

Psalm 83

“National Prayer for Divine Aid”

Major themes:

1. God is in control of all occurrences
2. Prayer for the current enemy of Israel to be destroyed as all of her past enemies were destroyed
3. Not a spirit of vindictiveness but rather so that the world may see that God’s rule is supreme

Theories of Historical Composition milieu:

1. This last Psalm of Asaph highlights the lament of the people due to their fear of the Babylonian invasion (597BC).
2. Extreme (rarely held) view is fear of the onslaught of Antiochus in the Maccabean age (2nd cent BC).
3. Wars with surrounding nations as depicted in 2 Chron 20, although some of the nations/races listed in Psalm 83 were not involved in that attack.
4. Safest view-- this poem is an amalgam of history and poetry. Maclaren: “The Psalm would then be, not the memorial of a fact, but the expression of the standing relation between Israel and the outlying heathendom.”

Vs. 1-5 Cry For Help In Danger

- 1 do not be silent: literally “let there be no rest to Thee”
do not be deaf: literally “hold not Thy peace”
- 2 ...your arrogant enemies are rising up: literally “lifted up the head”
- 3 the precious ones: literally “Thy hidden ones,” those whom God hides in his protection from danger

4 the memory of its existence: literally “that the name of Israel may be no more in existence”

Vs. 6-8 Alliance Against Israel

Edom, Ishmaelites, Moab, Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia, Tyre, Assyria

Vs. 9-18 Prayer for Enemies to be Overthrown

9 Midian, routed by Gideon (Judges 7:19)

Sisera and Jabin, routed by Barak and Deborah (Judges 4:12)

10 Endor, intense fighting took place here (Judges 5:19)

fertilized the soil: literally “as dung for the earth”

11 Oreb and Zeeb, Midianite princes (Judges 7:25)

Zebah and Zalmunna, Kings of Midian (Judges 8:5)

12 Pasturelands: literally “the habitations of God “ = the land of Canaan which God had allotted to Israel

13 Tumbleweed: literally “the whirling dust” cf Isa 17:13

16 Utterly disgrace them: literally “fill their faces with shame”. Rabbis say “may their humiliation create within them a feeling of contrition so that, instead of being God’s ‘enemies,’ they seek to know Him and submit to His will.”

17 Rabbis say “If the hope that they will repent is unfulfilled, then let their disgrace be everlasting and may they perish. The world will be well rid of them.”

18 literally: “That they may know that it is You alone whose name is Yahweh, the Most High (‘alyon) over all the earth”