

## Psalms 77-83, Fall and Restoration of North and South

### Overview

Like 49-60 in Book 2, this section describes judgment. The outer panels (Figure 1, chart) reflect the two bases of hope from 73-74: God’s past works (77, 78, 81) and future judgment (79, 83), while 82 and 78b focus on the role of God’s appointed ruler (75-76). The center anticipates the suffering Messiah the son of Joseph.

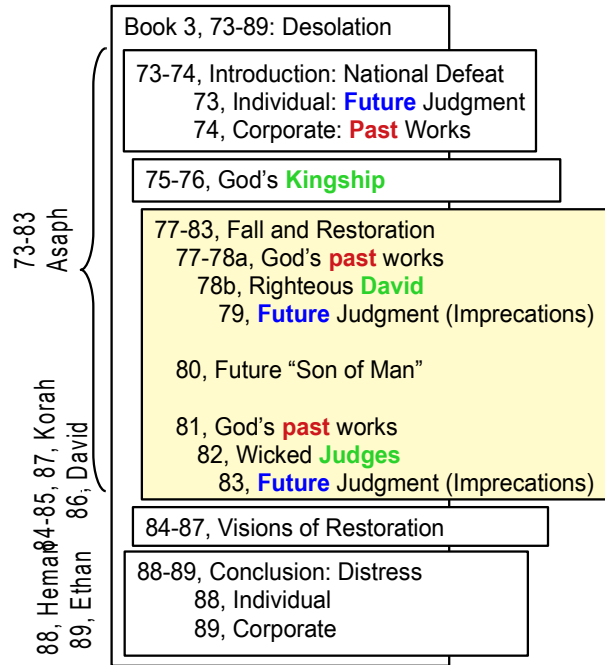


Figure 1: Structure of Books 2 and 3

### Psalm 77, Remember What?

This Psalm is the peak of two vocabulary features in Psalms: the verb “remember,” and references to God’s mighty works.

**77:1 A Psalm of Asaph.**--The “song” of 75-76 disappears as God’s chastening appears.

The Psalm shifts from Asaph’s focus on himself, marked with “I” (vv. 1-9), to his comfort from God’s past works, marked with “thou” (11-20), linked with a hinge (Figure 2, chart). In both halves, Asaph remembers (vv. 3, 6, 11), but he remembers different things. The two panels are chiasmic. The two parts of each panel are separated by Selah. The outer members report experience—Asaph’s depression in 1-3, Israel’s deliverance in 16-20. The inner members analyze that experience, focusing on questions.

### 1-9, Asaph’s Doubts

**I** cried unto God with my **voice**, even unto God with my **voice**; and he gave ear unto **me**. **2** In the day of my trouble **I** sought the Lord: **my** sore/hand ran in the night, **ידִי לִילָה נָגְרָה** and ceased not:--The word translated “sore” is the usual word for “hand” (KJV margin), which offers an important correspondence with v. 20, “the hand of Moses and Aaron,” and God’s hand in vv. 10, 15.<sup>1</sup>

**my** soul refused to be comforted. **3** **I** remembered God, and was troubled: **I** complained, and **my** spirit was overwhelmed. **Selah.**--His thoughts of God lead him only to feel abandoned.

**4** **Thou** holdest mine eyes waking: **I** am so troubled that **I** cannot speak. **5** **I** have considered the days of

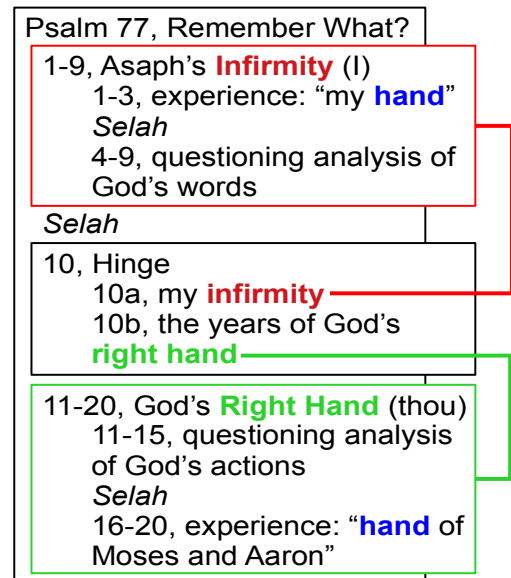


Figure 2: The Structure of Psalm 77

<sup>1</sup> The interpretation “sore, wound” (caused by the blow of a hand) goes back to Rashi, motivated by the verb “ran,” which means to flow and is awkward with “hand” as subject.

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old, the years of ancient times. **6 I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.**--He is remembering, but at this point what he is remembering is his own problems and lamentation.

**7 Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? 8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?**

**9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.**--He calls to mind God's revelation of himself in Exodus 34, but can only question it (Table 1, chart).<sup>2</sup>

Exodus 34	Psalm 77
6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, <b>merciful רחום</b> and <b>gracious חנון</b> , <b>longsuffering אף</b> , and abundant in <b>goodness טוֹב</b> and truth, 7 <b>Keeping mercy for thousands [of generations]</b> , forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, <b>unto the third and to the fourth generation.</b>	7 Will the Lord <b>cast off for ever?</b> and <b>will he be favourable no more?</b> 8 Is his <b>mercy טוֹב</b> clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? 9 Hath God forgotten to be <b>gracious חנון</b> ? hath he in <b>anger אף</b> shut up his <b>tender mercies רחום</b> ?

*Table 1: Ps 77:7-9 and Ex 34:6-7*

### 10, Hinge

**10 And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the**

**right hand of the most High.**--Note the italics. The Hebrew says simply, "This is my infirmity, the years of the right hand of the most High." Each half is a summary, the first of vv. 1-7, the second of 11-20. The verse is a hinge, summing up the surrounding material. He spoke before of the years (v. 5) of his suffering, but now he turns to the years of God's right hand (v. 15).

### 11-20, Asaph's Comfort

The solution to Asaph's dilemma comes when he shifts his attention from himself to the Lord, marked by the shift in pronouns.

He begins with an analysis of God's actions. As in 7-9, the analysis focuses on a question (v. 13): "Who is so great a God as our God?"

**11 I will remember the works מעלל of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12 I will meditate also of all thy work פעל, and talk of thy doings עלילה. 13 Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? 14 Thou art the God that doest wonders פלא: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.**--Note the synonyms for God's works, including פִּעַל (v. 12a "work," Strong 6467), a general term meaning "to do, to act," and three more specific words. "Wonders" (v. 14, Strong 6382) refers to the reaction that his acts inspire in us. מעלל (v. 11, Strong 4611) and עלילה (v. 12b "doings," Strong 5949) belong to a family of words that often describe God's greatness, but when applied to people, they refer to irresponsibility and childishness. When people act without accountability, they are wrong. We are all accountable, to one another, and ultimately to God. But God answers to no one. He does as he pleases, giving no account of his actions. So these words emphasize his sovereignty.

**15 Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.**--This focus on God's actions rather than his feelings leads him to realize that God's right hand (v.

<sup>2</sup> This observation, and the general correspondences between the two sections of the Psalm, is due to J. Kselman, *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 15 [1983] (1986) 51-58.

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10) is still active. God’s acts in 11-20 validate his words in 7-9. The two must go together. So also in our lives: our profession must be joined with evidence in our conduct of the Spirit’s work. Now he turns to the specific acts of God that lead to his analysis, all involving water.

**16 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.**--The initial event, and the most prominent, is the dividing of the Red Sea, when the waters fled from before his people.

**17 The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.**--This most closely recalls the storm that turned Deborah’s battle against Sisera, aided by the swollen river Kishon (Jud 5:4, 20-21).

**18 The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.**--Next we hear about a thunderstorm, which might be associated with the defeat of the coalition of five southern kings by Joshua (Jos 10:10-11), a defeat that involved hailstones and therefore a thunderstorm.

**19 Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.**--Finally, he returns to the crossing of the Red Sea.

**20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.**--He began lamenting that his hand was stretched out in vain, but now he realizes that God provides capable hands to guide his people.

So the Psalm teaches us to value God-focus over self-focus; to remember God’s grace rather than our sorrows; to emphasize what God has done more (10-20) than abstract theology (7-9). Cf. 1 Tim 6:3-5, 6; 2 Tim 2:22, 23; Deut 29:29 (“that we may do ...”).

### Psalm 78, Forgetting God’s Ways

**78:1 Maschil of Asaph.**--Like Psalm 74, intended for instruction.<sup>3</sup>

The Psalm’s introduction (Figure 3, chart) declares its purpose: to lead the nation to remember God and his mighty works. Then two cycles recall God’s gracious acts to the people, their rebellion, God’s wrath, and restoration from judgment. Both cycles emphasize the theme of remembering from the introduction and from Psalm 77.

The two panels follow a pattern from Joshua: God’s people neglect his gracious acts, rebel against him, are chastised, turn to him, and are restored by a distinguished leader (Table 2, chart). Asaph uses this pattern to present David as the

Psalm 78, Forgetting God’s Ways
1-11, Purpose (“fathers,” “mighty works”) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-4, Invitation to <b>remember</b></li> <li>5-7, Command <b>not to forget</b></li> <li>8-11, Failure: “<b>they ... forgat</b>”</li> </ul>
12-39, First Cycle: Wilderness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12-16, Gracious Acts</li> <li>17-20, Rebellion</li> <li>21-33, Divine Wrath &amp; Punishment</li> <li>34-35, Petition: “<b>they remembered</b>”</li> <li>36-37, Rebuke</li> <li>38-39, Restoration: “<b>he remembered</b>”</li> </ul>
40-72, Second Cycle: Egypt & Canaan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40-55, Gracious Acts: “<b>they remembered not</b>”</li> <li>56-58, Rebellion</li> <li>59-64, Divine Wrath &amp; Punishment</li> <li>65-72, Restoration</li> </ul>

*Figure 3: Structure of Psalm 78*

<sup>3</sup> Thirtle: “The Maschil psalms are: six by David--32, 52, 53, 54, 55, 142; three by the sons of Korah--42, 44, 45; two by Asaph--74, 78; and one each by Heman the Ezrahite--88, and Ethan the Ezrahite--89.” Thus they dominate in Books 2 and 3 (7/34 = 0.21, compared with 5/41 = 0.12 in Book 1). They are also favored by the levites: 6/73 = 8% of David’s Psalms are marked *maschil*, but 7/23 = 30% of the Levitical Psalms bear the title.

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	Judges							Psalm 78	
Stage	2:11-19 summary	3:7-11	3:12-30	4:1-5:31	6:1-8:28	10:6-12:7	13:1-15:20	12-39	42-72
Gracious Acts	Book of Joshua							12-16	42-55
Rebellion	11-12	7	12	1	1	6	1	17-20	56-58
Anger & Judgment	14-15	8	12-14	2	1-6	7-9	1	21-33	59-64
Petition	18	9	15	3	6	10		34-35	
Rebuke					7-10	11-16		36-37	
Restoration	16-19	9-11 Othniel	15-30 Ehud	4:4-5:31 Deborah	11-8:28 Gideon	17-12:7 Jephthah	2-16:31 Samson	38-39	65-72 David

Table 2: Judges as the Pattern for Psalm 78

ultimate judge. The lack of a petition in the second cycle echoes the Samson cycle in Judges. God hears his people when they cry, even insincerely, but also cares for them when they do not.

### 1-11, The Purpose of the Psalm

Each paragraph of the introduction refers to the fathers (vv. 3, 5, 8), and ends with God's mighty acts.<sup>4</sup> Asaph proposes to remind his hearers of God's mighty works, because (second paragraph) God commanded each generation to declare God's works to the next. The third recounts the failure of the fathers, and Ephraim in particular, to remember God's works. In contrast with Psalms 74 and 77, Psalm 78 describes the *failure* of memory, and its consequences.

### 1-4, Asaph's Invitation

**Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:**<sup>5</sup>--A "dark saying" is a riddle (Jd 14:10-18), something perplexing. In this case, when presented with God's mighty works in all their power, how can people turn against him?

**3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works נפלאות that he hath done.**--Like David in Ps 71:18, Asaph wants to pass on the precious legacy of God's mighty works.

### 5-7, God's Command

**5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: 6 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: 7 That they might set their hope in God, and not**

<sup>4</sup> נפלאות (vv. 4, 11) is related to פלא in 77:12a, and vv. 7,10 repeat the words from עלל in 77:11,12.

<sup>5</sup> משל and חידה appear together elsewhere in Pss only in 49:4, again at the start of the judgment section.

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**forget the works מעלל of God, but keep his commandments:**--His reason is that God commanded Israel to pass on this legacy (e.g., Deut 6:7; Exod 13:14).

### 8-11, The Fathers' Failure

**8 And might not be [And they were not] as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. 9 The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. 10 They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; 11 And forgot his works עלילה, and his wonders נפלאות that he had shewed them.**--The fathers failed in this duty. The focus on Ephraim is probably from Judges, recognized for its low view of Ephraim (Ellicott on 12:1; Block on 1:22). This criticism of Ephraim sets us up for the conclusion of the Psalm, where God rejects the Ephraimite city of Shiloh (v. 60) and Ephraim itself (v. 67) in favor of Zion.

### 12-39, In the Wilderness<sup>6</sup>

#### 12-16, Gracious acts upon leaving Egypt

**12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.**--v. 43 repeats these locations at the start of the second cycle. He sets us up to expect an account of the plagues, but then defers it to the second cycle to move into the wilderness.

**13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap. 14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. 15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. 16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.**--We recognize these various events, but also recall the rebellion associated with them. For instance, the division of the sea followed their doubts in Ex 14:11, 12, and the water from the rock in Ex 17:15 was in response to the people's complaints in 17:2.

#### 17-20, Rebellion: Complaint about Food

**17 And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.**--That is, in addition to the complaints about the water.

**18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. 19 Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? 20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?**--The episode is in Numbers 11.

#### 21-33, Divine Anger & Punishment: The Quail

**21 Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth עבר Dt:**--The verb marks both this paragraph and the corresponding one in the second cycle.

<sup>6</sup> The chronology is interesting: the second panel, about Egypt and Canaan, surrounds the first.

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so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; 22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: 23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, 24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. 25 Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. 26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. 27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: 28 And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. 29 So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; 30 They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, 31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. 32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for **his wondrous works** **בפלאות**. 33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.--See Numbers 11 for the details.

### 34-35, Petition

34 When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. 35 And they **remembered** that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.--As in Judges, they turn to the Lord when they are chastened.

### 36-37, Rebuke

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. 37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.--But as in the two instances in Judges, their repentance is insincere.

### 38-39, Restoration

38 But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. 39 For he **remembered** that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.--Though they are not doing well at remembering God, he does not forget them.

### 40-72, Egypt and Canaan

The second cycle omits the petition and rebuke. Even when the people do not cry to the Lord, he faithfully cares for them.

### 40-55, Gracious acts within Egypt and Canaan

40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! 41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

42 They **remembered** not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. 43 How he had wrought his signs **in Egypt**, and his wonders **in the field of Zoan**: 44 And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. 45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. 46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. 47 He

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destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. 48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. 49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. 50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: 52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.--First he recalls the judgments in Egypt, before they left.

53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. 54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. 55 He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.-- Then he turns his attention to the conquest of Canaan after they enter the land of promise.

### 56-58, Rebellion: Idolatry in the land

56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: 57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. 58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.--The rebellion now is in the land.

### 59-64, Divine wrath and punishment: Destruction of Shiloh

59 When God heard this, he was **wroth עבר Dt**, and greatly abhorred Israel: 60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; 61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. 62 He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was **wroth עבר Dt** with his inheritance. 63 The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. 64 Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.--The wrath in this cycle takes the form of the capture of the Ark by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 5.

### 65-72, Restoration: Establishment of Zion and David

65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. 66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach. 67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: 68 But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. 69 And he built his **sanctuary** like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established for ever. 70 He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: 71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.--This time the restoration takes the form of establishing his temple in Zion and his kingship in David. This paragraph moves us from the theme of remembrance introduced in Psalm 74, to the theme of kingship from Psalms 75-76.

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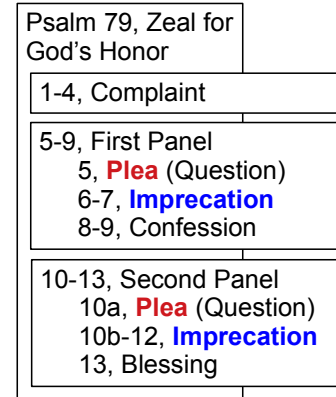
### Psalm 79, Zeal for God's Honor

79:1 A Psalm מִזְמוֹר of Asaph.

The Psalm is a lament with sections marked by the classic components (Figure 4, chart), beginning with the complaint, and then two cycles ABCABD, where A is an invocation in the form of a question, B is imprecation (echoing the promise of judgment in Psalm 73), and the final element is either confession (8-9) or promise of praise (13).

This is the peak of the word גוי (Strong 1471) “heathen, nation” in Psalms (see notes for plot). The next strongest is Psalm 9-10 (6x).

There, David celebrated God's victory over the heathen, commemorating his victories over the Philistines, the Moabites, Zobah, the Syrians, the Ammonites, the Amalekites, and the Edomites (2 Samuel 8).<sup>7</sup> In the book of Confrontation, God dominates the heathen, but here, in the book of Desolation, they have crushed Judah.



*Figure 4: Structure of Psalm 79*

**O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. 2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. 3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them. 4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.**--Asaph mentions three details of the disaster: the temple is defiled, Jerusalem is destroyed, and the people are slaughtered. What is the occasion?

Psalm 74 described the three nations that attacked Jerusalem: Babylon, Syria, and Rome. Each disaster had its own distinctive features (Table 3, chart), but the only one that shows all three is the Roman one.<sup>8</sup> As in Psalm 74, Asaph is seeing into the future.

	Temple Defiled	City Destroyed	People Slain
Babylon, 586 BC 2 Kings 25	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b> (captivity)
Syrians, 168-160 BC 1 Maccabees	Antiochus <b>defiled the altar:</b> 1:54,55	<b>No</b>	Alcimus' <b>slaughter of the Maccabees:</b> 7:16-17 (Ps 79:2-3)
Romans, AD 70 Josephus, Wars, book 6	<b>Ensigns</b> in temple: 6:316	<b>Yes:</b> 6:265-266	<b>Yes:</b> 6:406 and often

*Table 3: Three Jerusalem Disasters*

Notice the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns. Asaph focuses on the dishonor to God: **thine inheritance, thy temple, thy servants, thy saints**. Only at the end does he mention the scorn that the people feel. The lesson is that affronts to us mean little, but we should be zealous for God's honor.

**5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?**--As in 77:7-9, “angry for ever” echoes Ex 34:6, “slow to anger.” “Jealousy” is another echo of Exodus:

Exo 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a **jealous** God,

Asaph recognizes that these desolations ultimately result from Israel's idolatry, an awareness reflected in vv. 8-9 as well.

<sup>7</sup> See notes on Psalm 9 for a retranslation of 9:5-6 that is very similar to 80:1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Delitzsch clearly sees that Babylon does not fit, and opts for the Seleucid period, but this does not include the destruction of the city in v. 1.



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**6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. 7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.**--In the imprecation, Asaph calls for judgment on these oppressing nations, emphasizing again their offense against the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

**8 O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.**--The first stanza ends with confession, continuing to ask God's help, not for their comfort alone, but for his glory.

**10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?**--The second stanza starts with another question. But this time, instead of questioning God's actions, he questions the irreverence of the heathen.

**let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed. 11 Let the sighing<sup>10</sup> of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die; 12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.**--Again, he turns to imprecation, praying that God would bring just judgment, and again (v. 12 "thee") emphasizing the offense to God himself.

**13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.**--The first stanza ended with a confession that asked God to glorify his name. Now the people promise to give praise to him.

**To the chief Musician upon Shoshannimeduth**—Like the other Psalm with this subscript, Psalm 59 (Saul watching the house), this is in the judgment section. The emphasis of this Psalm on the heathen would point to Pentecost, see notes on Ps 59.

## Psalm 80, Turn, O Lord, and Turn Us

Like Psalm 76, the LXX of Psalm 80 references Assyria in the title (there, προς τον ασσυριον; here, טער טו אססורט). This Psalm deals with the captivity of the northern kingdom (v. 1).

### 80:1 A Psalm מזורר of Asaph.

The Psalm is divided by four refrains, in vv. 3, 7, 14-15, and 19 (Table 4, chart). The first, second, and fourth are very similar; the third has several remarkable modifications. The section between the second and third refrain treats of two separate themes, so it is helpful to recognize the first part of this section as a fifth stanza, with no refrain, yielding a chiasm (Figure 5, chart).

Another important feature is the repeated name "God of hosts" (vv. 4, 7, 14, 19). This is an Elohist version of the common expression "LORD of Hosts" elsewhere in the OT (see note). The word "host" (צבא, Strong 6635) means "army. The expression "LORD of Hosts" is commonly misunderstood to refer to the angelic armies that God commands. The OT does use "host" in reference to heavenly entities, in the expression "host of heaven" (19x; compare Luke

9 Other than this and 83 (by Asaph), 71 (anonymous, but Davidic via 70) and 137 (post-exilic), the imprecatory Psalms (19/23) are by David. Most imprecation can be justified as the exercise of royal judgment on the wicked. Asaph's imprecations deserve further analysis.

10 Kidner on vv. 11-13, sighs, taunts or praise: "Such are the three tones of voice which, in the main, ascend to God. The prayer of the psalm is that the first two will be answered so decisively that only the third remains.

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2:13 when the angels appeared to the shepherds), but in every case “host” in this sense is singular. The plural always refers to the tribes of Israel, e.g.,

Exo 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it

came to pass, that all the **hosts of the LORD** went out from the land of Egypt.

3 <b>Turn</b> us again,	7 <b>Turn</b> us again,	14 <b>Return</b> , we beseech thee,
<b>O God</b> ,	<b>O God of hosts</b> ,	<b>O God of hosts</b> :
and cause thy <b>face</b> to shine;	and cause thy <b>face</b> to shine;	<b>look down</b> from heaven, and <b>behold</b> ,
and we shall be saved.	and we shall be saved.	and visit this vine; 15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch [Heb. בן “son”] that thou madest strong for thyself.

*Table 4: The Refrains of Psalm 80*

Throughout the numbering in Numbers 2, each tribe is described as a “host.” So the reference to God as “God of hosts” or “Lord of hosts” draws our attention to his relation to the nation Israel and its several tribes. In the context of the fall of Samaria, it supports a plea that God would restore the severed nation and reunite his “hosts.” The expression is limited (apart from 24:10) to books 2 and 3 of the Psalter: it is densest in Psalms 46-48, the kingship Psalms of book 2. Then it peaks here in Psalm 80, the center of the discipline section, and again in 84, looking forward to the promised restoration. This association with kingship and restoration confirms our analysis of Psalm 80 as the distinctive center of 77-83.



*Figure 5: Structure of Psalm 80*

**Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock;**--This title for God links this Psalm to v. 13 of the previous one.

**thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. 2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us.**--The tribal names are all associated with the northern kingdom. Though Asaph served in the Jerusalem temple, he was of the family of Gershom (1 Chr 6:39-43), and the Levitical cities assigned to Gershom were in Issachar, Naphthali, Asher, and trans-Jordanian Manasseh (Jos 21:6), so he would have a strong sympathy with the northern tribes (Figure 6, chart).

The reference to Joseph leads us to expect Ephraim and Manasseh, the two tribes descended from him, but why is Benjamin included? Num 2:18-24 tells that Benjamin was part of the camp of Ephraim on the west side of the Tabernacle during the wanderings. This grouping reflected their fraternal relation: Joseph (father of Ephraim and Manasseh) and Benjamin were the two sons of Rachel. Benjamin’s loyalty during the divided kingdom wavered during the divided kingdom. As the tribe of Saul, there was always some antipathy toward the descendants of

## Psalms 77-83

David, and it hosted Bethel, the southern sanctuary that Jeroboam established to keep the people from going to Jerusalem to worship.

Asaph the seer anticipates a time when the northern tribes, here represented by the camp of Ephraim, are taken into captivity.

**3 Turn us again, O God,**--Our understanding of this verb, and “saved” at the end, depends on the perspective from which Asaph writes.

Because his home and family are from the north, he is sympathetic with the disaster of the northern tribes. If he identifies with them, then “Turn us . . . we shall be saved” could be simply a plea by these tribes for God to bring them back from captivity.

But Asaph serves in the temple in Jerusalem. It seems more natural that, foreseeing the disaster to come on the north, he is pleading with the Lord to turn the hearts of the nation, and especially the southern remnant, back to himself. Now the verbs “turn . . . saved,” on the lips of Judaeans, will refer mainly to spiritual restoration. The second stanza shows that he is aware of the spiritual need, and he wants Judah to learn from the example of the fall of Samaria.

**and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.**--“Cause thy face to shine” is an echo of the Levitical blessing that he has often heard the priests recite in the temple:

Num 6:25 **The LORD make his face shine upon thee**, and be gracious unto thee: 26 The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

He is firmly aware that in themselves, people will not follow the Lord. They need the Lord’s grace to turn their hearts and lead them in ways that he can then bless.

Asaph’s plea is an admonition for us. He saw the sin of the northern tribes, and we see the corruption of society all around us. He foresaw the Lord’s judgment falling on those tribes, among whom he lived, and we can certainly anticipate God’s judgment on those around us. We must not be tempted into smugness, but should be challenged to examine our own hearts, and to pray that God would graciously spare us the hardness of heart that has fallen on our neighbors.

**4 O LORD God of hosts,**--The second stanza introduces the title “God of hosts,” emphasizing God’s rule over all the tribes (the hosts) of Israel. It recognizes that the nation’s suffering is ultimately the result of God’s wrath. Asaph pleads that God will reunite his scattered hosts.

**how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? 5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. 6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves.**--Notice the contrast between “them” (the captive tribes) and “us.” The captive northern tribes mourn in their misery, while the remnant in Judah are mocked by their pagan neighbors.



Figure 6: The territory of Asher (Gershom's Levitical cities) (blue, green) and Ps 80:1-2 (yellow, green) [https://www.bible-history.com/geography/maps/map\\_canaan\\_tribal\\_portions.html](https://www.bible-history.com/geography/maps/map_canaan_tribal_portions.html)

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**7 Turn (שׁוּב C) us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.**--The second version of the refrain differs from the first in replacing “God” with “God of hosts.” He is praying for God’s saving work, not just as God, but as the nation’s captain, and in particular for reunification of the scattered tribes.

The third stanza is the only one that lacks the refrain. This stanza and the next are very similar to Isaiah’s song of the vineyard (Isa 5:1-7, chart), and if we identify Asaph as the one David appointed, then Isaiah probably has this Psalm in mind as he writes.

**8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. 9 Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root,**--The central stanza tells how God chose Israel and brought her into the land, under the figure of a vintner who prepares the field for his vine. Note the repetition of the themes of the area of the vineyard, preparation of the ground, and the choice character of the vine.

Isa 5:1 Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: 2 And **he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein:**

**and it filled the land. 10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. 11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.**--The reference is to the extent of Solomon’s kingdom, corresponding to the limits of the land promised to Abraham:

Exo 23:31 And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. (cf. also Gen 15:18; 1 Ki 4:21).

Asaph goes on to describe the prosperity of the nation, a detail that Isaiah does not describe. But Isaiah does describe the Lord’s disappointment in the lack of fruit within the nation:

Isa 5:2b and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

The contrast between Asaph’s emphasis on the nation’s prosperity and Isaiah’s commentary on their lack of fruit reminds us not to confuse outward prosperity with spiritual blessing.

**12 Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? 13 The boar out of the wood<sup>11</sup> doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.**--Isaiah picks up the images of destruction in the latter part of his song, emphasizing both the Lord’s immediate action in removing his protection, and the ravaging effect of wild beasts who then move in.

Isa 5:5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will **take away the hedge** thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and **break down the wall** thereof, and **it shall be trodden down**: 6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

<sup>11</sup> מִיעֵר; the ע is suspended in the MT, marking the central letter of the Psalter.

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The fourth stanza ends with a variant of the refrain used in stanzas 1, 2, and 5. This version is anterior to the others: it prays for a change in God's attitude that would lead him to grant the repentance sought in the others.

**14 Return (שוב G), we beseech thee, O God of hosts:**<sup>12</sup>--In the other refrains, Asaph prays that God would "turn us." We have seen that this is probably not simply a request for return from captivity, but a plea for spiritual healing in the South in the light of the disaster that is coming on the North. Now, using a different form of the verb, Asaph prays that God would himself return to his people, whom he has abandoned to the nations.

**look down from heaven, and behold,**--In the other refrains, the request is, "Cause thy face to shine," emphasizing the blessing God bestows. Here, the prayer again involves his face (look, behold), but in order to learn their state so that he may then shine on them.

**and visit this vine; 15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself.**--The word rendered "branch" is in Hebrew "son." The KJV understands it botanically, as a shoot of the vine, but the Targum interprets it as a human, "King Messiah." The ultimate restoration of the nation is not complete until God sets up his Messiah, who must be an offshoot of the vine, a true Israelite, their kinsman.

**16 It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.**--"Countenance" is the same word as "face" in the simpler version of the refrain. The shining that he requests is to replace the anger that God has previously showed them.

**17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.**--"Man of thy right hand" recalls the inclusion of Benjamin, "son of my right hand," among the exiles. This title was given by Jacob because of the special favor that he had toward Benjamin.

This request expands the prayer in 15 for "the son that thou madest strong for thyself." This one is now characterized not just as an offshoot of God's chosen vine (an Israelite), but also as especially dear to God ("the man of thy right hand"). In addition, he is "son of man," an expression whose only previous use in Psalms is in 8:4, the Psalm David wrote to celebrate his victory over Goliath. That was certainly a case where God made a weak person strong for his own purposes, which is a central point of the Psalm.

So we have here a threefold picture of the coming Messiah: an Israelite (a son of the vine), beloved to God, and deriving his strength from God.

**18 So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. 19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.**--Under the ministry of this promised deliverer, Asaph is confident that the people will indeed bring their worship to the Lord.

**To the chief Musician upon Gittith**--Thirtle: "winepresses," reminiscent of Tabernacles. Note the references to vintage in vv. 8, 14, suggesting Asaph is thinking of the pilgrimage feast of booths, when the divine Vintner gathers all his tribes together in Jerusalem.

12 VanGemeran takes this as a fourth instance of the refrain, supporting a four-fold division of the Psalm. But the third stanza thus marked is heterogeneous, compared with the homogeneity of each of the others. If we treat 8-11 as a separate central stanza, without a refrain, then all is well. Delitzsch also sees 14 as an altered refrain, but extends it through v. 15, which handles the other two clauses in the refrain.

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### Psalm 81, Call to the Fall Holy Days

The last three Psalms in this section correspond to the first three, and echo the three opening themes of the third book (Figure 7, charts).<sup>13</sup> Each matched pair conveys a lesson:

- In spite of God’s past goodness, his people sin against him (77-78a, 81)
- God has prepared a righteous ruler for them (78b), and will judge corrupt ones (82).
- The heathen will abuse them, but God will deliver them for his own name’s sake (79, 83).

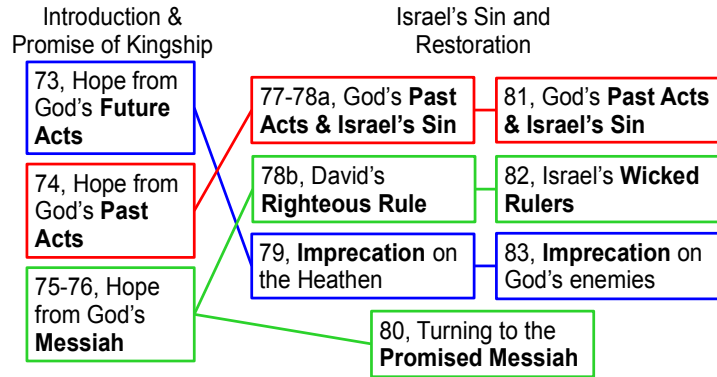


Figure 7: Repeated Themes in Psalms 73-83

#### 81:1 A Psalm of Asaph.

5b announces a change of speaker from the Psalmist (1-5) to God (6-18) (Figure 8, chart). Vv. 1-5 and 6-7 recall God’s care, celebrated in the feasts of trumpets and tabernacles announced in v. 3, but 8-18 recall the nation’s wickedness, and thus the day of atonement.

**Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. 2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. 3 Blow up the trumpet שופר in the new moon, in the time appointed (at the full moon), on our solemn feast day.**

--The word rendered “time appointed” is very rare.<sup>14</sup> Parallels in cognate languages suggest the translation “full moon.” The trumpet at the beginning of the month and a feast at the full moon two weeks later point to the seventh month:

Lev 23:23 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 24 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the **first day of the month**, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets תרועה, an holy convocation. ... 34 ... The **fifteenth day** of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD.

The challenge to this identification<sup>15</sup> is that it would omit the day of atonement on the tenth day:

27 Also on the **tenth day of this seventh month** there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

The reader is intended to notice this gap, preparing the mind to find it answered in vv. 11-18. The structural principle is the use of broken symmetry to emphasize a point.

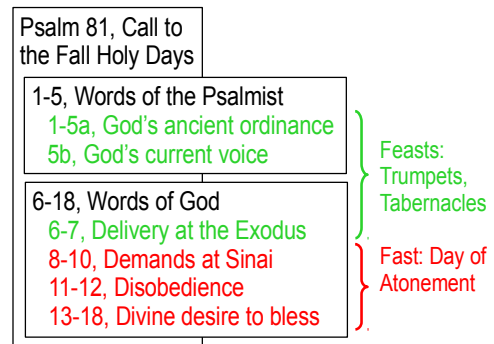


Figure 8: Structure of Psalm 81

<sup>13</sup> The first heading is simply “of Asaph,” without the “Psalm” indicating the presence of instruments. Psalm 82 is called a Psalm, while 83 is a song-Psalm, suggesting a return to joyful anticipation.

<sup>14</sup> Only here and Prov 7:20.

<sup>15</sup> Which Delitzsch finds decisive, opting instead for Passover.

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**4 For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. 5 This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt:**--Joseph's "going forth" to rule the land of Egypt (Gen 41:45) anticipates what God did later in the plagues.

The latter half of v. 5 recalls God's words to Moses after Pharaoh refused to release the people:

Exo 6:2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: 3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

The name JEHOVAH was certainly used before this point, but God's point is that the people did not understand its covenant implications before his dealings with them through Moses.

**where I heard a language that I understood not.**-- "I heard" is a verb form that more usually indicates the present or future. The parallel with Ex 6:2-3 suggests the translation, "I am hearing the speech of one whom I knew not." Asaph announces a change in speaker, as God begins to speak. First he recounts his gracious past acts to Israel.

**6 I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.**--Or "baskets," used to carry the mud for making bricks. Figure 9 (chart) shows a tomb painting from the time of the Exodus<sup>16</sup> illustrating slaves making mud bricks.

**7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.**--Each of these expressions recalls a different event during the Exodus.

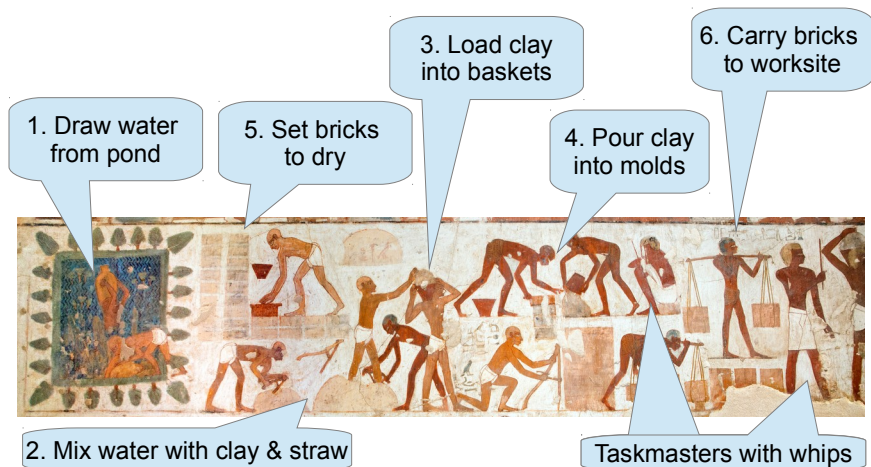


Figure 9: Slaves making bricks in Egypt just before the Exodus  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/manna4u/32513653582>

"calledst ... delivered" recalls God's words to Moses at the bush,

Exo 3:7 And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have **heard their cry** by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; 8 And I am come down to **deliver them** out of the hand of the Egyptians,

The "secret place of thunder" is a reference to Sinai,

Exo 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were **thunders and lightnings**, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud;

"Meribah" was where God first brought water from the rock (Exod 17:7). "Waters of Meribah" always refers to the second episode, where Moses was to speak to the rock and instead smote it twice (Num 20:13). Nevertheless, God graciously gave them water there too.

Next, he reminds them of the law he gave them, and their disobedience to it.

<sup>16</sup> Tomb of Rekhmire, vizier to Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, Pharaoh of the Exodus

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**8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; 9 There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. 10 I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt:--**These words are a paraphrase of the beginning of the ten commandments:

Exo 20:2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

**open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.**--If they would keep his law, he would bless them.

**11 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. 12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.**--But they would not hearken, so God left them to walk in their own way.<sup>17</sup>

The following imperfects should be understood as futures, “Oh that my people would ... “

**13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!--**Repeating the verbs from vv. 11-12, God longs for his people to turn back to him. Here is the missing reference to the Day of Atonement.

**14 I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. 15 The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. 16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.**--If they would only turn back to him, he would once again bring blessing on them, as he has in the past.

### Psalm 82, Nonmessianic Rulers

**82:1 A Psalm of Asaph.**--Alternation in speaker marks the structure (Figure 10, chart). The Psalmist begins by describing the Lord's disapproval of human judges and ends asking the Lord to judge them. His voice is probably heard in v. 5 as well.<sup>18</sup>

**God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.**--The critical question is whether “the gods” (the same word as “God”) are human rulers, or members of the heavenly council (as in 29:1, “Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty [sons of gods]”) (see notes). There is good reason to think that here, the term refers to human rulers.

- The actions that they should have carried out, described in this Psalm (judge the wicked, defend the poor, etc.) are those associated with human rulers, not with angels.
- The symmetry of the section leads us to expect something corresponding to the appointment and righteous rule of David at the end of Psalm 78.
- Exodus uses this word of human magistrates as God's representatives in judging the people.

Exo 21:5 And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: 6 Then his master shall bring him unto the **judges**; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.

<sup>17</sup> A common form of divine judgment, cf. Romans 1, “God gave them up.”

<sup>18</sup> V. 5 refers to the wicked judges in the 3rd person; on either side God describes them in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person.

Psalm 82, Nonmessianic Rulers
1, <b>Psalmist</b> : Introducing the Lord
2-4, <b>God</b> : Indictment of Judges
5, <b>Psalmist</b> ? Comment
6-7, <b>God</b> : Judgment on Judges
8, <b>Psalmist</b> : Petitioning the Lord

Figure 10: Structure of Psalm 82



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Exo 22:8 If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the **judges**, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods. 9 For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the **judges**; and whom the **judges** shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour.

So we should read the Psalm as a critique of the unjust rulers who led Israel into sin.

**2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. 3 Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4 Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.**--In contrast to David, God's chosen king (78b), the human judges have failed to do the work that God has given them.

**5 They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.**--Asaph responds with a lament on the consequences of unjust rule that recalls Messiah's observation in Psalm 75,

Psa 75:3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it.

**6 I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.**--God recalls that he has honored them with the title, "gods," probably alluding to the passages in Exodus. Our Lord quotes this verse in his controversy with the Jewish leaders in John 10:

Joh 10:33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. 34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, **I said, Ye are gods?** 35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; 36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Our Lord understands the passage to be referring to human judges, those "to whom the word of God came" to guide them in their rule, which in the context of John 10 is a criticism of the Jewish leaders themselves. If they deserve the title "gods," how much more should he, the true Messiah, merit the title?<sup>19</sup>

**7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.**--But in the end, they are vulnerable to his judgment.

**8 Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.**--Asaph's final plea.

## Psalm 83, Foreign Foes

**83:1 A Song or Psalm of Asaph.**--While the Psalm is a lament, it anticipates God's victory over his enemies. The joyful "song-psalm" title prepares for the restoration in Psalms 84-87.

The Psalm contains three standard elements of a lament: the initial invocation (v. 1), the complaint (vv. 2-8, ending with Selah), and the imprecation (9-18; Figure 11, chart). The prayer of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20 echoes the main themes of this Psalm, which we will see is probably not coincidental.

<sup>19</sup> Methodologically, it is important not to read the Lord's usage back into the OT. But having established the legitimacy of the human interpretation on internal grounds in the Psalter, it is useful to see our Lord's comment as first-century understanding of the Psalm in this way. The contrast of Psalm 82 with Psalm 78b makes the Lord's Messianic reference very much in context.

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The Psalm is a strong parallel to 79. Both deal with heathen adversity (cf. Psalm 2); both are imprecatory; both are motivated by a desire for God's glory (2-5, 16, 18).

**Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.**--Asaph piles up synonyms to ask that God intervene in an impending disaster.<sup>20</sup>

**2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. 3 They have taken crafty counsel**

**against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. 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. 5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:**--Compare Ps 79:1-2. The offense is against God, so God he must respond.

**6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; 8 Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.**--Asaph envisions a coalition of enemies against Israel, led by "Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagarenes," and with participation by Ammon and others. The phrase "the children of Lot" again points to Moab and Ammon (Gen 19:36-38). The closest historical parallel is 2 Chronicles 20. There, the attack was led by Moab and Ammon, joined by the Edomites ("Mount Seir").

2 Chr 20: 1 It came to pass after this also, that the children of **Moab**, and the children of **Ammon**, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. ... 10 And now, behold, the children of **Ammon** and **Moab** and **mount Seir**, ... 22 And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of **Ammon**, **Moab**, and **mount Seir**, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. 23 For the children of **Ammon** and **Moab** stood up against the inhabitants of **mount Seir**, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

The Chronicler does not name the other groups, but a coalition against Judah would attract other traditional enemies of the nation, and at no other period in history did these groups coexist.

The description of the event involves the Levites at several points, including the sons of Korah (v. 19) and Jahaziel, "a Levite of the sons of Asaph" (v. 14).

Other Levites, the sons of Korah, wrote Psalms 46-48,<sup>21</sup> whose order corresponds to the history (Table 5, chart). Those Psalms confidently prepare for battle, celebrate the victory that the Lord gave, and rejoice on returning to the temple in Jerusalem. Psalm 83 is thematically earlier. It recognizes the threat but does not yet have assurance of the Lord's deliverance, and thus would logically be associated with Jehoshaphat's prayer, leading to the assurance of victory by Jahaziel, Asaph's descendant. We surmise that Asaph the seer anticipated this attack and wrote this psalm

20 The second of his three clauses, אל-תהרש, is found elsewhere in the Psalms: 28:1; 35:22; 39:12 (MT 13); 109:1. But the other two appear only here in this sense.

21 Thirtle's analysis of the titles makes it likely that Psalm 46 has no explicit attribution, but its association with a block of other Psalms by this group makes it likely that the editor considered it a part of the collection.

Psalm 83, Foreign Foes 1, Plea 2-8, <b>Complaint:</b> a Gentile Coalition 9-18, <b>Imprecation</b> based on <b>History</b>
--

2 Chr 20:5-12, Jehoshaphat's Prayer

**History:** 7 Art not thou our God, who **didst drive out the inhabitants of this land** before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

**Complaint** and **Imprecation:** 10 And now, behold, the **children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir**, ... 11 Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. 12 **our God, wilt thou not judge them?**

*Figure 11: Structure of Psalm 83*

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2 Chronicles 20	Psalms 46-48, 83
1 It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.	46:6 the kingdoms ... 48:4 the kings ...
2-13 (Jehoshaphat leads the nation in prayer)	<b>Psalm 83</b>
14-18 (Jahaziel, <b>descendant of Asaph</b> , predicts victory)	
19 And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.	<b>Psalm 46</b> Preparation for Battle
20-22 (Judah marches out singing)	
22-25 (the kings destroy themselves)	
26 And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.	<b>Psalm 47</b> Celebration of Victory
27 Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. 28 And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD.	<b>Psalm 48</b> Praise in Zion
35 And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, ... 36 ... to make ships to go to Tarshish:... 37 Then Eliezer ... prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.	48:7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

*Table 5: 2 Chronicles 20 as Context for Psalms 46-48 and 83*


to encourage the nation. Jehoshaphat's prayer is his response to the Psalm, as he uses it as a guide in framing his petition for the Lord's intervention, and then the Lord gives the encouraging response through Asaph's descendant Jehaziel. We see here an example of how God provides in his word the resources he knows his people will need in times of trial.

**9 Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: 10 Which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth. 11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: 12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.--**The imprecation recalls God's historic victories over Israel's enemies. These verses recall two conflicts from the book of Judges, ordered chiasmatically (Table 6, chart).

**13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. 14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; 15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. 16 Fill their faces with shame; **that they may seek thy name, O LORD.** 17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: 18 **That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.--**As in 79:9, Asaph seeks God's glory. The purpose of the judgment that he requests is not vengeance, but to draw the wicked to acknowledge the Lord and that all men may come to worship him.**

## Psalms 77-83

**To the chief Musician upon Gittith,--**  
 Winepresses, indicating use at the autumn festival (booths). This is the third and last of the Gittith Psalms. Here (the chaff in v. 13) as in Ps 7:5, the imagery of harvest describes the coming judgment; in 80 the point is the regathering of the tribes at a pilgrimage feast under the care of the divine vintner.

Judges 7-8, Gideon	<b>9a, Midian:</b> Jdg 7: Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the <b>Midianites</b> were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.		<b>11, Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah, Zalmunah:</b> Jdg 7:25 And they took two princes of the <b>Midianites</b> , <b>Oreb</b> and <b>Zeeb</b> ; and they slew <b>Oreb</b> upon the rock <b>Oreb</b> , and <b>Zeeb</b> they slew at the winepress of <b>Zeeb</b> , and pursued <b>Midian</b> , Jdg 8:12 And when <b>Zebah</b> and <b>Zalmunna</b> fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of <b>Midian</b> , <b>Zebah</b> and <b>Zalmunna</b> , and discomfited all the host.
Judges 4-5, Barak & Deborah	<b>9b, Sisera, Jabin, Kison:</b> Jdg 4:7 And I will draw unto thee to the river <b>Kishon Sisera</b> , the captain of <b>Jabin's</b> army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.		<b>10, Endor:</b> (not mentioned in Judges, but in the Jezreel valley near the site of the battle, Jos 17:11; 1 Sam 28:7)

*Table 6: Past Victories from Judges in 83:9-12*

## Psalms 77-83

### Notes

#### Themes in Psalms 77-83

	77	78	79	80	81	82	83
Imprecation			x				x
King and Rulers		x		x		x	
Sanctuary	x	x	x				
Gentiles		x	x	x			x
Israel's sin		x	x		x	x	
Deliverance from Egypt	x	x		x	x		

#### 77:10 שָׁנוֹת יָמִין עֲלִיּוֹן (MT v 11)

Is שָׁנוֹת Qal inf. construct of the verb “to change,” or plural of the noun “year”?

In v. 5 (MT 6) it is in parallel with יָמִים, and thus “years.” Similarly in 90:15 and Prov 9:10. No other clear attested use of the inf construct.

See Perowne for excellent discussion on both שָׁנוֹת and חֲלוּתִי. The Targum takes the latter as from חָלָה D “to supplicate”: “this is my petition, the years of the right hand of the most high,” thus an inclusio with v. 15. But Perowne objects that this meaning with חָלָה always includes פָּה as object, “to soothe the face of someone.”

Look closer at the Selahs. If the Selah after 9 marks the turn, then we have to take v. 10 positively, not negatively (as “change” implies). Reinforced by discourse role of explicit וְאִמְרָתִי.

Or perhaps, “I realized that my infirmity is actually the years of the most high. Instead of remembering my sorrow (5,6), I should be remembering the Lord’s mighty acts.

If we follow the accents, it is difficult to take הִיא as the copula, “My affliction is the change of the right hand of the Most High.” See Waltke-O’Connor 16.3.3 for numerous examples of the pleonistic pronoun as copula; it regularly is grouped with the predicate and separated from the subject. This leads to a contrastive reading: “This [vv. 1-9] is my problem, but as for the years of the most high.” Perhaps the contrast is between “my” and “of the most high,” signaling the change in his focus.

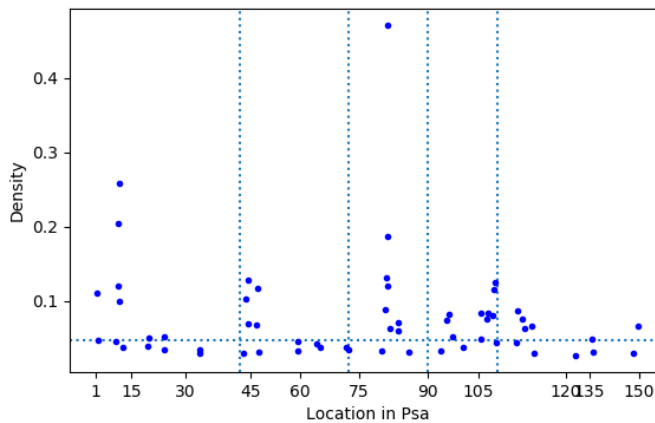


Figure 12: גוי in Psalms

#### Ps 79, גוֹיִם

Figure 12 plots this term in Psalms.

## Psalms 77-83

### Ps 80, God of Hosts

Attested expressions (verse references are to MT; ET may be one verse lower)

- אלהים צבאות: Only in Book 3 of the Psalms, 80:8, 15.
- יהוה צבאות: Appears 245x, mostly in Isaiah (54x), Jeremiah (71x), Haggai (14x). Zechariah (53x), Malachi (24x), but 8x in Psalms (inc. 3x in Psalm 84)
- יהוה אלהים צבאות: Only in Books 2 and 3 of the Psalms: 59:6; 80:5, 20; 84:9
- אדוני יהוה צבאות: once in Ps 69:7; 8x in Isaiah (inc. 4x in Isa 22); 6x in Jeremiah.

It is tempting to see אלהים צבאות as Elohist version of יהוה צבאות, and יהוה אלהים צבאות as Elohist version of אדוני יהוה צבאות.

The distribution of these expressions in Psalms is interesting (Figure 13). It is most strongly peaked in 46-48, in the kingship section of Book 2, then in 80, and finally in 84, in the restoration section of Book 3, which balances the opening kingship section. The recurrence of this phrase in Psalm 80 as well sets 80 apart from the six Psalms that surround it and emphasizes its Messianic import.

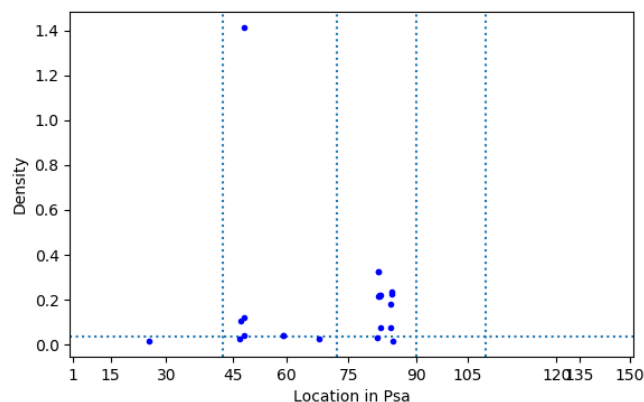


Figure 13: יהוה צבאות or אלהים צבאות in Psalms

### “Gods” in Psalm 82

Who are they?

1. If men,
  - (a) Israelite judges? Perowne (with an excellent survey), Delitzsch
  - (b) Or does it include pagan ones?
2. Or are they angelic beings, like the בני אלים of Psalm 29? Kidner

#2 seems out of line with the Lord’s use of the Psalm in John 10:34-36. 1a is supported by examples of judicial practice in Ex 21:6; 22:7, 8. Gordon (JBL 54 (1935) 139ff) explains אלהים in these texts as household gods who witness oaths, on the basis of Nuzi. While Israel was not immune to this custom (Jdg 17), only a clumsy editor would endorse it one chapter after Ex 20:1-6. If we do not accept that, the meaning “judges” seems firm.