

PSALMS 133 and 134

David knew by experience the bitterness occasioned by divisions in family, as well as that experienced between the tribes of Israel. Every kind of unity that can be observed among brethren, therefore, is here praised as most commendable, and it is certainly a most suitable psalm to be sung as the Jews returned from their Babylonian captivity at the decree of Cyrus the Persian.

Psalm 133

A Song of Ascents, of David

- 1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!
- 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard,
even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes.
- 3 It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
for there YAHWEH commanded the blessing—life forever.

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We have now reached the last of the "Songs of Ascents." It is early morning, and the Jews who have been in Jerusalem for one of the festivals are ready to depart, for the journey home is long. They see upon the temple wall the 24 Levites, the 3 priests, and the captain of the guard, as well as the lamps shining from the chamber windows surrounding the sanctuary. Moved by the sight, they chant a farewell, for they cannot leave without one last expression of the piety that fills their hearts (verses 1,2). Their parting exhortation arouses the priests to pronounce a blessing upon them (verse 3). Perhaps the pilgrims leaving Babylon after Cyrus' decree also used this hymn as a parting salutation to the priests that might have remained behind.

Psalm 134

A Song of Ascents

- 1 Behold, bless YAHWEH, all servants of YAHWEH, who serve by night in the house of YAHWEH!
- 2 Lift up your hands to the sanctuary and bless YAHWEH.
- 3 May YAHWEH bless you from Zion, He who made heaven and earth.

PRAYER

Almighty Yahweh, your chosen people, Israel, praised your name with pious hearts for your great blessings and deliverance. Today a remnant of pious Jews remains who

love their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Add to their numbers daily, we pray, and give us a hearty zeal in promoting Israel's welfare. And grant that all true believers, whatever their denomination, may be so joined together in unity of spirit that they may be made a holy temple acceptable to you. Keep us from forgetting that the praise of men is but a smoky vapor that vanishes away. Keep us from forgetting that the pleasures and treasures of this world are fleeting and vain. There is a race to be run, a prize to be gained, and so keep us from thinking that we can spend our days with our hands folded in leisurely contemplation. You have graciously condescended to give us a reward for our works done here, though done so very poorly, we must confess. And can we find another god who welcomes his own disciples with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" Oh, forgive us for cold hearts and create in us a fire for your glory. Hear our prayer now through the merits of Jesus the Messiah, and grant an abundance of your Holy Spirit for the work that lies before us. We praise you Yahweh, three persons in one unity, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent! Amen.