

Psalms 80:0 ¶ To the chief Musician upon Shoshannimeduth, A Psalm of Asaph.

Though this psalm is credited to Asaph, the circumstances do not fit the time of David or Solomon. This leads me to believe Asaph is speaking prophetically; or this is a different Asaph, probably one of his descendants.

The term Shoshannimeduth is a compound word. The first part makes reference to a lily or a trumpet. The second part references a testimony or witness. This could serve as a direction to proclaiming this psalm to the accompaniment of a trumpet, or it could be identifying a tune to which it is to be sung, e.g., "Lily of the Testimony."

Psalms 80:1 ¶ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth.

The psalmist addresses his prayer to the "Shepherd of Israel," a term that is more intimate than the way God is addressed most of the time in the Old Testament. David addressed Him as "my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation" in Psalm 89," and that is the only instance I found from a quick perusal of the word search for "father." It is the LORD Jesus that taught us to think about God as our Father and to pray to our Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Matthew 6:6 "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Matthew 6:9 "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

The psalmist acknowledges that God leads His people (referenced as Joseph) like a flock of sheep—unless of course they defy His leadership and run away from Him.

The reference to dwelling between the cherubims is to the ark of the covenant, the earthly representation of God's throne, in the Holy of Holies in the temple, the designated place of His presence. This would seem to imply that the temple was still standing, so the psalm could be a direct reference to the Northern Kingdom's destruction by Assyria and its aftermath.

He pleads for God to "shine forth" on behalf of His people and save them (v2) in a visible display of His mighty power.

Spurgeon: "The people are called here by the name of that renowned son who became a second father to the tribes, and kept them alive in Egypt; possibly they were known to the Egyptians under the name of "the family of Joseph," and if so, it seems most natural to call them by that name in this place.

Psalms 80:2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us.

Psalms 80:3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

The reference to Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh make reference to the whole of Israel (north and south). The psalmist is pleading with God to show up with great power and give His people victory over their enemies.

The priestly blessing talks of God's face shining on one for blessing, so it was natural language for the psalmist.

Numbers 6:24–26 “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

Though the Hebrew has many shades of meaning, the context clearly is a call for God to restore His people to fellowship and a place of blessing. Isn't it interesting that the psalmist realizes that repentance begins as a result of God's action? It's an act of grace, of His divine influence on one's heart, that brings the sinner to his knees in repentance.

Psalms 80:4 O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?

Psalms 80:5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.

The psalmist indicates that this isn't the first of his prayers or of others to ask for God's deliverance and salvation. He infers that God must still be very angry with people since He hasn't answered those prayers. He notes how the people weep in response to God's judgment against them, a judgment of "great measure."

Psalms 80:6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves.

Psalms 80:7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

NIV for v3: *“You have made us a source of contention to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us.”*

In light of that truth, the psalmist again begs God to restore them to a place of fellowship and blessing, to save them.

I couldn't help but think of how this applies to Israel yet today. Israel is definitely a source of contention among the Islamic neighbors of Israel. They mock them and call for their destruction in spite of their obvious military might. Israel today is still in a place of needing to repent and turn back to God. One day in the not so distant future that will happen; but not before they endure much more suffering if I understand the scripture correctly.

Spurgeon re enemies: "They find mirth in our misery, comedy in our tragedy, salt for their wit in the brine of our tears, amusement in our amazement. It is devilish to sport with another's griefs; but it is the constant habit of the world which lieth in the wicked one to make merry with the saints' tribulations; the seed of the serpent follow their progenitor and rejoice in evil."

Psalms 80:8 ¶ Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

Psalms 80:9 Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

Psalms 80:10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.

Psalms 80:11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

In this section the psalmist recalls how God established Israel as a nation after delivering the people from slavery in Egypt. He pictures the nation as a vine that God took out of Egypt and planted in a heathen land after casting out its original inhabitants. He describes how the roots of the vine grew deep and filled the land; the vine grew so large that the hills of the land were covered by its shadow and its branches were like those of a great cedar tree—the picture of a growing, strong and prosperous nation. In fact, the nation grew so large that her borders reached the Mediterranean Sea and the “river,” (especially the Nile, Euphrates, etc.) probably referencing the Euphrates. We know that David’s border extended to the Euphrates.

1 Chronicles 18:3 “And David smote Hadarezer king of Zobah unto Hamath, as he went to stablish his dominion by the river Euphrates.”

Psalms 80:12 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

Psalms 80:13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

Hedges or walls (from the Hebrew) provided protection for the cities of Israel. The psalmist is declaring that God broke down these hedges by allowing their enemies to conquer them. That, in effect, left the inhabitants that remained in the land vulnerable to others seeking to plunder their land as well as to the wild beasts of the field.

Psalms 80:14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;

Psalms 80:15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.

Once again, the psalmist pleads with God on behalf of the people. This time he addresses Him as the “God of hosts,” referencing the mighty army of the angels of heaven at His command. He pleads with God to remember and take care of (from the Hebrew for “visit”) His vine, the people of Israel. He reminds God that they are the vineyard that He personally planted and made strong. He also notes that the reason God blessed Israel was to stand out among the heathen as His possession, an example of the benefits of trusting God as LORD.

Psalms 80:16 It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

Psalms 80:17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.

Asaph reminds God that His nation has been destroyed; His people are being killed because He has judged them. He begs God to remember that He set apart the men of Israel as His own and again reminds Him that He did this because He loved them and to keep covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to be a source of blessing to all people on earth. That blessing would come in the person of Jesus, the precious Son of God who now sits at His right hand, who would die as the sacrifice for our sins and provide for the redemption of all, Jew or Gentile, who would place their faith in Him.

Deuteronomy 7:6–8 “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers....”

Genesis 12:1–3 “Now the Lord had said unto Abram...I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Colossians 3:1 “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

Psalms 80:18 So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.

Psalms 80:19 Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

The psalmist basically declares that if God will save them once more and restore them to a place of fellowship and blessing, they will not rebel against Him again and will honor His name.

I'm sure the psalmist and the people were sincere as they made this prayer, but oh how wrong they were. Every child of God struggles with submission and obedience. It's hard enough for individuals to maintain a right relationship with the LORD and even harder for a nation full of individuals.

When, however, Jesus comes to establish His kingdom, His people will call upon God's name and rejoice in the blessings of His presence. At that time, all Israel will be saved and will never again rebel against their God.

Luke 1:31–33 “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

Romans 11:26–29 “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”