

Israel's Hymnal
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PSALM EIGHTY-FIVE

[Pss 85:1] Jehovah, thou hast been favorable unto thy land; Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

[Pss 85:2] Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; Thou hast covered all their sin. Selah

[Pss 85:3] Thou hast taken away all thy wrath; Thou hast turned (thyself) from the fierceness of thine anger.

[Pss 85:4] Turn us, O God of our salvation, And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.

[Pss 85:5] Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

[Pss 85:6] Wilt thou not quicken us again, That thy people may rejoice in thee?

[Pss 85:7] Show us thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, And grant us thy salvation.

[Pss 85:8] I will hear what God Jehovah will speak; For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: But let them not turn again to folly.

[Pss 85:9] Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him, That glory may dwell in our land.

[Pss 85:10] Mercy and truth are met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

[Pss 85:11] Truth springeth out of the earth; And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.

[85:12] Yea, Jehovah will give that which is good; And our land shall yield its increase.

[Pss 85:13] Righteousness shall go before him, And shall make his footsteps a way (to walk in).

I. A vision of Israel in the Millennial Age (vss. 1-3).

II. Israel's prayer for deliverance and a realization of the vision (vss. 4-7).

III. The Lord's answer to the petition (vss. 8-13).

For our study this month let us investigate Psalm 85 which was written by the sons of Korah and was sent to the chief musician or dedicated to him. Of course the Holy Spirit inspired the writers to compose the hymn. This beautiful ode falls into three natural divisions, which are set forth in the heading of this article.

I. A vision of Israel in the Millennial Age (vss. 1-3)

1 Jehovah, thou hast been favorable unto thy land;

Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people;

Thou hast covered all their sin.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath;

Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

Where there is no vision we are told, the people perish. This statement is an accurate representation of a sound psychological principle. Men are saved by hope. All things are accomplished by men of vision. A careful study of the messages of the prophets and the hymns of the psalmists reveals the fact that God,

as a rule put a vision before His people, pointed them to the future, and then pleaded with them to conform their lives to His will in order that they might obtain the blessing and reach the goal.

In the first statement of the psalm which we are considering, the writer declares that "Jehovah, thou hast been favorable unto thy land." The earth and the fullness thereof belong to Jehovah (Ps. 24:1). But in our quotation it is quite evident that the land herein referred to is none other than Israel which is by Isaiah the prophet called Immanuel's land (Isa. 8:8). Although this country is Immanuel's land in the highest sense of the term, it is in a peculiar way the land of the Jews. They hold the title deed to it. To Abraham and his seed God promised this territory.

In some way, according to this psalmist, God will be favorable to this land--that of Immanuel and of the Jews. Our psalmist was carried forward by the Spirit of God to some time in the future when God will especially favor the land of Israel and will let His blessing in a special and unique manner rest upon it. But this thought is clarified further by the next statement which is parallel to this one: "Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob." There is a very close connection between God's being favorable to the land of Israel and His bringing back the captivity of Jacob. When we read this verse in the light of related passages, we can understand immediately what the writer had in mind; namely, that he saw in vision the time when God will lift the curse from Israel, will restore it to Edenic conditions, and will bring back the Jews from their world-wide dispersion.

This interpretation is confirmed by the statements of verse 2 which are: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; Thou hast covered all their sin." This sentence looks forward to the time when God will have forgiven the iniquities of all of His people, the Jews, and will have covered all their sin. Thus the prophet in vision looked forward to a time when Israel will be cleansed, purified, and saved. The same vision was granted to Balaam as is recorded in Numbers 23:21:

He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob;
Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel:
Jehovah his God is with him, And the shout of a king is among them.

Thus Balaam, by the Spirit of God saw a time when Israel will be converted, will have been forgiven for all her sins, and will be living victoriously. At that time Jehovah, her God, will be in her midst as her King. This time can be none other than the great Kingdom Era, when Messiah shall return to establish His judgments upon the earth.

In verse 3 of Psalm 85 we have this language: "Thou hast taken away all thy wrath; Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger." This verse looks forward to the time when God will have punished Israel for all her sins and will have turned from His righteous indignation against her for all her iniquities. To everyone who knows the scriptural teaching, it becomes immediately evident that the psalmist was looking forward to the Tribulation, when God will pour out His wrath upon His people and to the conclusion of that period of judgment when God will turn from all His wrath against Israel and will be favorable to His ancient people. To sum up the message of this first section, I would say that the Psalmist, in vision, saw the glorious Kingdom Era when the curse shall have been lifted from the earth, when God will have produced Edenic conditions in the land of Israel, and when Israel, converted and saved, will be in her own land and will be in fellowship with Him. Since the writer was dealing, in this

psalm, with the Jewish question alone, it was natural for him to speak of Palestine, the land of the Jews, and of Israel's being in a blest, forgiven, and happy condition--dwelling in her own land. But from other passages of Scripture which speak of the same time, we see that the curse will have been lifted and that the glory of God will encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea.

II. Israel's prayer for deliverance and a realization of the vision

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,
and cause thine indignation toward us to cease.
5 Wilt thou be angry with us forever?
Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
6 Wilt thou not quicken us again,
That thy people may rejoice in thee?
7 Show us thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah,
And grant us thy salvation.

By the Spirit of God the psalmist was transported to the time of the great Tribulation and in vision stood, identified with the Jewish nation at their time of great distress and sorrow. Being thus ideally among God's suffering ancient people, the psalmist leads them in prayer. This petition appears in the verses which I have just quoted. Now let us notice particularly the various petitions made.

The writer, voicing the sentiments of the nation at this future time, prays: "Turn us, O God of our salvation, And cause thine indignation toward us to cease." When the time here foreseen arrives, the nation of Israel will follow our psalmist in this petition and will implore the Lord to turn them to Himself, at which time they will recognize Him as the God of their salvation. Israel at the present time does not look upon God in this manner; but, when the time arrives here foretold, she will learn the truth that she needs to be converted and will call upon God to perform that miracle of regeneration. In this manner He will turn them to Himself. Moreover they will recognize that the salvation of Israel as a nation and of each individual is dependent upon God. He is the God of deliverances.

Furthermore, they will pray that He will cause His indignation toward them to cease. Let us remember that in the vision of the future (vss. 1-3) the psalmist saw the time when God's anger will have passed away from Israel and when she will be dwelling in blessedness and peace. But Israel in the latter part of the Tribulation will have been taught the truth concerning God's Word as it relates to Israel and will pray for Him to cease being indignant against her. In this connection let me say that God's anger and indignation against His ancient people will never cease until they penitently confess the nation's crime of rejecting King Messiah, implore His forgiveness, and plead for His blessing. Then, and only then, will His indignation against them cease.

According to verse 5 they will ask Him, "Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?" When one looks back over the weary centuries of the Christian Era--nineteen hundred years during which Israel has been exiled from her land and has been the nation of the wandering foot--having suffered untold persecution--one will see how it is that Israel as she endures the sufferings of the great Tribulation will ask Him sincerely and earnestly if He intends to be angry with her forever. As just stated, His anger will cease the very moment

she repudiates the national sin of the rejection of King Messiah and pleads with Him in genuine repentance to return and be her King. Then and only then will His anger cease.

Moreover, the nation will pray to God to quicken her that she may rejoice before Him. The quickening mentioned here, as is manifest from the context, means the impartation of spiritual life and power in the soul. In order to pray this petition, Israel must know the facts concerning her fallen and lost condition. Moreover, she must know the fundamental teaching of the Word of God concerning the necessity of the new birth--regeneration. Being convinced of her need of this miracle of salvation, the nation of Israel at the time here foreseen will pray to God to quicken her, to give her this spiritual life. She will pray for His salvation in order that she may rejoice before Him.

God's ancient people will also pray to Him to display His Lovingkindness, His grace toward them, and to grant them His salvation. They will realize that they cannot save themselves but that only the Lord can do this.

III. The Lord's answer to the petition

Verse 8 of this psalm begins the third and last section. In this connection let us remember the setting. As stated above, the psalmist is carried forward to the time of the Tribulation and is placed in the midst of suffering Israel of that time of future judgment. He voices their sentiments in prayer as we have just seen in verses 4-7. Then he declares, "I will hear what God Jehovah will speak." He will have absolute and unqualified faith in God that the message will be favorable because he thus speaks: "For He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: But let them not turn again to folly." The psalmist knows that God is very eager to bless His people. He realizes that the blessing of Israel is contingent upon her exalting the Lord that He might be gracious unto His people. On this point see Isaiah 30:18. "And therefore will Jehovah wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for Jehovah is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for him."

The answer to the petition of the people who are led ideally here by the prophet is in the following words:

9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him,
That glory may dwell in our land.
10 Mercy and truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
11 Truth springeth out of the earth;
And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.
12 Yea, Jehovah will give that which is good;
And our land will yield its increase.
13 Righteousness shall go before him,
And shall make his footsteps a way to walk in (vss. 9-13).

God's response to their petition begins thus: "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him, That glory may dwell in our land." Whenever man, in faith, approaches God and begins to worship him salvation draws near. Since this hymn is national in its outlook, the salvation here spoken of is that of the entire

nation. Thus when the nation of Israel takes the attitude set forth in verses 4-7, salvation will be very, very near. When they are thus saved, the glory of the Lord will dwell in their land--Israel. As suggested in the beginning of this study, the Holy Land is called not only the land of Immanuel but also the land or the country of the Jews.

In a most beautiful and expressive manner the psalmist speaks of the blissful condition that will exist in the land at that future time when Israel accepts her Messiah: "Mercy and truth are met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." At that time God will display His mercy toward Israel, but everything will be within the limits and in accordance with the fundamental principles of the truth of God. Righteousness and peace are represented as saluting one another. There can be no such thing as peace apart from righteousness; neither can there be righteousness apart from peace. Thus these two abstract qualities are personified and represented as embracing each other. This graphic bit of imagery presents the blessed condition that will exist in the land among converted Israel when she accepts her Messiah.

In verse 11 the imagery is changed. Truth is represented as springing out of the earth, while righteousness is looking down from heaven. Israel in sincerity and in truth will be looking up into the heavens by faith into the face of her once-rejected Messiah. He, in His glory and righteousness, will, like the father in the parable of the prodigal son described in Luke, chapter 16 be looking down toward the earth as Israel looks up toward Him in faith. His heart will rejoice when He hears her cry. He will then answer her and restore her to peace and blessedness in her own land.

The answer comes to penitent Israel that Jehovah will give that which is good, and that the land of Israel shall yield its increase. The reason for these blessings is that the curse will be lifted and he who is the cause of the curse (Satan) will be removed from all contact with the earth, he being incarcerated in the pit of the abyss during the thousand years' reign of our Lord.

According to the last statement of Psalm 85, "Righteousness shall go before him {Jehovah}," when he returns to the earth, "And shall make his footsteps a way *to walk in*." As a person precedes a distinguished guest and prepares the way for Him, thus righteousness is thought of as one who goes before the returning Messiah and prepares the way in which His feet shall walk. This poetic language simply sets forth the truth that there will be those who shall be clothed in the righteousness of God and who will prepare the way before Messiah's return. Elijah is scheduled to appear before the second coming of the Lord to prepare His way. The 144,000 Jewish evangelists, who conduct the world-wide revival in the first half of the Tribulation Period, will likewise be clothed in God's righteousness and will prepare the way for the coming of Messiah. What they do will be in fulfillment of the prediction contained in verses 12 and 13 of our Psalm.