



Psalms
The Book of Praises

Lesson 16
Communal Lament Psalms

Communal Lament Psalms

- Many times Israel fell out of favor with God. Would allow them to suffer defeat in battle or give them into the hands of another nation for a time.
- Israelites would finally cry out for deliverance.
- These psalms lament the state of Israel, and plead the nation's case before God.
- Communal – of or relating to a community – here primarily, children of Israel
- Typical pattern: a) an introduction, b) the lament, c) a confession of trust in God, d) the petition, and e) a declaration or vow of praise.

Songs of Lament in Our Hymnals

- 409 – It Is Well with My Soul
- 224 – O Sacred Head Now Wounded
- 373 – Be Still My Soul
- 669 – In the Desert of Sorrow and Sin
- 569 – I Must Tell Jesus



Lessons for Today

- The plea of Psalm 74 is for restoration. This should be our plea even today. Sin separates us from God. Let us lament that condition and plead as well for 'His face to shine upon us.'
- Jesus says He is the vine and we (His disciples) are the branches: John 15:1-11. We must stay connected to that vine, if we are to have life and bear fruit. His words must abide in us, and we must keep His commandments.

Psalm 80

- Written by Asaph
 - Asaph the son of Berachiah, a Levite, is the most prominent of this name in the Bible. An outstanding musician in the days of David, he was appointed along with another Levite, Heman, as minister of music in the center of worship in Jerusalem. (1 Chron. 6:33-43)
- Set to the tune 'The Lilies'
- A 'testimony' of Asaph - witnessing on the part of Israel
- Time of writing – probably one of the invasions of Israel (Northern Kingdom) – note v. 2 – three of the Northern tribes

Psalm 80

Q4. What is the refrain that appears several times which expresses their desire?

- “Restore us, O God; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved.” (vv. 3, 7, 19)

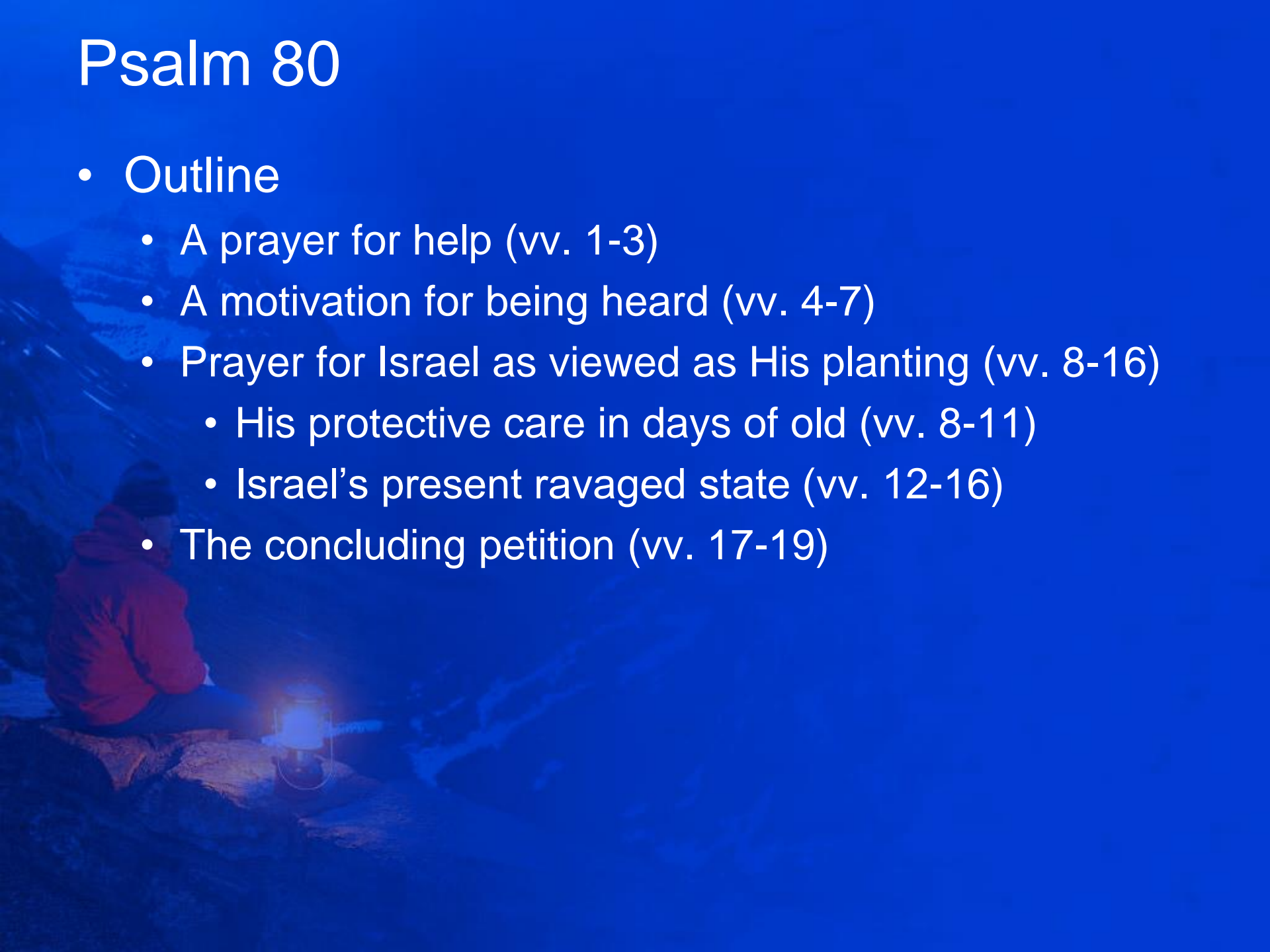
Q5. What is the metaphor used in this psalm to describe Israel? Summarize the descriptions of the metaphor.

- A vine.
- The Lord cast out nations and planted it; it took deep root, filled the land from the Sea to the River; now, her hedges are broken and all come to pluck its fruit; boar uproots it; the wild beast of the field devours it; it is burned and cut down.

Psalm 80

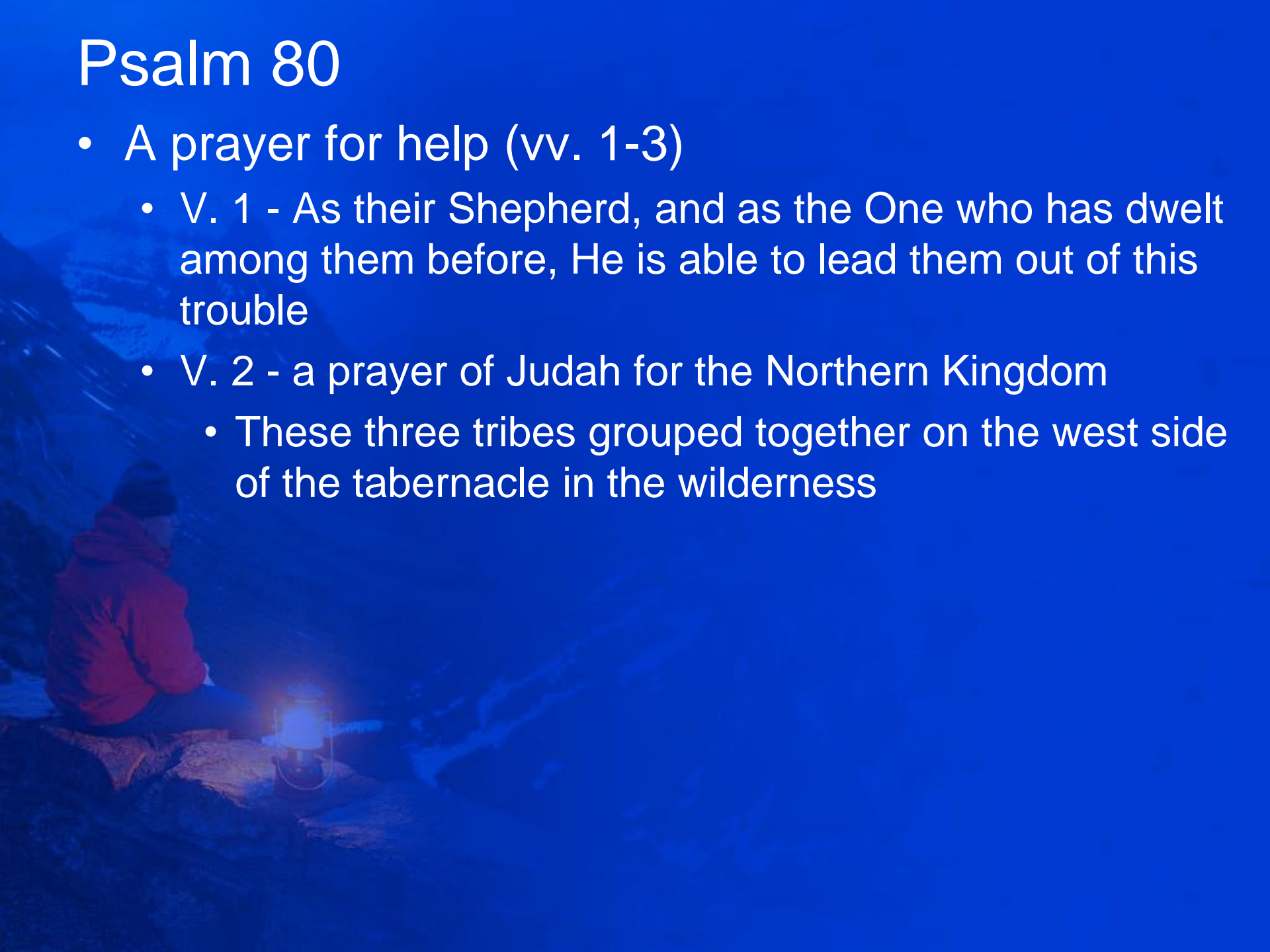
- Outline

- A prayer for help (vv. 1-3)
- A motivation for being heard (vv. 4-7)
- Prayer for Israel as viewed as His planting (vv. 8-16)
 - His protective care in days of old (vv. 8-11)
 - Israel's present ravaged state (vv. 12-16)
- The concluding petition (vv. 17-19)



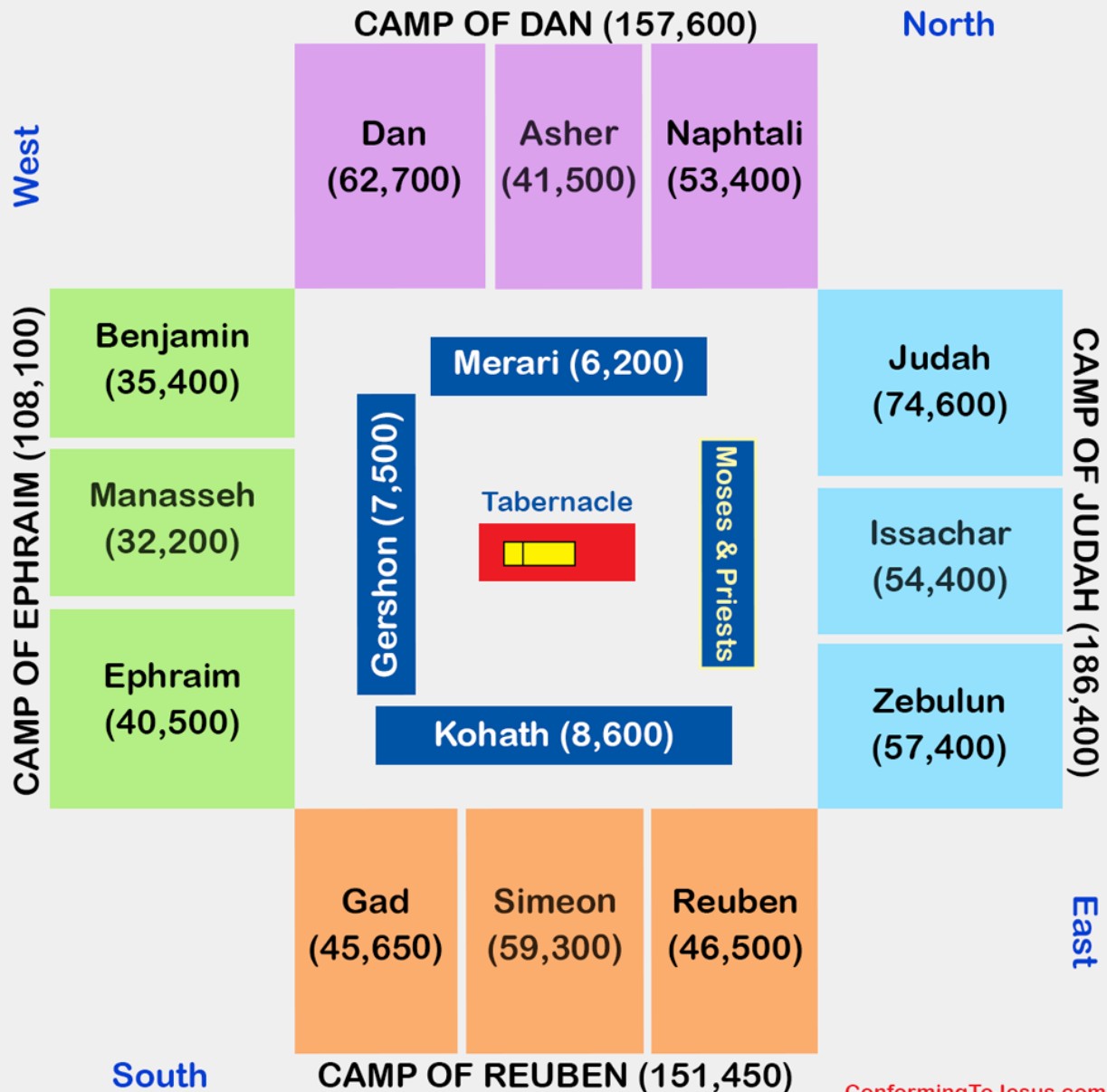
Psalm 80

- A prayer for help (vv. 1-3)
 - V. 1 - As their Shepherd, and as the One who has dwelt among them before, He is able to lead them out of this trouble
 - V. 2 - a prayer of Judah for the Northern Kingdom
 - These three tribes grouped together on the west side of the tabernacle in the wilderness



ENCAMPMENT OF THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

Numbers 2:1 - 3:39



Psalm 80

- A prayer for help (vv. 1-3)
 - V. 1 - As their Shepherd, and as the One who has dwelt among them before, He is able to lead them out of this trouble
 - V. 2 - a prayer of Judah for the Northern Kingdom
 - These three tribes grouped together on the west side of the tabernacle in the wilderness
 - What was true then is possible again
 - These three appear to be put for Northern Kingdom
 - V. 3 – the first of three repeating pleas (vv. 3,7,19)
 - Allusion to Num. 6:22-27
 - This should be our plea even today. Sin separates us from God. Let us lament that condition and plea as well for ‘His face to shine upon us.’

Psalm 80

- A motivation for being heard (vv. 4-7)
 - The sad state of the afflicted nation
- Prayer for Israel as viewed as His planting (vv. 8-16)
 - Vv. 8-11 – His protective care in days of old
 - The vine was planted and flourished
 - Vv. 12-16 – Israel's present ravaged state
 - The sad condition of the vine now, vv. 12-13, 16
 - Vv. 14-15 – a plea to God
- The concluding petition (vv. 17-19)
 - V. 17 – may refer to king of Israel; or may be bringing the psalm full circle – Gen. 35:18 – 'son of my right hand'
 - Vv. 18-19 – final plea

Psalm 74

- Time of writing – most likely the Chaldean invasion
- 587 B.C. – Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple; this probably written 15-20 years later

“There is one singularity in this Psalm: there is not one mention of national or personal sin throughout, no allusion to the Lord’s righteous dealing in their punishment, no supplication for pardon and forgiveness; and yet one can hardly doubt that the writer of the Psalm must have felt as keenly as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or any other prophet of the captivity, the sins and iniquities which had brought all this sore evil upon them. But still, though there be expostulation, there is no complaint; though there be mourning, there is no murmuring; there is far more the cry of a smitten child, wondering why, and grieving that his father’s face is so turned away from him in displeasure, and a father’s hand so heavy on the child of his love.” (Barton Bourcier)

Psalm 74

- Vv. 1-3
 - Some sign of penitence on the part of the people
 - Recognize their situation is a result of God's anger for their sins
 - Plea is based on the covenant of old
- Vv. 4-8

Q1 - What had been destroyed by enemies?

 - The sanctuary (the temple); all the meeting places
- Vv. 9-11

Q2 - Who is no longer among them? Does this part of the lament seem ironic? Explain.

 - A prophet. Yes – they are desiring a prophet, now. These are the same ones who rejected the prophets

Psalm 74

- Vv. 12-17
 - Recites the mighty acts of God in history and creation
 - Encourages all to think of God as still able to achieve such works
- Vv. 18-23
 - Now have a series of pleas
 - Q3. How does their plea change in the last two verses (vv. 22-23)?
 - It becomes a plea for God to defend His own name and honor
 - Strongest plea of all – for God to plead (defend) His own cause

Psalm 123

- Time of writing
 - Difficult to pinpoint
 - Perhaps during the Persian period when exiles returned (see Neh. 2:19; 4:1-4)

Q6. What are these praying for in the psalm?

- God's mercy

Q7. What is the source of their complaint?

- The scorn of those who are at ease, and the contempt of the proud

Psalm 123

Q8. Would you say it has a submissive tone or a bold and powerful tone?

- Submissive
- “There is nothing powerful, moving, or sublime that finds expression here. A quiet, submissive tone prevails throughout. It is subdued in character. There is no loud complaint. There is no impetuous plea.” (H.C. Leupold)
- Vv. 1-2
 - An expression of complete submission to God till He be pleased to help
- Vv. 3-4
 - An earnest plea for help from contemptuous treatment

Brief Summaries of the Communal Laments

- Psalm 44
 - “Why do You hide Your face?” (v. 24)
 - Probably during a very serious military setback and a people greatly disturbed. 2 Sam. 8:13-14 - David was severely beset by the Syrians to the north and the allied Edomites, Ammonites, etc., to the south
- Psalm 60
 - Confident prayer in a great national crisis
- Psalm 79
 - Lament over destruction of Jerusalem & prayer for help
 - A close kinship to Psalm 74

Brief Summaries of the Communal Laments

- Psalm 83
 - An eager plea that God may confound His enemies
- Psalm 85
 - A prayer for restoration



Lessons for Today

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