

# PSALMS

## Chapter 114

*Tremble at the Presence of the Lord*

**When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, 2 Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. 3 The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back. 4 The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. 5 What ails you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? 6 O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs? 7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, 8 who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.**

**Ps 114** A hymnic celebration of the exodus—one of the most exquisitely fashioned songs of the Psalter. It probably dates from the period of the monarchy sometime after the division of the kingdom (see v. 2). No doubt it was composed for liturgical use at the temple during one of the annual religious festivals (see introduction to Ps 113). The theme is progressively developed through four balanced stanzas, reaching its climax in the fourth. The first two stanzas (vv. 1–4) recall the great events of the exodus; the last two (vv. 5–8) celebrate their continuing significance. (CSB)

Of the six hallelujah psalms (113–18) sung at Passover, only this one points directly back to the exodus. Ps 113 taught that the Lord lifts the needy. Ps 114 shows how the Lord did this in the exodus and conquest. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, Israel is the Lord’s sanctuary; vv 3–4, creation reacts; vv 5–6, the psalmist questions creation; vv 7–8, the presence of the Lord. (TLSB)

The 114<sup>th</sup> psalm is a psalm of thanks, for the people of Israel to praise God at the Passover for His wonderful works. He had led them out of Egypt, the Red Sea, through the dry wilderness, mountain, and the Jordan, into the Promise Land. We sing this psalm daily to Christ to praise Him who has led us out of death and sin, through the wilderness of the flesh and the devil, into an eternal life. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

**114:1–2** The great OT redemptive event. (CSB)

The purpose of the exodus and conquest was not simply to found another nation. It was to establish the nation in which God’s Word would be preserved and in which his temple would be built. (PBC)

**114:1** *Israel ... house of Jacob.* Synonyms (see Ex 19:3). (CSB)

*went from Egypt.* Recalls the exodus and all the great events of the desert journey. (CSB)

**114:2** *Judah ... Israel.* The southern and northern kingdoms, viewed here as the one people of God. (CSB)

*became.* The crucial event was the establishment of the covenant at Sinai, where Israel became bound to the Lord as a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:3–6). (CSB)

*his dominion.* Lit. “his.” The “antecedent” is not expressed until the climax (v. 7). (CSB)

*sanctuary.* His temple in which he took up his residence in the world—symbolized by the tabernacle, later the temple. In Ex 15:17 the Promised Land is similarly called God’s sanctuary. (CSB)

Israel became a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6) with God in their midst (Dt 23:14). (TLSB)

*dominion.* The special realm over which he ruled as King. This, rather than the exodus itself, was the great wonder of God’s grace. (CSB)

**113:3-6** Personifies the sea and the mountains to show that all creation obeyed God’s will. (TLSB)

**114:3-4** The author evokes a fearsome scene such as that portrayed by other poets (see 18:7-15; 68:7-8; 77:16-19; Jdg 5:4-5; Hab 3:3-10). (CSB)

Though Israel was never great among the nations in earthly terms, the founding of Israel was nevertheless an earthshaking event, for the Savior, the ruler of the universe, would rise from Israel. God’s use of Israel to bring salvation to the world was an example of his use of the lowly to accomplish great things. (PBC)

**114:3** *sea ... Jordan.* The Red Sea and the Jordan River, through which the Lord brought his people—here they are personified. (CSB)

*looked and fled.* Saw the mighty God approach in his awesome pillar of cloud and fled. (CSB)

**114:4** *skipped.* Or “leaped”; the mountains and hills quaked at God’s approach (see 29:6). (CSB)

This was a poetic way of describing the awesome power of God which makes the whole earth tremble. (PBC)

**114:7-8** The Lord of yesterday (vv. 5-6)—the God of Jacob—is still with us. (CSB)

**114:7** *Tremble.* In awesome recognition. (CSB)

*earth.* All creation. (CSB)

*presence of the Lord.* Hebrew *panim*, “face,” so “to be in front of someone/something.” To “enter God’s presence” typically refers to visiting the temple or tabernacle for worship. See *courts of the Lord.* An advancing warrior naturally “faced” his enemies, so the Lord’s “presence” or “face” is fearsome to His enemies. (TLSB)

*Jacob.* A synonym for Israel (see Ge 32:28). (CSB)

**114:8** *turns the rock into a pool.* Thus sustaining and refreshing life (see Ex 17:6; Nu 20:11). (CSB)

**Psalm 114** “Tremble” in v. 7 could also be translated “dance.” On the one hand, we tremble before the presence of the Lord because of our sins. Yet, since He comes to save, it is also true that we can dance with joy. – Lord Jesus, we praise you as you come to us out of death and sin into life eternal. Amen