

# The Psalms

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY

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PSALM LXXXIII

1) A Song, [a] Psalm of Asaph.

פנ 1) שִׁיר מְזֻמָּר לְאַסָּף:

2) O God Who sittest in judgment, silence does not become Thee; Thou canst not hold Thy peace and be still, O Almighty One.

2) אֱלֹהִים אֲלֵיךָ מִיָּלֶד אֶל־תִּחַרְשׁ  
וְאֶל־תִּשְׁקֵט אֵל:

3) For behold, it is Thy enemies that are in an uproar and that spread the hatred of Thee; they have raised their head.

3) כִּי־תִבְהַר אֲוִיבֵיךָ יַחְמִיזוּ  
וְכִמְשֹׁנֵי־אֵיךָ נִשְׂאוּ רֹאשׁ:

Israel had become His "inheritance," נחלתו (Deut. 9:29), and the first group of men to subordinate all of its affairs and relationships to God, to the fulfillment of His will and to the realization of His goals. For without a foundation of justice, human society will perish without ever having reached the path that would have led them to a position sanctified to the Lord.

PSALM LXXXIII

V. 1. שִׁיר מְזֻמָּר לְאַסָּף. This psalm has the characteristic features of a שִׁיר. It "looks back" (Verses 10—13) upon the mighty acts which God has inflicted upon Israel's oppressors who, even in those days long ago, had meant to fight God by attacking Israel, and the Psalmist voices his confident expectation that God will intervene in the same manner even now in order to chastise the nations that are presently engaged in waging a fight against Him. In Psalm 82 Asaph expects God to act because the manner in which justice is administered on earth has become corrupt. In Psalm 83 Asaph awaits such intervention as a result of the action taken by the nations against Israel.

V. 2. דמי, אלדלי וגוי. דומיה (Psalm 22:3), is formed from דום and דמה, thus combining the two concepts of inner peace and outward silence. חרש (see Psalm 28:1). As God of Justice, Thou canst not stand by indifferently and silently look on while the nations act against Israel. And as the all-powerful God Thou canst not remain deaf and still while evil men fight with words and actions against Thy aims to bring about universal salvation and the coming of Thy kingdom on earth.

V. 3—5. משינאיך, אויביך. כי הגה וגוי. The separating accent in אויביך (Verse 3) and in עמך (Verse 4) lays stress on the pronoun in these words. In the

4) It is against Thy people that they plot craftily, and they take counsel against those sheltered by Thee.

4) עַל־עַמֶּךָ יַעֲרִימוּ סוֹד וְיִתְעַצְּבוּ  
עַל־צִפּוֹנֶיךָ:

5) They say, "Come, let us destroy them as a nation; the name of 'Israel' shall be remembered no more."

5) אָמְרוּ לְבוֹ וּנְכַחֲדֵם מִגּוֹי וְלֹא־  
יִזְכָּר שֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד:

6) For when they convene together with a unanimous heart, then it is against Thee that they make a covenant.

6) כִּי גִוְעֵצוּ לֵב יַחֲדוּ עֲלֶיךָ בְּרִית  
יִקְרְחוּ:

7) The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites.

7) אֹהֲלֵי אֲדוֹם וְיִשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים מוֹאָב  
וְהַגְּרִים:

8) Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre.

8) גִּבְלָ וְעַמּוֹן וְעַמְלֶק פְּלִשְׁתֵּי עַם־  
יִשְׁבֵי צוֹר:

final analysis, the fight of Israel's enemies is not directed against us but against "Thee"; that is, against God Himself. God stands in the way of men and nations with His absolute power as a ruler and with the absolute requirements of His moral law, for both of which He has sent Israel as a memorial and messenger among the nations. Judaism, with its concept of the invisible God and its idealistic views of the world and of life as a whole, has always been thoroughly hated by those who capitalize upon the degeneracy and corruptibility of man. לכו ונכחידם מגוי. The advent of "Israel" as גוי, as a nation among nations, bare of all those things upon which the other nations base their existence, represents such a protest against the entire social and political structure of the rest of the world that the nations would desire nothing more than the elimination of Israel from their midst, so that its very name "ישראל" and the fact of its persistent survival should no longer proclaim the ultimate and universal supremacy of God's rule.

V. 6. **כי וגוי**. Ordinarily the nations, due to differences and conflicts of interests, oppose each other in jealousy and hostility. But as regards hostility against God, they present a united front.

V. 7-8. **אהלי וגוי**. These verses enumerate nations which presumably did not maintain friendly and neighborly relations with each other under

9) Even Ashur has joined them; they have become the arm of the sons of Lot. [Selah].—

10) Do to them as to Midian, as to Sisera, as to Jabin in the valley of Kishon.

11) They were destroyed at En Dor; they became dung for the soil.

12) Make them, their nobles, like Oreb and like Zeeb, and like Zebach and like Zalmuna all those who have become their princes.

13) Who have also said, "We will conquer for ourselves the pleasant habitations of God."

14) O my God, make them as chaff, as stubble before the wind,

9) גם־אַשׁוּר נִלְוָה עִמָּם הָיוּ זְרוּעַ לְבְנֵי־לוֹט סֵלָה:

10) עֲשׂוּהֶלְתֵּם כְּמִדְיָן כְּסִיסְרָא כְּיָבִין בְּנַחַל קִישׁוֹן:

11) נִשְׁמְרוּ בְּעֵדְרָדַר הָיוּ דָמָן לְאֲדָמָה:

12) שִׁתְּמוּ גְדִיבְמוּ כְּעֹרֵב וְכַזָּבִיב וְכַזְבַּח וְכַזְמֻנָּה כָּל־נְסִיכְמוֹ:

13) אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ נִירְשָׁה לָנוּ אֶת נְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים:

14) אֱלֹהֵי שִׁתְּמוּ כַּגִּלְגַּל כְּקָשׁ לְפִנְיֵדְרוֹת:

ordinary circumstances. הגרים apparently are descendants of Hagar other than the Ishmaelites. גבל is mentioned in Ezechiel 27:9, וזני גבל. In Joshua 13:5 הארץ הגבלי designates a part of the Jewish land, and it is presumed to be a region in Arabia, which is still called by this name.

V. 9. גם אשור וגו'. Even Ashur, which, as a rule, would arrogantly withdraw from intercourse with other nations and would rather subjugate them than contract alliances with them, joined the other nations in the fight against God and became the actual "helping arm" in this conspiracy.

V. 10—13. עשה להם וגו'. Reference is made here to periods in the history of Israel when it had been brought very low indeed as regarded its faith in God—איש כל אשר ישר בעיניו יעשה—and seemed to be entirely at the mercy of the neighboring nations such as עמלק, מדין, etc. Asaph declares, "Lord, Thou didst save them at that time; O save them now again."

וצלמנע. (See Judges 8:3, 6.) מדין, ערב, וזאב, זבח, וצלמנע. (See Judges, Chap. 4.) The hostile army had gathered אל נחל קישון, and as we can see from Judges 5:21, נחל קישון was a brook. Since, however, we read here בנחל קישון, it is most probably meant to denote the valley through which that brook flows. For נחל can designate either one. (See Gen. 26:17 et al.). נאות. See Psalm 23:2. עין דאר. The historic event at Endor to which reference is made here is not known.

V. 14—16. גלגל derived from גלל, "to turn around," ordinarily

15) As the fire that kindles the forest, as the flame that sets the mountains ablaze:

15) כָּאֵשׁ תִּבְעַר יַעַר וְכִלְהֹכָה  
תִּלְהַט הַרִים:

16) So pursue Thou them with Thy tempest, and terrify them with Thy storm.

16) בֶּן תִּרְדָּפֵם בְּסַעֲרֶךָ וּבְסוּפְתֶךָ  
תִּבְהַלֵּם:

17) Fill their faces with shame, so that they may seek Thy Name at last, O Lord.

17) מִלֹּא פְנֵיהֶם קָלוֹן וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ  
שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה:

18) Let them be deceived and dismayed forever; [let them be] unmasked and sense that they are about to perish,

18) יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּבְהֲלוּ עַד יַעַד וַיִּחְפְּרוּ  
וַיֵּאבְדוּ:

means "a wheel." Here as well as in Isaiah 17:13, כגלגל לפני סופה, it denotes something that can be "whirled" easily, a substance that can be carried off by the wind with ease because it has no grip upon the ground either by its own weight or by virtue of some other force. Moreover, גלל is phonetically related to קלל. (See Commentary to Leviticus 20:2.) סער and סופה—see Commentary to Exodus 2:3. Asaph says, "Let the nations come to realize that despite all their earthly power and grandeur they still have no foothold on earth and will surely be carried off by the currents of the events of time. Let them come to understand that even as mighty forests and mountains must fear fire because it can overcome them, so they, too, have cause to fear a Higher Power which can pursue them, lift them from the ground like chaff and seize them like a storm that suddenly bursts forth in full vehemence."

V. 17. מלא וגוי, "Do not decree their destruction, O Lord, but קלון, cause them to become aware of their utter moral bankruptcy and insignificance. (See Commentary to Deuteronomy 27:15—25.) Then they will seek Thy Name, ד; they will appeal to it, hoping that, in Thy mercy as symbolized by the Name of ד, Thou wilt grant them an opportunity to shape a new and better future for themselves."

V. 18. יבשו ויבהלו, בוש, חפר, (see Psalm 34:6). The words יבשו ויבהלו ויחפרו ויאבדו form one phrase, as indicated by the accent, as do יבשו ויבהלו. The thought of Verse 18 is: "May they (Israel's foes) discover with dismay that they have been deceived in the confidence they had cherished heretofore, and let them sense that they are about to perish because their past has now been exposed in all its worthlessness."

19) And know that Thou, Whose Name alone is "The Lord," art the Most High over all the earth.

(19) וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי אֵלֶּיךָ בְּרֵאשִׁית שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה לְבַדָּה עֲלִיּוֹן עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ:

PSALM LXXXIV

1) To Him Who grants victory over the "wine pressing." By the sons of Korah, a Psalm.

פ ד 1) לְמַנְעֵחַ עַל-הַגִּתִּית לְבָנֵי קִרַח מִזְמוֹר:

2) What beloved friends are Thy dwelling places, O Lord Zebaoth!

2) מַה יְדִידוֹת מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

V. 19. וידעו וגו' "And they will know that they must seek refuge with Thee if they are to have any future wheresoever, a future which Thou holdest open for all, as Thy Name as 'ד teaches us. They will know that Thou art the Most High over all the earth. And they will realize, therefore, that such renewed future can be theirs only if they render Thee homage without reservations."

PSALM LXXXIV

V. 1. על הגתית. The central theme of this psalm, expressed in Verses 6—9, is the ennobling and purifying action that is inherent in suffering in general and in Israel's anguish of exile in particular. Therefore the superscription על הגתית (see Psalm 8:1, 81:1). Israel is fully aware of the blessed, ennobling power inherent even in the pain of exile, and Israel knows, too, that God is near throughout. But even so, or perhaps all the more for this very reason, Israel is filled with yearning for the complete presence of God and for the opportunity to strive toward it in God's own Sanctuary (Verses 2—5). Therefore the plea for the restoration of מלכות בית דוד and for the return of God to His Temple (Verses 10—13).

V. 2. מה וגו' ידיד. is in the passive mood, "the beloved friend." משכנותיך. We have already mentioned elsewhere that God's Sanctuary, as a rule, is described in the Psalms in accordance with its several chambers, עזרה and היכל, דביר; that is, the Abode of the Word of God, the Abode of the spiritual and material power which is granted by the Word of God and thus is consecrated to it forever, and then the antechamber of purification and dedication which leads up to the other two chambers. These "abodes" with all that they symbolize, teach, give and stimulate, are the friends and advancers of all our spiritual and moral lives. They are the sources of our