

April 22

"It came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up. Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." — Numbers 10:35,36.

We might have expected that Aaron would have done this, as he was the high-priest. But Moses was the leader and commander of the people, and he was not offering sacrifice, or burning incense, in which he would have offended, but performing a duty of natural, as well as revealed religion. This is binding upon all, and especially upon public men. Thus Solomon, though a king, kneeled on a scaffold of wood at the dedication of the temple, and led himself the prayers of the nation. Princes, officers, magistrates, masters of families, should all be men of prayer. Relative, as well as personal claims, bind them to the duty.

It would seem that Moses, always on these occasions, employed the same terms. Our Lord also, in the garden, prayed three times, saying the same words. It is obvious from hence, that whatever advantages extemporaneous prayer possesses, and it has many, yet forms of prayer cannot be in themselves improper, in public or in private.

As Moses thus addressed God at the commencement, and the conclusion of every march, does it not behove us to acknowledge Him in all our ways, and with prayer to begin and end every day, every meal, every ordinance, every enterprise, every journey, every going out and every coming in?

Especially, let us think of those short and sublime addresses in our travelling heavenward, through this wilderness world.

Here is the marching prayer: "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered and let them that hate thee flee before thee;" that is, "Before we move, we commend ourselves to thy guidance, and guardian care, and almighty agency. We are passing not only through strange, but hostile regions. There are foes, open or concealed, which would hinder our progress, rob us, wound us, destroy us. But we are thy charge, and engaged in thy cause. They that hate us hate thee. Our enemies are thy enemies; and formidable as they are, thou canst as easily vanquish them as the sun, rising in his strength, can disperse the shadows that seem to oppose his march." Let us realize this, and we shall feel enough to animate us to go forward, though men, though devils, beset our path. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

Here is the resting prayer: "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel;" that is, if Thou goest on, in vain we are left. What can we do without thee in our encampment, any more than in our march? Thy presence is our security, our treasure, our glory, our joy. What is any station without thee? How can its duties be discharged; its trials be endured; its comforts be sanctified? But every residence with thee, is ennobled and blessed. Heaven is the only tabernacle of God with men. Thus the two disciples, when the Lord made as if he would have gone farther, constrained him, saying. It is toward evening, and the day is far spent; and did he refuse? He went in to tarry with them. Do we thus prize him? Do we thus pray that he would go where we go, and dwell where we dwell? If not, we have a poor prospect before us. If we can live without God with us in this world, we must live without him in another. But if our souls cleave to Him, and cry, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me," we may rejoice in the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

But let me not here overlook two things: first, The number of his people, "The many thousands of Israel." "For," unless we send out ignorance and bigotry to count them, "who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" And the Lord add to his people, how many soever they be, a thousandfold. Secondly, We should be concerned for the whole Israel of God. They all belong to us. They are all fellow-citizens of the same community, branches of the same household, members of the same body. They are more intimately related, and ought to be more endeared to us, than any earthly friends, or natural relations.

Pray therefore for the peace of Jerusalem. For your brethren and companions' sakes, say, Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. "Return, O Lord," not unto our family, or tribe, not unto the thousands of Episcopalians or Dissenters, but "unto the many thousands of Israel." "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." And, "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

Morning Exercises For Everyday In The Year
By Rev. William Jay