

PSALM 85



GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY
A JOYFUL JOURNEY THRU THE PSALMS

The Embrace of God's Grace

March 6, 2022 AM

I. GENRE: National Lament with Concluding Hope

- A. Ps 85 is a lament about conditions in the land after Israel returned from the Babylonian **captivity**.
- B. Other national laments include Pss 44, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89.
- C. Most of the prayer is from the perspective of "us" (vv. 4-7).
 1. The individual ("I") who speaks in v. 8 may be a Korahite who sought a prophetic word from God.
 2. The prophetic word is then shared with the congregation who celebrates the news of God's coming kindness.
 3. Only the middle verses complain the lament (vv. 4-7), but everything else in the poem revolves around those requests.
 4. The psalm ends with a lengthy section of assurances (vv. 8-13) that God has not abandoned His people and will **restore** His blessing.

II. SETTING & USAGE

A. AUTHOR: An Korahite

1. Korah was a great-grandson of **Levi** who led an infamous religious revolt in Moses' day. Num. 16. His descendants were spared judgment & went on to serve faithfully in Temple. 1 Chr 9:19
2. The Sons of Korah were most active in leading worship between David's time (1010 BC) and the fall of Judah in the late 600's BC. They resumed activity in worship after the return from exile in the 500's.

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PURPOSE: While God had brought Israel back from Babylonian captivity, their life in the land was full of hardship and adversity. The people find assurance that God's full favor will be restored by His grace as they turn unto Him.

Type: National Lament with Concluding Hope
Author: A Korahite
Date: Perhaps 450-440 BC, around the time of Nehemiah's return

HEADINGS	RECOLLECTION OF DIVINE FAVOR: A CELEBRATION OF PAST GRACE vv. 1-3	LAMENT OVER GOD'S WRATH: PLEAS FOR GOD TO TURN BACK HIS ANGER vv. 4-7	CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE FAVOR: ASSURANCE OF GOD'S RESTORATION vv. 8-13
Authorization Consigned to the Sanctuary Choir Director Song Type A Psalm, a Song to be Accompanied by Instruments Authorship A Korahite	Yahweh's Restoration of Israel to the Promised Land v. 1 Forgiveness of Israel's Covenantal Unfaithfulness v. 2 [Selah] Withdrawal of God's Covenantal Wrath v. 3	Opening Plea: Request for Full Restoration of Israel's Relationship v. 4 Humble Petitions for Grace vv. 5-6 Your Anger against Our Nation Isn't Forever, Is It? v. 5 Revival of Relationship will Come Again, Won't It? v. 6 Closing Plea: Request for Covenantal Kindness and Deliverance v. 7	Anticipation of a Prophetic Word v. 8 Waiting for a Divine Response v. 8a The Assurance of Coming Peace & the Counsel to Practice Faithfulness v. 8b Celebration of the Prophetic Word vv. 9-13 Coming Deliverance & the Return of God's Glory v. 9 The Harmonious Outworking of God's Favor vv. 10-11 Divine Blessing on a Productive Land v. 12 Yahweh's Return to His People in Restorative Righteousness v. 13

B. PLACEMENT

1. Psalms 84 and 85 are both by the sons of Korah.
2. They both contain expressions of strong longings (84:2; 85:4-7).
3. Both psalms speak of God's "glory" (84:11; 85:9)
4. Ps 84 anticipates a pilgrim's return to the glorious temple while Ps 85 anticipates God's glory returning to the land.

C. BACKGROUND & USAGE

1. The restoration spoken of in vv.1-3 seems to fit Israel's return from Babylonian captivity.
 - a. Because of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness, God unloaded on them the fullest measure of Deuteronomy's curses, removing her from the land in from 605-586 BC.
 - b. But Jews began returning to the land around 535 BC.
2. While it was wonderful to be back in the land, it was not the good old days. The land was **unproductive**, the political situation was oppressive, & the shekinah never returned.
3. This psalm may come from the time period of **Nehemiah's** return to the land between 450-440 BC.
4. Another famous poem about similar problems is Ps 126.

III. NOTES:

A. Many Happy Returns

1. The Hebrew term for **shub** is used repeatedly in the psalm in different ways.
2. The root of the word is behind "restored" (1), "captivity" (1), "turned" (3), "restore" (4), "again" (6), and "turn back" (8).

B. Righteousness

1. The term "righteousness" is used repeatedly in the final stanza of the poem (vv. 10, 11, 13).
2. In the prophets, Israel is often condemned for its social **injustices**. Righteousness is described as being excluded from Jerusalem. **Isaiah 59:14-15**.
3. But this psalm foresees righteousness returning to center stage as God prepares to bless and lead his people (v .13).

C. God's Harmonious Attributes

1. Vv. 10-11 describe a happy meeting of God's wonderful **attributes**, bringing great blessing to the land.
2. The "meeting" and "kissing" of v. 10 is not that of lovers but of friends. God's attributes are described as being not in conflict with each other but in harmony.
 - a. Implied in this is that Israel will be in a state where she can enjoy God's favor instead of His wrath.
 - b. The imagery of v. 11 implies that **Israel** is bubbling forth in faithfulness which in turn is met with righteous blessing of God raining down from above.
3. The only way Israel could enter into this renewed relationship of favor was through the **reviving** work of God's grace (v. 6).
 - a. In New Testament terms, we come to know the harmonious outworking of God's attributes through the grace made known to us in the Gospel.
 - b. The Gospel revives us and enables us to walk with God so as to know His blessings that we had otherwise forfeited.