

# PSALMS

## Chapter 83

O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God! <sup>2</sup>For behold, your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads. <sup>3</sup>They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your treasured ones. <sup>4</sup>They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!” <sup>5</sup>For they conspire with one accord; against you they make a covenant—<sup>6</sup>the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, <sup>7</sup>Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; <sup>8</sup>Asshur also has joined them; they are the strong arm of the children of Lot. *Selah* <sup>9</sup>Do to them as you did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, <sup>10</sup>who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground. <sup>11</sup>Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, <sup>12</sup>who said, “Let us take possession for ourselves of the pastures of God.” <sup>13</sup>O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind. <sup>14</sup>As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze, <sup>15</sup>so may you pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your hurricane! <sup>16</sup>Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O LORD. <sup>17</sup>Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace, <sup>18</sup>that they may know that you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.

**Ps 83** Israel’s prayer for God to crush his enemies when the whole world—or so it seemed—was arrayed against his people. Neither Kings nor Chronicles tells of a confederacy as extensive as that described here. Perhaps only some of the nations mentioned were actually attacking, while the rest of Israel’s historic enemies were more passively supporting the campaign. If so, the occasion may have been that reported in 2Ch 20, when Moab, Ammon, Edom and their allies were invading Judah. In any event, the psalm must date from sometime after the reign of Solomon and before the great thrust of Assyria in the time of King Menahem (see 2Ki 15:19). (CSB)

Likely written after King Solomon’s death (1Ki 11:41–43) but before the Assyrian invasion (2Ki 17:1–6). The psalmist prays that God would destroy the nations that have conspired against Israel (vv 6–8), just as He previously destroyed those who opposed Israel during the days of the judges (vv 10–11). *Song*. See Ps 46 intro. *Asaph*. See intros, Ps 73; 74.

Format: Vv 1–8, plans of the nations; vv 9–12, prayer for the nations’ defeat; vv 13–18, shame the nations. (TLSB)

Each of the two main divisions (vv. 1–8, 9–18) consists of two four-verse stanzas, with the latter division being extended by a two-verse stanza that brings the prayer to its climactic conclusion. (CSB)

This psalm provides an apt conclusion to Asaph’s collection, which deals with the distress of Israel. (PBC)

**83:1–4** An appeal to God to act in the face of Israel’s imminent danger. (CSB)

In this very brief opening prayer the psalmist calls on God to come to Israel’s rescue. He follows this plea with a catalog of Israel’s enemies and their crimes. (PBC)

**83:1** *do not keep silence.* Do not remain inactive (see 35:22; 109:1). (CSB)

**83:2** *enemies.* Nations of vv 6–8. (TLSB)

*raised their heads.* In defiance against God. (TLSB)

**83:3** *treasured ones.* God’s people. (TLSB)

**83:4** *they say.* God’s enemies. *them.* The “treasured ones” of v 3. (TLSB)

*let us wipe them out.* Israel’s very existence is at stake (see v. 12). (CSB)

**83:5–8** The array of nations allied against Israel—threat from every quarter. (CSB)

**83:5** *covenant.* Here, a military alliance. (TLSB)

**83:6-8** Ten of Israel’s closest neighbors and constant adversaries are listed as making a covenant against God’s covenant people. *Edom.* Esau’s descendants. Cf Gn 25:30. *Ishmaelites.* Descendants of Ishmael, Abraham’s son through Hagar. Cf Gn 25:12–18. *Moab ... Ammon.* Lot’s descendants through incest. Cf Gn 19:36–38. *Hagrites.* Possibly descendants of Hagar, Abraham’s concubine. *Gebal.* City of Phoenicia. *Amalek.* Descendants of Esau through his son Eliphaz. Cf Gn 36:12. *Philistia.* Descendants of Ham through his son Egypt. Cf Gn 10:6, 13. Philistines were Israel’s persistent enemy, living on a small strip of land between Israel and the Great Sea. (TLSB)

**83:6** *Edom* – They were descendants of Esau, who lived southeast of the Dead Sea. (PBC)

*Ishmaelites.* Either descendants of Hagar or a group mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions as an Aramean confederacy (see 1Ch 5:10, 18–22; 27:31). (CSB)

The Moabites and the Ammonites were descendants of Lot, who lived east of the Jordan. (PBC)

**83:7** *Gebal.* See 1Ki 5:18; Eze 27:9. Gebal was an important Phoenician city. (CSB)

**83:8** *Asshur.* Since it is mentioned only as an ally of Moab and Ammon (the descendants of Lot; Assyria, though distantly active in the region, must not yet have become a major threat in its own right. (CSB)

*children of Lot.* Moabites and Ammonites, Lot’s descendants (Gn 19:36–38) who later turned away from the faith of Lot. (TLSB)

*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)

**83:9–12** A plea for God to destroy his enemies as he did of old in the time of the judges. Those who hurl themselves against the kingdom of God to destroy it from the earth—so that the godless powers are left to shape the destiny of the world as they will—must be crushed if God’s kingdom of righteousness and peace is to come and be at rest (see note on 5:10). (CSB)

Psalmist recalls some of God’s stunning victories for Israel during the days of the exodus and the conquest of Canaan. *Midian*. Defeated by Moses and Gideon. Cf Nu 31:1–12; Jgs 7. *Sisera*. Canaanite military commander under Jabin. *Jabin*. Canaanite king. Sisera and Jabin were killed in the days of Deborah. Cf Jgs 4. *Oreb and Zeeb*. Canaanite kings defeated by Gideon. Cf Jgs 7:25. *Zebah and Zalmunna*. Canaanite kings defeated by Gideon. Cf Jgs 8:11–12. (TLSB)

**83:9** *as you did to Midian*. In Gideon’s great victory (see Jdg 7). (CSB)

*as to Sisera and Jabin*. In Barak’s defeat of the Canaanite coalition (see Jdg 4). (CSB)

**83:10** *Endor*. Northeast of where the main battle was fought—apparently where much of the fleeing army was overtaken and decimated. (CSB)

*dung for the ground*. Their bodies decayed into the earth. (TLSB)

**83:11** *Oreb and Zeeb ... Zebah and Zalmunna*. Leaders of the Midianite host destroyed by Gideon. (CSB)

**83:12** *pastures of God*. Land promised to Abraham, in which God’s people live like a flock. Cf Gn 15:18–20. (TLSB)

**83:13–16** The plea renewed, with vivid imagery of fleeing armies and of God’s fearsome power. (CSB)

**83:14** *flame sets the mountains ablaze*. Mountaintops were tree covered, so one spark could cause a huge fire. (TLSB)

**83:15** Imagery of the heavenly Warrior attacking his enemies out of the thunderstorm (see 18:7–15; 68:33; 77:17–18; Ex 15:7–10; Jos 10:11; Jdg 5:4, 20–21; 1Sa 2:10; 7:10; Isa 29:5–6; 33:3). (CSB)

*Your tempest ... Your hurricane!* Pictures the “storm” of God’s judgment and wrath. (TLSB)

**83:16** *name*. References to God’s name often signify His presence. (TLSB)

**83:17–18** The prayer’s climactic conclusion. (CSB)

**83:18** The ultimate goal of God’s warfare is not merely the security of Israel and the destruction of Israel’s (and God’s) enemies but the worldwide acknowledgment of the true God and of his rule, even to the point of seeking him as his people do (see v. 16; see also 40:9; 47:9; 58:11). (CSB)

**Ps 83** The psalmist feels overwhelmed by his enemies, who plot against him. His only recourse is to run to God Most High, whose great deeds he remembers in prayer. God's children do not stop praying, even when He appears to keep silent. God is faithful. He answers your prayers in His time and according to His good pleasure, yet always acting for your benefit and eternal life (Rm 8:28). • Act on my behalf, O God, as You have acted so many times before. Amen. (TLSB)