

Psalm 78

"God's Gracious Leading of Israel Despite Her Rebellion"

A Maskil of Asaph.

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A1 INTRODUCTION: A DEVICE TO ENABLE FATHERS TO TEACH THEIR SONS TO TRUST IN ELOHIM 78:1-8

B1 Introduction: A Parable and Riddles Regarding the Praises of Yahweh Received from Forefathers and Passed on to Children 78:1-4

C1 Asaph's Call to Israel to Listen to the His Instruction 78:1

D1 {1} Listen, O my people, to my instruction;

D2 Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

C2 Asaph's Employment of a Parable and Riddles Handed Down from Israel's
Fathers 78:2-4

D1 The Mode of His Instruction 78:2

E1 Parable: {2} I will open my mouth in a parable;¹

E2 Riddles: I will utter dark sayings ² of old,

D2 The Origin of His Instruction 78:3

E1 Common knowledge: {3} Which we have heard and
known,

E2 Taught by fathers: And our fathers have told us.

D3 The Destiny of His (and his fellow Israelis') Instruction 78:4a

E1 The sons (bene') of our fathers (i.e., Asaph's
contemporaries): {4} We will not conceal them from their
children [lit., sons],

E2 The generation to come: But tell to the generation to come

¹ 78:2 - parable: "An illustration by comparison." (Charles C. Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible [RSB]* note on Ezek. 17:2.)
"This verse is quoted in Matt. 13:35 to describe Jesus' way of teaching." (*RSB* note on Ps. 78:2.)

² 78:2 - dark sayings: I.e. riddles. "A riddle contained an obscure idea requiring interpretation" (*RSB* note). See preceding note on parable.

D4 The Content of His Instruction 78:4b

E1 The praises of Yahweh: the praises of the LORD,

E2 The powerful miracles of Yahweh: And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

B2 The Fathers Commanded by Statute to Teach the Their Sons to Trust in Elohim and Keep His Commands 78:5-8

C1 The Mandate of the Instruction 78:5

D1 {5} For He established a testimony in Jacob

D2 And appointed a law in Israel,

C2 The Process of the Instruction 78:5b-6

D1 In the past 78:5b

E1 The teachers - our fathers: Which He commanded our fathers

E2 The students - their sons: That they should teach them to their children, (lit. sons)

D2 In the future 78:6

E1 That sons yet to be born might know: {6} That the generation to come might know, *even* the children (lit. sons) *yet* to be born,

E2 And might instruct their sons: *That* they may arise and tell *them* to their children, (lit. sons)

C3 The Purpose of the Instruction: That Ensuing Generations of the Sons of Israel Should ... 78:7-8

D1 Place confidence in Elohim: {7} That they should put their confidence in God

D2 Not forget Elohim's works: And not forget the works of God,

D3 Keep His commands: But keep His commandments, 78:7

D4 Not be like their fathers: {8} And not be like their fathers, 78:8

E1 A stubborn and rebellious generation,

E2 A generation that did not prepare its heart

E3 And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

A2 THE SONS OF EPHRAIM ARE LIKE ARCHERS WHO TURNED BACK IN THE DAY OF BATTLE, FORGETTING ELOHIM'S COVENANT AND HIS MIRACLES IN THE EXODUS 78:9-16

B1 Their Unfulfilled Potential to Serve God 78:9

C1 Their potential: {9} The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows,

C2 Their retreat: *Yet* they turned back in the day of battle.

B2 Their Refusal of Elohim's Covenant 78:10

C1 {10} They did not keep the covenant of God

C2 And refused to walk in His law;

B3 Their Failure to Remember God's Might Deeds on Their Behalf 78:11-16

C1 The Statement of Their Memory Lapse 78:11

D1 {11} They forgot His deeds

D2 And His miracles that He had shown them.

C2 The Enumeration of His Forgotten Mighty Deeds 78:12-16

D1 The Plagues in Egypt: {12} He wrought wonders before their fathers In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. 78:12

D2 The Red Sea Crossing: {13} He divided the sea and caused them to pass through, And He made the waters stand up like a heap. 78:13

D3 Guidance by Cloud and Fire: {14} Then He led them with the cloud by day And all the night with a light of fire. 78:14

D4 Water from Rocks 78:15-16

E1 {15} He split the rocks in the wilderness And gave *them* abundant drink like the ocean depths. 78:15

E2 {16} He brought forth streams also from the rock And caused waters to run down like rivers. 78:16

A3 ISRAEL'S REBELLION BY DOUBTING GOD'S ABILITY TO PROVIDE FOOD IN THE WILDERNESS 78:17-39

B1 Israel's Rebellion against the Most High by Doubting His Ability to Provide Food in the Wilderness 78:17-20

C1 Their Sinful Rebellion in the Desert 78:17

D1 Their Sin: {17} Yet they still continued to sin against Him,

D2 Their Rebellion: To rebel against the Most High in the desert.

C2 Their Testing God By Requesting Food to Their Liking 78:18-20

D1 Their Heart Attitude: Testing God! 78:18

E1 Their heart: {18} And in their heart they put God to the test

E2 Their request: By asking food according to their desire.

D2 Their Questioning Elohim's Ability to Provide 78:19-20

E1 Their blasphemy: {19} Then they spoke against God;

E2 Their question: They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? 78:19

E3 Their acknowledgment of His provision of water 78:20a

F1 {20} "Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out,

F2 And streams were overflowing;

E4 Their questioning His ability and His generosity 78:20b

F1 Can He provide bread: Can He give bread also?

F2 Can He provide meat? Will He provide meat for His people?"

B2 God's Anger Kindled, Yet He Provided Manna and Quail 78:21-33

C1 His Provision of Manna Despite His Anger at Israel 78:21-25

D1 Yahweh's Anger against Israel 78:21

E1 {21} Therefore the LORD heard and was full of wrath;

E2 And a fire was kindled against Jacob

E3 And anger also mounted against Israel,

- D2 The Reason for His Anger 78:22
 - E1 {22} Because they did not believe in God
 - E2 And did not trust in His salvation.
- D3 His Grace Despite His Anger 78:23-25
 - E1 Responding from Heaven 78:23
 - F1 {23} Yet He commanded the clouds above
 - F2 And opened the doors of heaven;
 - E2 Raining Down Abundant Food from Heaven 78:24-25
 - F1 {24} He rained down manna upon them to eat
 - F2 And gave them food from heaven. 78:24
 - F3 {25} Man did eat the bread of angels;
 - F4 He sent them food in abundance. 78:25
- C2 His Provision of Quail and His Anger at Israel's Lust 78:26-33
 - D1 His Provision of Quail 78:26-29
 - E1 By Means of a South East Wind 78:26
 - F1 {26} He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens
 - F2 And by His power He directed the south wind.
 - E2 The Plentifulness of the Fowl 78:27
 - F1 {27} When He rained meat upon them like the dust,
 - F2 Even winged fowl like the sand of the seas,
 - E3 The Accessibility of the Fowl 78:28
 - F1 {28} Then He let *them* fall in the midst of their camp,
 - F2 Round about their dwellings.
 - E4 The satisfaction afforded by the fowl 78:29
 - F1 {29} So they ate and were well filled,
 - F2 And their desire He gave to them.

D2 The Anger of Elohim 78:30-33

E1 The rapidity of His anger 78:30

F1 {30} Before they had satisfied their desire,

F2 While their food was in their mouths,

E2 The deadliness of His anger 78:31

F1 {31} The anger of God rose against them

F2 And killed some of their stoutest ones,

F3 And subdued the choice men of Israel.

E3 Israel's sinful failure to trust Him 78:32

F1 Their sin: {32} In spite of all this they still sinned

F2 Their lack of faith: And did not believe in His wonderful works.

E4 The premature death of those twenty and upward 78:33

F1 {33} So He brought their days to an end in futility

F2 And their years in sudden terror.

B3 Israel's Half-Hearted Response to Elohim's Destruction of the Older Generation 78:34-39

C1 Their Belated Response 78:34-35

D1 Their Sudden Change of Heart 78:34

E1 The Cause: Premature death of the older generation: {34}
When He killed them,

E2 The Effect – Seeking after Elohim

F1 then they sought Him,

F2 And returned and searched diligently for God;

D2 Their Remembrance of Elohim 78:35

E1 {35} And they remembered that God was their rock,

E2 And the Most High God their Redeemer.

C2 Their Unfaithfulness 78:36-37

D1 Their Deceitful Speech 78:36

E1 {36} But they deceived Him with their mouth

E2 And lied to Him with their tongue.

D2 Their Treacherous Heart 78:37

E1 {37} For their heart was not steadfast toward Him,

E2 Nor were they faithful in His covenant.

C3 Elohim's Compassionate Response 78:38-39

D1 His Display of Compassion 78:38

E1 Forgiveness: {38} But He, being compassionate, forgave *their* iniquity

E2 Preservation: and did not destroy *them*;

E3 Restraint

F1 Of anger: And often He restrained His anger

F2 Of wrath: And did not arouse all His wrath.

D2 His Remembering of Their Frailty 78:39

E1 Mere flesh: {39} Thus He remembered that they were but flesh,

E2 Fleeting wind: A wind that passes and does not return.

A4 ISRAEL'S REBELLIOUS AMNESIA CONCERNING ELOHIM'S REDEMPTIVE POWER IN EGYPT 78:40-53

B1 Israel's Rebellious Tempting of Elohim 78:40-41

C1 Grievous Rebellion in the Desert 78:40

D1 Rebellion: {40} How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness

D2 Causing sorrow: And grieved Him in the desert!

C2 Painful Tempting 78:41

D1 Tempting Elohim: {41} Again and again they tempted God,

D2 Paining Israel's Holy One: And pained the Holy One of Israel.

B2 Israel's Disregard for God's Redemptive Power in Egypt 78:42-43

C1 The General Reference to His Power, Which They Did Not Remember
78:42

D1 His power: {42} They did not remember His power,

D2 Manifested in redemption: The day when He redeemed them from
the adversary,

C2 The Location of His Miracles 78:43

D1 Signs in Egypt: {43} When He performed His signs in Egypt

D2 Wonders in Zoan: And His marvels in the field of Zoan,

**B3 The Specific Manifestations of God's Redemptive Power in the Exodus
78:44-53**

C1 His Plagues against Egypt 78:44-51

D1 Water to Blood 78:44

E1 {44} And turned their rivers to blood,

E2 And their streams, they could not drink.

D2 Flies and Frogs 78:45

E1 Flies: {45} He sent among them swarms of flies which
devoured them,

E2 Frogs: And frogs which destroyed them.

D3 Grasshoppers and Locusts 78:46

E1 Grasshoppers: {46} He gave also their crops to the
grasshopper

E2 Locusts: And the product of their labor to the locust.

D4 Hail 78:47

E1 Destroying vines: {47} He destroyed their vines with
hailstones

E2 Destroying sycamore fig trees: And their sycamore trees
with frost.

- D5 Cattle 78:48
 - E1 Killed by hail: {48} He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones
 - E2 Felled by lightning: And their herds to bolts of lightning.
- D6 Pestilence and the Death of the Firstborn 78:49-51³
 - E1 The zeal of God's miracles 78:49a
 - F1 {49} He sent upon them His burning anger,
 - F2 Fury and indignation and trouble,
 - E2 The agents of His destruction: A band of destroying angels. 78:49b
 - E3 The modes of His destruction 78:50-51
 - F1 Death through pestilence 78:50
 - G1 His emotion - anger: {50} He leveled a path for His anger;
 - G2 His extremity - death: He did not spare their soul from death,
 - G3 Their extinction - through pestilence: But gave over their life to the plague,
 - F2 The death of the firstborn 78:51
 - G4 {51} And smote all the firstborn⁴ in Egypt,
 - G5 The first *issue* of their virility in the tents of Ham.

³ 78:49-51 - Title - Pestilence and the Death of the Firstborn: This is apparently a combination of the fifth and tenth plagues. The fifth plague was a pestilence upon cattle. The close association of these two plagues here may indicate that God used a virulent and rapid pestilence to kill the firstborn of Egypt. See Exodus 9:15, where Yahweh alludes to the threat of pestilence upon the people of Egypt, which, if carried out, would have utterly decimated the entire Egyptian population.

⁴ 78:51 - firstborn: The Hebrew word for firstborn, *bekowr*, occurs only in the masculine. The assumption is that firstborn means firstborn males.

C2 His Safe Guidance of His Own People and Destruction of Their Egyptian Enemies in the Sea 78:52-53

D1 His guidance of His own 78:52-53a

E1 {52} But He led forth His own people like sheep

E2 And guided them in the wilderness like a flock; 78:52

E3 {53} He led them safely, so that they did not fear; 78:53a

D2 His aqueous destruction of the Egyptians: But the sea engulfed their enemies. 78:53b

A5 ISRAEL'S REBELLION AGAINST ELOHIM DESPITE HIS HELPING THEM TO CONQUER CANAAN 78:54-64

B1 His Aid in Helping Them Conquer Canaan 78:54-55

C1 His Leading Them to Canaan 78:54

D1 {54} So He brought them to His holy land,

D2 To this hill country which His right hand had gained.

C2 His Help in Conquering Canaan 78:55

D1 Driving out the nations: {55} He also drove out the nations before them

D2 Allocating their inheritance; And apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement,

D3 Granting peace and security: And made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.

B2 Israel's Treacherous Rebellion 78:56-58

C1 Their Rebellion against the Laws of Elyown Elohim 78:56

D1 {56} Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God

D2 And did not keep His testimonies,

C2 Their Treachery 78:57

D1 {57} But turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers;

D2 They turned aside like a treacherous bow.

C3 Their Idolatry 78:58

D1 With high places: {58} For they provoked Him with their high places

D2 With carved images: And aroused His jealousy with their graven images.

B3 Elohim's Wrathful Discipline 78:59-64

C1 Elohim's Wrath 78:59

D1 His wrath: {59} When God heard, He was filled with wrath

D2 His abhorrence: And greatly abhorred Israel;

C2 His Departure from the Tabernacle 78:60

D1 {60} So that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh,

D2 The tent which He had pitched among men,

C3 His Delivery of Israel, Trophies of His Strength and Glory, and His Own Special Inheritance upon the Earth, over to Conquest 78:61-62

D1 To captivity: {61} And gave up His strength to captivity And

D2 To the adversary: His glory into the hand of the adversary. 78:61

D3 To the sword: {62} He also delivered His people to the sword,

D4 To wrath: And was filled with wrath at His inheritance. 78:62

C4 The Specific Effects of His Abandonment 78:63-64

D1 To His young men: {63} Fire devoured His young men,

D2 To His virgins: And His virgins had no wedding songs. 78:63

D3 To His priests: {64} His priests fell by the sword,

D4 To His widows: And His widows could not weep. 78:64

A6 ADONAI'S REMEMBRANCE AND RESTORATION 78:65-72

B1 His Repudiation of His Enemies 78:65-66

C1 Adonai's Awakening 78:65

D1 {65} Then the Lord awoke as *if from* sleep,

D2 Like a warrior overcome by wine.

- C2 His Rout of His Adversaries 78:66
 - D1 {66} He drove His adversaries backward;
 - D2 He put on them an everlasting reproach.

B2 His Election of Judah and Mount Zion over Joseph 78:67-69

- C1 His Rejection of Joseph 78:67
 - D1 {67} He also rejected the tent of Joseph,
 - D2 And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,
- C2 His Choice of Judah and Mount Zion 78:68
 - D1 His choice of Judah: {68} But chose the tribe of Judah,
 - D2 His choice of beloved Mount Zion: Mount Zion which He loved.
- C3 His Building the Temple on Mount Zion 78:69
 - D1 Its transcendent nobility: {69} And He built His sanctuary like the heights,
 - D2 Its eternal durability: Like the earth which He has founded forever.

B3 His Election of David as His Ultimate Dynasty 78:70-71

- C1 His Choice of David 78:70
 - D1 As His servant: {70} He also chose David His servant
 - D2 From the sheepfolds: And took him from the sheepfolds;
- C2 His Moving of David from Shepherd of Sheep to Shepherd of Israel 78:71
 - D1 Shepherding sheep: {71} From the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him
 - D2 Shepherding Israel
 - E1 Adonai's people: To shepherd Jacob His people,
 - E2 Adonai's inheritance: And Israel His inheritance.
- C3 The Superlative Role of David as Shepherd 78:72
 - D1 With integrity: {72} So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart,
 - D2 With skill: And guided them with his skillful hands.

EXPANDED ANALYSIS OF PSALM 78

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October, 2010. Updated October, 2013

Published Online by WordExplain.com
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