

Psalm 78

Psalms 78:1-2 [NIV] *“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,”*

The Psalmist calls the people’s attention to what is going to be an instructive discourse, not a mere story but a story with meaning, clearly implying that it is a solution to their problems he intends to offer, lessons from their own history.

The people of Israel rebelled and were **not** faithful to God, [**Psalms 78:11-12**].

Put God to the test by making demands on him, [**Psalms 78:18; Exodus 16:1-34**].

Lied to God and tried to flatter Him, [**Psalms 78:36; Ezekiel 33:31**].

Continued to turn away from the Creator God even after He did great works on their behalf, [**Psalms 78:42-56**].

This was not only recorded for the generation in which the Psalmist wrote these words, but for all people so they would not make the same mistakes, [1 Corinthians 10:5-12].

Psalms 78:3-8 [New King James] *“Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. 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; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.”*

God commanded that the stories of His mighty acts in Israel’s history and the laws He gave to them should be passed on from one generation to another.

This shows the importance of religious education for all children of Christian parents, to help each generation obey the Creator God and set their hope in Him.

Psalms 78:9-10 [New King James] *“The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law,”*

Ephraim was the most important tribe in Israel from the time of Moses to Saul. The Tabernacle was set up in their territory.

There is no Biblical record of Ephraim’s soldiers turning back from battle, so this is probably a metaphor referring to Ephraim’s failure to provide strong leadership during those years.

When David became king the tribe of Judah gained prominence.

Because of David’s faith and obedience, God chose Jerusalem in Judah to be the place for the Temple and rejected Ephraim, [Psalms 78:67].

This caused tension between the two tribes.

This Psalm may have been written because of this tension in order to demonstrate once again why God chose Judah, for God works through those who are faithful to Him.

The supreme intention of this dramatic presentation of Israel's history is to show the peculiar responsibility of the Davidic king.

God had intervened not merely to free the nation from adversaries, Pharaoh [verse 42] and the Philistines [verse 66] but to select Judah to be His people, Zion His habitation [verses 70-72] and David to be His servant who would feed [*“be the shepherd of”*] His people, [2 Samuel 3:18; 2 Samuel 5:2].

Psalms 78:70-72 [New King James] *“He also chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes that had young He brought him, to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.”*

Although David had been on the throne when this Psalm was written, he is called shepherd, not king.

Shepherding was a common and humble profession in Biblical times, a highly responsible job, the flocks being completely dependent upon shepherds for guidance, provision and protection.

David had been a shepherd in his early years, [1 Samuel 16:10-11]. This was a good training ground for his future responsibilities that God had in store for him when he was ready.

God took David from caring for sheep to caring for Israel, God's people, and that same leadership and care will be his in the future Kingdom of God, [Ezekiel 37:22-24].

Do not treat our present situation lightly or irresponsibly, it is very likely that it is God's training ground for your future.