

STUDIES IN PSALMS

PSALM 83

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Appeal to God for Deliverance from an Impending Invasion.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Israel's Enemies described as the Enemies of God—their Destructive Designs. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, The Parties to the Conspiracy Enumerated. Stanza III., vers. 9-12, Examples of the Overthrow desired, taken from the Book of Judges. Stanza IV., vers. 13-16, Petitions urged for a Complete Overthrow, for High Religious Ends. Stanza V., vers. 17, 18, Re-urged for the Sake of Revealing the Supremacy of Jehovah over all the Earth.

(Lm.) Song—Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Oh God! let there be no quiet to thee,
do not be silent neither be still O GOD!
- 2 For lo! thy foes are tumultuous,
and they who hate thee have lifted up the head.
- 3 Against thy people make they crafty their counsel,
and conspire together against thy treasured ones.
- 4 They have said—"Come! and let us wipe them out from
being a nation,
and let not the name of Israel be remembered any more."
- 5 They have taken counsel with one heart,
Against thee a covenant would they solemnise;
- 6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites¹
[the land] of Moab and the Hagrites,²
- 7 [the lords] of Ammon and Amalek,
the Philistines with the dwellers in Tyre:
- 8 even Assyria hath joined herself with them,
they have become an arm to the sons of Lot.³
- 9 Do to them as to Sisera,⁴
as to Jabin⁴ at the brook Kishon:

1. Gen. 25:12-16.

2. 1 Ch. 5:10.

3. "The Moabites and Ammonites, who seem to be singled out as the leaders of the confederacy. Cp. 2 Ch. 20:1."—Kp.

4. Jdg. 4:22, 23.

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- 10 Let them be destroyed as Midian at En (Harod),⁵
let them become as manure for the soil:
- 11 Make them [even] their nobles as Oreb and as Zeeb,⁶
and as Zebah and Zalmunna⁷ all their princes:
- 12 Who said—"Let us take it to ourselves for a possession,
let us enjoy the pastures of God!"
- 13 O my God! make them as whirling dust,
as chaff before the wind;
- 14 As fire that burneth up a forest,
and as a flame that setteth ablaze mountains:
- 15 So mayest thou pursue them with thy tempest,
and with thy storm-wind⁸ dismay them:
- 16 Fill thou their faces with dishonour
that men may seek thy name O Jehovah.
- 17 Let them be put to shame and dismayed unto futurity,
and let them be abashed and perish:
- 18 That men may know that thou whose name is Jehovah—
thou—alone,—
art Most High⁹ over all the earth.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the Wine-presses=The Feast of Tabernacles.
For the sons of korah.

PARAPHRASE

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O God, don't sit idly by, silent and inactive when we pray.
Answer us! Deliver us!

2 Don't You hear the tumult and commotion of Your
enemies? Don't You see what they are doing, these proud men
who hate the Lord?

3 They are full of craftiness and plot against Your people,
laying plans to slay Your precious ones.

4 Come, they say, and let us wipe out Israel as a nation—
we will destroy the very memory of her existence.

5 This was their unanimous decision at their summit con-

5. Thus the text shd. be re-constructed in accordance w. Jdg. 7. M.T.:
"En-dor"—Josh. 17:11.

6. Jdg. 7:25.

7. Jdg. 8:21.

8. Amos 1:14.

9. So, in effect: R.V. (text), Kp., Dr., Carter, Leeser.

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ference—they signed a treaty to ally themselves against Almighty God—

6 These Ishmaelites and Edomites and Moabites and Hagrites;

7 People from the lands of Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia and Tyre;

8 Assyria has joined them too, and is allied with the descendants of Lot.¹

9 Do to them as once You did to Midian, or as You did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon.

10 And as You did to Your enemies at Endor, whose decaying corpses fertilized the soil.

11 Make their mighty nobles die as Oreb did,² and Zeeb;² let all their princes die like Zebah³ and Zalmunna,³

12 Who said, "Let us seize for our own use these pasturelands of God!"

13 O my God, blow them away like dust; like chaff before the wind—

14 As a forest fire that roars across a mountain.

15 Chase them with Your fiery storms, tempests and tornados.

16 Utterly disgrace them until they recognize Your power and name, O Lord.

17 Make them failures in everything they do; let them be ashamed and terrified

18 Until they learn that You alone, Jehovah, are the God above all gods in supreme charge of all the earth.

EXPOSITION

Of the various dates proposed as suiting the origin of this psalm, the two more probable are the time of Jehoshaphat, and that of Jeroboam II.: the former as represented by the narrative in 2 Ch. 20, the latter not being formally recorded at all, but probably conjectured from various data when brought into historical combination. Delitzsch inclines to the days of Jehoshaphat, in preference to those of the Maccabees. But Thrupp, with considerable plausibility, suggests rather the time of Jeroboam II.: arguing that the *Assyrians* could not yet have reached the zenith of their power under Pul and Tiglathpileser; that

1. The Moabites and Ammonites were among Lot's descendants.

2. Judges 7:25.

3. Judges 8:21.

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Amalek could not yet have been destroyed by the Simeonites in the days of Hezekiah (1 Ch. 4:39-43); and that "only at this one period have we any indication of the Phoenicians of Tyre being in league with the eastern enemies of the Israelites." He further thinks that "it was probably the contemporaneous victories of Uzziah and Jeroboam that the confederacy against which the psalmist prayed was finally broken up." The especial feature in Thrupp's view which interests us is his conclusion "that the psalm was composed in reference to a danger which especially threatened the kingdom of the ten tribes," and which he bases on the appeal in prayer being made to events in which the northern tribes were specially interested, coupled with the absence of any allusion to the successes of David. It is true, of course, that Jehoshaphat's prophetic helper was one of the sons of Asaph (2 Ch. 20:14), and *he* may have been the author of this psalm; but, at all events, the more interested in the Northern Tribes the composer of this psalm was, the more this song is thrown into line with several which have preceded it, particularly the 78th and 81st.

There is little that needs to be said with reference to the general course and spirit of this psalm. It is obviously the barest justice to those who thus prayed for the destruction of their enemies to remember: That they were a miraculously redeemed and constituted nation; that they were the people of Jehovah, the appointed witnesses of his holiness, power and grace; that his honour was bound up with his people's preservation and well-being; that the haters of Israel were the haters of Jehovah; and that the effacement of this nation meant the silencing of the only national testimony to Monotheism, and the extinction of the race through whom the World's Redeemer was to come. More than this, the psalm contemplates the seeking of Jehovah's face on the part of other nations, as a chief result of the overthrow of those now in conspiracy. Besides all which, there is the ever-present possibility,—mostly unspoken, but always involved in Jehovah's readiness to shew mercy to the penitent,—that even these rebels on whom vengeance is invoked may by prompt repentance turn away Jehovah's wrath.

It may be added, as a matter of translating interest, that the close of this psalm is one of the few instanced in which both A.V. and R.V. have felt constrained to unveil for the English reader the occurrence in the original of the oft recurring but mostly suppressed sacred name JEHOVAH.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Of the various dates proposed as suiting the origin of this psalm which two are the more probable?
2. Read II Chron. 20:1-14 and find possible connections to this psalm.
3. Was there any good reason or reasons for God to answer the prayers of this psalm? If so discuss.
4. Someone suggested the thought of the defense of honor is different than the seeking of vengeance. Which is it here? Discuss.

PSALM 84

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Longing of a Levite for the Habitations of Jehovah in Zion,
with Inspiring Memories of a Past Pilgrimage
and Exultant Joy in Renewed Service.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, In the Intense Longing of his soul, the Psalmist Draws a Picture from Memory of the Joyous Scene in the Temple Courts, where Birds and Men Evermore Offer Praise. Stanza II., vers. 5-9, He traces a Pilgrim Journey Zionwards; recalling the Cheer by the Way, the Growing Enthusiasm, the Final Hope, and the Impassioned Prayer for the King. Stanza III., vers. 10-12, Renewed Experience of his Levitical Duties, leads him to Contrast his Present Privileges with his Past Detention in the Tents of the Lawless; and moves him to Admire the Character and Gifts of the God whom he Serves. A Three-fold *Refrain* Adapts the psalm to the Levites, to the King, and to Every Believer in Israel.

(Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 How greatly to be loved are thy habitations Jehovah of hosts!
- 2 My soul longeth yea even languisheth for the courts of
Jehovah,
my heart and my flesh ring out their joy unto the God of
my life.
- 3 Even the bird hath found her a house,
and the swallow a nest for herself where she hath laid her
young: