

Psa. 83:0 ¶ A Song or Psalm of Asaph.

This psalm is specifically noted as a composition of Asaph, one of the chief musicians who served under King David.

1Chr. 15:16 And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren *to be* the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.

1Chr. 15:17 So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari their brethren, Ethan the son of Kushaiah;

Psa. 83:1 ¶ Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

Psa. 83:2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

The psalmist is writing a prayer to God on behalf of the people of Israel asking Him to take action against “His” enemies. The enemies he references aren’t just harboring a spirit of ill-will, they are taking action as a result of their hatred. The Hebrew for *tumult* indicates that they are making noises of war.

Psa. 83:3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

The motivation for the prayer of the psalmist becomes even clearer at this point. These enemies of God are enemies of the people of Israel. They are identified as taking “crafty counsel” against them. Webster tells us that *crafty* is a word that describes one that is skillful in deceiving others. The Hebrew for *counsel* makes reference to their meeting in secret. “Thy hidden ones” is a phrase that references Israel’s special position as God’s chosen people—those under His special protection.

Psa. 83:4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

What is the purpose behind these clandestine meetings? They want to destroy the nation of Israel.

Does that scream at you from the headlines of today’s newspapers or what! It’s interesting that there is direct connection between the enemies of Israel as identified by the psalmist in the following verses and the enemies of Israel today.

Psa. 83:5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:

Psa. 83:6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes;

Psa. 83:7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;

Psa. 83:8 Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

The psalmist is clear that these nations are acting in league with one another for a common goal—the destruction of Israel. The league of enemy nations are identified as:

- Edom – This is a name of those descended from Esau, Jacob’s brother from whom the Israelites descended, who settled in the area southeast of Israel.
- Ishmaelites – These are the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham by Hagar, Sarah’s Egyptian maid, who settled in the area of northern Arabia.
- Moab – This nation descended from Abraham’s nephew Lot through his older daughter who settled in part of the land today known as Jordan.
- Hagarenes – This identifies another group of people who lived east of Jordan and Gilead. Maybe they are descended from other children of Hagar, the Egyptian mother of Ishmael.
- Gebal – Appears to be same city called in Greek, Byblos, and was an important port city of the Phoenicians located about 20 miles north of what is today known as Beirut, Lebanon.
- Ammon – This is another nation descended from Lot through his younger daughter and settled in another part of the land today known as Jordan.
- Amalek – This would appear to reference the descendants of Esau’s grandson. It is interesting to note that Haman the Agagite, the “Hitler” of the book of Esther, was one of these descendants. I couldn’t connect them with a specific current-day nation.
- Philistines – The origin of this nation is considered by many to be from the island of Crete. They lived in the land area on the west coast of Israel and included the area that is today known as the Gaza Strip.
- Tyre – This was one of the major Phoenician port cities that was located in the area of South Lebanon today.
- Assur – This was the name of the chief city of Assyria and would include reference to the land today called Syria, whose capital is Damascus.

Spurgeon in *The Treasury of David* makes the following observation: *“It may be observed that these were on all sides of the land of Israel; the Edomites, Ishmaelites, and Amalekites, were on the south; the Moabites, Ammonites, and Hagarenes, were on the east; the Assyrians on the north; and the Philistines, Gebalites, and Tyrians, on the west; so that Israel was surrounded on all sides with enemies....”*

The wording seems to indicate that Assyria has joined the coalition specifically in support of the children of Lot, the Moabites and Ammonites.

“Selah” – This is an instruction to take a pause in the music, an opportunity to reflect on the message of the song. This strikes me as particularly appropriate as I read this psalm in light of possible future application and today’s news headlines. Israel is once again surrounded by enemies, although Jordan and Egypt have signed agreements recognizing the state of Israel. This, however, does not reflect the heart of their people. The “Palestinian” issue is at the root of the hatred of many toward Israel. Others are motivated more by their fervor for the Islamic religion. I couldn’t help but make another connection to verse 3 regarding the craftiness (the skillfulness in deceit) that has been evidenced as these enemies of Israel have cultivated world sympathy. They have employed the use of lies so persistently that even the state of Israel has adopted their terminology of “occupation” in referencing land belonging to the sovereign state of Israel. Their persistent declaration that the state of Israel has no right to exist eventually resulted in the public display of a map upon which there was no state of Israel when the UN commemorated the “International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People” on November 29, 2005.

I am sure that there was specific application to the time in which the psalmist was writing, but I can’t help but think that God was using him to prophesy regarding events to come that I think may have application to our day. I’m often reminded of the words of Solomon.

Eccl. 1:9 ¶ The thing that hath been, *it is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is that* which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun.

Psa. 83:9 ¶ Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites; as *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:

Psa. 83:10 Which perished at Endor: they became *as* dung for the earth.

Psa. 83:11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:

Psa. 83:12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

In this section the psalmist is making reference to past enemies that were destroyed and praying that God will ensure that their current enemies will experience the same complete destruction.

The Midianites were destroyed by Gideon and his band of 300 as recorded in Judges 7. Sisera was the leader of the armies of the Canaanite King Jabin. They were defeated by Israel’s army led by Barak, but Sisera escaped and was eventually killed by a courageous woman, Jael, as recorded in Judges 5; verse 24 ends with a note that King Jabin was also destroyed. The general area of this defeat was close to Endor, infamous for Saul’s clandestine trip there to get the advice of a witch.

“they became as dung for the earth” – The bodies of the dead became as manure or waste to return to dust.

Oreb and Zeeb were two princes of Midian that were killed by Gideon.

Judg. 7:25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

Zebah and Zalmunna were kings of Midian that were killed by Gideon.

Judg. 8:21 ...And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna....

They, too, had burned with the desire to destroy God's people and take the land as their own.

Psa. 83:13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.

Psa. 83:14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

The psalmist continues his petition asking the Lord to make them like a whirlwind or blowing thing (from the Hebrew) or as straw before the wind. In other words, may they be easy to push aside and squash underfoot. As one who loved to paint pictures with words, he goes on to emphasize his request by picturing the enemy burning like a chunk of wood in the fire, in fact, burning in the heat of a powerful, raging fire that engulfs the mountains.

Psa. 83:15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

Psa. 83:16 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.

Psa. 83:17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:

Psa. 83:18 That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

The psalmist is clear in declaring his heart, but is also confident that YHWH will act in honor of His name. As he continues to pray, his heart is moved to hope that these enemies will respond to God's judgment by seeking His salvation. I believe that is how the Holy Spirit will always move in the heart of people of faith. God's desire is that all men everywhere come to know Him as Lord and Savior.

1Tim. 2:3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

1Tim. 2:4 Who will have **all** men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Ezek. 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye.

If we accept God as our Lord and Savior, our heart should mirror his heart as He looks at those who have rejected Him. Those who refuse to repent and continue to reject Him will die ashamed and in fear. Our desire should be that YHWH is honored and served as "the most high" over all the earth. He has no equal.

Is. 45:5-6 *I am* the LORD, and *there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.*