

Psalm 83
The Silence of God When Encircled By God's Enemies

Introduction: Found in book 3 of the psalms. This psalm may reference God's enemies in a cumulative sense, not a specific time in history. Or it may reference God's enemies in a future sense, when all the nations attack Israel because of their hatred for God (Zech. 14:2). Some see similarities to the 1973 *Yom Kippur War*.

Superscription: *A song. A psalm of Asaph.* (The last of the psalms of Asaph, 73-83)

1) The psalmist cries to God—83:1

- a) ¹ *O God, do not be silent. Do not be incommunicative or (do not) be inactive, O God,*
- b) Will God remain faithful to His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:3)?
 - i) A seed, a land, a nation, and God's blessing and protection

2) God's enemies have placed themselves in great danger—83:2-5 ² because, behold,

- This sounds similar to Psalm 2. While the immediate target may be Israel, the ultimate target is God Himself.
- a) The enemies' hateful attitude toward God—83:2
 - i) *Your (God's) enemies make an uproar;*
 - ii) *and those who hate You have acted arrogantly hostile.*
 - b) The enemies' wicked actions against God's people Israel—83:3-4
 - i) ³ *They devise shrewd schemes against Your people; and they conspire against Your treasured/hidden ones.*
 - (1) They are hidden because they are considered valuable ultimately because they belong to God.
 - ii) ⁴ *They have said, "Come, and let us annihilate them as a nation so that Israel's name will be remembered no more!"*
 - (1) Even though their bumper stickers say, "Co-Exist."
 - c) The enemies' irrational actions against God—83:5
 - Even though they don't get along otherwise, they stand together against God.
 - i) It is a bold conspiracy—⁵ *Because they have conspired with a united heart;*
 - ii) It is a binding covenant—*they make/inaugurate a covenant against You.*

3) The psalmist lists the enemies of God—83:6-8

- This is a multinational alliance. Some of these are relatives of Israel. Family hatred is often particularly bitter and sad.
- a) Relatives to the East—⁶ *The tents of Edom (from Esau) and the Ishmaelites (from Abraham), Moab (from Lot) and Hagrites (from Hagar?), ⁷ Gebal and Ammon (from Lot),*
 - b) To the South—*and Amalek (descendants of Esau),*

- c) To the West—*Philistia and the inhabitants of Tyre.*
- d) To the North—⁸ *Even Assyria has allied with them; they are the arm/reinforcements of the children of Lot (Moab and Ammon).* [Selah]

4) The psalmist, as a patriot, asks God to do 4 things to God's enemies, but not for a selfish motive—83:9-18

- These are examples of enemies who did as described in 83:2-5.
- a) Destroy the enemies—83:9-10 (cf. Judges 4-5, Deborah and Barak)
 - i) ⁹ Do to them as with Midian, as with Sisera and Jabin at the Kishon River, ¹⁰ *who were destroyed at Endor; who became manure/compost for the ground* (a dishonorable non-burial).
- b) Eliminate the enemies—83:11-12 (cf. Judges 7-8, Gideon)
 - i) ¹¹ Set their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb and all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, ¹² *who said, “Let us seize possession of God’s pastures for ourselves.”*
 - ii) They are deliberately seeking to steal what belongs to God Himself.
- c) Consume the enemies—83:13-15
 - i) ¹³ *O my God, set them like tumbleweed, like stubble/chaff for the wind.* ¹⁴ *As fire burns the forest and like the flame sets the mountains on fire,* ¹⁵ *so pursue them with Your whirlwind, and terrify them with your windstorm.*
 - ii) The psalmist recognizes the sovereignty of God who controls the reality behind all these images.
- d) Embarrass the enemies, but for two good reasons—83:16-18
 - i) Dishonor them—83:16 (O that disgrace would lead to devotion)
 - (1) What? ¹⁶ Cover their faces with shame,
 - (2) Why? *so that they may seek Your name, O Yahweh.*
 - ii) Humiliate them—83:17 (O that devastation would lead to acknowledgment)
 - (1) What? ¹⁷ Let them be put to shame and be terrified forever, and let them be ashamed and be ruined,
 - (2) Why? ¹⁸ *that they may know that You alone, whose name is Yahweh, are the Most High over all the earth* (including their own nations).
- e) Note that the psalmist, while asking for deliverance from the enemies and for the conversion of the enemies, he is ultimately asking for God to vindicate and glorify Himself.

5) Things we need to remember:

- a) Someone has said: God reserves His most severe judgment for those who would attempt to annihilate His people and take over His land.
- b) God may not be as noisy as His enemies, but He is more powerful.
- c) Don't interpret times of silences as indications of God's indifference.