

Psalm 80

This Psalm is wholly concerned with the northern kingdom of Israel, depicted by the names Joseph, Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Though Benjamin was often linked with Judah, it was essentially a northern tribe.

For example, Saul was a Benjaminite also an Ephraimite monarch.

Written after the northern kingdom of Israel was defeated and its people deported to Assyria.

Psalms 80:1-2 [New King James] *“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up Your strength, and come and save us!”*

The Creator God is addressed as *“Shepherd of Israel.”* This view of the exodus which saw in it a flock moving under the divine Shepherd is common in several Psalms.

The Psalmist feels that it is a great while since any light from the Creator God has cheered His people, [Psalms 80:3, 7 and 19].

Hence the prayer that the Creator God will *“shine forth”* from the Holy place for the people’s comfort.

True Christians should be making a similar prayer and making changes in our lives to revive our dedication to the Creator God, the God of light, [John 1:1-5].

Romans 13:11-14 [New King James] *“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.”*

The *“night”* refers to this present evil time under the influence of Satan the false *“angel of light,”* [2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2 Corinthians 4:4]. The *“day”* refers to the time of Jesus Christ’s Second Coming, [Titus 2:13].

Psalms 80:3 [New King James] *“Restore us, O God; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!”*

The prayer relies wholly on what the Creator God can do, He only can *“restore”* His people, literally *“cause them to turn”* back to Him, and He only can welcome them back with *“shining face”* significant of His pleasure in them.

Out of this double *“turning”* of us to the Creator God and He to us comes the assurance we are *“saved”* from eternal death.

Psalms 80:5-6 [New King James] *“You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in great measure. You have made us a strife to our neighbours, and our enemies laugh among themselves.”*

These verses are a reminder of the sorrow and scorn into which they have been allowed by the Creator God to travel.

Note there is no loss of faith in the Creator God in spite of the experiences He has allowed them to endure. This is what God had justly allowed that will in the end be best for them, [Hebrews 12:5-11].

Psalms 80:4 [New King James] *“O LORD God of hosts, how long will You be angry against the prayer of Your people?”*

The greatest need is that when they seek the Creator God to answer their prayers, that their prayers will not anger Him, [Matthew 6:5-8].

Psalms 80:7 [New King James] *“Restore us, O God of hosts; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!”*

Hence the added urgency of the renewed petition made in verse 3, this time with “God of hosts” that is God omnipotent.

Psalms 80:8-9 [New King James] *“You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. You prepared room for it, and caused it to take deep root, and it filled the land.”*

The Psalmist introduces an allegory of the vine which is often used as an emblem of Israel, [Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 15:1-6; Hosea 10:1], also applied to Jesus Christ and New Testament Christians, [Luke 20:9-15; John 15:1-8].

The transplanting the vine from Egypt [Genesis 49:22] was possible only because of the Creator God’s special intervention, [Psalms 44:3].

Psalms 80:10-11 [New King James] *“The hills were covered with its shadow, and the mighty cedars with its boughs. She sent out her boughs to the Sea, and her branches to the River.”*

The transplanting of the vine slip from Egypt, once planted flourished so as to spread, during the empires of David and Solomon, over the mountains of Judah as far as the cedar forest of Lebanon, the Mediterranean coast and the Euphrates river, [Deuteronomy 11:24].

Psalms 80:12-13 [New King James] *“Why have You broken down her hedges, so that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit? The boar out of the woods uproots it, and the wild beast of the field devours it.”*

Now all the vineyard was derelict, the Gardener had abandoned it and consequently it had been invaded by the Gentile nations, symbolised by “wild beasts.” The threat of Isaiah 5:5-7 has come true.

Psalms 80:14 [New King James] *“Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine”*

This leads to the cry of penitence and need.

Psalms 80:15-16 [New King James] *“And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down; they perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.”*

The whole anomaly of careful planting and utter rejection the outcome of “fire” instead of “fruit” is summed up in these verses.

Psalms 80:17-19 [New King James] *“Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself. Then we will not turn back from You; revive us, and we will call upon Your name. Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!”*

Throughout the Psalm the Creator God has been reminded of the special and beloved place that Israel occupies in His plan for humanity, they are His flock, [verses 1, 4] and His vine [verse 8]. Now the Psalmist takes the direction into the future, by using the example of when Benjamin was born, at the cost of his mother's life, [Genesis 35:16-18].

Rachel's dying wish for the son whose birth cost her her life was to be named Ben-Oni meaning "*son of my sorrow,*" but Jacob called the baby Benjamin meaning "*son of my right hand.*"

It was to be through the "*Son of my right hand,*" Jesus Christ, [Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:1-3; Hebrews 10:10-12]. That salvation was to be brought to all of humanity.