain is the help of man.” As they had lately experimented in Saul, a king of their own choosing, but not able to save them from those proud Philistines.—John Trapp.

Verse 11.—So long as sight and reason find footing in matters, there is no place for faith and hope; the abundance of human helps puts not grace to proof, but the strength of faith is in the absence of them all. A man is stronger when he goeth on his feet alone, than when he standeth by a grip in his infancy, or leaneth on a staff in his old age: the two feet of faith and hope serve us best when we are fixed on the Rock of Sion alone.—*William Struther.*

Verse 12.—“*Through God we shall do,*” etc. In war these two must be joined, and indeed in all actions: HE, *we*; God and man. 1. “We shall do valiantly,” for God helps not remiss, or cowardly, or negligent men. 2. And yet, that being done, the work is *his*: “He shall tread down;” the blow and the overthrow are not to be attributed to us, but to *him*.—*Adam Clarke.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Prayer of a church in low condition. I. *Complaint.* 1. Left of God’s Spirit. 2. Scattered. II. *Cause.* Something displeasing to God. Neglect or actual sin; a subject for self-examination. III. *Cure.* The Lord’s return to us and ours to him. In our version it is a prayer; in the Septuagint an expression of faith—“Thou wilt return.”

Verse 2.—The perturbation, the prayer, the plea.—*G. R.*

Verse 3.—That God does afflict his people severely, and that he has good reason for the same.

Verse 3.—“*The wine of astonishment.*” A purgative, a tonic. Astonishing sin followed by astonishing chastisements, discoveries of corruption, of the spirituality of the law, of the terror of divine wrath, and by astonishing depressions, temptations, and conflicts.

Verse 4.—The banner of the gospel. I. Why a banner? A rallying point, meant to fight under, etc. II. By whom given. “*Thou.*” III. To whom. “*To them that fear thee.*” IV. What is to be done with it. “*To be displayed.*” V. For what cause. “*Because of the truth.*” Truth promotes truth.

Verse 5.—The deliverance of the elect needs a saving God, a mighty God (“*right hand*”), and a prayer-hearing God.

Verse 5 (*last clause*). “*Save . . . and hear.*” The remarkable order of these words—1. In the purpose of God. 2. In the first works of grace. 3. Often under trial. 4. And specially in fierce temptations, God’s saving precedes man’s praying.

Verse 6.—God’s holy promise, ground for present joy, and for boldly taking possession of the promised good.

Verse 7.—“*Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.*” How, and in what respect, this world is the Christians.

Verse 7.—“*Judah is my lawgiver.*” The believer owning no law but that which comes from Christ.

Verse 8.—“*Moab is my washpot.*” How we may make sinners subservient to our sanctification. We are warned by their sin, and punishment, etc. See “*Spurgeon’s Sermons,*” No. 983, “*Moab is my washpot.*”

Verse 9.—The soulwinners question. I. The object of attack; the strong city of man’s heart, barricaded by depravity, ignorance, prejudice, custom, etc. II. Our main design. To penetrate, to reach the citadel for Jesus. III. Our great enquiry. Eloquence, learning, wit, none of these can force the gate, but there is One who can.

Verse 12.—Divine operation a reason for human activity.