

A Study of the Wisdom Literature

(OT Survey Lesson 243—Psalms 79-80)

Introduction: These psalms center around periods of oppression or destruction to Israel by foreign powers. Such occasions were the result of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Consequently, the psalmist acknowledges Israel's guilt and pleads with Him to be forgiving and rescue them.

Lesson aim: To show the need to acknowledge guilt and seek God's salvation.

A prayer of lamentation over the destruction of Jerusalem— Psalm 79:1-13

(Jerusalem faced two devastating periods of destruction in her history—in 588 bc by the Babylonians and in 167 bc by the Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes. Perhaps arguments be could made for either occasion being the background of this psalm. The parallel descriptions of this psalm with the historical record in 1 & 2 Maccabees might suggest the latter destruction as the background of this psalm.)

1. What fact serves as a background for this psalm? (v. 1) How did the psalmist describe the loss of life among the people of God? (v. 2-3)
2. How did the neighboring nations treat Israel at this time? (v. 4)
3. What question did the psalmist ask God? (v. 5) What did he want God to do? (v. 6-7)
4. What was the reason for this period of oppression? (v. 8) What did the psalmist plead with God to do? (v. 9)
5. How did the psalmist appeal to God's honor and justice? (v. 10) How did the psalmist appeal to God's compassion for His people? (v. 11)
6. What did he want the neighbors of Israel to receive? (v. 12)
7. How did the writer regard Israel? (v. 13) What did he pledge to God?

A psalm of petition for help during a time of oppression— Psalm 80:1-19

(Perhaps the best clues to the time of writing are the suggestions of oppression from a foreign power and references to Joseph and his brothers being the tribes of Israel most affected. On this basis, we may conclude that the psalm was written during the Assyrian oppression of Israel that ultimately led to the downfall of the Northern Kingdom. Some of the language of this psalm seems to be derived from Jacob's patriarchal blessing of Joseph, Gen. 49:22ff.)

1. How did the psalmist address God? (v. 1) Who did he ask God to lead and save? (v. 2) What plea did the psalmist repeat in the psalm? (v. 3, 7, 19)
2. What question did the psalmist ask God? (v. 4) What did he say had been their food and drink? (v. 5) How had they been treated by their neighbors? (v. 6)
3. To what did the psalmist compare the nation of Israel? (v. 8) How does he describe its former prosperity? (v. 9-11) Yet, how did he describe it at the present time? (v. 12-13)
4. What then did he appeal to God to do? (v. 14-15) Why? (v. 16)
5. What did he appeal to God to do for “the man of thy right hand”? (v. 17)
6. What vow does the psalmist make to God if He will answer his prayer? (v. 18)