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## Psalm 81

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Psalm 81.

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### Topics.

- Sing to God; blow the trumpet at the new moon, on our feast day.
- I relieved you of the burden your hands were freed from the basket.
- My people did not listen so I gave them over to their counsels.
- Oh, that my people walked in my ways I would turn against their foes.
- The fate of those who hate the LORD will last forever.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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### INTRODUCTION

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Psalms are songs and prayers offered to God by the nation Israel, they cover the range of human emotion, expressing praise, faith, victory, sorrow, despair, depression, frustration and the troubled heart of a mourner. They contrast the righteous with the wicked, and include the wisdom and the treasure of God's word. Psalms were written at the beginning of the 15th century BC and probably collected in their final form in the 3rd century.

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### BOOK THREE (PSALM 73-89)

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### PSALM 81:1-3

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To the Choirmaster: According to the Gittith. Of Asaph.

#### **Sing to God; Blow the Trumpet at the New Moon, on our Feast Day.**

- **Psalm 81:1-3:** Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! <sup>2</sup>Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. <sup>3</sup>Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day.

The King James Bible says:

- Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. (Psalm 81:3).

The trumpet, the timbrel, the harp, and the psaltery, were all common instruments of music employed on their festive occasions. In the original Hebrew it is unclear to the exact translation of the expression, "At the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day," (v3) because of this uncertainty it could mean any of the following:

- At the full moon of the beginning of every month.
- The new moon, the full moon or of every full moon in general.
- The whole time of the moon's passing while full.
- The first day of the full moon or the first day of the lunar month

Because of this uncertainty there are different views as to which of Israel's feasts Asaph had in mind, but since the primary focus of the Psalm is upon God delivering His people out of Egypt it was most likely the Passover Feasts, though there are other views, but none are absolute since Asaph

does not specifically say which feast it applies to and because of this I have no desire to spend time on what might be, but will highlight what is clear. Based upon the remaining verses of the Psalm it seems that Asaph is calling Israel to do the following two things:

1. During the days of the feast make merry music with various instruments and sing and shout for joy remembering that God had delivered them from the bondage and burden of Egypt (v5-6).
2. During the days of the feast hold a solemn assembly and reflect upon the fathers rebelling against God at the waters of Meribah and turning to other gods so that they would forever remember not to have any strange gods among them or bow down to a foreign god.

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## PSALM 81:4-7

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### **I Relieved You of Burden, Your Hands were Freed from the Basket.**

- **Psalm 81:4-7:** For it is a statute for Israel, a rule of the God of Jacob. <sup>5</sup>He made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over the land of Egypt. I hear a language I had not known: <sup>6</sup>"I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket (pots in KJV). <sup>7</sup>In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah*

Blowing the trumpet and celebrating on the full moon of Israel's on feast day was a statute God had established for Israel and a rule they were to keep.

**I hear a language I had not known:** (v5) applies to Joseph who went into the land of Egypt and heard a language he had not known (Egyptian), and he relieved and delivered his Hebrew brothers the sons of Jacob from their burden during the seven years of famine. But it could also apply to the great cries of the Hebrew people under the bondage of the Egyptian taskmasters.

**I relieved your shoulder and freed your hands from the basket:** (v6) the word pots, comes from the Hebrew word (duwd) and can refer to a pot for boiling or a basket for carrying. The allusion is to a yoke swung over the shoulders with two baskets or pots hanging from each end in which straw, clay, water, lime or bricks were carried. Much like what the Chinese use today for carrying tea and others use for carrying water from a well. There are many representations on Egyptian sculptures which would illustrate this. The idea is that God removed the burden of making bricks and carrying them and stones to the houses and towns they were forced to build for the Egyptians spoken of in the following verses.

- Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. <sup>12</sup>But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. <sup>13</sup>So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves <sup>14</sup>and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. (Exod. 1:11-14) (see also Exod. 5:4-17).

The meaning of the words, "I relieved your shoulder and freed your hands from the basket," (v6) is that God saved them from the burdens of forced labour and hard bondage and made their hands free from carrying the pots and the baskets over their shoulders.

**I answered you in the secret place of thunder:** (v7) some refer this to the thunder at Sinai; but at that time Israel was not in trouble, but in a safe and glorious condition. The primary focus so far has been upon Egypt so the meaning is from the dark cloudy pillar that God guided Israel and thundered and through the Egyptian armies into a panic.

- The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. (Exodus 13:21).
- The angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. (Exod. 14:19).
- In the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic. (Exod. 14:24).

It is certain this pillar of fire that threw the Egyptian forces into a panic was full of loud thunders and spectacular lighting

**I tested you at the waters of Meribah:** (v7) not long after Israel had crossed the Red Sea and before they'd reached Mount Sinai (Num. 33:15) they camped at Rephidim in the wilderness. There was no water for the people to drink, so they quarrelled with Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us with thirst? Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" Then Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people they are almost ready to stone me." The LORD said He would stand on the rock at Horeb (Mount Sinai), and told Moses to take the staff that he struck the Nile with and strike the rock and water will flow out, Moses struck the rock in the sight of the elders of Israel and water flowed out, he named the place Massah meaning tempting and Meribah because of the striving of the children of Israel and because they tempted God. Israel had tested God by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" They had seen the mighty and awesome miracles and extraordinary wonders of the LORD and should have had faith that He would provide. (Exodus 17:1-7).

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## PSALM 81:8-12

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### **My People did Not Listen so I gave them Over to their Counsels.**

- **Psalm 81:8-12:** Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me! <sup>9</sup>There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. <sup>10</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. <sup>11</sup>"But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. <sup>12</sup>So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.

**O Israel, if you would but listen to me:** (v8, 11) God longed for His people to do the right thing, He grieved when they didn't because they forced Him to judge them rather than bless them which is what anyone who loves another desires. God loved His chosen people, like an earthly father loves his only son, but Israel instead of bringing joy to the heart of their heavenly Father greatly grieved Him. They set their hearts diamond hard against the prophets, entered into gross wickedness, set up pagan idols in the temple and turned to the gods of foreign nations.

**Open your mouth wide and I will fill it:** (v10) the picture painted here is of a hungry person with their mouth wide open being feed with all the food they need to survive and to enjoy life. God is saying if Israel did what was right before him, He would have not only given them everything they needed to survive, but would have given them all they need to live a joyful, blessed, safe and secure life.

**I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels:** (v12) many today wonder if God is so Holy, loving and powerful how come so many of the world's governments are not only corrupt, but also use violence (i.e., war) and deception to oppress the populations they rule over. The words, "God gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels," answers this question. This is a universal principal of God that applies to both Christians and non-

Christians. God does not force Himself upon others or force others to follow Him rather He invites them to Himself. For us today this invitation comes in the form of the bloodstained cross of Calvary where the bleeding Saviour hung with his arms stretched wide open in self-sacrificing love saying "All who come unto me I will not cast out, but give eternal life and everlasting happiness in eternal glory."

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## PSALM 81:13-14

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### **Oh, My People Walk in my Ways, I will Turn against your Foes.**

- **Psalm 81:13-14:** Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! <sup>14</sup>I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes.

God cries a second time, "Oh, that my people would listen to me," He longs that His people would have remained faithful and is deeply grieved that they didn't. For further information concerning this heartfelt cry of God, see the notes following (Psalm 81:8-12) (above).

**Oh, that my people Israel would walk in my ways:** (v13) it is not enough just to listen to the voice of God we have to be doers of the word. James in the New Testament wrote:

- Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22-25).

Being a doer of the word does not simply mean strictly adhering to all outward ceremonial rites and holy days etc., but daily living a life of honesty, integrity and showing honest justice to the rich and poor alike. It means treating all people (inside or outside of God's Kingdom) with decency and respect and not violence hurt and harm or oppressing the poor and helpless for one's own gain. It means doing all we can to live a lifestyle that honours God and brings a good name to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.

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**I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes:** (v14) here is the sadness of Israel's rebellion, if they had faithfully followed God He would not only have abundantly prospered all they put their hand to do, but exalted them to such high status that they would have been the head of all nations and not the tail (v15). This of course God will do for all the faithful (Jews and Gentiles) when Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to destroy the antichrist and his kingdom and establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign.

The dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power.

The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

In Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

The great prophet Isaiah wrote:

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## PSALM 81:15-16

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### **The Fate of those who Hate the LORD will Last Forever.**

- **Psalm 81:15-16:** Those who hate the LORD would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. <sup>16</sup>But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

There are very few people that directly have active conscious hate toward God, most are just indifferent to Him or don't believe He exists. The idea is that they hate God's laws, His will, His holy image and fight and persecute His people it is in this sense they hate God. Hating God's people is the same as hating God Himself. Paul wrote:

- For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. (Rom. 8:7).

Some say that to hate God is pointless since even the proudest of his enemies can do Him no injury, though this may be true on one level it is not true on all levels since injuring those who love God also injures God. The words, "The fate of those who hate the LORD will last forever," means that their end will be the darkness of the grave never to rise again.

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## NOTICE

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Throughout this Psalm the person speaking changes between Asaph and God such a change of person is not uncommon in the Scriptures especially in Psalms and poetic and prophetic language. This is because the prophet is speaking on behalf of God and being inspired by God so though he is always the one actually speaking, the language can switch between him speaking about things to him speaking as the voice of God to the people.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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