

PSALM 83

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 83

A Song [or] Psalm of Asaph

This is the last of the psalms that bear the name of Asaph, and some think it was written by him on occasion of David's smiting the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Edomites, and others, (~~1081~~2 Samuel 8:1-14), but these did not conjunctly, but separately, fight with David, and were overcome by him; whereas those this psalm makes mention of were in a confederacy together; and besides, the Tyrians in David's time were in friendship with him; but are here mentioned as joining with others against Israel, (~~1880~~Psalm 83:7), others are of opinion that this was prophetic delivered out with respect to future times, either to the conspiracy of the enemies of the Jews against them in the times of the Maccabees,

“Now when the nations round about heard that the altar was built and the sanctuary renewed as before, it displeased them very much. etc.” (1 Maccabees 5:1)

or rather to the confederacy of the Moabites, Ammonites, and others, in the times of Jehoshaphat, (~~401~~2 Chronicles 20:1), so Kimchi, Arama, and the generality of interpreters: perhaps reference is had to the enemies of God's people, from age to age, both in the Old and in the New Testament; R. Obadiah understands it of the war of Gog and Magog.

Ver. 1. *Keep not thou silence, O God*, etc.] Which he is thought and said to do, when he does not answer the prayers of his people, nor plead their cause, nor rebuke their enemies; when he does not speak a good word to them, or one for them, or one against those that hate and persecute them;

hold not thy peace; or “be not deaf”^{f1187} to the cries and tears of his people, and to the reproaches, menaces, and blasphemies of wicked men:

and be not still, O God; or “quiet”^{f1188}, at rest and ease, inactive and unconcerned, as if he cared not how things went; the reason follows.

Ver. 2. *For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult*, etc.] Or “a noise”^{f1189}: wicked men are commonly noisy, roaring out their blasphemies against God, belching out oaths and curses, and breathing threatenings and slaughter against the saints; especially a numerous army of them, consisting of many people and nations, as this did; who are called the Lord’s “enemies”, being the enemies of his people, and their cause and his are one and the same; and besides, all wicked men are enemies to God, and all that is good, in their minds, and which appears by their actions; yea, they are enmity itself unto him:

and they that hate thee have lift up the head; are haughty, proud, and arrogant; speak loftily, and with a stiff neck; set their mouth against heaven, and God in it; and their tongue walks through the earth, and spares none; they exult and rejoice, as sure of victory, before the battle is fought; such then were, and such there are, who are haters of God, hate his being, perfections, purposes, and providences; hate his Son without a cause, and even do despite unto the Spirit of grace; hate the law and its precepts, the Gospel and its doctrines and ordinances, and the ways, worship, and people of God, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 3. *They have taken crafty counsel against thy people*, etc.] The people of Israel, hereafter named, whom God had chosen and avouched to be his people; these they dealt subtlety with, as the king of Egypt had done with their forefathers; and this, agreeably to their character, being the seed of the old serpent, more subtle than any of the beasts of the field; these devised cunning devices, formed crafty schemes for the destruction of the Lord’s people; but often so it is, that the wise are taken in their own craftiness, and their counsel is carried headlong:

and consulted against thy hidden ones; not hidden from the Lord, and unknown unto him, though from their enemies, and unknown by them, and so the object of their hatred and persecution; but hidden by him as his jewels and peculiar treasure, which he takes care of; hidden under the shadow of his wings, in the secret of his presence and tabernacle, as in a pavilion; and therefore it was a daring piece of insolence in their enemies to attack them: so the life of saints is said to be hid with Christ in God, which denotes both its secrecy and safety; (see ^{<S00B>}Colossians 3:3), the Targum is,

“against the things hidden in thy treasures;”

meaning the riches of the temple.

Ver. 4. *They have said*, etc.] Secretly in their hearts, or openly to one another, and gave it out in the most public manner, as what they had consulted and determined upon; (see ^{<1974B>}Psalm 74:8),

come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; they were not content to invade their country, take their cities, plunder them of their substance, and carry them captives, but utterly to destroy them, root and branch; so that they might be no more a body politic, under rule and government, in their own land, nor have so much as a name and place in others; this was Haman's scheme, (^{<17B>}Esther 3:8,9)

that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance; but this desperate and dreadful scheme, and wretched design of theirs, took not effect; but, on the contrary, the several nations hereafter mentioned, who were in this conspiracy, are no more, and have not had a name in the world for many hundreds of years; while the Jews are still a people, and are preserved, in order to be called and saved, as all Israel will be in the latter day, (^{<5125>}Romans 11:25). So Dioclesian thought to have rooted the Christian name out of the world; but in vain: the name of Christ, the name of Christianity, the name of a Christian church, will endure to the end of the world; (see ^{<19717>}Psalm 72:17 ^{<1007>}Proverbs 10:7). Compare with this (^{<24119>}Jeremiah 11:19).

Ver. 5. *For they have consulted together with one consent*, etc.] Or "heart"^{f1190}; wicked men are cordial to one another, and united in their counsels against the people of God, and his interest: whatever things they may disagree in, they agree in this, to oppose the cause and interest of true religion, or to persecute the church and people of God: Herod and Pontius Pilate are instances of this:

they are confederate against thee; or have made a covenant against thee^{f1191}; the covenant they had entered into among themselves, being against the Lord's people, was against him; and such a covenant and agreement can never stand; for there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord, (^{<12130>}Proverbs 21:30). This the psalmist mentions to engage the Lord in the quarrel of his people, and not be still, and act a neutral part; since those were his enemies, and confederates against him, and they are next particularly named.

Ver. 6. *The tabernacles of Edom*, etc.] Or the Idumeans, as the Targum; the posterity of Esau, who, with the rest that joined with them, hereafter

mentioned, and made the confederate army, brought their tents with them, pitched them, and encamped in them against Israel:

and the Ishmaelites; or Arabians, as the Targum, who descended from Ishmael, the son of Abraham:

of Moab, and the Hagarenes; the Moabites, who sprung from Lot by one of his daughters, in an incestuous way; and the Hagarenes are the same with the Hagarites, (^{<1350>}1 Chronicles 5:10,19,20) who dwelt to the east of the land of Israel, so called from Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham, but not by him, but by another husband, after sent away from him, as Aben Ezra and Kimchi think, or by him, supposing Hagar to be the same with Keturah, as some do: the Targum calls them Hungarians; the Syriac version renders it Gadareans, or Gadarenes; of which (see ^{<400>}Mark 5:1).

Ver. 7. *Gebal*, etc.] Gubleans, or Gebalites, as the Targum; the same with Giblites, (^{<0235>}Joshua 23:5 ^{<1158>}1 Kings 5:18), or men of Gebal, (^{<270>}Ezekiel 27:9) the same with Byblus: these dwelt in Phoenicia, near Tyre, where Pliny ^{f1192} makes mention of a place called Gabale: the Syriac version joins it with Ammon, and renders it “the border of Ammon”:

and Ammon and Amalek, the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre; these are well known in Scripture, and as the enemies of Israel.

Ver. 8. *Assur also is joined with them*, etc.] Before mentioned, or Assyria, though at so great a distance from Israel, and unprovoked by them: according to R. Joseph Kimchi, the sense is, that the Assyrians joined them, continuing in their wickedness, though their army had been destroyed by an angel in Hezekiah’s time, of which they were unmindful; but this, as his son observes, makes this confederacy and war to be after the times of Hezekiah; whereas it was long before it: the Targum is,

“Sennacherib, king of Syria, is joined with them;”

and so some refer this to his invasion of Judea, and besieging Jerusalem, with an army consisting of many nations, in Hezekiah’s time; but he was the principal there, and not an auxiliary, as here:

they have holpen the children of Lot; or were “an arm” ^{f1193} unto them, assisted and strengthened them: these were the Moabites and Ammonites, who were the principals in the war, and the rest auxiliaries, as it appears they were in the times of Jehoshaphat, (^{<400>}2 Chronicles 20:1,10,22,23),

here were ten different nations, which joined in confederacy against the people of Israel; to which answer the ten horns of the beast, or ten antichristian kings, who agreed to give their kingdom to the beast, and to make war with the Lamb and his followers, (^{<66712>}Revelation 17:12-14), and it may be observed, that these were on all sides of the land of Israel; the Edomites, Ishmaelites, and Amalekites, were on the south; the Moabites, Ammonites, and Hagarenes, were on the east; the Assyrians on the north; and the Philistines, Gebalites, and Tyrians, on the west: so that Israel was surrounded on all sides with enemies, as the Lord's people are troubled on every side, (^{<4048>}2 Corinthians 4:8), and so the Gog and Magog army, of which some understand this, will encompass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, (^{<6109>}Revelation 20:9).

Selah. (See Gill on "^{<3932>}Psalm 3:2").

Ver. 9. *Do unto them as unto the Midianites*, etc.] In the times of Gideon, who destroyed one another, trod in whose destruction the hand of the Lord was very visible, (^{<07021>}Judges 7:20-22), and much in the same manner was the confederate army of the Moabites, Ammonites, and others, destroyed in the times of Jehoshaphat, (^{<4011>}2 Chronicles 20:20,23,24),

as to Sisera, as to Jabin: Jabin was a king of Canaan, who oppressed Israel, and Sisera was his general; the latter was slain by a woman, Jael, the wife of Heber; and the former the hand of Israel prevailed against, until they destroyed him, (^{<07042>}Judges 4:2,21,22,24), the great victory which they obtained over them was

at the brook of Kison, or "Kishon", (^{<07047>}Judges 4:7 5:21) with this compare (^{<4016>}2 Chronicles 20:16).

Ver. 10. *Which perished at Endor*, etc.] Aben Ezra and Kimchi understand this of the Midianites; but rather it is to be understood of Jabin and Sisera, and the army under them, who perished at this place, which is mentioned along with Taanach and Megiddo, (^{<06711>}Joshua 17:11), which are the very places where the battle was fought between Jabin and Israel, (^{<07059>}Judges 5:19) according to Jerom^{f1194}, it was four miles from Mount Tabor to the south, and was a large village in his days, and was near to Nain, the place where Christ raised the widow's son from the dead, (^{<07071>}Luke 7:11 ^{<09207>}1 Samuel 28:7)

they became as dung for the earth; being unburied, they lay and rotted on the earth, and became dung for it; (see ^{<2482>}Jeremiah 8:2), or were trodden under foot, as dung upon the earth; so the Targum,

“they became as dung trodden to the earth.”

Ver. 11. *Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb*, etc.] Two princes of Midian, who were slain, the one at the rock Oreb, and the other at the winepress of Zeeb, so called after their names, (^{<4075>}Judges 7:25),

yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna; kings of Midian, slain by Gideon, (^{<4082>}Judges 8:21).

Ver. 12. *Who said*, etc.] Not the kings and princes of Midian just mentioned, but the confederate enemies of Israel, named (^{<4986>}Psalms 83:6-8), to whom the like things are wished as to the Midianites and others, because they said what follows:

let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession; not only the temple, which was eminently the house of God, but all the habitations of the Israelites in Jerusalem, and other places, where the Lord vouchsafed to dwell; unless this should be ironically spoken by their enemies calling them so, because they pretended, as they reckoned it, to have and to hold them by the gift of God; whereas, of right, they belonged to them, at least some of them: such a claim was made by the Ammonites in the times of Jephthah, (^{<47113>}Judges 11:13), and to dispossess the Israelites was the intention of the Ammonites and Moabites in the times of Jehoshaphat, (^{<4430>}2 Chronicles 20:10,11).

Ver. 13. *O my God, make them like a wheel*, etc.] Which, as the Targum adds, is rolled, and goes on, and rests not in a declivity; let them be as fickle and inconstant as a wheel; being in high, let them be in slippery places, and brought down to desolation in a moment; like a wheel set running down hill, so let them swiftly and suddenly come to ruin; or be in all kind of calamities, and continual troubles ^{f1195} as the wheel is always turning: some think there is an allusion to the wheel by which bread corn was bruised; (see ^{<2338>}Isaiah 28:28 ^{<4106>}Proverbs 20:26), but the word ^{f1196} signifies a rolling thing before the wind, as a wisp of straw or stubble, which is easily carried away with it: Jarchi interprets it of the tops or down of thistles, which fly off from them, and roll up, and are scattered by the wind; (see ^{<21713>}Isaiah 17:13), and which agrees with what follows:

as the stubble before the wind; which cannot stand before it, but is driven about by it here and there; and so wicked men are, as chaff and stubble, driven away in their wickedness, with the stormy wind of divine wrath and vengeance, and chased out of the world, which is here imprecated.

Ver. 14. *As the fire burneth the wood*, etc.] Or “forest”^{f1197}; which is sometimes done purposely, and sometimes through carelessness, as Virgil^{f1198} observes; and which is done very easily and swiftly, when fire is set to it; even all the trees of it, great and small, to which an army is sometimes compared, (²³⁰¹⁸Isaiah 10:18,19), and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; either the mountains themselves, as Etna, Vesuvius, and others; or rather the grass and trees that grow upon them, smitten by lightning from heaven, which may be meant by the flame: in like manner it is wished that the fire and flame of divine wrath would consume the confederate enemies of Israel, above mentioned; as wicked men are but as trees of the forest, and the grass of the mountains, or as thorns and briars, to the wrath of God, which is poured out as fire, and is signified by everlasting burnings.

Ver. 15. *So persecute them with thy tempest*, etc.] Pursue them with thy fury, follow them with thy vengeance; cause it to fall upon them like a mighty tempest:

and make them afraid with thy storm; God has his storms and tempests of wrath and vengeance, which he sometimes causes to fall upon wicked men in this life, to their inexpressible terror, and with which he takes them out of this world; and he has still more horrible ones to rain upon them hereafter: (see ¹⁸²⁷¹Job 27:20,21 ¹⁹¹⁰⁶Psalm 11:6).

Ver. 16. *Fill their faces with shame*, etc.] For their sins, or rather through disappointment, not being able to put their desperate and deep laid schemes into execution: or “with lightness”^{f1199}; instead of a weight of honour and glory upon them, let them be despised. R. Joseph Kimchi renders it, “fill their faces with fire”; let their faces be as if they were on fire, as men’s faces are, who are put to an exceeding great blush, or are most sadly confounded and ashamed:

that they may seek thy name, O Lord; not they themselves, who are filled with shame; for it is imprecated, that they be ashamed, and troubled for ever, and so as to perish, (¹⁸⁸¹⁷Psalm 83:17) but others; for the words may be supplied, as in (¹⁸⁸¹⁸Psalm 83:18) “that men may seek thy name, or that thy name may be sought”: the judgments of God upon wicked men are

sometimes the means of arousing others, and putting them upon seeking the Lord, his face, and his favour; that God would be merciful to them, pardon their iniquities, avert judgments from them, and preserve them from threatened calamities; and this is a good end, when answered; (see ^{<2319>}Isaiah 26:9,16).

Ver. 17. *Let them be confounded and troubled for ever*, etc.] As long as they are in this world, and to all eternity in another; a dreadful portion this:

yea, let them be put to shame, and perish; wholly and eternally, in soul and body, for evermore.

Ver. 18. *That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah*, etc.] Or, “that thou, thy name alone is Jehovah” ^{f1200}, a self-existent Being, the Being of beings, the everlasting I AM, the immutable God; for this name is expressive of the being, eternity, and unchangeableness of God, who is, and was, and is to come, invariably the same, (^{<6104>}Revelation 1:4) which is to be understood not to the exclusion of the Son or Spirit, who are with the Father the one Jehovah, (^{<8184>}Deuteronomy 6:4), and to whom this name is given; (see ^{<1276>}Exodus 17:6), compared with (^{<6100>}1 Corinthians 10:9 ^{<3418>}Isaiah 40:3 ^{<2236>}Jeremiah 23:6) (^{<2318>}Isaiah 6:8,9) compared with (^{<4825>}Acts 28:25,26), but to the exclusion of all nominal and fictitious deities, the gods of the Heathens; and the being and perfections of God are known by the judgments he executes, (^{<1916>}Psalms 9:16),

art the most High over all the earth; or,

and that thou art, etc. ^{f1201}, being the Maker and the Possessor of it, and the sovereign Lord of its inhabitants, doing in it what seems good in his sight; (see ^{<1142>}Genesis 14:22 ^{<2045>}Daniel 4:35), for the accents require two propositions in the text: the Heathens ^{f1202} give the title of most high to their supreme deity: the Targum is,

“over all the inhabitants of the earth.”