

PRAYING FOR ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE IN OUR DAY - ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

by Keith Parker

“Give ear O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.” (Psalm 80:1 & 19)

Please read all of Psalm 80. Don't you think it sounds rather like the things which threaten Israel in our day?

The writer of this psalm was Asaph, whose name means “collector”, or one who gathers all together, who, as we say, *picks up the pieces*. Several of his psalms seem to be written at times of trouble for Israel, and Psalms 79 and 80 are cases in point. Asaph is an intercessor, who sees the problems and *'picks up the pieces'* of Israel's disasters. We have a lot to learn from Asaph. All intercessors are meant to be 'Asaphs', for we are called to come in where there is trouble and to cry out in compassion.

The book of Psalms really consists of prayers, which apply in all spiritual & political seasons for believers and for Israel. They are sometimes full of praise and at others full of woe. Since every psalm is inspired of God the message to us is clear – God's people are authorized to turn every situation into prayer. When we have grievously sinned we may turn it to prayer; think of Psalm 51. When we are depressed we may turn it to prayer – Psalm 116 sees David, who had said in the haste of his depression, “all men are liars”, praising God for his deliverance after he has turned it all into prayer.

This Psalm 80 describes Israel surrounded by laughing enemies. Israel, God's vineyard, is laid waste by “the boar out of the wood”, is “burned with fire” and “cut down”. They feel the rebuke of God upon them: “How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?”

In the midst of all Israel's woes, the godly Asaph is not ascribing them to Israel's enemies, who are looking for her demise, but confessing that it is all because God is offended with his own people.

As we consider the present climate of world opinion Psalm 80 seems to have application. The middle-eastern nations are set on Israel's destruction. Even those who were to a degree friendly (such as Egypt, Turkey and Jordan) are growing cold towards her. Our western nations still speak the language of friendship, while in our hearts we are ready to sacrifice Israel on the altar of political convenience. By the way I am sure that our politicians would condemn me for saying that – they would say they are eternal friends of the State of Israel. The attitude of the President of the USA is a case in point. We can thank God that both houses of Congress in Washington seem not to share their leader's attitudes. But the direction international events are taking does not bode well for Israel.

Now as never before she needs Asaphs, intercessors, who will bring her case before a higher tribunal than the United Nations – before the throne of God himself. The following bullet points are some of the fruits of my own lifelong reading of God's word:

- When Israel sins God brings trouble upon them and rebukes them as a father does his erring sons;
- God is not sympathetic to the criticisms of Israel from the mouths of those who hate her;
- God never finally writes Israel off – never has, and never will;
- God uses tribulation to change the attitudes of his people Israel;
- God uses intercessors to bring down

his deliverance and blessing upon Israel his people.

As we pray, we may reflect that if (God forbid) Israel perishes, which is what her enemies desire, there could be no national salvation of Israel, as per Romans 11:26, so we have to balance two great needs – the need of Israel the nation to be preserved and her need of spiritual salvation, which includes the protection and nurture of Messianic congregations throughout Israel and the Diaspora.

I haven't given you a lot of scripture references for these dogmatic statements – there must be some Bible-study left for you to do!

Judaism thinks that Israel no longer has priesthood, high priest or sacrificial system. We know better. *Jesus is the great high priest*; believers, both Jewish and Gentile, *constitute the priesthood*, and Calvary is the once-for-all atoning sacrifice for Israel's sins.

May we pray Psalm 80 with assurance that Jesus is far more concerned for Israel than we are, and that the blood of Christ cries out for their salvation and preservation. It is on the basis of what Jesus has done that we pray for Israel. God does not save those who deserve it, but came to save the sinful.

“Return we beseech you O Lord of Hosts; Look down from heaven and see and visit this vine...”

Ps 80 vs 14.