

PSALMS

Chapter 80

Restore us, O God

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth. ²Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up your might and come to save us! ³Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved! ⁴O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? ⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. ⁶You make us an object of contention for our neighbors, and our enemies laugh among themselves. ⁷Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved! ⁸You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. ⁹You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land. ¹⁰The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. ¹¹It sent out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the River. ¹²Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit? ¹³The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it. ¹⁴Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, ¹⁵the stock that your right hand planted, and for the son whom you made strong for yourself. ¹⁶They have burned it with fire; they have cut it down; may they perish at the rebuke of your face! ¹⁷But let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself! ¹⁸Then we shall not turn back from you; give us life, and we will call upon your name! ¹⁹Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!

Ps 80 Israel's prayer for restoration when she had been ravaged by a foreign power. It seems likely that "Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh" (v. 2) here represent the northern kingdom. If Jeroboam was indeed given ten tribes (see 1Ki 11:29–36), leaving only one to Rehoboam—Judah (see 1Ki 12:20), which was actually two tribes because Simeon was located within Judah (see Jos 19:1–9)—then Benjamin belonged to the northern kingdom. However, part of Benjamin must always have remained with the southern kingdom since its territory actually bordered on Jerusalem itself, and the southern kingdom continued to control Jerusalem's environs (see 1Ki 12:21). This suggests that the disaster suffered was the Assyrian campaign that swept the northern kingdom away (see 2Ki 17:1–6). Recent archaeological surveys of Palestine have shown that Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside experienced at this time a dramatic increase of population, no doubt the result of a massive influx of displaced persons from the north fleeing the Assyrian beast. This could account for the presence of "Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh" at the Jerusalem sanctuary, and for a national prayer for restoration with special focus on these tribes (see notes below). (CSB)

The prayer has five stanzas of four (Hebrew) lines each. A recurring petition climaxes the first, second and last (for other refrains see introduction to Ps 42–43), with a progressing urgency of appeal: "O God" (v. 3); "O God Almighty" (v. 7); "O LORD God Almighty" (v. 19). (CSB)

References to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh (v 2), representing the Northern Kingdom of Israel, suggest that this psalm may have been written in response to the Assyrian campaign of 2Ki 17:1–6. Refugees from the Northern Kingdom have come to the Jerusalem sanctuary in the Southern Kingdom to pray for restoration and peace. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, appeal to the Shepherd of Israel; v 3, refrain of restoration; vv 4–6, full of tears; v 7, refrain of restoration; vv 8–13, Israel as a vine; vv 14–18, prayer for the vine; v 19, refrain of restoration. (TLSB)

80:1–3 An appeal for God to arouse himself and go before his people again with all his glory and might as he did of old in the desert. (CSB)

The opening plea connects the psalm with the tribes north of Judah and speaks a prayer in their name. (PBC)

80:1 See the shepherd-flock motif in 74:1; 77:20; 78:52, 71–72; 79:13. (CSB)

Image for God that speaks not only of protection (cf 23:4) but also of divine self-sacrifice for the sheep (Mt 9:36; Jn 10:11–15). (TLSB)

Joseph. OT authors sometimes refer to the northern kingdom as “Joseph” (or “Ephraim,” Joseph’s son) in distinction from the southern kingdom of Judah. (CSB)

like a flock. The church of Christ is called a flock because of its unity, for “My dove is only one” (Song of Sol. 6:8), and because of its gentleness, for the anointed and Christians are without bitterness. (LW-V-10)

enthroned upon the cherubim. Probably similar to the carvings of winged sphinxes that adorned the armrests of royal thrones in many parts of the ancient Near East. In the OT the cherubim were symbolic attendants that marked the place of the Lord’s “enthronement” in his earthly kingdom. (CSB)

A reference to the lid of the ark of the covenant, upon which God promised to dwell among His people. (TLSB)

shine forth. Let your glory be seen again, as in the desert journey (see Ex 24:16–17; 40:34–35), but now especially through your new saving act (see 102:15–16; Ex 14:4, 17–18; Nu 14:22; Isa 40:5; 44:23; 60:1–2). (CSB)

80:2 *before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.* March against the nations as you marched in the midst of your army from Sinai into the promised land (in that march the ark of the covenant advanced in front of the troops of these three tribes. (CSB)

80:3 *make your face shine.* See vv. 7, 19; an echo of the priestly benediction. (CSB)

Comparison of the warm, shining sun to the face of God (Nu 6:24–26). (TLSB)

80:4–7 A lament over the Lord’s severe punishment of his people. (CSB)

After 722 B.C. Israel never again existed as an independent kingdom, and even Judah was confined to a relatively small area of the hills of Judea. (PBC)

80:4 *O LORD GOD OF HOSTS.* He is God of both the armies of Israel and the angelic armies of heaven. (TLSB)

how long ... ? This expresses the lament that God's anger seems unending. And that their endurance is nearly exhausted. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

anger. Here God's anger is said to be against the prayer of his people, which indicates that something was wrong with the people, that the punishment was deserved. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

80:5 God has now given them tears to eat and tears to drink rather than "the bread of angels" and water from the rock (see 78:20, 25). (CSB)

Poetic expressions found also in Canaanite literature. Their sorrow and grief have become so great that it seems every part of their lives is defiled by tears. (TLSB)

80:8–16 This use of the vine-vineyard metaphor (here to describe Israel's changed condition) is found also in the prophets (see Isa 3:14; 5:1–7; 27:2; Jer 2:21; 12:10; Eze 17:6–8; 19:10–14; Hos 10:1; 14:7; Mic 7:1; see also Ge 49:22; Mt 20:1–16; Mk 12:1–9; Lk 20:9–16; Jn 15:1–5). (CSB)

80:8–11 Israel was once God's flourishing transplanted vine. (CSB)

Notice Israel's dependence upon God's careful nurture: He transplanted the vine, cleared its ground, and provided for its continued growth, which was so great that it began to influence the nations (i.e., "mountains") around it. (TLSB)

80:8 *brought.* See 78:52; here the Hebrew for this verb has the sense of "uprooted" (as in Job 19:10). (CSB)

vine – OT describes God's people as a vine (Jer 2:21; Hos 10:1); Jesus appropriated the image for Himself (Jn 15:1, 5). (TLSB)

drove out the nations and planted. Reference to Israel's exodus from Egypt and subsequent entry into Canaan. (TLSB)

planted. Transplanted. (CSB)

80:9 *cleared the ground.* He had prepared the ground for the planing by driving out the nations that were living there. The God took care of the vine: he made way for it so that it would take root. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

80:10 *mighty cedars.* Lit. "cedars of God." The Hebrew word for "God" is sometimes used in the sense of "mighty." (CSB)

As the vine grew, it filled the entire land – Israel grew more numerous and spread out and occupied the entire land. Moreover, the shade of the vine covered the mountains and its shoots covered the mightiest cedars – Israel dominated the land and all that was in it. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

80:11 *Sea ... River.* The branches spread from the Mediterranean Sea all the way to the way to the Euphrates River. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

80:12–15 A prayer for God to renew his care for his ravaged vine. (CSB)

80:12 *Why ... ?* Israel's anguished perplexity over God's abandonment. (CSB)

broken down its walls. Taken away its defenses. (CSB)

A vinedresser protects his vineyard by building a protective wall around it (cf Mt 21:33), so that enemies or wild animals cannot enter it. God has broken down Israel's protective wall, so to speak, so that the "boar from the forest ravages it" (v 13). (TLSB)

80:13 *boar* – The Assyrians. (TLSB)

80:14 *look down.* See Ex 3:16. But the Hebrew for this phrase may have the sense here that it has in Ru 1:6: "come to the aid of." (CSB)

Reminiscent of the prayer offered at the time of giving an offering (Dt 26:15), this prayer does not speak of God as far away, but as all-powerful. (TLSB)

80:15 *son.* Israel (see Ex 4:22–23; Hos 11:1). But "son" may sometimes be used also to refer to a vine branch. That may be the case here, thus yielding the conventional pair "root and branch," a figure for the whole vine (see Job 18:16; 29:19; Eze 17:7; Mal 4:1; see also Isa 5:24; 27:6; 37:31; Eze 17:9; 31:7; Hos 9:16; Am 2:9; Ro 11:16). (CSB)

Refers to the Davidic king of Israel; this word also anticipates the coming of the Messiah (cf Gn 3:15). (TLSB)

80:16–19 Concluding prayer for restoration. (CSB)

80:16 *rebuke.* This word, when predicated of God, usually refers to the thunder of his fierce majesty by which he wields his sovereign control over cosmic entities or repulses his enemies. (CSB)

Unrighteousness of Israel's enemies cannot stand before God's righteousness. Cf Is 6:5. (TLSB)

80:17 *Let your hand be o the man of your right hand.* Show your favor to (see Ezr 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; Ne 2:8, 18). (CSB)

In Israel's history, it was often true, "As the king goes, so goes the nation." (PBC)

your right hand. Reference may be to the Davidic king as the Lord's anointed, seated in the place of honor in God's presence (see 110:1) and the one in whom the hope of the nation rested (see 2:7–9; 72:8–11; 89:21–25). But v. 15 strongly suggests another sense: that "the man" is Jacob/Israel and that he is "of God's "right hand" in that he has been "planted" and "raised up" by him. (CSB)

With v. 15, these phrases speak about the king of Israel from David's line, pointing toward the coming of the Messiah. Jesus is the true "son of man" who sits at God's "right hand." (TLSB)

80:18 A vow to be loyal to God and to trust in him alone. It occurs in a place where it would be more common to find a vow to praise. (CSB)

Psalmist describes his people's forsaken condition as lifeless, reminiscent of the clay into which God breathed life while making Adam (Gn 2:7). (TLSB)

Ps 80 This psalm begs God to restore His people after their fall before foreign armies. The psalmist recognizes that God's acts of salvation in the past speak assurances for His salvation in the future. Israel repeatedly turned away from the Lord, thus incurring His judgment as a call to repentance. In what ways have we suffered as a result of our turning away? God's pattern of salvation through history provides reliable assurances: God has saved us before; He shall yet save again! • As You have delivered Your people of old, dear Lord, so also deliver me for the sake of Your Son, Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)