

The arrangement, by which a Psalm that speaks of a great feast of mercy prepared for mankind is followed by a Psalm that praises Jahve as the Shepherd and Host of His own people, could not possibly be more sensible and appropriate. If David is the author, and there is no reason for doubting it, then this Psalm belongs to the time of the rebellion under Absalom, and this supposition is confirmed on every hand. It is like an amplification of iv. 8; and iii. 7 is also echoed in it. But not only does it contain points of contact with this pair of Psalms of the time mentioned, but also with other Psalms belonging to same period, as xxvii. 4, and more especially lxiii., which is said to have been composed when David had retreated with his faithful followers over Kidron and the Mount of Olives into the plains of the wilderness of Judah, whither Hushai sent him tidings, which counselled him to pass over Jordan with all possible haste. It is characteristic of all these Psalms, that in them David yearns after the house of God as after the peculiar home of his heart, and, that all his wishes centre in the one wish to be at home again. And does not this short, tender song, with its depth of feeling and its May-like freshness, accord with David's want and wanderings to and fro at that time?

It consists of two hexastichs with short closing lines, resembling (as also in Isa. xvi. 9, 10) the Adonic verse of the strophe of Sappho, and a tetrastich made up of very short and longer lines intermixed.

Vers. 1—3. The poet calls Jahve רַעַי, as He who uniformly and graciously provides for and guides him and all who are His. Later prophecy announces the visible appearing of this Shepherd, Isa. xl. 11, Ezek. xxxiv. 37, and other passages. If this has taken place, the רַעַי רַעַי from the mouth of man finds its cordial response in the words ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός. He who has Jahve, the possessor of all things, himself has all things, he lacks nothing; viz. לֹא-יִשָׁר, whatever is good in itself and would be good for him, xxxiv. 11, lxxxiv. 12. אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ אֵינֶם אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ are the pastures of fresh and tender grass, where one lies at ease, and rest and enjoyment are combined. הָיוּ (הָיוּ), according to its primary meaning, is a resting- or dwelling-place, specifically an oasis, i. e. a verdant spot in the desert. מַי מְנוּחָה are waters, where the weary finds a most pleasant resting-place (according to Hitzig, it is a plural brought in by the plural of the governing word, but it is at any rate a superlative plural), and can at the same time refresh himself. נָהַל is suited to this as being a pastoral word used of gentle leading, and more especially of guiding the herds to the watering-places, just as הִרְבִּיץ is used of making them to rest, especially at noon-tide, Cant. i. 7; cf. ὁδηγεῖν, Apoc. vii. 17. שׁוֹבֵב נַפְשׁ (elsewhere הַשִּׁיב) signifies to bring back the soul that is as it were flown away, so that it comes to itself again, therefore to impart new life, *recreate*. This He does to the soul, by causing it amidst the dryness and heat of temptation and trouble, to taste the very essence of life which refreshes and strengthens it. The *Hiph.* הִנְחִיחַ (Arabic: to put on one side, as perhaps in Job xii. 23) is, as in cxliii. 10 the intensive of נָחַח (lxxvii. 21). The poet glories that Jahve leads him carefully and without risk or wandering in מְעַלְמֵי-צֶדֶק, straight paths and leading to the right goal, and this לְמַעַן שְׁמֵן (for His Name's sake). He has revealed Himself as the gracious One, and as such He will prove and glorify Himself even in the need of him who submits to His guidance.

Vers. 4—5. Rod and staff are here not so much those of the pilgrim, which would be a confusing transition to a different figure, but those of Jahve, the Shepherd (שֶׁבֶט, as in Mic. vii. 14, and in connection with it, cf. Num. xxi. 18, מִשְׁעֵנָה as the filling up of the picture), as the means of guidance and defence. The one rod, which the shepherd holds up to guide the flock and upon which he leans and anxiously watches over the flock, has assumed a double form in the conception of the idea. This rod and staff in the hand of God comfort him, i. e. preserve to him the feeling of security, and therefore a cheerful spirit. Even when he passes through a valley dark and gloomy as the shadow of death, where surprises and calamities of every kind threaten him, he fears no misfortune. The LXX. narrows the figure, rendering כְּנִיָּא according to the Aramaic כְּנִיָּא, Dan. iii. 25, ἐν μέσῳ. The noun צֶלְמֹות, which occurs in this passage for the first time in the Old Testament literature, is originally not a compound word; but being formed from a verb צָלַם, צָלַם (root צָלַם, צָלַם), to overshadow, darken, after the form עֲבָרֹות, but pronounced צֶלְמֹות (cf. הַצֶּרְמֹות, *Hadramôt* = the court of death, בְּצֶלְאֵל in-God's-shadow), it signifies the shadow of death as an epithet of the most fearful darkness, as of Hades, Job x. 21 sq., but also of a shaft of a mine, Job xxviii. 3, and more especially of darkness such as makes itself felt in a wild, uninhabited desert, Jer. ii. 6.

After the figure of the shepherd fades away in ver. 4, that of the host appears. His enemies must look quietly on (נָוֶה as in xxxi. 20), without being able to do anything, and see how Jahve provides bountifully for His guest, anoints him with sweet perfumes as at a joyous and magnificent banquet (xcii. 11), and fills his cup to excess. What is meant thereby, is not necessarily only blessings of a spiritual kind. The king fleeing before Absalom and forsaken by the mass of his people was, with his army, even outwardly in danger of being destroyed by want; it is, therefore, even an abundance of daily bread streaming in upon them, as in 2 Sam. xvii. 27—29, that is meant; but even this, spiritually regarded, as a gift from heaven, and so that the satisfying, refreshing and quickening is only the outside phase of simultaneous inward experiences.\* The future תִּשְׁעַרְךָ is followed, according to the customary return to the perfect ground-form, by דִּשְׁנַתְּךָ, which has, none the less, the signification of a present. And in the closing assertion, כּוֹסִי, my cup, is metonymically equivalent to the contents of my cup. This is רִוְיָהּ, a fulness satiating even to excess.

Ver. 6. Foes are now pursuing him, but prosperity and favour alone shall pursue him, and therefore drive his present pursuers out of the field. אָרַךְ, originally affirmative, here restrictive, belongs only to the subject-notion in its signification *nil nisi* (xxxix. 6, 12, cxxxix. 11). The expression is remarkable and without example elsewhere: as good spirits Jahve sends forth טוֹב and חֶסֶד to overtake David's enemies, and to protect him against them to their shame, and that all his life long (accusative of continuance). We have now no need, in connection with our reference of the Psalm to the persecution under Absalom, either to persuade ourselves that וּשְׁבַרְתִּי is equivalent to וּשְׁבַרְתִּי xxvii. 4, or that it is equivalent to וּשְׁבַרְתִּי. The infinitive is logically inadmissible here, and unheard of with the vowel *ā* instead of *i*, which would here (cf. on the other hand וּשְׁבַרְתִּי) be confusing and arbitrary. Nor can it be shewn from Jer. xlii. 10 to be probable that it is contracted from וּשְׁבַרְתִּי, since in that passage שׁוֹב signifies *redeundo* = *rursus*. The LXX., certainly, renders it by καθίσαντες, as in 1 Sam. xii. 2 by καὶ καθίσουσαι; but (since so much uncertainty attaches to these translators and their text) we cannot draw a safe inference as to the existing usage of the language, which would, in connection with such a contraction, go out of the province of one verb into that of another, which is not the case with וּשְׁבַרְתִּי = וּשְׁבַרְתִּי in 2 Sam. xxii. 41. On the contrary we have before us in the present passage a *constructio prægnavans*: "and I shall return (*perf. consec.*) in the house of Jahve", i. e. again, having returned, dwell in the house of Jahve. In itself וּשְׁבַרְתִּי בֵּיתִי might also mean *et revertam ad* (cf. vii. 17, Hos. xii. 7), like בָּ עָלָה, xxiv. 3, *adscendere ad* (*in*). But the additional assertion of continuance, אֲרֵךְ יָמִים (as in xciii. 5, Lam. v. 20, אֲרֵךְ, root אָרַךְ, extension, lengthening = length) favours the explanation, that בֵּיתִי is to be connected with the idea of וּשְׁבַרְתִּי, which is involved in וּשְׁבַרְתִּי as a natural consequence.

\* In the mouth of the New Testament saint, especially on the *dies iridium*, it is the table of the Lord's supper, as Apollinaris also hints when he applies to it the epithet βίψαντων βίβουσαν, *horrendorum onustam*.