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A Psalm by Asaph.

PSALM 79: 1 God, the nations have come into your inheritance. They have defiled your holy temple. They have laid Jerusalem in heaps.

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The psalmist complains of the cruelty of his enemies and the desolations of Jerusalem, and prays against them, Psa 79:1-7. He prays for the pardon and restoration of his people, and promises gratitude and obedience, Psa 79:8-13.

The title, A Psalm of Asaph, must be understood as either applying to a person of the name of Asaph who lived under the captivity; or else to the family of Asaph; or to a band of singers still bearing the name of that Asaph who flourished in the days of David; for most undoubtedly the Psalm was composed during the Babylonish captivity, when the city of Jerusalem lay in heaps, the temple was defiled, and the people were in a state of captivity. David could not be its author. Some think it was composed by Jeremiah; and it is certain that the sixth and seventh verses are exactly the same with Jer 10:25 : "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him; and have made his habitation desolate."

Verse 1

The heathen are come into thine inheritance - Thou didst cast them out, and take thy people in; they have cast us out, and now taken possession of the land that belongs to thee. They have defiled the temple, and reduced Jerusalem to a heap of ruins; and made a general slaughter of thy people.

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PSALM 79: 2 They have given the dead bodies of your servants to be food for the birds of the sky, the flesh of your saints to the animals of the earth.

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Verse 2

The dead bodies of thy servants - It appears that in the destruction of Jerusalem the Chaldeans did not bury the bodies of the slain, but left them to be devoured by birds and beasts of prey. This was the grossest inhumanity.

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PSALM 79: 3 Their blood they have shed like water around Jerusalem. There was no one to bury them.

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Verse 3

There was none to bury them - The Chaldeans would not; and the Jews who were not slain were carried into captivity.

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PSALM 79: 4 We have become a reproach to our neighbours, a scoffing and derision to those who are around us.

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Verse 4

We are become a reproach to our neighbors - The Idumeans, Philistines, Phoenicians, Ammonites, and Moabites, all gloried in the subjugation of this people; and their insults to them were mixed with blasphemies against God.

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PSALM 79: 5 How long, LORD? Will you be angry forever? Will your jealousy burn like fire?

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Verse 5

How long, Lord? - Wilt thou continue thine anger against us, and suffer us to be insulted, and thyself blasphemed?

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PSALM 79: 6 Pour out your wrath on the nations that don't know you; on the kingdoms that don't call on your name;

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Verse 6

Pour out thy wrath - Bad as we are, we are yet less wicked than they. We, it is true, have been unfaithful; but they never knew thy name, and are totally abandoned to idolatry.

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PSALM 79: 7 For they have devoured Jacob, and destroyed his homeland.

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Verse 7

Laid waste his dwelling-place - The Chaldee understands this of the temple. This, by way of eminence, was Jacob's place. I have already remarked that these two verses are almost similar to Jer 10:25, which has led many to believe that Jeremiah was the author of this Psalm.

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PSALM 79: 8 Don't hold the iniquities of our forefathers against us. Let your tender mercies speedily meet us, for we are in desperate need.

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Verse 8

Remember not against us former iniquities - Visit us not for the sins of our forefathers.

Speedily prevent us - Let them go before us, and turn us out of the path of destruction; for there is no help for us but in thee.

We are brought very low - Literally, "We are greatly thinned." Few of us remain.

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PSALM 79: 9 Help us, God of our salvation, for the glory of your name. Deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name's sake.

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Verse 9

Purge away our sins - כפר capper, be propitiated, or receive an atonement (על חטאתינו) al chattotheynu) on account of our sins.

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PSALM 79: 10 Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let it be known among the nations, before our eyes, that vengeance for your servants' blood is being poured out.

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Verse 10

Where is their God? - Show where thou art by rising up for our redemption, and the infliction of deserved punishment upon our enemies.

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PSALM 79: 11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before you. According to the greatness of your power, preserve those who are sentenced to death.

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Verse 11

The sighing of the prisoner - The poor captive Israelites in Babylon, who sigh and cry because of their bondage.

Those that are appointed to die - בני תמותה beney themuthah, "sons of death." Either those who were condemned to death because of their crimes, or condemned to be destroyed by their oppressors. Both these senses apply to the Israelites: they were sons of death, i.e., worthy of death because of their sins against God; they were condemned to death or utter destruction, by their Babylonish enemies.

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PSALM 79: 12 Pay back to our neighbours seven times into their bosom their reproach with which they have reproached you, Lord.

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Verse 12

Sevenfold into their bosom - That is, Let them get in this world what they deserve for the cruelties they have inflicted on us. Let them suffer in captivity, who now have us in bondage. Probably this is a prediction.

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PSALM 79: 13 So we, your people and sheep of your pasture, will give you thanks forever. We will praise you forever, to all generations.

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Verse 13

We thy people - Whom thou hast chosen from among all the people of the earth.

And sheep of thy pasture - Of whom thou thyself art the Shepherd. Let us not be destroyed by those who are thy enemies; and we, in all our generations, will give thanks unto thee for ever.