

PSALMS

Chapter 76

In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel. ²His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion. ³There he broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war. *Selah* ⁴Glorious are you, more majestic than the mountains full of prey. ⁵The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil; they sank into sleep; all the men of war were unable to use their hands. ⁶At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse lay stunned. ⁷But you, you are to be feared! Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused? ⁸From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, ⁹when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth. *Selah* ¹⁰Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt. ¹¹Make your vows to the LORD your God and perform them; let all around him bring gifts to him who is to be feared, ¹²who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth.

Ps 76 A celebration of the Lord's invincible power in defense of Jerusalem, his royal city. The psalm is thematically related to Ps 46; 48; 87. The ancient tradition may well be correct that the psalm was composed after the Lord's destruction of Sennacherib's army when it threatened Jerusalem (see 2Ki 19:35). Structurally, the opening (vv. 1–3) and closing (vv. 11–12) stanzas contain the main thematic development. Between them, a seven-verse stanza of praise addressed to God (vv. 4–10) celebrates his awesome act of judgment. The internal structure is notable: Verses 4, 7, 10 present general reflections, while the intervening verses recall the judgment itself. Verse 7, the center line (see note on 6:6), states the main theme of this stanza. (CSB)

May be compared with Ps 46; 48; 87. Many have conjectured that the deliverance from the invasion of Sennacherib (Is 36–37) may have been the occasion for its composition. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–3, God dwells in Zion; vv 4–6, victory over warmongers; vv 7–9, God roused in anger; vv 10–12, vows and gifts to the Lord. (TLSB)

This psalm goes one step further than Psalm 75 in that it describes a specific example of such a victory. Although the psalm names no specific occasion, the circumstances described in it fit the situation at the time of the destruction of the army of the Assyrian king Sennacherib. In 701 B.C. (Isaiah 36 & 37). (PBC)

76:1–3 God's crushing defeat of the enemy in defense of Zion. (CSB)

76:1 *Judah ... Israel*. Names for God's people, the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. (TLSB)

is known. Now especially—as a result of his marvelous act. (CSB)

God's mighty deeds (described in the following verses) reveal His majesty and saving power. (TLSB)

Israel. The poet probably does not intend to distinguish between the two kingdoms (Judah and Israel) but only, by joining their names together, to refer to the whole of God's covenant people. Moreover, as a result of the Assyrian invasions, many displaced Israelites from the northern kingdom now resided in and around Jerusalem. (CSB)

76:2 *abode/dwelling*. Lit. “booth,” referring to the temple. Since the Lord has just achieved a great victory over a menacing army, the poet may have wished to speak of the temple as the Lord’s campaign tent (see 2Sa 11:11; 1Ki 20:12, 16). But see also 18:11 (“canopy”); 31:20 (“dwelling”). (CSB)

The word “abode” may have another connotation as well: it can refer to a dense thicket, like a lion’s lair (see Ps. 10:9 and Amos 3:4). This might convey an image that the Lord is like a lion (an implied comparison), dwelling in his lair on Mt. Zion, who, when attacked strikes back. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

Salem. Jerusalem, as the parallelism makes clear. (CSB)

Lit, “peace.” Like Zion, Salem is another name for Jerusalem. (TLSB)

Zion. Another name for Jerusalem. (PBC)

76:3 *he broke* – While this could stand as a summation of the things that God broke, it may be figurative, referring to other weapons of a battle. So the Lord made his dwelling in Mt. Zion; any army that attacked it would discover that the Lord was able to destroy them and all their weapons. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

Selah – Hebrew; untranslatable. Mainly in the first two books of Psalms. Probably refers to the accompaniment of the harps during the psalm. (TLSB p. 993)

This often occurs in the middle of a psalm and which apparently signals an interlude. “The Sela indicates that one must be still and quickly think through the words of the psalm; for they demand a quiet and restful soul, which can grasp and hold to that which the Holy Spirit there presents and offers” (Luther). (Psalms – The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer p. 23)

Selah may be a musical notation. It could also be a point where a pause is desirable for the singer or reader of the psalm in order that the statement last made or the thought as a whole just developed may be reflected upon before the next turn of the thought appears. (Leupold)

76:4–10 Praise of God’s awesome majesty, whose mighty judgment evokes fearful reverence. (CSB)

76:4 *mountains of prey*. Unusual phrase that seems to indicate that the Lord has won a great victory in a mountainous region (Jerusalem itself is situated on a hilltop). (TLSB)

Assuming that “prey” is the correct reading, it would be a reference to mountains in which there were animals that preyed on anything that threatened their lives. This would harmonize with the suggested image that Jerusalem is like a lair and the Lord like a lion defending it from attack. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

76:5–6 Perhaps echoes also God’s victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea (see Ex 14:28, 30; 15:4–5, 10). (CSB)

Portrays the utter defeat of the opposing army. (TLSB)

76:5 *stouthearted...stripped...sank* – “stouthearted, strong of heart” means those whose will is resolute and unwavering. The opposing army never wavered in its resolve or self-confidence. But it met with disaster nonetheless. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

76:6 *rebuke*. This word, when predicated of God, usually refers to either (1) the thunder of his fierce majesty by which he wields his sovereign control over cosmic entities (see 18:15; 104:7; 106:9; Job 26:11; Isa 50:2; Na 1:4) or repulses his enemies (as here; see also 9:5; 68:30; Isa 17:13), or (2) the thunder of his wrath (see 80:16; Isa 51:20; 54:9; 66:15; Mal 2:3). (CSB)

Denotes the power in God’s Word; cf Is 55:10–11; Jn 18:6; Rm 1:16–17. (TLSB)

God of Jacob. A link with Ps 75. (CSB)

76:7–9 *feared ... judgment ... save ... humble*. God’s deeds portend judgment for those who oppose Him and therefore make them afraid. The “humble” are those who trust in the Lord (cf 25:9; 37:9; Mt 5:3, 5). His mighty deeds save them; hence, their fear of Him is one of faith and reverent awe (cf v 11). (TLSB)

76:7 The thematic center of vv. 4–10 . (CSB)

who can stand – Malachi 3:2 refers to what we now know to be the second coming of Christ the Lord; this psalm also will begin to look ahead to the final judgment. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

76:8 *From heaven*. Though God is present in Zion (see v. 2), he sovereignly rules from heaven. (CSB)

God caused judgment (s.v. Ps. 140:12) to be heard from heaven. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

76:9 *Selah* – Hebrew; untranslatable. Mainly in the first two books of Psalms. Probably refers to the accompaniment of the harps during the psalm. (TLSB p. 993)

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76:10 *wrath*. God’s anger is always an expression of his righteousness. (CSB)

Even those who oppose the Lord will one day praise Him; if they do not do so willingly, out of faith, then in eternity they will be compelled to acknowledge His power and righteousness (Is 45:23; Rm 14:11–12; Php 2:10–11; Col 2:15). (TLSB)

shall praise you. When his judgments bring deliverance, those rescued praise him.

Even the vanquished in hell will bow the knee and confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10,11).

76:11–12 Let Israel acknowledge God’s help with grateful vows; let the nations acknowledge his sovereign rule with tribute. (CSB)

Examples from history would include those Egyptians who were awed by the plagues and took measures to deliver themselves. Rahab and Gibeonites who joined God’s people in order to escape the destruction which was coming upon the rest of the Canaanites, and the army officer who pleaded with Elijah for his life after he had witnessed the destruction of two other contingents of the army that had tried to arrest the prophet. (PBC)

76:11 *Make vows.* Vows that accompanied prayer in times of need, usually involving thank offerings (see 66:13–15), always involving praise of the Lord for his answer to prayer. (CSB)

One form of worship in OT Israel consisted of gifts and offerings vowed to the Lord (Dt 12:6, 11, 17, 26). (TLSB)

fulfill – The verb “fulfill (s.v. Ps. 38:3) means to pay the vow made to the Lord. In the psalms this idea usually includes giving praise to God, that is, acknowledging that he is the savor from destruction. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

76:12 *spirit of rulers.* Their bold rebelliousness. (CSB)

Ps 76 God is majestic in both judgment and salvation. We must tremble in fear before His judgment over our sins. Yet we also trust in and rejoice in His mighty deeds for our salvation, by which He has delivered us from those who would seek our eternal, spiritual harm (Col 2:15). • Glorious are You, O God, when You judge and when You save. Amen. (TLSB)