

## ARTICLE VI.

## INTERPRETATION OF PSALM LXVIII.

By Wm. W. Turner, Hebrew Instructor in the Union Theol Sem., New York.

*Introduction.*

THE sixty-eighth Psalm is acknowledged by commentators to exhibit an extraordinary degree of lyric force, variety, and beauty; but at the same time, owing to these and to other circumstances, its interpretation presents more and greater difficulties than that of any other piece in the entire collection. A great deal has been accomplished for the elucidation of this noble ode since the time of Michaelis, who broke off at the seventeenth verse, declaring that the thread of connection had slipped from his hands and all was dark before him;<sup>1</sup> yet much still remains to be done before all its rough places can be made smooth. The following may be assumed as some of the general principles which should guide the writer who wishes to carry forward this investigation.

Where a doubt may reasonably exist as to which of two or more explanations of a word or phrase is the best, the interpreter should place them together before the reader and state his reasons for preferring the one which he has concluded to adopt. If he thinks he can offer something better than what has been proposed before, he should not hesitate to do so. But there are two errors of frequent occurrence in writings of this nature which he should carefully endeavor to avoid. While he manifests his respect for the genius and labors of his predecessors by accrediting, as far as practicable, each valuable explanation to its original author, he should disdain the cheap triumphs to be gained by elaborately confuting their palpable mistakes. Again, a profound regard for truth, while it incites him to spare no labor in investigating and weighing every particular that may promise to throw additional light on the subject of his researches, should cause him to keep a jealous guard against that natural vanity which prompts many to attach an undue and even exclusive value to their own conjectures, though they may have nothing but their novelty to recommend them.

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<sup>1</sup> *Epimetra ad Lowthii Praelectiones.*

Another rule which the interpreter in the present state of biblical criticism should adopt, is that of a close adherence to the Masoretic text. That this text is wholly free from errors, no honest and well informed critic will assert; nevertheless the absurdity of setting up the authority of the Septuagint or any other version in opposition to it as a whole, has been too well exposed to be now entertained for a moment. The period no doubt will arrive, when the discovery of ante-Masoretic manuscripts or the collation and classification of manuscripts already known, will render possible a systematic revision of the standard Hebrew text; but at present, alterations of it, whether in accordance with ancient versions or by conjecture, except in a few palpable cases of error, are merely labor thrown away. It is time this fact was more generally acknowledged, when we see commentator after commentator rejecting the emendations of his predecessor, often with expressions of contempt, yet venturing on new conjectures of his own, which a like fate quickly overtakes.

There is still another duty imposed on the interpreter who writes in the English language by the existence of the Authorized Version. Of this version many things have been said which are true, many which are absolutely false. It is true that it is the joint and careful production of many admirable scholars profoundly skilled in the Hebrew and English languages, and familiar with the works both of Jews and Christians who had labored in the field of biblical interpretation before them; it is true that the nervous Saxon English in which they have clothed the thoughts of the Hebrew bards and prophets may well be regarded as a miracle of beauty and fitness, and forms a style which, on account of its intrinsic excellence and of the hallowed associations conferred upon it by time, no modern translator can depart from with impunity. But it is not true that this is the best version extant, or that it does not require very great and essential improvements both in matter and in form to raise it to a level with the philological science of the present day. This however is not the place to discuss its imperfections, or to analyze the motives of those who cast stumbling-blocks in the way of their removal; all I wish to say at present is that, in view of the facts here stated, it seems incumbent upon one who offers a new English translation of any portion of Scripture to adopt as his model the style of the Authorized Version, and where he deviates from it to point out his reasons for so doing. Every portion of Scripture thus explained will form a useful contribution to an improved English version to be prepared at a future day.

The principles here laid down I have endeavored to adhere to in the following translation and commentary, with what success the reader will judge.

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der will decide. Here follows a list of the works chiefly made use of; a few others which I would gladly have consulted were not at hand.

The Septuagint, Vulgate, Chaldee, and Syriac versions in Walton's Polyglott. The commentaries of Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and D. Kimchi in the Rabbinical Bible and elsewhere; and of Saadiah in Ewald's Jüdische Sprachgelehrte. *Stuttgart*, 1844.

R. Lowth de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum Prælectiones, cum notis et epimetris J. D. Michaelis, ed. E. F. C. Rosenmüller. *Leipsic*, 1815.

C. F. Schnurrer, Dissertationes Philologico-criticæ. *Gotha*, 1790.

Mendelssohn's translation with the commentary of Joel Brill, etc. *Prague*, 1835.

E. F. C. Rosenmüller, Scholia in Psalmos in compendium redacta. *Leipsic*, 1831.

Böucher's Proben alttestamentlicher Schrifterklärung. *Leipsic*, 1833.

Ewald's Poetische Bücher des alten Bundes. *Göttingen*, 1835—39.

De Wette's Commentar über die Psalmen, nebst beigefügter Uebersetzung, 4th edit. *Heidelberg*, 1836.

Sachs's translation in the Bibel für Israeliten. *Berlin*, 1838.

Lengarke, die fünf Bücher der Psalmen. *Königsberg*, 1847.

#### Argument.

The first circumstance which attracts attention when we try to ascertain the general import of this psalm, is the resemblances between it and the Song of Deborah and Barak. These make it evident that either one has in some respects imitated the other, or both have drawn from some common source. As to the latter supposition, it may be sufficient to say that there is no such common source extant. If a standard sacred poem of such merit and celebrity as to be imitated by writers so far apart had ever existed, it is certainly possible but not probable that it would have been excluded from the extant collection and allowed to perish. We may then safely conclude, until the contrary can be proved, that one of these compositions, to wit Judges 5th and Psalm 68th, imitates the other; and all that remains is to settle the question of priority. Whatever may be the precise age of the psalm, it is undeniably of a later date than the times of the Judges. Now Dr. Robinson, in his exposition of the Song of Deborah, has satisfactorily shown that that poem is coeval with the events it celebrates.<sup>1</sup> It may therefore be considered as established, as far perhaps as such matters admit of being established, that Judges 5th is both anterior in point of time and has served in many respects as a model to the author of the present psalm. The resemblances alluded to will be fully described in the notes.

<sup>1</sup> Bibl. Repository, Vol. I. 1831. p. 575 sqq. The same conclusion is come to by Kemink in his Commentatio de Carmine Deborah. *Utrecht*, 1840. pp. 24—26.

This being premised, let us ask ourselves, What is the occasion which this psalm celebrates? That it is the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem and the depositing of it there, all commentators may be said to be agreed; they differ only as to whether the particular occasion was its first entry into the sanctuary there erected, or its return after a battle with a foreign enemy. Now that the latter was the case is very clear, as well from the imitations which the psalm contains of the triumphant Song of Deborah as from the entire purport of its contents; for, to use the words of the judicious De Wette, "Why is there so much said of victory, of the destruction of enemies, of the bringing home of captives, of assistance received, if the occasion was not a victory?"

The point of view then at which we must place ourselves for the proper understanding of this composition, is to suppose that the people have just returned after a battle in triumphant procession to Jerusalem bearing the ark in the van, that they have deposited it in its place in the sanctuary, and that they now sing this ode written to celebrate the event. The general course of the argument, leaving particulars for the notes, may be summed up as follows.

- I. Allusion to the late going forth to battle with the ark. God leads his people against their enemies, and defeats them, and thus gives the righteous new cause to exult in his protection.
- II. Allusion to the triumphant return. Sing praises to Jehovah who prospers his humble worshippers, but makes desolate those that rebel against him.
- III. Of this an illustrious example was afforded, when God conducted his people through the wilderness, supplying all their wants;
- IV. And finally enabled them to subdue the savage inhabitants of Canaan.
- V. And whereas God formerly appeared unto his people on Sinai, so now he has taken up his abode among them on Zion, whither he has just returned leading captive the foes of himself and people.
- VI. Thanks be to God, whose care is constantly over Israel, and who will one day enable them to execute plenary vengeance on all their enemies.
- VII. These have gazed with envy while beholding the recent procession of the victorious tribes, as they marched with songs and rejoicings to the sanctuary.
- VIII. May this new instance of God's goodness enhance his honor and glory among men; so that all nations, even the most remote, may submit themselves to his rightful sway.
- IX. Let all the earth praise the glorious God of Israel.

This division into stanzas, which I have taken the liberty of numbering to facilitate reference, is clearly justified by the internal structure of the psalm. Its correctness too is strongly vouched for by the fact that in all essential particulars it is acquiesced in by such widely differing authorities as Mendelssohn, Böttcher, Ewald, De Wette, and Lengerke. If we further examine the relation of these stanzas to each other, it will appear that they may be divided with a good degree of probability

into four pairs of strophe and antistrophe with a concluding epode. We might suppose too that the strophes (stanzas I. III. V. VII.) were sung by the warriors and people, the antistrophes (stanzas II. IV. VI. VIII.) by the priests, and the epode (stanza IX.) by both parties conjointly. Too little however is known of the details of the ancient temple worship to give this supposition any force beyond that of mere conjecture; much less is there any good reason to think that this psalm was sung *during* a procession either *to* the temple (so Schnurrer, Ewald, and others) or *in* the temple (so Lengerke).

*Translation.*

## PSALM LXVIII.

1 For the Leader; by David. A Psalm to be sung.

## I.

- 2 Let God arise, let his enemies scatter;  
And let his haters flee before him.  
3 As smoke is driven, so drive them away;  
As wax is melted before the fire,  
So perish the wicked before God.  
4 Then shall the righteous be glad and exult before God;  
Yea they shall rejoice with gladness.

## II.

- 5 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name;  
Prepare the way for him that rideth through the deserts,  
Whose name is Jah, and exult before him.  
6 The orphan's father and the widow's judge  
(Is) God in his holy habitation.  
7 God maketh the solitary to dwell in a home,  
He bringeth out captives into prosperity;  
But rebels inhabit a barren land.

## III.

- 8 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,  
When thou didst march through the wilderness;  
9 The earth trembled, yea the heavens dropped before God,  
Sinai itself (shook) before God, the God of Israel.  
10 Thou scatteredst bounteous rain, O God;  
Thou sustainedst thy possession when they were wearied.  
11 Thy wild beasts dwelt therein;  
Thou didst prepare in thy good land for the meek, O God.

## IV.

- 12 The Lord gave the word ;  
 The singers of victory were a great army :  
 13 " Kings of armies flee, they flee ;  
 And she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil !  
 14. When ye lie down among the folds,  
 The wings of the dove shall be covered with silver,  
 And her pinions with greenish gold."  
 15 When the Almighty scattered kings therein,  
 It grew snow-white on Zalmon.

## V.

- 16 A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan,  
 A mountain of crags is the mountain of Bashan.  
 17 Why do ye lower, ye craggy mountains,  
 At the mount where God hath fixed his abode,  
 Yea Jehovah reigneth for ever ?  
 18 The chariots of God are twice ten thousand,  
 Thousands upon thousands !  
 The Lord is among them, and Sinai in the sanctuary.  
 19 Thou hast ascended the height, thou hast captured thy foes,  
 Thou hast received gifts of men,  
 Yea even rebels, to reign as Jehovah and God.

## VI.

- 20 Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth us ;  
 The God (who) is our salvation.  
 21 This God is ours, a God of salvation ;  
 And unto Jehovah the Lord (belong) the issues from death.  
 22 But God shall dash in pieces the head of his enemies,  
 The hairy crown of him that goeth on in his trespasses.  
 23 Saith the Lord : " From Bashan I will bring (them) back,  
 I will bring (them) back from the depths of the sea ;  
 24 That thou mayest dash thy foot in blood,  
 That the tongue of thy dogs (may have) its portion of (thine) enemies."

## VII.

- 25 They have seen thy procession, O God ;  
 The procession of my God, my King, to the sanctuary.  
 26 The singers went before, afterwards the players ;  
 In the midst of damsels beating timbrels.—

- 27 In the congregations bless ye God :  
 (Bless) the Lord, ye of the fountain of Israel!—
- 28 There is little Benjamin, their subduer ;  
 The princes of Judah that o'erwhelmed them with stones ;  
 The princes of Zebulon, the princes of Naphtali.

## VIII

- 29 Thy God hath ordained thy glory ;  
 Be thou glorious, O God, who hast wrought for us.
- 30 At thy temple above Jerusalem,  
 To thee let kings bring tribute.
- 31 Rebuke the beast of the reeds—  
 The herd of the bulls with the calves of the nations—  
 That humbleth himself for pieces of silver ;  
 Scatter thou the nations that delight in war!
- 32 Let magnates come out of Egypt,  
 Let Ethiopia quickly stretch forth her hands to God.

## IX.

- 33 Ye kingdoms of the earth, sing unto God,  
 Sing praises unto the Lord ;
- 34 To him who rideth on the heavens, the heavens of old ;  
 Lo, he uttereth his voice, a mighty voice !
- 35 Give glory unto God ;  
 Whose majesty is over Israel,  
 And his glory in the clouds.
- 36 Fearful art thou, O God, in thy sanctuaries.  
 The God of Israel giveth glory and strength to his people ;  
 Blessed be God !

*Comment.*

VERSE 2. This is the invocation, altered from the 2d to the 3d person, which Moses used to employ when the ark was taken up for removal to another encampment ; see Num. 10: 35. The hortatory rendering of the old interpreters, *Let God arise*, etc. is therefore more natural and better suited to the energetic character of the entire psalm than the mere declaration, *God arises*, etc. of Ewald, De Wette, and others. The poet transports himself back in imagination to the time when the army was setting out on its expedition, and speaks accordingly.

These two first stanzas have reference to the recent victory. The beginning of the first alludes to the going forth of the ark to the battle-field, and that of the second to its triumphant return, as Böttcher has pointed out; the other verses are general in their nature and contain ideas which form a natural sequence to these two (the 2d and 5th). It will be observed that the ark, as the peculiar seat of God's presence, is spoken of throughout this psalm in the same terms as God himself; see verses 2, 5, 8, 18, 19, 25.

VERSE 3. This verse and the next are a poetical amplification of the preceding one (Schnurrer).—*So perish*, etc. When a clause of the parallel is subdivided into two parts, I will indent the latter half as in this case.

VERSE 4. Observe that the word rendered simply *before*, is in verses 2 and 3, מִפְּנֵי lit. *from the face of*, i. e. from the presence of, from in front of; and in this verse, לְפָנָי *at the face of*, i. e. in the presence of; and so v. 5, etc.

VERSE 5. The principal interpretations of the second clause may be represented thus:

Extol him who rideth on the clouds.—*Syr. Chald. Saadiah, Eng. Vers., etc.*

Cast up (a way) for him who rideth on the clouds.—*Sept. Vulg. Mendels.*

Cast up (a way) for him who rideth through the plains.—*Schnurrer, Böttcher, De Wette.*

These interpretations, it will be perceived, rest on two different renderings of each of the words מִפְּנֵי and מְרִיבֵי. Many arguments have been adduced in support of each of them; but a sufficiently conclusive evidence in favor of the last one is, that both words occur repeatedly in the senses it assigns to them, and never in any other.

*Prepare the way.* The literal meaning of the verb מְרִיבֵי is *to cast up*, scil. the earth in constructing a causeway; and it is usually followed by a word meaning *causeway, road, etc.*, which here by an elegant ellipsis is omitted; comp. Is. 57: 14. 62: 10. I know not how to imitate this in English, for want of a verb with a similar technical meaning; The Septuagint version has best expressed it by the compound *ὁδοποιεῖσθε*. The expression evidently has reference to the ancient custom of constructing roads for the advance of kings and their armies, before great and permanent highways were as common as they have since become.

The great central valley of Palestine, which runs from north to south through its whole length, bounded by a mountain range on either side, is an arid waste except where rendered luxuriantly fertile by the waters of the Jordan and its tributaries.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly it is

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, Jewish Wars 8. 8. Robinson, Bibl. Researches, II. p. 576.

named in Hebrew אַרְבָּה *the Arabah*, or *desert plain* אַרְבָּה אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵמֶק יַרְדֵּן; while to portions of it north of the Dead Sea we find applied the names אֶרְבֹּת יֶרִיחוֹ *the plains of Jericho*, אֶרְבֹּת מוֹאָב *the plains of Moab* (see Ges. Lex. ad voc.), perhaps so called in the plural because broken up into a number of small wastes by intervening patches of cultivated land. The absolute term אַרְבָּה will then naturally designate the valley of the Jordan; and in so understanding it here, we are confirmed by subsequent allusions, verses 16 and 31.

VERSE 6. *The widow's judge*, i. e. he that sees justice done to widows. As De Wette has well remarked, we are not to make too special an application of the expressions contained in this and the following verse, where, in conformity with poetic usage, particular images are brought before the mind to indicate in the most forcible manner the different treatment which God bestows on his people and on their enemies.—קִדְשׁוֹ קִדְשׁוֹ *his holy habitation*. This phrase is found only in the later writings, in Deut. 26: 15. 2 Chron. 30: 27. Jer. 25: 30. Zech. 2: 17; and it everywhere denotes the heavens. There is in these two verses, as Aben Ezra has pointed out, a beautiful antithesis between the almighty Sovereign of the universe whose seat is in the lofty heavens, and the most feeble and forlorn of his creatures on earth (here representing the nation of Israel in general; see remarks on v. 11), who are the constant subjects of his condescending care; comp. Ps. 11: 4, 5. 138: 6. 146: 5-10.

VERSE 7. Lit. *God maketh those who are solitary to dwell at home*, i. e. he makes those who are lonely, forlorn, to live in houses, dwellings of their own; a figure probably suggested by the use of the phrase "his holy habitation," in the preceding verse.—בְּמוֹשָׁלוֹ. There are two modes of rendering and construing this word which are deserving of notice. One is to construe it with אֲסִירִים *captives*, and translate *in fetters*, comparing קֶשֶׁרִים *belts*; and so Aben Ezra, D. Kimchi, Mendelssohn, and the English Version. The other is to construe with מוֹצִיא *who bringeth forth*, and render *into prosperity*; and so Syr., Saadiab, Ros., Ges., De Wette. The last is decidedly entitled to the preference; because it forms a proper antithesis to the word אֲסִירִים in the next clause, and, which is more conclusive, it agrees with the signification of the verb and its other derivatives. With De Wette I understand this verse like the preceding one in a general sense, but yet as containing an allusion to the removal of the Israelites from Egypt into the promised land, and thus forming a natural transition to what follows. So Rosenmüller: "Haud obscura allusio ad nobilem illam rerum conversionem, qua olim gens Israelitica, summi Dei beneficio, ab Ægyptiaca servitute esset liberata, inque

terram bonis omnibus abundantissimam deducta, barbaris incolis partim deletis, partim e patria in loca vasta atque horrida ejectis."

VERSE 8. Here the psalmist, in accordance with a very common practice of the Hebrew poets, when returning thanks in the name of the nation for favors just received or soliciting new ones, introduces a retrospect of the signal manifestations of God's providence on behalf of his people in former times, and especially of that memorable epoch in the nation's history, its exodus from Egyptian bondage and induction into the promised land. Observe that the verbs are here in the past tense, and that the entire stanza has an historical character different from the preceding ones, in which all is vividly depicted as present. Compare too the Song of Deborah and Barak, Judg. v. There verses 2 and 3 form an introduction relating to the recent victory, and invoking blessings on its almighty Author; and these are followed, in verses 4 and 5, by a description of God's appearance on Sinai as the future guide and guardian of his people. This plan our psalmist has closely followed, employing however such additional richness of imagery as to convert the four verses of the older poem into as many stanzas. But that we may arrive at a more precise idea of the relation of these two compositions to each other, it may be well to compare the two passages which exhibit the closest resemblances in detail. In Judg. 5: 4, 5 we read as follows:

4 יהוה בצאתו מסיני  
בצעקה משדד ארם  
אֶרֶץ רָעָשָׁה וְגַם שָׁמַיִם נָטְפוּ  
וְגַם עָבָרִים נָטְפוּ מַיִם  
5 הָרִים קָדְמוּ לַיהוָה  
וְחַ סִּינַי טָפְנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

- 4 Jehovah, when thou camest forth from Seir,  
When thou marchedst from the field of Edom;  
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,  
Yea the clouds dropped water;  
5 The mountains shook before Jehovah,  
Sinai itself before Jehovah, God of Israel.

The extraordinary and supernatural manifestations of Jehovah's power which were witnessed on the grand occasion of the delivery of the Law on Sinai, are here depicted in a manner that places the scene directly before our eyes. We behold Jehovah enveloped in clouds advancing from the north and descending on Sinai; where his awful presence is indicated by the storm that rushes forth from his dark concealment,

and the thunder that shakes the earth and its mountains.<sup>1</sup> That this is the correct explanation of the passage, is clear from the mention of Sinai at its close, and from its correspondence with the historical description of that event and of the clouds, the thunder and lightning, and the quaking of the mountain by which it was accompanied, in Ex. xix. Here follows the imitation of this passage in the 8th and 9th verses of our psalm :

8 אֱלֹהִים בְּצִמְצוּמָהּ לְפָנַי עֲפָדָה  
 בְּצִמְצוּמָהּ בְּיַשְׁמֹמוֹן  
 9 אֶרֶץ רָעָשָׁת אֶה לְשִׁמּוֹ נָטַפּוּ מִמֶּנִּי אֱלֹהִים  
 זֶה סִינַי מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

- 8 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,  
 When thou didst march through the wilderness ;  
 9 The earth trembled, yea the heavens dropped before God,  
 Sinai itself before God, the God of Israel.

The first circumstance which strikes us on comparing these verses with Judg. 5: 4, 5, is that the author of the psalm has condensed the last verse by throwing out the passage *בְּיַד הַרְרִים נָזְלוּ*, as he is about to speak more fully of rain in what follows ; and consequently the phrase *זֶה סִינַי וְגוֹ'* now comes in rather abruptly. Again, the word *יְהִי* has been altered in each case to *אֱלֹהִים*, either by the author himself, or by those who collected and made use of the portion of the psalms to which this belongs before they were incorporated into the Psalter as now existing.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, and which is of more importance, it will be seen that the change of one or two expressions has given the whole passage an application different from that which it has in Judges. By altering *מִשְׁעִיר* from *Seir*, into *לְפָנַי עֲפָדָה* before thy people, and *מִשְׁדֵּי אֶדוֹם* from the fields of Edom into *בְּיַשְׁמֹמוֹן* through the wilderness, it is made to refer chiefly no longer to the giving of the law, although the allusion to it is retained, but to God's leading his people through the wilderness, which brings this stanza into harmonious agreement with the two preceding ones ; comp. verses 2 and 5. The same relation exists between the two similar passages, Deut. 33: 3, and Hab. 3: 3, 4. Commentators both ancient and modern, in remarking on the resemblance between all these passages, have commonly fallen into the error of assuming that, because one imitates the other, they must have exactly the same bearing and application ; whereas nothing is better established than the fact that while the Hebrews

<sup>1</sup> Bertheau, das Buch der Richter und Rut. Leipzig, 1845.

<sup>2</sup> See Ewald, die poet. Bücher des alten Bundes, I. p. 192.

had a living language and literature, it was not uncommon for later writers, in quoting and copying the productions of earlier ones, to alter the language more or less, and even to remodel them, so as to suit analogous but different purposes.<sup>1</sup>

VERSE 9. All nature is struck with terror as God approaches. See preceding remarks on Judg. 5: 4, 5; and comp. Hab. 8: 10.

VERSE 10. The tremendous exhibitions of God's power over the elements just spoken of were not confined to the manifesting of his own greatness; they were employed also as a means of conveying comfort and support to his destitute people. The "*bounteous rain*" seems clearly to designate the celestial food with which they were supplied while in the desert, and especially the manna, which is said to have been "rained down" from heaven, in Exod. 16: 4 and again in Ps. 78: 24 (and so Schnurrer, De Wette, Lengerke).—*וְנִלְאָה וְנִלְאָה* lit. *thy possession even wearied*, i. e. thy peculiar people when exhausted with their wanderings and privations. For similar uses of the conj. ׀, see the particle in Ges. Lex. No. 1. c.—Many understand this verse of rain simply, and the expression *וְנִלְאָה* of the Holy Land, as in Exod. 15: 17. Jer. 2: 7. 16: 18. Ps. 79: 1.

VERSE 11. *וְחַיֵּיהֶם* *thy wild beasts*, i. e. which thou hast created, meaning the Canaanites, in opposition to the term *מְעִיב* *meek and gentle one*, applied to the Israelites; comp. Sept. Vulg. Syr. The two expressions are contrasted in a similar manner in Ps. 74: 19; comp. also the figures employed in verses 6 and 7. It is usually supposed that *וְחַיֵּיהֶם* here means simply *troop, multitude, people*; but to do so seems utterly to discard the proper force and meaning of the word. This appellation, it is true, is given to a body of soldiers, 2 Sam. 23: 11, 18; but they are Philistine soldiers, and it is there used in a contemptuous manner, equivalent to the term *herd*, instead of the usual *מַחֲנֵה* *host, camp*. The comparing of enemies to savage beasts, as dogs, bulls, lions, etc. is frequent in Hebrew poetry; and for an example we need go no further than the 31st verse of our psalm, where this very word is again used and in a connection which admits of no dispute as to its general application.—The suffix in the word *בְּרָחָה* refers to *טוֹבָה* *thy good land*, in the next clause (Ges. Lebrg. p. 740). The fem. adj. *טוֹבָה* is used independently, with *אָרֶץ* understood; like *יְבֵשָׁה* *dry land*, *מֶלַח* *salt, barren land*, and *צָמְיָה* *thirsty land*, v. 7, the last of the preceding stanza and which corresponds to the present verse in general meaning. Others render *with thy goodness*; but this is incompatible with our interpretation of the context,

<sup>1</sup> See the examples cited by De Wette, introd. to Ps. 14, and by Ewald, Poet. BB. des alten Bundes, I. p. 203.

inasmuch as the word  $\text{מָה}$  must then necessarily refer to  $\text{מַלְאָכָיו}$  in the preceding verse.— $\text{תְּכַנֵּן}$  *thou preparest*, i. e. Jehovah now makes all things ready for the entrance of his people into their promised possession.

VERSE 12. *The Lord gives the word.* And now, the proper time being arrived, God the leader of his people gives the word for them to attack and destroy the wild beasts (the Canaanites) who had hitherto been allowed to hold possession of Israel's inheritance. For the sake of greater vividness of description, and to represent the events described as passing directly before the eye, the psalmist has made frequent use of the future tense; but the less vivacious character of the English language makes it necessary to sacrifice this beauty to perspicuity in the translation both here and elsewhere.— $\text{דִּבְרֵי נְשִׂאִים}$  *the females that proclaim the glad tidings*, scil. of victory; comp. Exod. 15: 20. Judg. 5: 12. 11: 34. 1 Sam. 18: 6, etc. The song of victory follows.

VERSE 13.  $\text{הֲרוּגוּן הֲרוּגוּן}$  *they flee, they flee!* comp. the similar repetition, Judg. 5: 19.— $\text{נִשְׂרָה בַּיִת}$  *she that abideth in the house*, Gr.  $\text{οἰκουρός}$ , Eng. *housewife*; a poetical appellation to denote the *women*, in opposition to men, who go forth to war, etc.; comp.  $\text{נְשִׂאִים בְּאֶהֱלֵךְ}$  *women in the tent*, Judg. 5: 24.—It will be observed that there is a strong antithesis between the two clauses of this verse: kings and their armies run away, while the weak women of the Israelites divide the spoil—a sign of victory.

VERSE 14. Jacob, in speaking of Issachar's future condition of ease and plenty, says, Gen. 49: 14:  $\text{יִשָּׂכַר אֵסֵךְ חֹמֶר גֵּרָם רִבְץ בֵּין הַמְּשָׁחִים}$  *Issachar is a strong ass crouching down among the folds.* In Judg. 5: 16, Deborah reproaching the tribe of Reuben for its want of patriotism in preferring the charms of rural quiet to the din of battle, says,  $\text{לָמָּה הֲשַׁבְתָּ בֵּין הַמְּשָׁחִים}$  *why satest thou still among the folds?* So here the women, as they congratulate their countrymen on their victories, employ in allusion to the repose which their valor is about to secure for them the similar expression,  $\text{אִם תִּשְׁבְּבוּן בֵּין הַמְּשָׁחִים}$  *when ye shall lie down among the folds.* The formative  $\text{ש}$  is here dropped, as in Ezek. 40: 48. The rendering "pots" of the English version is derived from the  $\text{مَفْت}$  *hearths* of the Syriac and the  $\text{הכיריס}$  *hearth-stones* of Kimchi.—With the Chald. Jarchi, and Schnurrer, I understand  $\text{יֹדָה}$  *the dove*, to signify the people of Israel, as it probably does also in Ps. 56: 1. This term is here used as a poetical equivalent to  $\text{רַקִּינִי}$  *the meek ones*; which in v. 11 is opposed to  $\text{הַחַיָּוִת}$  *the wild beasts*, the ferocious enemies of the Israelites. This interpretation is con-

firmed by the use of the analogous term תור *turtle-dove* in the same sense and in the same relation to the expressions just mentioned Ps. 74: 19.

The connection of this verse with the preceding is this: the women, as they divide the dresses, jewels, and other booty taken from the vanquished foe, exult in the prospect of wearing and displaying this finery after the wars are over; comp. Judg. 5: 30. The *silver* and *gold* denote the brilliant colors of the dove's plumage. Says Böttcher: "All the classical and rabbinical learning which Bochart has lavished on this passage (Hieroz. P. II. l. 1. c. 2.) amounts only to what every unlearned observer's experience might have told him: viz. he shows 1st, that the Roman poets applied to white doves the epithet *silvery*; 2dly, that doves after a certain age, at which they were no longer fit for offering, were said to turn of a *golden color*; and 3dly, that the necks of doves when moving about in the sunshine reflect all sorts of colors, among others that of *gold*."

VERSE 15. In this obscure and difficult verse the psalmist seems to speak again in his own person and in allusion to the song just recited.—*אֶרֶץ חַיָּל* it doubtless refers to the land of Canaan, as in the last verse of the preceding stanza.—*צֶלְמֹן* is regarded by some as a common noun meaning *shade, gloom*; so some Mss. of the Sept. *ἰν οὐρανῷ*, and several later interpreters. But as the word occurs in only one other place, and there as the proper name of a mountain in Samaria, it is safest to take it in that sense here also. It is less easy to determine why this mountain should be introduced in this connection. It may be that historical events connected with it are here alluded to; but as there is no record of any such events we are at liberty to conclude, which is not at all unlikely, that it is mentioned simply on account of its name, *the shady, gloomy* (prob. because thickly covered with trees; see Judg. 9: 48).—The next thing is to ascertain the meaning of the verb *תִּשְׁלֵג*, which is found only in this place. Assuming that we are correct in referring the expression *אֶרֶץ חַיָּל* in it to *אֶרֶץ* land understood, and that *צֶלְמֹן* is the name of a mountain, it will follow almost of necessity that the fem. sing. verb *תִּשְׁלֵג* likewise agrees with *אֶרֶץ* understood, and that it is a denominative from *שֶׁלֶג* snow, and means to *snow* (like *הִקְטִיר* to *rain*) and intrans. to *become snowy* or *snow-white*.—The idea conveyed by the last clause will then be that the whole land was strewn with the corpses of the slain, till even the dark and gloomy Zalmon looked white as though covered with snow. Other interpretations worth considering will be found in Schnurrer, De Wette, and Lengerke,—especially that which regards *תִּשְׁלֵג* as impersonal, and gives it the meaning to *brighten up, to become lively, cheerful*,—though less consonant

than the one above given to the meanings we have assigned to the other terms of the context.

VERSE 16. Having thus rapidly sketched the induction of the chosen people by the hand of the Almighty into the land promised to their fathers, the poet now by an ingenious transition comes back to his principal theme, viz. the recent victorious return of the army with the ark, and the latter's safe deposit in the temple on Zion; comp. Judg. 5: 6. He now represents the lofty and rugged mountains of Bashan beyond Jordan as lowering with envy at the comparatively insignificant Mount Zion, which God has so highly favored as to choose it for his special and perpetual residence on earth,—for where the ark was there God was also. See Exod. 25: 22. 1 Kings 8: 10-13; and comp. Ps. 76: 3.<sup>1</sup> The nexus consists in the mention of Mount Zalmon in the preceding verse.—The term *mountain* is used here, as often elsewhere, collectively for a range of mountains, i. q. the Germ. *Gebirg*. *הַר אֱלֹהִים* a *mountain of God*, i. e. a god-like, magnificent mountain.

VERSE 17. After praising the natural grandeur of the mountains of Bashan, the psalmist asks why they are not satisfied with this, but seem to envy the mountain on which God has chosen to confer spiritual superiority over others; comp. Mic. 4: 1-3 and Ps. 48.—The meaning "*skip*," which the English version assigns to the verb *הִצִּיד*, is a conjecture of the Chaldee interpreter from its resemblance to the verb *הִצִּיד*, also said of mountains Ps. 114: 4, 6 and elsewhere; but the true meaning of the word has been satisfactorily established from the Arabic, in which language it signifies *to watch with eagerness or jealousy*, as a wild beast its prey, or a camel others which are drinking while awaiting its own turn. With this agrees the interpretation of the Sept. and Vulg. *ὕπολαμβάνετε*, *suspiciamini*.—*הַרֵּי הַבְּשָׁן* *mountains that are crags, craggy mountains*.—*הַרֵּי הַבְּשָׁן הַיְהוָה חָשָׁה לְשִׁבְתוֹ* lit. *the mountain (which) God hath desired for his dwelling*.—*אֵם יְהוָה יָשְׁבָה* *yea (where) Jehovah abideth for ever*, i. e. sitteth enthroned, reigneth, taking *יָשָׁב* in a sense in which the synonymous verb *יָשַׁב* frequently occurs; and so Is. 57: 15.

VERSE 18. God, who is often said to *fight* for his people, and who is called a *man of war*, *Jehovah of hosts*, etc. is here represented as enthroned on Zion surrounded by countless multitudes of chariots, i. e. war-chariots of fire such as are spoken of in 2 Kings 6: 17. Accompanied by these celestial forces he had gone forth to combat for his people (comp. Hab. 3: 8-15), and now was returned with them to Zion.—*אֲלֵי־שָׁמַיִם* lit. *thousands of reduplication*, i. e. redoubled, re-

<sup>1</sup> The reader will bear in mind that the references are made to the Hebrew text.

peated. The English rendering "thousands of angels" is copied from the Chaldee translator, who appears to have taken שְׁבַע אֲלֹהִים as i. q. שְׁבַע אֲלֹהִים *tranquil*, which he regarded as equivalent to *happy ones, angels*; comp. Sept. and Vulg.—שֵׁנִי בְּקוֹשׁ *Sinai is (now) in the sanctuary*, i. e. the place of God's abode and communion with his people on earth, which in the ancient times before spoken of (stanza III.) was on Sinai, is now removed to Zion. Examples of a precisely similar use of proper names in classical writers are quoted by Schnurrer from Annotations on the Psalms by James Merrick, p. 141.

VERSE 19. תָּרִימָה לְעֵלְיָהּ lit. *thou art come up to the height*, alluding to the bringing up of the ark with pomp and ceremony to its place in the temple on Zion; comp. 2 Sam. 6: 15. 1 Kings 8: 4. But the psalmist, instead of saying simply and prosaically *the ark has ascended*, says *thou (God) hast ascended*, because Jehovah's presence always accompanied the ark; comp. 1 Sam. 4: 7. Ps. 47: 6. תָּרִימָה may be rendered either *on high*, i. e. to heaven; or *to the height*, scil. of Zion, elsewhere called צִיּוֹן הַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ *the height of Zion* Jer. 31: 12 and הַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ *the height of Israel* Ezek. 17: 23, etc. The context shows that we are to take it in the latter sense; comp. Ps. 7: 7, 8. 182: 8.—שָׁבַרְתָּ שְׁבִיבֵי שָׁבִירָתְךָ *thou hast taken captives*, alluding to the late victory; and so Num. 21: 1. Judg. 5: 12.<sup>1</sup> The rendering of the English version, *thou hast led captivity captive*, is a servile copy of a common Hebrew idiom (see Ges. Lehrg. § 218. 5. a), after the example of the Septuagint.—לָקַחְתָּ מִתְּחוֹמֵי בְּאֵרָם *thou hast taken offerings in men*, referring to the heathen captives taken by the victorious Israelites, who had probably devoted themselves in the ancient manner to the God of their conquerors (and so De Wette). Even these rebels Jehovah graciously accepts, that he may reign the acknowledged God not of Israel only but of all mankind; comp. v. 17. As the quotation in Eph. 4: 8 rests on an exposition not warranted by the original text, no account need be taken of it here. Compare together the last clause of this verse and the last clause of verse 7, where the words are similar but the general sense is different; and so Ps. 49: 12, 20. 59: 10, 18.

VERSE 20. יִרְעַסְתֵּנוּ. Nearly all interpreters either consider this verb as impersonal, and render *though one should cast loads upon us*, i. e. oppress us; or else they refer it to God, and render *even though he impose burdens (i. e. trials) upon us*. But neither of these interpretations is satisfactory. In the first place, the verb cannot

<sup>1</sup> The meaning to *lead forth captives* given to the phrase שָׁבַרְתָּ שְׁבִיבֵי שָׁבִירָתְךָ by Gesenius and others, rests on an erroneous exposition of Judg. 5: 12 seq., where is described, as Schnurrer has clearly shown, not a triumphal procession *after* the battle, but the *going down* of the host *to* the battle.

without the utmost violence be referred to any other subject than God, who is mentioned immediately before and after it, and forms the theme of the entire stanza; and again, whatever may be the exact meaning of the verb, the grateful and exulting tone of the whole context shows that it can be used in no other than a good sense. We are thus led to the opinion of Hupfeld (as quoted by De Wette), who regards the ל as equivalent to את the sign of the accusative, and renders, *he (God) beareth us*. This is the only instance in which the verb נָשַׂם is found with this preposition; when used in the sense of *placing a load upon*, it is always construed with the preposition עַל.

Another question perhaps more difficult to answer, is whether the phrase יוֹם יוֹם is to be connected with נִשְׂמָה לָנוּ or with the preceding אֲדֹנָי קָרִיב. Both the ancient versions and modern commentators agree with singular unanimity in adopting the latter construction; and still I think our English translators were correct in taking the opposite view, and accordingly translate, *Blessed be the Lord (who) beareth us day by day*, supplying the relative as in v. 17; comp. Ps. 28: 6. 31: 22. 66: 20. 124: 6. God is often spoken of as bearing his people as a father beareth his children, and that too *perpetually*; see Exod. 19: 4. Num. 11: 12. Deut. 1: 31. 33: 27. Ps. 28: 9. Is. 63: 9, and especially Is. 46: 3, *Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, בְּטֶן בֶּטֶן הַחֲמָסִים מְנִי בֶטֶן who are borne (by me) from the belly, who are carried from the womb*, where the very same verb is employed. Another inducement to adopt this construction is that it makes a more perfect parallel. As to the accents, editions differ; but the oldest in my possession, that of Venice 1525, reads יוֹם נִשְׂמָה לָנוּ, which agrees with the interpretation given above, and so the Polyglottis and Van der Hooght.—יְשׁוּעָתָנוּ *our salvation*, i. e. our saviour, preserver, especially in battle.

VERSE 21. יוֹם הַיָּאֵל לָנוּ *this God is ours*, taking לָנוּ predicatively with the English version.—לְמִצְרָתוֹ הוֹצֵאתוֹ *the issues of (i. e. from) death*. Commentators have given themselves much unnecessary trouble with this phrase, rendering *goings forth to death, escapes for death*, etc., and all because they have not observed that the ל, as in the preceding לְמִצְרָתוֹ, is a mere sign of the genitive, which is here rendered necessary by the inversion employed for the sake of having the two clauses end alike (see De Sacy, Gram. Arabe, I. § 1051, ed. 2); comp. וְגַל יוֹצְאֵי *all that go out of the ark* Gen. 9: 10. Exod. 1: 5, וְזֶרַע שְׂמָרְתָּהּ *what issues from her lips*, Num. 30: 13, and many like phrases.

VERSE 22. After praising God as the deliverer and preserver of his people, with especial reference to the victorious issue granted them in the recent battle, the psalmist goes on to depict the punishment

which God will yet inflict on those of his enemies who for the present elude his justice, and have not submitted, like the recently made proselytes (v. 19), to his rightful sway. Comp. the similar antithesis in the first stanza.—קִדְקִדֵי שֵׁטֶר *hairy scalp* is merely a poetical equivalent for ראש *head* in the first clause.

VERSE 23. The psalmist gives weight to the prediction contained in this and the following verse, by introducing it in the shape of an oracle coming directly from God; comp. Ps. 60: 8 [6]. It is an amplification of the declaration contained in v. 22; comp. verses 2 and 8.

Wherever the enemies of God and his people may flee to and hide themselves, whether in the east or the west, in the heights of the mountains or the depths of the sea, God will bring them back from their retreats and deliver them over to Israel for destruction; comp. the strikingly parallel passage in Amos 9: 1-4, also Ps. 139: 7-10. The primary and usual meaning of the verb הֵשִׁיב, the relation of this passage to what has gone before, and especially the comparison of it with those just cited from other parts of Scripture, show that what is here meant is not, as some suppose, a mere *bringing together* of enemies for punishment, as in Joel 4: 2 [3: 2], but a *bringing back* of fugitives from God's justice. Still the introduction of the proper name Bashan warrants us in supposing with Rödiger that reference is here had to the geographical position of the particular countries alluded to in other parts of the psalm, viz. the Chaldeans [or Syrians] and Egyptians. It is surprising, as Schnurrer remarks, that some respectable interpreters (and among them our English translators) should apply what is here said to the Israelites, when the connection in which this verse stands with those which precede and follow it shows that the object to be understood is the *enemies* of God and his people.

VERSE 24. This verse has exercised the ingenuity of interpreters from very early times, and probably will long continue to do so. In the original it reads as follows:

לְמַעַן תִּמְחֹךְ רִגְלֶךָ בְּדָם  
לְשׁוֹן קַלְבֵיךָ מֵאֲבִיבִים מִיַּדֵּי

The questions on which the construction and rendering of the whole verse turn are these: 1. What is the meaning of the verb תִּמְחֹךְ, and is it of the sec. pers. masc. sing. or the third pers. feminine? 2. What is the כֶּן of מִיַּדֵּי, and does its suffix refer to אֲבִיבִים, to דָּם, or to לְשׁוֹן?

I. Rejecting as inadmissible all conjectural emendations of the text, the first interpretation that presents itself is as follows:

That thou mayest shake thy foot in blood,  
(That) the tongue of thy dogs (may drink) of each of (thine) enemies.

Or as Rosenmüller renders the last clause : *lingua canum tuorum ex hostibus, ex unoquoque eorum*, scil. bibet. He considers that the sing. suffix of *תַּעֲרֹה* *ex ipso* refers distributively to the plur. noun *אֹיְבֵייהֶם*, so that the phrase *תַּעֲרֹה אֹיְבֵייהֶם* is i. q. of (thine) *enemies, of each one* (of them); and he supplies the verb *תַּשְׁתֵּהוּ*. This translation is objectionable on account of the violence of the supposed ellipsis in the second clause, where we are required to supply a verb different from that in the first clause and of a different gender, number, and construction. The proper meaning of the verb *תַּשְׁתֵּהוּ* is not to “shake” but to *dash*; much less can we assign to it with Gesenius (sub. v. *תַּשְׁתֵּהוּ*) the meaning to “lap” in the second clause. Besides, the termination thus given to the verse appears exceedingly flat and awkward and unworthy of so vigorous a writer as our psalmist. The construction is that of the Chaldee, Gesenius, and Rosenmüller.

II. One mode of obviating the difficulty which attends the construction of *תַּשְׁתֵּהוּ*, is to treat it as a third pers. fem. agreeing with *תְּלֵלָהּ* and *תַּשְׁוֶהוּ*; thus :

To the end that thy foot may glisten in blood,  
(That) the tongue of thy dogs (may glisten) from that of (thine) enemies.

Lit. *from* (thine) *enemies, even from it*, scil. their *blood*, *תְּלֵלָהּ*, which is the corresponding word in the first clause. Such is the rendering of Ewald, who supports it by referring to the Arab. *محص*, which means *to dash*, and also *to flash, to glitter*, as lightning. This intransitive construction of the verb has the greatest weight of ancient authority in its favor, being adopted by the Sept. Vulg. and Syr., which render, *that thy foot may be dipped*, etc. R. Jehudah (quoted by Aben Ezra) and Kimchi explain *תַּשְׁתֵּהוּ* as i. q. *תַּשְׁוֶהוּ* by transposition and as meaning *to become red*. Our English translators have adopted the rendering of the ancient versions in the text, and placed that of the rabbins in the margin. The merit of this translation is that it supposes in the second clause an easy and natural ellipsis of the verb contained in the first; comp. v. 22. The objections to it are that it gives to the verb *תַּשְׁתֵּהוּ* a different meaning and construction from those which it has in v. 22 and the many other passages where it occurs, and ends the verse in the same faulty manner as before.

III. The interpretation which has found most favor in modern times is the following :

That thou mayest dash thy foot in blood,  
(That) the tongue of thy dogs (may have) its portion of (thine) enemies.

Lit. according to Simonis, *ad linguam canum tuorum quod attinet, de hostibus (sit) ejus portio*, supplying merely the substantive verb. Here the first syllable of  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$ , which the other translations treat as a preposition, is regarded as the noun  $\text{חָרַץ}$  *portion* esp. of food. This etymology is adopted by Saadiah, Jarchi, Mendelssohn, and Sachs among Jewish, and by Simonis, Schnurrer, Böttcher, and De Wette among Christian scholars. The merits of this translation are that it preserves to the verb  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  the same meaning and construction which it has in v. 22 and elsewhere; while it simplifies the construction of the second clause, and closes it with an important member of the proposition instead of an awkward and unnecessary particle. The objections made to it are: 1. That  $\text{חָרַץ}$  occurs nowhere else but as a preposition. To this it is replied that, although the noun  $\text{חָרַץ}$  is not actually found elsewhere, it may be derived with the greatest ease and certainty from the verb  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$ , from whose correlative  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  we have the nouns of like meaning  $\text{חָרַץ}$  and  $\text{חָרַץ}$ , the latter of which is used in a closely similar manner Ps. 63: 11; and even Lengerke is obliged to confess that a *ἀπαξ λεγόμενον* of this sort is by no means surprising in a writer so fond of uncommon words. It may be observed too that there is no other example of the form  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  for  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  (the nearest approach to it being  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  Job 4: 12), and it is by no means unlikely that the punctators also regarded it as a noun. 2. It is objected that the noun  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  to which the masc. suff.  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  is here made to refer, is properly of the fem. gender. This is answered by an appeal to Ps. 22: 16. Lam. 4: 4, etc. where it is plainly construed in the masculine. These arguments may be found more fully stated in Böttcher ad loc. —In the similar prediction Ps. 58: 11 we find the plainer verb  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  *to bathe*, scil. the feet; but in the passage before us the verb  $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  appears to be employed partly on account of its greater boldness, and partly to produce a correspondence between this verse and v. 22.

This last interpretation I have concluded to adopt as liable to the least objection. There are a number of minor varieties of rendering, with which it is not necessary to trouble the reader; since the entire discussion is of little or no consequence except to the philologist who aims at scientific accuracy. The verse has no important bearing on any other part of the psalm; and besides, its general import is perfectly clear, and remains the same whichever mode of interpretation we adopt.

VERSE 25. After the natural digression contained in the foregoing stanza, the psalmist proceeds to describe the order of the recent procession.— $\text{וְחָרַץ}$  *they have seen*, scil. the enemies spoken of just before, who seem to be here represented as looking forth from their hiding-

places with fear and jealousy at the triumphant rejoicings of their victors.—*תְּלִיכוֹתֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים thy goings, O God*, i. e. the procession of the ark; comp. v. 5: 19.—*בְּקֶרֶב into the sanctuary*, i. e. on its way to the sanctuary; so Schnurrer and Mendelssohn. Others, *in the sanctuary*, i. e. in the courts of the temple; but this is contradicted by the expression *שָׁם there*, v. 28. The construction which unites *בְּקֶרֶב* to *תְּלִיכֵי* and renders *who art in the sanctuary* (Sept., Vulg., Böttch., De Wette) is too prosaic; as to the accents, they here prove nothing, as in Ps. 25: 19. 50: 13. 60: 4, 7, 8, etc. *In holiness* (Chald., Syr., Jarchi) is still more inadmissible.

VERSE 26. The description of the procession which here follows was doubtless suggested by Judg. 5: 12 sqq. The musicians, who performed a conspicuous part on such occasions (comp. 2 Sam. 6: 5, 15), lead the van.—*In the midst of damsels beating timbrels*, and walking on either side of the singers and players (Böttcher). The rendering of the English version, "*among them were the damsels*," etc. is borrowed from Kimchi, who offers it as a mere conjecture. It is totally inadmissible; because it requires us to read *בְּתוֹךְ* instead of the *בְּקֶרֶב* of the text, whose correctness is here vouched for by the unanimous testimony of the ancient versions.

VERSE 27. *בְּמִקְוֵי הַמַּקְוֵי in the convocations, congregations, assemblies*, for worship in the temple, such as that in which the people now find themselves; and so Ps. 26: 12, the only other place where the word occurs (Lengerke). Consequently this verse does not represent what is sung in the procession, as some suppose; but is an outburst of gratitude in the form of an apostrophe, precisely like that in Ps. 22: 24.—*עַיִן הַמַּקְוֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ye of the fountain of Israel*, i. e. ye descendants, posterity of Israel; so *עַיִן יַעֲקֹב the fountain of Jacob*, Dent. 33: 28; comp. Num. 24: 7. Is. 48: 1. As to the absolute use of the prep. *מִן*, comp. *מִמֶּנּוּ they that proceed from thee*, thy posterity, Is. 58: 12; *בְּתוֹךְ הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה they of the house of Togarmah*, the Togarmathites, Ezek. 27: 14; *בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר they of the city*, the citizens, Ps. 72: 16.

VERSE 28. Here are mentioned some of the returning tribes with their chieftains who took part in the ceremony. The tribes enumerated, viz. the two nearest to Jerusalem and the two furthest off, seem designed to include the rest. Böttcher compares the prose expression "*from Dan to Beersheba*," to denote all Palestine. A comparison of this verse with Judg. 5: 14–18 exhibits in a striking light the power of condensation which is a characteristic of our psalmist.

The two words *רָדַם* and *רָגַמְתָּם* have given much trouble to interpreters both ancient and modern. The Sept., Syr., and Vulg. derive the former from *רָדַם to sleep soundly*; the Chald. and Jarchi from *רָדַד to*

*descend*; Mendelssohn and Ewald render *their leader*. The word רִנְיָתָם is rendered by Sept., Vulg., Syr., Saad., *leaders or rulers*; by Jerome, M. ben Seruk, and Mendels., *purple*, i. q. אֲרִינְיָן; by Rosenmüller and others *stone*, i. e. support, comparing the expression *stone of Israel*, Gen. 49: 24. These interpretations are all opposed to the obvious etymology of the words or to the context. The following is De Wette's translation:

There was Benjamin the youngest (and) their ruler,  
The princes of Judah (and) their band.

Which is essentially that of our English version. De Wette owns that it does not satisfy him; and in fact it is open to serious objections, both on the score of construction and meaning. The awkwardness of the sudden transition from the singular to the plural number, which arises from referring the suff. ׀ to רִנְיָתָם and רִנְיָתָם, notwithstanding that they are collectives, is heightened by the omission in each case of the copula ׀ *and*. Besides, the verb רָדָם means *to trample on, to subdue enemies*; and then *to hold in subjection, to have dominion over*, scil. the people or kings of another nation. It is never used of a prince simply *ruling* over his own people, not even in Ps. 72: 8; comp. 1 Kings 5: 4 [4: 24]. As the word is thus used only in an unfavorable sense, we are naturally led to refer its suffix not to Benjamin, but to the *enemies* who are spoken of both in what precedes and in what follows. An examination of the corresponding word in the next clause confirms the correctness of this interpretation.

The Arab. verb رَجَمَ means *to stone, to cast stones at any one*, and also *to heap up stones*; and its derivative رَجْمَةٌ signifies accordingly *a stoning, lapidation*, and also *a heap of stones*. The Heb. verb רָגַם and the Aram. רִגַם are used only in the first of the above meanings, viz. *to cast stones*; and hence the Syr. رَجَمَ and the Chald. רִנְיָתָם mean only *a stoning*. The inference is clear that the corresponding Heb. noun רִנְיָתָם is restricted to the same meaning with the Aramæan, i. e. *stoning, lapidation*. Hence we are not at liberty to render it, after the Arabic, *heap of stones*; much less can we suppose that this expression is used to denote *heap* in general, and then *multitude, troop*, i. e. soldiers (so Kimchi, De Wette, and others), or council (Seb. Münster and Eng. Vers.). I therefore render, with Böttcher and Lengerke:

There is little Benjamin, their subduer;  
The princes of Judah, who showered stones upon them.

and suppose with them that the abstract noun *stoning* is used collectively to denote 'those who cast stones,' and that reference is had to the hurling or slinging of stones, which was an important part of ancient warfare; see further in Böttcher.

VERSE 29. *Thy God* (O Israel) *hath ordained thy might*, or rather *thy glory*; see next clause. God, who is here spoken of in the third person, is immediately afterwards addressed in the second; comp. similar transitions of person in vv. 2 and 3, 8 and 9 seq.—*עֲזָרָה אֶלְדָּרֶיךָ וְגו'*. The Sept., Vulg., and Syr. render, *Strengthen, O God, what thou hast wrought for us*, i. e. do still greater things than thou hast already done for us. But a careful examination of the passages in which this verb occurs, shows that this causative meaning cannot properly be imputed to the Kal form; nor does it here yield a proper sense, because the prayer to which this forms the introduction is, not that God will confer yet greater favors on his people, but that he will cause himself to be glorified of men in consequence of the great things which he has done for Israel. Accordingly we must render, with Ewald, De Wette, and Lengerke, *Be thou glorious* (i. e. glorify thyself), *O God, who hast wrought for us*. The meaning thus given to the verb is supported by that of its derivative *עָזַר*, which signifies *might, power*, and also *glorious might, glory*; and by the like meaning of the Arab. *عَزَّ*.—The same general sense is expressed by the Chaldee: *Show thyself mighty* (or *glorious*), *O God, in what thou hast made for us*, scil. the temple, mentioned in the following verse. But this construction, which is adopted in a different sense by Schnurrer and Rosenmüller, supposes an ellipsis which is not readily supplied.

VERSE 30. *מִמְדִּיבְכֶךָ* at *thy temple*. The use of the prep. *בְּךָ* to denote *direction* and then *locality*, which is found e. g. in the well known term *מְבִרָה* (see Ges. Lex. *בְּךָ* 3. h), seems to be extended to the similar expression *מִמְדִּיבְכֶךָ* or *מִדִּיבְכֶךָ* both in this place and in Ps. 45: 9. By adopting this rendering we are freed from the unsatisfactory interpretation of Symmachus, *because of thy temple*, which has found favor with most modern commentators; and without having recourse to De Wette's objectionable expedient of connecting this clause with the preceding verse. The only versions in which I find the rendering here proposed are the Ethiopic and Arabic.—*לִיךָ יוֹבְרִינֵי וְגו'* lit. *to thee let kings bring gifts in procession*, scil. in token of homage; an allusion to the well known oriental custom, both in ancient and modern times, of bearing gifts to a great man with much pomp and display.

This last phrase may assist us in estimating the date of the

psalm. The first writer who makes use of the verb יָבֵל and whose age is known with historical certainty is *Isaiah*. It is afterwards employed by Jeremiah, Hosea, and Zephaniah, and it occurs repeatedly in the Psalms and in Job; see Ges. Lex. where all the passages are cited. The word פָּרָה is found only in connection with the verb just mentioned. It is used by Isaiah in the phrase יָבֵל פָּרָה *presents shall be brought*, scil. from Ethiopia, Is. 18: 7; and also in Ps. 76: 12, which speaks of bringing presents to God.

VERSE 31. חַיֵּי הַיַּבֵּל *the beast of the reeds*. Aben Ezra explains חַיֵּי to mean *spears*, after the Arabic usage, and renders חַיֵּי הַיַּבֵּל *the company of spearmen*, in which he is followed by Kimchi and the English version. But this interpretation is opposed by the following clause; from which it is evident that the words must be taken in their primary signification to denote a savage beast of some kind, and that this beast must represent some inimical prince or people. Jarchi accordingly supposes it to mean the *wild boar*, and to typify the Edomites; but he has found few to acquiesce in his views. The common opinion among modern commentators is, that it denotes the *crocodile*, and that this is a figure for Egypt. They base it on the supposition that this verse and the next refer to the same people. But this is not necessarily the case; on the contrary they seem, when closely compared with each other and with what follows, to speak in a different tone and not improbably of different nations. Hence the opinion of Saadiah, Lowth, Schnurrer, and Böttcher is to be preferred, who suppose the animal intended to be the *lion*. That the cane-brakes which fringe the banks of the Jordan were in ancient times the common resort of lions, is evident from Jer. 49: 19. 50: 44. Zech. 11: 8; comp. Relandi Palest. p. 274. It is not unlikely too that these animals infested more particularly the northern parts of the river, owing to the frequently disturbed state of the regions round about it; and this would render the lion a peculiarly appropriate representative of a northern or north-eastern enemy, comp. Jer. 4: 6, 7. The repeated allusions to *Bashan* in an unfavorable sense (v. 16 and 28) and the use of the word אַבְיָרִים *bulls* in the same manner as אַבְיָרֵי בָשָׁן *bulls of Bashan*, Ps. 22: 18, cause me to refer the terms of this verse, with Schnurrer and Böttcher, to an enemy situated to the north-east, say the Syrians. The mention of *kings* in the preceding verse authorizes us to understand with Schnurrer חַיֵּי הַיַּבֵּל as denoting the enemy's king, just as אֲרִי *crocodile* is used to represent the king of Egypt, Ezek. 29: 3. 32: 2.

The terms *bulls* and *calves* in the next clause will then fitly designate the military leaders and the soldiers or common people.—קָנָה

עַמֵּי הָעוֹלָם lit. *the calves of the nations*, i. e. of the heathen countries; comp. the phrase נִיחַוּ גוֹי וְנִיחַוּ אֶרֶץ i. q. נִיחַוּ וְנִיחַוּ זֶפְחָן Zeph. 2: 14. The Chald. and Syr. explain this of idols.—מִתְרַחֵם בְּרַגְלָיו קָסָה *who humbleth himself for bits of silver*. This phrase is usually applied to the enemies collectively. De Wette adopts the construction of the Sept., Vulg., Aben Ezra, Eng. Vers., and Ros., and renders *that they may prostrate themselves with pieces of silver*; but he candidly owns that such a use of the participle is without a parallel. It is better to adhere to the relative construction of the Chald., Ewald, and Lengerke, which is so common in Hebrew poetry; at the same time referring it, not to the enemies in general, but to their *king*, הַיְהוּה קִנָּה, with which expression it logically agrees in the masc. singular. With Sachs I have assigned to the preposition אֶ the meaning *for, for the sake of*, as in Gen. 29: 18. According to this rendering, the enemy's king is represented as subjecting himself to the shame of defeat in battle for the sake of the booty which he had vainly hoped to carry away (as in Judg. 5: 19); comp. the concluding expression of the other member of the parallel, "the nations that *delight in war*."—בָּזַר *scatter thou*. In this single instance I reluctantly depart from the Masoretic punctuation, along with the ancient versions and most modern interpreters, and read the verb in the imperative בָּזַר; which the context seems almost absolutely to require. If we retain the preterite pointing בָּזַר, we must render, *Yea, he scatters the nations*, etc.; but this interrupts the continuity too much.

VERSE 32. מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם *out of Egypt*. This poetic form of the preposition is used twice in Judg. 5: 14, in similar phrases.—בִּישׁ קָרִיץ רָגְלוֹ *let Ethiopia quickly stretch forth her hands*, lit. make its hands run. The verb קָרִיץ, which immediately follows the subject, agrees with it as the name of a country in the fem. sing.; but in the word רָגְלוֹ, which is removed a degree further from it, the agreement is neglected as far as the gender is concerned, the suffix being put in the masculine. Comp. the similar instances וְהָזֶקֶת וְהָזֶקֶת 1 Kings 19: 11. אֶרֶץ צִדְדִּים וְצִדְדִּים Ps. 63: 2. The verse expresses the wish that Egypt and Ethiopia may soon come as tributaries to Jehovah, and join his chosen people in acknowledging his sovereignty. It is only by taking the verse in this favorable sense that we obtain a natural transition to the following stanza. Comp. the like kindly predictions respecting these nations in Is. 18: 7. 19: 19–25. Ps. 87: 4.

VERSE 33. The psalmist, reverting to the general theme of the second stanza, but introducing different expressions in accordance with what has gone before, now calls upon all the kingdoms of the earth to sing the praises of God.

VERSE 34. לְרִיבָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַיִם קָדְמָם *to him that rideth upon the heavens, the heavens of old*; comp. הַרְרֵי קָדְמָם *the ancient mountains* Num. 23: 7. Deut. 33: 15. נַחַל קְדוּמַיִם *that ancient river* Judg. 5: 21. As the writer designedly introduces specific differences between this and the second stanza, we are not to force upon the phrase לְרִיבָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַיִם קָדְמָם an exact conformity of meaning with the present clause; comp. the closing remarks on v. 19. As to the two construct nouns in apposition, see the same construction Judg. 19: 22. Ps. 78: 9, and comp. the expression מְרִיבָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַיִם קָדְמָם etc. so often used by Isaiah and Jeremiah (Ges. Lehrs. p. 677).—וְיָמֵינוּ קוֹל עֹז *he utters* (i. e. speaks) *with his voice, a mighty voice*, alluding to the thunder, as in Ps. 46: 7. We have here a repetition for the sake of emphasis like that in the first clause; comp. Ps. 106: 7.

VERSE 35. עַל יְהוֹדָאֵל גְּבוּרָתוֹ *his majesty is over Israel*, scil. as a protection. This and the preceding verse seem to contain a reminiscence of Deut. 33: 26; comp. Ps. 36: 6. 57: 11. 103: 19.

VERSE 36. בְּמִקְדָּשֶׁיךָ *in thy sanctuaries*; comp. v. 30 and Ps. 135: 21. The plural is used here as elsewhere of the temple on Zion, which formed an assemblage of many parts; comp. Jer. 51: 51. Ezek. 21: 7. Ps. 73: 17. 74: 7. The tabernacle is always called in the singular מִקְדָּשׁ; for the plur. מִקְדָּשִׁים which occurs in Lev. 21: 23 means *hallowed things* i. q. מִקְדָּשִׁים 22: 2, 3, 4, etc. Comp. the like use of the plur. הַיְצִיּוֹת *courts* Ps. 84: 3, 11. מִשְׁכְּנֵיהֶם *dwellings* Ps. 46: 5. 84: 2. 132: 5.—The Hebrews often employ the definite article where we should make use of a passive pronoun; so here the expression הָעָם *the people* is equivalent to עַמּוֹ *his people* in Ps. 29: 11.

#### Occasion and Date.

The most difficult of all the difficult questions that belong to the interpretation of this psalm—viz. What is the occasion that called it forth and the date of its composition?—I have purposely deferred to the last; because our only reliable guide to a solution of it is to be looked for in hints scattered up and down the psalm itself, and in order to understand their force, it is necessary that they should first be examined in detail.

The chief opinions that have been broached respecting the origin of this psalm are the following:

1. It was composed by David, to celebrate the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Law on Sinai.—So the older rabbins.
2. Composed by David, on the occasion of bringing the ark from

the house of Obed Edom to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 16: 12 seq.).—*So Lowth, Schnurrer, Rosenmüller.*

3. Composed by David, to celebrate a victory over the heathen.—*Aben Ezra.*

4. Composed in the time of David, to celebrate the bringing back of the ark after a victorious battle with north-eastern enemies, to wit, Syrians and Ammonites (see 2 Sam. 8—12).—*Böttcher.*

5. Celebrates the bringing back of the ark to the temple after a victorious battle, subsequent to David's reign and before the separation into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.—*De Wette.*

6. A joint victory of the two kingdoms over the Moabites.—*Hitzig.*

7. Hezekiah's deliverance from the invasion of Sennacherib, king of Assyria (2 Kings 19: 35, 36).—*D. Kimchi.*

8. Celebrates in a general way the praises of Jehovah as the God of victory, occasioned however by some occurrence that took place between Judah and Egypt about the close of the seventh century B. C.—*Rödiger, Lengerke.*

9. The dedication of the second temple.—*Ewald.*

The reader in casting his eye over this list will perceive that the differences of opinion among the ablest commentators as to the period to which this composition belongs, are so great as to cover, like the theories respecting the date of the book of Job, the entire history of the Jewish nation. The conclusion which naturally arises to the mind from such an exhibition of conflicting views, is that the question, for want of sufficient data, is incapable of a satisfactory solution; and such perhaps is really the case. Still, while we have before us the wonderful disclosures which modern criticism is constantly making with regard to matters apparently far more difficult and hopeless than this, it would be presumptuous in the extreme to set a limit to its powers and affirm that what now is doubtful must necessarily remain so forever. Let us then endeavor in the meantime, by weighing the scanty evidence presented to us, to ascertain which of these views has the greatest probabilities in its favor, and thus contribute our mite to the final settlement of the question, if that be possible.

Of course the early expositors, both Jews and Christians, who received the superscriptions of the psalms as of equal antiquity and authority with the psalms themselves, were unanimous in attributing this one to David. But when it came to be shown that many of these inscriptions are manifestly erroneous, and that consequently as a whole they are of no authority whatever, the date of the present composition was gradually lowered by critics until finally placed by Ewald at the completion of Zerubbabel's temple. The reason why they did so is,

that the psalm contains expressions and allusions which seem inconsistent with the supposition that it was written at so early a date as the reign of David.

Thus we have already shown, in commenting on the psalm, that the first writer that uses the phrases קָרָיוּ קְרָיוּ (v. 6) and וְזָכַרְתָּ לִּי (v. 80), and whose age is known with certainty, is Isaiah. Again, in v. 82 we have a prediction respecting the future submission of Egypt and Cush to Jehovah. Now such joint predictions are not found in the Hebrew writings until the period when Upper Egypt was united to Ethiopia under the same sovereigns in the reigns of Ahas and Heseckiah kings of Judah,<sup>1</sup> when they became quite common; see Is. 18: 7. 19: 18, 21, 28. 20: 3, 4, 5. 43: 3. 45: 14. 46: 8, 9. Nah. 3: 9. Ezek. 30: 4, 9. Dan. 11: 42, 43. Ps. 87: 4. These facts warrant us in assuming with a good degree of likelihood that this psalm was not composed before the reign of Ahas. With this agrees well the character of the whole production, which in its historical reminiscences bears a strong family resemblance to the later psalms 78, 80, 81, 105, 106, 135, 136. As to the particular passages, compare the likening of manna to rain (v. 10) with Ps. 78: 24; the antithetic use of וְיָדָע and יָדָע (v. 11) with Ps. 74: 19; the future gathering together of enemies for punishment (vs. 23 and 24) with Joel 4: 2 [3: 2]. Amos 9: 1—4. Ps. 139: 7—10; the coming of kings with gifts (v. 30) with Ps. 72: 10; and the description of God's glory (vs. 34 and 35) with Deut. 33: 26.

On the other hand the psalm cannot well have been produced after the captivity. Though historical in its character, it does not contain the slightest reference to that great event. Its bold, free style, abounding in ἀπαξ λεγόμενα and other rare words, bespeaks an origin anterior to the period when the language had lost much of its original purity and vigor. Moreover, the enumeration of the tribes, v. 28, is altogether opposed to the assumption of a date when all the tribes had become fused together into a single nation of Jews.

In accordance with these arguments, the events which the psalm celebrates should lie between the accession of Ahas to the throne of Judah B. C. 741 and the deposition of Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar B. C. 588. It is true that the mention of the tribes Judah and Benjamin, Zebulon and Naphtali, would naturally suggest a period either before the separation of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel or when they were united together against their common enemies in the days of Jehoshaphat and Ahab (1 Kings 22) or of Ahaziah and Jehoram (2 Kings 8: 25—29). But if the indications just pointed out are to

<sup>1</sup> See Gesenius, Com. on Isaiah, I. p. 595—599.

be relied on, we must account for the appearance of these names in some other way. Thus we may suppose that many individuals from the northern tribes had either been left behind in their own country or had taken refuge in Judah when the main body of the population was carried off, and that these had assisted their kinsmen and protectors in the late battle.

From various concurrent circumstances, this enemy is to be sought in the *north-east*. These circumstances are the mention of the *Araboth* traversed by the returning host (v. 5); the repeated allusions to *Bashan* as an inimical region (vs. 16 and 23); and the epithet of the enemy's king, *beast of the woods*, meaning the *lion*, so similar to that applied to a northern enemy by Jeremiah (v. 31). The conclusion to which they lead us is corroborated by the fact that the psalmist has taken as his model the Song of Deborah and Barak (see remarks on verses 2, 5, 18, 7, 13, 14, 19, 31, 32), not improbably because the latter celebrates a victory over a northern enemy in ancient times.

All these facts and arguments seem to indicate that the psalm was composed somewhere between the reigns of Ahaz and Zedekiah shortly after a battle between the forces of Judah assisted by Israelites on the one side and a north-eastern people, say the Syrians, on the other, in which the former were partially victorious; while the predictions in verses 23, 24, and 32, appear to refer to previous struggles with Egypt and Ethiopia.

To come to a more definite conclusion than this and point to some occurrence within the limits specified which shall completely answer to the indications set forth, is a difficult if not an impossible task. The sudden destruction of Sennacherib's army, it is true, suggests itself at once; and history relates many circumstances preceding, attending, and following it (especially if we adopt the account of Hezekiah's reign as given in the book of Chronicles), which admirably suit this psalm; for which reason Kimchi, and it is said many other rabbins,<sup>1</sup> interpreted it of that memorable event. But there are two circumstances which forbid us to adopt this exposition; one is the fact that, according to all the ancient authorities, the defeat of the Assyrian army was produced without any agency of the Jews, who were shut up in their capital at the time;<sup>2</sup> the other is the good understanding which then existed between Judah and Egypt. The brief annals of Judah from Manasseh to Jehoahaz (2 Kings 21: 1—23: 8) offer no occurrence to which the psalm can be referred. We are thus brought to the conclusion, already arrived at by Prof. Rödiger and adopted by

<sup>1</sup> Poli Synopsis Criticorum, ad Ps. LXVIII.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 19: 35. Herodotus 2. 141. Berosus in Josephus, Antiqq. 10, 1.

Lengerke, that the event which gave rise to the psalm must have occurred in the time of Necho king of Egypt near the close of the seventh century, B. C. If required to specify the occasion more nearly, I would suggest that it may have been one of the contests with nations east of the Jordan in the time of Jehoiakim mentioned 2 Kings 24: 2. It is true that these contests are spoken of as resulting unfavorably to the Jews; but we may suppose that, although adverse on the whole, victory sometimes inclined to the side of the latter.

If this be objected to as unsatisfactory, I can only lament, as many have done before me, that want of certain information which such conjectures can but ill supply. But though some points still remain subject to doubt, the labor devoted to the exposition of this psalm will not have been spent in vain, provided we have truly explained its general scope and design, and exhibited the connection in which its several parts stand to each other so as to constitute a harmoniously proportioned whole. This is plainly the first duty of an expositor, and forms the only true and legitimate groundwork for the higher exegesis of any portion of the Sacred Writings. This alone can gradually bring the world to something like unity of opinion respecting their meaning, and release them from the condition of a nose of wax in the hands of ingenious theologians to be twisted into any shape that may suit their purposes. Entertaining these views, it will not be surprising that, to use the words of bishop Patrick, "I have forborne a great many mystical and allegorical senses of words, and rather adhered to the literal meaning, though accounted trivial and vulgar by many men; who had rather indulge to their own fancies than be at the pains of making a diligent inquiry after the truth. For, whatever is pretended, it is not the easiness and meanness of the literal sense which have made it to be despised, and been the cause of allegorizing the Scriptures; but the great difficulty and labor that are required to the finding of it out in many places."