

## A JERUSALEM PROCESSIONAL

JOHN P. PETERS

UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

**WORKING** on the Psalms over thirty years, I have been more and more impressed with the amount of local color in them, and the failure of scribes and commentators to note this from lack of personal familiarity with Palestine. My attention was first called to this in connection with Ps. 89. Verse 13 reads:

“North and south, Thou hast created them:  
Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Thy name.”

To any one who has traveled in northern Galilee and had Tabor and Hermon as his landmarks of south and north this breathes the atmosphere of that country. None could have written it but a Galilean. So far as I know, however, no commentator has noticed this. Prof. Briggs in his commentary in the International Series (II, 257) says: — “Tabor and Hermon, the chief mountain peaks of the Holy Land, Tabor commanding the great plain of Esdraelon, and Hermon, the giant of Lebanon, commanding the greater part of the entire land, representatives therefore of the mountains.” This is to miss the local force of the allusion entirely. It led Briggs to a false dating of this part of the Psalm, and a false reference of it. He says (233): “The Ps. indicates a period of peace and quietness in which the public worship of Yahweh in the temple was enjoyed by Israel, and this not until the troubled times of the Restoration were over, some time subsequent to Nehemiah, when peace and prosperity were enjoyed under the Persian rule of Artaxerxes II (458—404 B. C.).” Equally vivid are the local allusions in several of the Psalms of the collection entitled “Of the Sons of Korah” (42—49), such as the mention of the land

of Jordan and the roaring of its fountain beneath Hermon by Tel Kadi (42); and the river on which the Temple stood (46). A study of the Korah Psalms on the ground forced me to the conclusion that they could only be ascribed to psalmists of the temple of Dan, which I set forth in an article in the Briggs Memorial Volume.

With this brief introduction I wish to present what I think I may describe as a new discovery. Vv. 6-8 of Ps. 84 have proved a stumbling block. There is no translation of them which makes real sense, and after taking most unjustifiable liberties with the text, and giving to individual words meanings which they have nowhere else commentators have still left the passage quite unintelligible to the ordinary reader. So the Revised Version (American) reads:

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee:  
In whose heart are the highways to *Zion*.  
Passing through the valley of  
Weeping they make it a place of springs;  
Yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings.  
They go from strength to strength;  
Every one of them appeareth before God in *Zion*.”

Prof. Briggs in his volume in the International Commentary, taking somewhat greater liberties with the text, and omitting the first half of v. 6 altogether reads: —

“The highways are in the minds of those who pass on in the vale of weeping.

He maketh it a place of springs; yea, the early rain clotheth it with blessings.

They go on from battlement to battlement in order to appear before God, Yahweh in *Zion*, Yahweh the God of Hosts.”

Absolutely literally, with one slight change of text,<sup>1</sup> supported by the Greek translation (LXX), this passage reads:

“Happy the man whose strength is in Thee. Causeways in the midst of them<sup>2</sup> they have passed over. In the valley

<sup>1</sup> עברי (7) to עברו (or possibly עבר), and connected with the preceding verse (6), as the metre manifestly requires.

<sup>2</sup> בלבבם, in the midst of or between them; i. e. the causeway or bridge between the two hill, the western hill and *Zion*.

of weeping the fountain<sup>3</sup> that they make. Also the pool<sup>4</sup> the leader<sup>5</sup> encircleth.<sup>6</sup> They go from rampart to rampart. Is seen the God of gods in Zion.”

The first clause is a liturgical phrase to be chanted or sung. The remaining phrases are rubrical and describe or prescribe accurately the course of a procession from the western hill, overlooking the Temple area, across the causeway or bridge between the two hills, connecting them together, down the lower Tyropoeon valley, past the so called fountain of Siloam, made<sup>7</sup> by carrying the waters of the Gihon spring into the Tyropoeon valley.

Then the leader, bending to the right, must swing around the pool of Siloam in a circle, which brings the procession to the southernmost end of the hill of Ophel, and its first scarp. Up this hill they go, from scarp to scarp, where once its various ramparts stood, until the procession reaches the southern gate of the Temple, and appears to God in Zion. The road exactly as here designated exists to-day, and I have traced it step by step, following the directions of this Psalm; and it exists to-day following in its details the rubrics of this Psalm, except only that it does not reach the south gate of the Temple, since there is none, because it is the route ordained by the topography, now as then.

Now read the Psalm with the topography in view. The ceremony commenced on the western hill, about where the great

<sup>3</sup> מַעֵין, the very name applied to-day in Jerusalem to the point of issue of the water of the Virgin Spring through the tunnel in the Tyropoeon Valley, because of the intermittent gush of water, which causes it to be regarded as a fountain not a pool.

<sup>4</sup> Birket, as in the Hebrew consonant Text. The name is applied to-day to the lower pool of Siloam; or perhaps a plural בְּרִיכוֹת, covering both the upper pool, which catches the water of the fountain, and the lower and larger pool, now a garden bed, which formerly received the drainage of the valley.

<sup>5</sup> מוֹרֵה from יָרָה, teacher or leader. The translation *early rain* is a pure invention without any support.

<sup>6</sup> עָטָה means to encircle or enwrap as with a cloak. It has absolutely no other meaning in Hebrew.

<sup>7</sup> The word make or made, יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶהוּ in the text, suggests the peculiarity of this fountain, as one made by men, not by nature.

Jewish synagogues now stand, where the valley separating the two hills is at its narrowest and the western hill rises sharply, so that one looks down thence into the Haram-esh-Shereef, the old Temple area, across the Tyropoeon. Here was sung the first stanza, as the first sacrifice was offered:—

2. "How beloved Thine abode, LORD of Hosts!
3. I have longed, yea fainted for the courts of the Lord.  
With heart and body I raise the joy cry to the  
God of my life.
4. The very birds have found a home,  
And the swallow a nest where she put her young.  
Thine altars, LORD of Hosts,  
My king and my God.
5. (Refrain) Happy they that inhabit Thine house,  
That always sing Thy praise!

Selah."

It is a vivid and beautiful picture of what one sees even to-day as one looks down from that high point into the Temple court beneath and across the valley. Then the procession starts with rhythmic clapping of hands and stamping of staves, as all chant or intone: "Happy he whose strength is in Thee", precisely as one may see religious processions marching in Jerusalem to-day, iterating and reiterating some short phrase or phrases, the sound now almost dying away, now swelling into a shout, as new voices join in, or something arouses new zeal or energy. The procession crosses the bridge or causeway connecting the two hills<sup>3</sup> probably at Robinson's arch just below the Harem area, the natural point for a causeway or bridge, because here the valley is at its narrowest, and then follows the road to the right down the valley just below the walls of David's

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps as early as Hezekiah's time the city had spread over on to the western hill, occupying its highest part, roughly from a line drawn east from the Jaffa Gate along the southern line of the valley running down into the Tyropoeon, and bounded on the south by about the line of the present wall. This was connected with the eastern city by a causeway or bridge, as in the Herodian city, occupying about the same position.

City, into and through the valley of weeping,<sup>9</sup> and past the fountain<sup>10</sup> which has been made or is being made there. There the leader is to bend to the right, as the road does now, and fetch a circuit about the Pool of Siloam.<sup>11</sup>

So the procession finds itself at the foot of the high rock which constitutes the southern end of Ophel. This rock is scarped and was evidently fortified and battlemented, the lowest rampart of the old city of David. The hill goes up almost like steps, as a model of the rock levels shows. Indeed, this hill is peculiar in its succession of knolls of which are still clearly marked the knoll where stands the Dome of the Rock, beyond this the Baris or Antonia, and beyond this Bezetha. At a point approximately above the Virgin's Spring is what seems once to have been another high knoll, the southern edge which still presents a steep surface toward the south, suggesting a battlement or rampart similar to that at the extreme southern point of the hill. Here it is supposed once stood David's citadel, on the rock summit cut down with such vast toil in the Maccabean period to prevent it from dominating or rivaling the

<sup>9</sup> The excavations of the Assumptionists on the eastern side of the western hill above the Siloam fountain and pool have shown that in the earlier times, and presumably until some time not long before the Christian era, this area was occupied by graves and tombs. Hence probably the name valley of weeping, as similarly of the valley of weepers near Bethel (Jud. 2 1).

<sup>10</sup> This fountain is peculiar in that it is made by the tunnel through Ophel, and does not spring out of the ground naturally. The tunnel is generally supposed to have been cut in Hezekiah's time, the close of the 8th. century. The Hebrew text reads *that is made or set*; the Greek, *was made or set*. Apparently it was not so old at this time of composition of our Psalm that the remembrance of its construction was forgotten.

<sup>11</sup> The water from the tunnel, which discharges intermittently, is caught in a small pool, the outlet of which is carried beneath, not into the Birket or large pool, thus reaching the valley below. The large pool, like the other *birkets* about Jerusalem, simply caught and impounded the water flowing down the valley. To-day no water flows down the valley, the bed of the *birket* is gardens, but the water from the tunnel is carried underneath, not into it. It is much larger than the small pool or tank at the mouth of the tunnel, and extends further to the west, so that the road makes a circuit about it.

Temple. From this the road would have dipped down to a portion of the hill of lower level, crossing which it again ascended to the ramparts of Zion or the Temple enclosure, and to-day this part of the ascent is more gradual. The ascent of the eastern hill to the Temple court was then very literally a going *from rampart to rampart*. It will be observed that this road would have led the procession to the south gate of the Temple, the regular entrance in Herod's time, and presumably also in the earlier period when David's city lay to the south of the Temple. That gate reached, the sanctuary and the altar before it would become visible to the leaders of the procession, and "the God of gods is seen in Zion". Then follows the prayer cry, and presumably sacrifice before the threshold:

"LORD God of Hosts, hear my prayer;  
Hearken, God of Jacob.

Selah."

The third stanza (10-13), completing the liturgy, gives us glimpses of certain of the ceremonies and forms of the ritual within the Temple: the prostration of the worshippers with forehead to the ground, like so many threshold stones (הַסְתּוֹפֵה, v. 11), and the ritual purification (בַּתְּמִים, v. 12) before the great sacrificial feast, part of the obligation to fulfil exactly the ritual laws, the fulfilment of which brings favourable answer and blessing from God. It reads:<sup>12</sup>

10. "Behold, oh God, our shield,  
And regard the face of Thine anointed."<sup>13</sup>

11. For better a day in Thy courts than an army,<sup>14</sup>  
I had rather be the threshold in God's house.

<sup>1</sup> For the general method of such a processional ritual, with sacrifice at various stages, ending with the great sacrifice and sacrificial feast at the close, cf. II Sam. 6:12-19. I think that we have a liturgy intended for similar use in Ps. 42, 43, of which Prof. Briggs says (II, 225): "Ps. 8 resembles 42-43, and prob. had the same author."

<sup>13</sup> בַּשֶּׁחֵךְ, evidence that it was a hymn for the royal sacrifice, and therefore preexilic.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew הָלָא, *thousand*, that is a band of 1000 men, a regiment.

- 12 Than a fortress<sup>15</sup> in the city of the godless.  
 For sun and shield is the LORD of Hosts;  
 Favor and honor the LORD giveth,  
 And refuseth no good to them that walk in cleanness.
- 13 (Refrain) LORD of Hosts,  
 Happy he who trusteth in Thee,"

The last stanza helps to fix the date. It evidently belongs to the old days of battle, when warrior kings held their own in Zion by force of arms, when the Temple was the royal shrine, and sacrifices were offered for and in the name of the King, God's anointed. Such sacrifices were regarded as equally necessary to the king's success against his heathen or godless enemies with his armies. Its similarity to 42—43, like which it is ascribed to the Sons of Korah, suggests that this Psalm also was originally a processional liturgy of the temple of Dan, afterwards adopted into the Jerusalem Psalter, but with considerable changes to adopt it to its new use. So in general God (אלהים) was changed to LORD (יהוה), but above all the second stanza was purged entirely of its original local references, for which were substituted rubrical directions for the new ritual, while the original refrain of this stanza or part of it was made the marching chorus to be repeated at intervals throughout the procession. The date of this Psalm in its present shape, it would appear from these considerations, must have been somewhere between the fall of Samaria (721 B. C.), or slightly earlier, at which time the literature of Israel began to be taken over and adopted in Judah, and the capture and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar, approximately a century and a half later.

It may be asked why this Psalm underwent so much change while we have the companion liturgy, 42, 43, in almost if not quite its original form as a Psalm of Dan. We have in the collection 42—49 apparently a group of or selection from the old Dan Psalter, taken over together and preserved almost intact, even to the old use of Elohim. Such changes as were made, apparently, outside of some refrains and liturgical phrases, were of a literary character. Other Psalms of this Psalter did

<sup>15</sup> דור, cf. As. *duru*, wall, fortress.

not have the same history. Not included in the selection above referred to, they yet found their way to Jerusalem and into use in the Temple, undergoing considerable changes in the process, until at last, with a few other Psalms from the northern kingdom, they were gathered together, copied and added to the already existing collections of Psalms of the Sons of Korah and of Asaph to form the third book of Psalms.

Interesting evidence of the method in which this was done is furnished by two notes in Psalm 88. Vs. 9 ends: "Finished (כלל), I do not go on" ("go out or go forth"), which, seeming impossible, has been translated: "I am shut up and I cannot come forth" (Revised), or by some similar phrase, and supposed to refer to some imprisonment like that of Jeremiah in the pit. This quite spoils the Psalm. The last verse, 19, reads as follows: "Thou hast put far from me lover and friend, mine acquaintance darkness," which with all the doctoring given it by translators and commentators remains quite unintelligible. The concluding words of both verses are notes by the scribe who was copying them. "Finished, I go not on";<sup>16</sup> that is, the tablet or manuscript which he was copying stopped short at this point, leaving the Psalm unfinished.

After the word "acquaintance" in v. 19 the scribe could decipher nothing further. He therefore wrote at this point "darkness" (מחשך), i. e. unintelligible, or illegible. The two fragments (that they are fragments is clear among other things from the failure of the whole to get anywhere liturgically, as well as from the lack of development of the thought) were placed in juxtaposition because, I suppose, of their general resemblance to one another, and more particularly because of the striking resemblance of the closing verses of each. That these are in fact two Psalm fragments combined is testified to further by the double heading, unique in the entire Psalter, describing one part as "a song set to music of the Sons of Korah, to be led on maḡalath, to make penitence" (לענות), and the other as a "maskil of Heman the Ezrahite".

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps אצא should be changed to אצ, "it does not go on", אצא being due to an attempt to make sense by connecting this clause with the preceding.