

Israel's Hymnal
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PSALM EIGHTY

[Pss 80:1] Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that sittest (above) the cherubim, shine forth.

[Pss 80:2] Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up thy might, And come to save us.

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

[Pss 80:4] O Jehovah God of hosts, How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?

[Pss 80:5] Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears, And given them tears to drink in large measure.

[Pss 80:6] Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbors; And our enemies laugh among themselves.

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

[Pss 80:8] Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt: Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.

[Pss 80:9] Thou preparedst (room) before it, And it took deep root, and filled the land.

[Pss 80:10] The mountains were covered with the shadow of it, And the boughs thereof were (like) cedars of God.

[Pss 80:11] It sent out its branches unto the sea, And its shoots unto the River.

[Pss 80:12] Why hast thou broken down its walls, So that all they that pass by the way do pluck it?

[Pss 80:13] The boar out of the wood doth ravage it, And the wild beasts of the field feed on it.

[Pss 80:14] Turn again, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine,

[Pss 80:15] And the stock which thy right hand planted, And the branch that thou madest strong for thyself.

[Pss 80:16] It is burned with fire, it is cut down: They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

[Pss 80:17] Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.

[Pss 80:18] So shall we not go back from thee: Quicken thou us, and we will call upon thy name.

[Pss 80:19] Turn us again, O Jehovah God of hosts; Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

ISRAEL'S PRAYER FOR SALVATION AND DELIVERANCE

- I. Prayer to the Shepherd, God the Son, who:
 - A. Leads Joseph (vs. 1a).
 - B. Sits enthroned above the cherubim (vs. 1b).
 - C. Is to appear in glory (vs. 1c).
 - D. Alone can save (vs. 2).
 - E. Alone can regenerate (vs. 3).

- II. Prayer to Jehovah of Hosts, God the Father:
 - A. How long is Israel to suffer? (vss. 4-7).
 - B. Israel's history presented under the symbolism of a vine (vss. 8-16).
 - C. Closing petition (vss. 17-19).

The writer of this Psalm assumed a knowledge of the Trinity on the part of the reader or hearer. Israel's Great Confession is found in Deuteronomy 6:4, and reads, when literally translated, as follows: "Here, O Israel, Jehovah our Gods is Jehovah a Unity." Verses 1-3 Psalm 80, as we shall see, comprise a petition which the penitent remnant of Israel in the Tribulation will pray to Jehovah the Son, the Shepherd of Israel. The petitions found in verses 4-19 will be directed to Jehovah the Father. In answer to these two petitions Jehovah the Son, the Shepherd of Israel, will come, save her, and deliver her from all her woes.

This passage assumes a knowledge on the part of Israel of the fundamental basic principles concerning the Messiah and salvation. The psalmist gave us this prediction because he, by prophetic insight, saw that the gospel in its fullness will have, at the time here foreseen, been preached to all Israel. In other words, he foresaw that the church of Jesus Christ will, in the end of this age, evangelize all Israel. To the text let us now return.

I. Penitent Israel's petition to Jehovah the Son (vss. 1-3)

"Give ear O Shepherd of Israel." Who is this Shepherd? A glance at the first three verses shows that He is the one who is leading Joseph (the Jewish nation) like a flock; that He is, at the time that the prayer is made, seated above the cherubim; and that there is hope that He will manifest His power in glory and come to Israel's rescue. In keeping with this teaching is Ezekiel, chapter 34. In the first 10 verses of this chapter the prophet reprimanded the unfaithful shepherds of Israel (both the political and religious leaders of his day) for not looking after the flock of God over which they had been placed. Following this rebuke is the promise:

11 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Behold, I myself, even I will search for my sheep and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day (Ezek. 34:11,12).

He Himself will come to this earth and will play the part of a shepherd to the people of Israel. At first He entrusted the care of His people to their leaders; but, since they have failed, declared Ezekiel, God himself would come personally and do the shepherding properly, which they had failed to perform. This is a very definite promise that Jehovah himself would come and perform the functions that were entrusted to men, the leaders of Israel, to carry out. The implication of the entire prediction is that Jehovah will come, assume the form of a man, and will perform those duties, which had been entrusted to the unfaithful shepherds. The rabbis of the ancient synagogue experienced great difficulty in understanding this passage since it was hard for them to conceive that Jehovah would come, assume the form of a man, and thus perform these human duties.

Again, we see another reference to the Shepherd of Israel in Zechariah 13:7:

Awake, O Sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones.

Let us note the fact that God speaks to the sword and tells it to do all that it can against His shepherd. All of us recognize that this language is the figure of personification, for God speaks as if the sword were a person. We understand of course that He was speaking to those who wield the sword and was telling them to do all that they can, even to the point of putting His shepherd to death. Let us note the fact that this shepherd is a man. Although he is a man, he is God's fellow. This latter word occurs about eleven times in the Hebrew Scriptures. In all other places we learn from the context that it refers to an individual who is equal with the one who is doing the speaking. Since such is its connotation in other places, we must understand it as having the same significance here unless there are facts, which indicate otherwise. And examination of this context shows that there is no contrary evidence. Therefore we must give the word its ordinary meaning. In view of this fact, this man who is "God's fellow" is likewise God's equal. Thus from this passage we learn that God has a Shepherd who is a man and yet is equal to Himself. How can this be? The key to the problem is found in such passages as Isaiah 7:14, which foretells the miraculous conception and the virgin birth of Messiah, who is God in human form. Thus when all the facts are taken into consideration, we see that, in Psalm 80, the Shepherd whom the penitent remnant of Israel addresses in prayer is none other than this Shepherd who is a man and yet is God's equal. He is the Messiah of Israel--the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Israel thus utters this prayer, she will say to this Shepherd that He is the one who is leading Joseph like a flock. A glance at Psalm 81:5 shows that the term "Joseph" in the psalms of Asaph is a name given to the entire nation of Israel. The Hebrew people will learn the truth that this long--departed Shepherd has been leading and continues to guide the nation providentially as a Palestinian shepherd leads his flock. Moreover, the nation of Israel will at the time here foreseen recognize the further fact that Messiah is seated enthroned above the cherubim. In order for us to see this more clearly, let us study carefully such passages Ezekiel chapter 1. There we see the throne located on the firmament which is supported by the cherubim beneath. Psalm 80:1 therefore is an echo of such a description as Ezekiel's.

Moreover, the nation of Israel will understand the redemptive career of King Messiah. She will have learned the fact that He came to the earth nineteen hundred years ago, that after His rejection He returned to glory, and that since then He has been seated above the cherubim. She also will know that according to the plan of God He is to return to this earth when Israel pleads for Him to do so. That she will learn these facts and implore Him to return is quite evident from Hosea 5:14,15:

14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver. 15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly.

She will know that He is not coming the next time as He did the first--in humility. When He returns, He will emblazon the sky with His glory and will "shine forth." Thus He will appear on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, being attended by all the holy angels of God.

This remnant will plead for Him to come back and to stir up His might in order that He might save the nation. This passage is a reflection of the truth that Israel will be unable to save herself and will come to Him in utter dependence, asking Him to save her from her woes.

According to verse 3 this penitent remnant will recognize the helplessness of human nature and will realize that resolutions to do better do not give the power to carry out the good intentions. In other words, the nation of Israel will understand the corruption of the human heart and acknowledge that only by the miraculous regeneration of the soul can one return to God and please Him. Thus the people will pray, "Turn us again, O God; And cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." They will recognize that this Shepherd of Israel, who is a man, is also God and that it is by His grace and favor alone that they can be saved.

II. Penitential Israel's prayer to God the Father (vss. 4-19)

The one question which resounds throughout the psalms in various places here and there in the Old Testament is this: "How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?" In connection with this query the remnant of Israel will call the Lord's attention, according to verses 4-6, to the fact that their lot during the years of their wanderings has been almost unbearable, that they have eaten the bread of tears and have drunk tears in large measure, that they have been living in hostile lands, and that the Gentiles are their enemies. Being fully appraised of their helpless condition, they will, after having addressed Messiah himself, turn to God the Father and ask Him also to help them in their great distress. Thus they will pray to Him as they do to the Messiah: "turn us again, O God of hosts; And cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

In verses 8-16 the entire history of Israel is set forth under the symbolism of a vine. God went down to Egypt and got a vine. In connection with this passage one should study Isaiah 5:1-7, in which God spoke of Israel as the choicest of all the vines. In this chapter all the nations are thought of as grapevines. But Israel is recognized as the choicest. The reason for her superiority is this: God performed a biological miracle upon the bodies of Abraham and Sarah which made possible the birth of Isaac. In doing so, He injected into the bloodstream of the Jewish race powers, potentialities, and capabilities--both intellectual and spiritual--which have manifested themselves in the history of the Chosen People. Jacob went down in to Egypt with his family--seventy souls--where this little group developed into a nation. At the proper time the Lord brought the people out under the leadership of Moses and planted them in the land of promise, which He had given to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting inheritance. The psalmist thinking of Israel as the choicest vine, spoke of it as having taken root and of its sending its branches out to the sea and to the river. This language refers to the kingdom of Israel during the glorious days of David and Solomon when the kingdom reached from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River.

On account of Israel's unfaithfulness the Lord, figuratively speaking, allowed the walls around His vineyard to be broken down and permitted the boar of the wood and the wild beasts of the field to pass through it and to tread down His vineyard. Since this is a symbolic representation of Israel, the boar and the wild beasts that tread it down are likewise symbols. What is their metaphorical meaning? A glance at Daniel, chapter 7, shows that a beast when used symbolically always refers to a civil power. What great nation first broke into this vineyard and trod down the vine? Undoubtedly Assyria, which was followed by other wild beasts, such as Babylon, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, and Saracens. Thus Israel has suffered at the hands of various nations.

According to verse 15 of our psalm God planted that stock and made it strong for Himself. This statement undoubtedly refers to the biological miracle which made possible the birth of Isaac and about which I have just spoken.

The pitiable plight of the nation of Israel is represented in verse 16. This vine is described as being "burned with fire," and as being "cut down." It is said to perish at the rebuke of God's countenance. No one can sin with impunity. Every sin and transgression receives a just recompense of reward. God was displeased with Israel and cast her out of her land. The one great crime which she committed and on account of which she was cast out of her native country is undoubtedly the rejection of her Messiah, who came to redeem her. As is foretold in Leviticus 26:40,41, Israel will confess this national sin. The crime was committed by the fathers when she was still in the land. When they the fathers, committed this sin, God cast her out and scattered her among the nations. When therefore the convicted remnant acknowledges its iniquity and the iniquitous act committed by the fathers and implores divine mercy, the Almighty will hear the petition and grant the deliverance.

In verse 17 we have a most remarkable fact stated. It is part of the petition which Israel will pray at this future time:

Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.

As we have seen, verses 4-19 are directed to God the Father. In this part of the petition those praying will speak of a man who is at God's right hand. Moreover, they will realize that God made this man strong for Himself. Here is a picture therefore of someone who is a man--every inch a man--and who is at the right hand of God Almighty. When we read this passage in the light of other statements of the Word we know that this one is none other than the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who though He existed in the form of God thought not being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped but humbled Himself and became obedient--as a servant, entering the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth. After He was rejected by His people He ascended to the Father as we learn in Acts, chapter 1. He has been seated there since that time at the right hand of the throne of God, as foretold David in Psalm 110:1,2. When Israel prays this petition regarding Him and asks the Father to send Him here to deliver her, He will leave His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on High and will come to deliver her. A picture of His presence before the heavenly throne is found in Daniel 7:13,14.

13 I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

In this passage we see the Messiah invested with world power and an everlasting dominion. He is like unto a son of man because He is *the* Son of man--the God-man. He goes into the presence of the Almighty, receives world dominion, leaves heaven, comes to earth, answers Israel's call for deliverance, and brings salvation to the penitent, believing remnant. But let us remember that she must make confession of her national sin and plead for Him to return before He will ever do so. The Lord Jesus said the same thing as is recorded in Matthew 23:37-39. He told His contemporaries that He would go away, that their house would be left unto them desolate, and that He would never return until they declared, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

According to the last verse of this psalm Israel will ask God to quicken her, to give her new life, to establish her, and to cause His face to shine upon her.

In order that she might pray this petition, you, my dear friends who know Jesus Christ and believe the truth, and I must give the gospel to her. May we do this with all dispatch in the power of the Spirit.