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This week's Triennial Torah reading can be found at:

<https://sightedmoon.com/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf>

Gen 40	2 Sam 8-10	Ps 80-81	Luke 2
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Joseph in Prison (Genesis 40)

It is not clear how long Joseph was in prison, but we can deduce that the total time of his service to Potiphar and his imprisonment to this point was around 11 years. It had been that long since he was sold by his brothers at age 17, making him about 28 when the same Potiphar, captain of the guard who was over the prison warden, makes Joseph serve Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker during their confinement. Home may have seemed a distant memory for Joseph by now, given the time he had been away and the trouble in which he now found himself. Being in prison, he was a long way from having his family bow down to him—but he continued to make the best of the situation at hand, and God blessed him for his efforts.

Knowing that God had some big plans in mind, we can assume that these events are His doing. It surely was no accident that two high servants of Pharaoh's court were both placed in the same prison as Joseph. If they had been servants of any lesser government official, one may not have been in a place to later tell Pharaoh about Joseph's gift of interpretation. After hearing the prisoners' dreams, Joseph explains their meaning—and the events come to pass just as he foretells. Perhaps after this divine fulfillment, Joseph remembered his own dream, pondering his past and his future.

It actually seems a little hard to believe that the butler, after seeing Joseph's interpretation of the dream come true before his eyes, would actually forget about Joseph's request for a mention to Pharaoh. Perhaps he was so elated to be restored to his high position that he forgot what Joseph had asked of him. Or maybe after getting his job back as chief butler, he didn't want to give someone else the limelight, or perhaps he feared to remind the pharaoh that he had previously sent him to prison. Whatever the reason, God was still orchestrating events to His timetable—leaving Joseph imprisoned for another two full years before delivering him, illustrating once again that we should be patient as we wait on God. It may take some time, maybe even a *lifetime*, but He *will* come through on His promises.

The Israelite Empire; Mephibosheth Exalted (1 Chronicles 18; 2 Samuel 8-9)

Here we see David extending the dominion of Israel. God's covenant with him included the promise that he would be victor over his enemies. Furthermore, in conjunction with his movement north, his purpose is directly stated: "to establish his power by the River Euphrates" (1 Chronicles 18:3). All of this expansion was, no doubt, carried out with God's promise to Abraham firmly in mind—that the land God was giving him would extend "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18). Perhaps he also had direct instructions from God that Scripture does not reveal.

Of defeated nations, the accounts explain that they became David's "servants," bringing tribute—that is, vassal states indirectly ruled by David. The conquest of one of these, Moab, may have been undertaken with mixed feelings—David's great-grandmother Ruth having come from there (Ruth 4:13-17) and him having sent his own parents there to Moab's king for protection while he hid from Saul (1 Samuel 22:3-4). Perhaps Moab had a new ruler at this time. Nevertheless, Moab was a pagan nation that had posed a serious danger to Israel in the past (see Numbers 25:1-3; Judges 3:12-30) and would do so repeatedly throughout Israel's history.

In 2 Samuel 9, we read of David wanting to show the "kindness of God" (verse 3) to a son of Saul's son Jonathan in fulfillment of David and Jonathan's covenant of friendship (compare 1 Samuel 20:14-15). In learning of Jonathan's crippled son (2 Samuel 4:4), David sends for him immediately. Mephibosheth has good reason to be afraid at this point, as the founders of new dynasties in ancient times often killed the children of former rulers to eliminate contenders for the throne. But David reassures him, promising to restore his family estate and that he will be like an adopted son, eating at the king's table for the rest of his life.

Perhaps we can see in the story of Mephibosheth an illustration of our lives under God's grace—going from nothing, undeserving of blessing, living under threat of danger, to complete security with royal treatment at the table of the King of the universe.

Chariots of Mesopotamia

2 Samuel 10; 1 Chronicles 19; Psalm 60; Psalm 108; Psalm 83

This section of Scripture is quite interesting. Focus here is often placed on the fight against Aram, i.e., Syria, which stretched northeast to the Euphrates River. Yet across the Euphrates from Syria was the empire of Assyria—not yet risen to the major superpower it would ultimately become, but still a great force to be reckoned with. And, though Assyria is not directly mentioned here, we do see that there were forces arrayed against David from Mesopotamia (1 Chronicles 19:6), the land between the Tigris and Euphrates, which included Assyria. Indeed, it also included Babylon to the south. Some try to argue that the words translated

“Mesopotamia,” *Aram Naharaim*, denoted just a minor district on the upper Euphrates. But this is negated by the mention of 32,000 chariots (verse 7)—a huge number in any ancient context and unimaginably so if the traditional view of Israel fighting against just a few small neighboring powers is correct. At the height of his power, King Solomon had only 1,400 chariots (1 Kings 10:24-26). In addition to this, we know of 33,000 soldiers from the Aramaean, i.e., Syrian, states (2 Samuel 10:6), but there were probably untold thousands more in conjunction with the chariots sent from Mesopotamia.

While some might argue that the figure of 32,000 chariots is a copyist error, such an error seems highly unlikely since such a number of chariots would have screamed out at ancient readers and scribes as a mistake—unless it were known to be true. (While the Philistines were said to have had 30,000 chariots in 1 Samuel 13:5, it should be noted that these foremost of the Sea Peoples, who almost defeated Egypt shortly before the time of Saul, were a much greater force in the Mediterranean world than they are often reckoned to have been. The fact that Israel overcame them was itself miraculous.)

Surprisingly, then, it appears that what we may be looking at in our current reading is a massive Middle Eastern coalition that included the entire national armies of Assyria and Babylon—all engaged against David. The figure of 32,000 chariots is probably a combined total from all the armies fighting Israel.

What, then, of the instigation of this conflict by the disgracing of David’s messengers by the Ammonites? Author Stephen Collins gives some intriguing insights in this lengthy quote from his book, *The “Lost” Ten Tribes of Israel...Found!*: “The Ammonites were a small tributary nation subject to David and were no doubt aware that David had executed two-thirds of the Moabites who had rebelled against him. Why then would they dare to take the apparently suicidal action of humiliating David’s ambassadors and provoking David into a warlike response (1 Chronicles 19:1-5)? The only logical explanation is that the Ammonites were acting as agents for someone else who wanted to challenge David, and that the Ammonites knew they would be backed by powerful friends who supported their hostile action. The rest of the account supports that conclusion.

“1 Chronicles 19:6-9 states the Ammonites ‘hired’ a force of 32,000 chariots and an uncounted number of Syrian and Mesopotamian warriors to fight King David’s army on their behalf.... Since Ammon was paying gold and silver as tribute to Israel already (1 Chronicles 18:11), it hardly had the resources to hire virtually the entire national armies of the nations in Mesopotamia. Indeed, verse 6 indicates the Ammonites had no gold left with which to ‘hire’ mercenaries and could pay only in silver. Apparently, *the other nations wanted to challenge Israel in considerable force, and Ammon’s revolt was the pretext to arrange such a conflict....* That this huge Mesopotamian army would allow itself to be ‘hired’ without receiving any gold at all indicates that their presence was a national policy of Assyria’s king! A force of 32,000 chariots could only have been mustered with the approval of the Assyrian Empire, the dominant power of Mesopotamia.

“The Bible’s use of the term ‘Mesopotamia’ to describe the homeland of this vast force of foreign troops [rather than a specific country] indicates that it was a *joint expeditionary force of many Mesopotamian nations (Assyria, Babylon, etc.)*. Verses 6-7 state that many Syrian troops were also ‘hired’ by the Ammonites to join the Mesopotamian armies in fighting King David. Since David had already conquered portions of Syria, the Syrians were eager to join a large alliance to fight against David. *This battle then was an effort by the king of Assyria to defeat the growing power of King David*. He arranged for virtually his entire army, along with other Mesopotamian allies and various Syrian kings to be ‘hired’ (for a pittance) by one of David’s subject nations (Ammon) to get rid of the threat posed by King David’s power.

“Interestingly, these Mesopotamian nations and Syria had enough respect for King David and Israel that they did not declare war openly, but allowed their national armies to fight as ‘mercenaries’ of a small nation. In this manner, if things went badly, they could go home and say that they were not technically at war with Israel on a national level. However, as evidence that these nations were actually arranging a war with King David, *the Bible states that ‘the kings’ of the mercenary armies (the Mesopotamian nations and Syrians) came with their armies to personally watch the battle (I Chronicles 19:9)....*

“This battle for supremacy of the ancient world was fought in two stages. The initial stage of the battle is described in I Chronicles 19:8-15. Israel’s army met the combined forces of Ammon, Syria, and the Mesopotamian nations, and defeated them in a two-front battle. The fact that Israel had to split its forces and fight in two separate directions indicates that Israel’s army was not expecting to fight so large a force and found itself surrounded by a numerically superior army. Israel’s army likely expected to fight only the upstart Ammonites, and was surprised by the presence of so many enemies. Nevertheless, *Israel’s army won the battle*, and the Mesopotamian army (i.e. the Assyrian army) apparently retreated to its own territory as they are not mentioned in the second stage of the battle.

“David quickly realized that this conflict involved far more than a revolt by the little nation of Ammon. It was actually an attempt to destroy Israel’s army and national power, and to prevent it from supplanting Assyria as the preeminent nation in the ancient world” (1995, pp. 8-10).

The superscription of Psalm 60 shows that it refers to these events. David speaks here of having drunk the wine of astonishment or confusion. He speaks of trembling. David must have been overwhelmed at what was happening. But incredibly, the ultimate victory in this apparently titanic struggle was given by the Almighty Lord of Hosts to him and the men of Israel. As David notes in verse 12, it is “through God” that “we will do valiantly.” David later uses much of this psalm to write the second part of Psalm 108 (verses 6-13—the first part of Psalm 108, verses 1-5, being taken from Psalm 57, written while David and his men hid from Saul in the cave at En Gedi, compare verses 7-11). Interestingly, Psalm 83, which seems to be a prophecy of end-time events, may also refer to this monumental battle we’ve been reading about. A psalm composed by the Levitical chief musician Asaph, it concerns a huge Middle Eastern confederacy whose goal is to wipe out Israel—to which Assyria is joined. Perhaps a

coming end-time fulfillment of the apparent prophecy here had a prototype in David's time. If so, the episode we've just read about would seem to be the only one that would fit. If Psalm 83 does refer on some level to this episode, we may regard the "inhabitants of Tyre" mentioned in the coalition as rogue elements in that city rather than King Hiram and those loyal to him, as he was a close ally to David and later to Solomon.

"In the second stage of the battle recorded in I Chronicles 19:16-19, the Israelites and the Syrians mobilized their entire national military resources and clashed anew. This time there was no more pretense that the Syrians were Ammonite mercenaries. Also, the Assyrians were apparently no longer engaged, but had retreated after being soundly defeated by the Israelite army. The account states that David 'gathered all Israel' and Syria 'drew forth the Syrians that were beyond the River' (meaning reinforcements from east of the Euphrates River). The second battle of this war involved King David and his fully-mobilized army marching eastward from the Jordan River to fight everyone the Syrians could muster. After suffering 47,000 dead, including their commander, the Syrians yielded to King David and 'became his servants,' meaning they became vassal nations of Israel who paid tribute to King David...."

"What began as an effort on the part of Assyria and its Mesopotamian allies to crush Israel's military power resulted in Israel becoming sovereign over all the engaged Syrians, and the Mesopotamian powers being put to flight. The Assyrians and their allies learned firsthand that they could not successfully stand against Israel's power" (pp. 11-12). Indeed, Collins goes on to quote secular history as explaining that after this point, Aramaean invaders invade Mesopotamia and exhaust Babylonia and Assyria—and he points out that this is while the Aramaeans are vassals to David, indeed that the Israelites might be referred to by the Assyrians as one and the same with these Aramaeans. "After David made the Aramaeans his vassals and (probably in concert with those vassals) subjugated Assyria and Mesopotamia, David was not just king of Israel and Judah, he was emperor over nations. He was the dominant ruler of the known world, and Israel had become an ancient 'superpower'" (p. 19).

David's faith in God to grant victory is expressed in Psalm 20: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright" (verses 7-8).

With the forces to the north defeated, there remains only a mopping-up operation to finish this whole episode. The terrified Ammonites, their help gone, flee to their capital city of Rabbah to hide behind its city walls. We will see the fight against them in our next reading.

Where the superscription of **Psalm 80** has "Set to 'The Lilies' [Hebrew *Shoshannim*]. A Testimony [*Eduth*] of Asaph," this could be rendered "Set to 'The Lilies of Testimony.' Of Asaph." The NIV has "The Lilies of the Covenant." Compare the superscription of Psalm 60, which has, "Set to 'Lily of the Testimony'" (*Shushan Eduth*). As in other cases throughout the Psalter, the first part of the superscription of each of these psalms may be a postscript of the preceding psalm.

As in the previous psalm (79), the nation is in distress—plundered by enemies (compare 80:12-13). And as before, it may be that Asaph was prophesying of national invasion beyond his lifetime—perhaps even of the end time still to come. Yet, just as Psalm 79 ends with reliance on God as the Shepherd of His people (see verse 13), so Psalm 80 opens with an appeal to the Shepherd of Israel who leads Joseph (the leading birthright people and therefore representative of the nation as a whole) like a flock (verse 1; compare Psalm 23; John 10).

God, who dwells between the cherubim—as represented on the earthly copy of God’s throne, the mercy seat atop the Ark of the Covenant (see Exodus 25:17-22)—is asked to “shine forth” (Psalm 80:1), showing His glory through His intervening power (verse 2). Note the beginning of verse 2: “Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.” The psalm is here essentially pleading, “March against the [enemy] nations as you marched in the midst of your army from Sinai into the promised land (in that march the ark of the covenant advanced in front of the troops of these three tribes; see Nu 10:21-24...)” (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 80:2).

The central theme of the psalm is clear from the repeated refrain asking, “Restore us...” (verses 3, 7, 19), with building intensity in calling on God: “...O God” (verse 3), “...O God of hosts” (verse 7) and “...O Lord God of hosts” (verse 19). The rest of the repeated refrain, “Cause Your face to shine [i.e., smile favorably on us], and we shall be saved” (same verses), is essentially drawn from the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:25: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” We have previously noted the use of this language in other psalms as well (see Psalms 4:6; 44:3; 67:1; 119:135). Here in Psalm 80 the people had been experiencing the opposite—the rebuke of God’s countenance (His angry expression) causing them to perish (80:16).

“How long,” Asaph asks (as is common in laments), will God be angry and refuse to answer His people’s prayers? (verse 4; compare 13:1-2; 79:5). In the desert wilderness, God, as His people’s caring Shepherd, fed them with manna and gave them water to drink from the rock. But now, figuratively, He has given His people their tearful misery to eat and drink (80:5). They have become a source of contention and mockery to neighboring countries (verse 6)—rather than the blessing and positive example they were intended to be. So again the plea of restoration is raised (verse 7).

In verses 8-16 Asaph likens Israel to a vine and vineyard, imagery found in other passages (see Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jeremiah 2:21; 12:10; Ezekiel 15:1-8; 17:6-8; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1; 14:7). God bringing the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land is pictured as transplanting the vine (Psalm 80:8). His driving out of the nations before them (same verse) is compared to a caring vinedresser clearing the ground for the vine (verse 9; compare Isaiah 5:2). The vine filled the land (Psalm 80:9), growing to immense stature so that hills and tall trees, symbolic of other national powers (compare Ezekiel 17), were overshadowed as the vine grew (Psalm 80:10). It spread from the Sea (the Mediterranean) to the River (the Euphrates) (verse 11),

representing Israel's dominion reaching this extent, as it did during the reigns of David and Solomon.

Yet things have dramatically changed. God has broken down His vine's hedges—its protective fence (referring to His own divine protection)—and allowed others to plunder it (verse 12). The boar and wild beasts (unclean animals here representing foreign invaders) uproot and devour it. Because of God's anger it is burned with fire and cut down (verse 16). Compare God's later words, probably adapted from Psalm 80, in Isaiah 5:5: "And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down."

The psalm calls on God to look at the sorry state of the vine now and to "visit" it (Psalm 80:14)—to show it care and restore it as it was. There is a play on words in the last several verses here. The Hebrew word for vineyard in verse 15 "is used only here in the Bible; it literally means 'root-stock'" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 4-17). Then we see the word "branch" in the same verse—giving us the common pairing of *root and branch*. Yet the Hebrew word for branch here is *ben*, meaning "son"—the same word translated "son" in verse 17 in the expression "son of man."

The nation of Israel was not just as a mere plant to God as a vinedresser but was God's own son (see Exodus 4:22)—intended to serve as His "right-hand man" (see Psalm 80:17), a model nation to properly represent Him to the world (as a vine bearing godly fruit). Yet the imagery here likely pointed to Israel's Davidic ruler as well, the particular "son of man" (meaning human being) who was to lead the nation in setting the proper example. Moreover, the words here no doubt look to the ultimate "Branch" who would come from the vine of Israel and the line of David—the Messiah. He too would be, in a unique way, God's own Son.

Yeshua would later tell His followers that He is the true vine, that God the Father is the vinedresser and that they, abiding in Him as the vine, are the branches (John 15:1-8). Yeshua Himself was brought out of Egypt and replanted in the Promised Land, preaching throughout the breadth of the land. He suffered terribly for sin at the hands of enemies (not His own sin but that of others). He was brutalized and died. But He rose again—and through His death and resurrection all may be saved. Indeed, it is through this Son and His followers that the vine of Israel would be reconstituted in a spiritual sense and revived—so that it would never turn from God again (see Psalm 80:18). The physical Israelites will be restored to God's favor or grace through being grafted into spiritual Israel (compare Romans 11; Galatians 6:16).

Thus, as the final refrain calls for again (Psalm 80:19), Israel will be restored, God will smile favorably on His people and they shall be saved.

Appeals for Repentance, Justice and Deliverance From Foes (Psalms 81)

The middle of the superscription of **Psalm 81**, which may be part of a postscript to Psalm 80, contains the Hebrew phrase *al gittith*. We saw this earlier in the superscription of Psalm 8, and

it reappears in Psalm 84. The NIV leaves it mostly untranslated as “According to *gittith*,” whereas the New King James Version renders it as, “On an instrument of Gath.” The *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* comments, “The Hebrew word perhaps refers to either a winepress (‘song of the winepress’) or the Philistine city of Gath (‘Gittite lyre or music’; see 2Sa 15:18)” (note on Psalm 8 title).

Asaph composed Psalm 81 as a festival song (verses 1-3)-albeit one in which national enemies remain a serious concern (see verses 14-15), as in other psalms of Asaph in Book III.

The people were to “sing aloud,” to “make a joyful shout,” to “raise a song,” to “strike the timbrel,” to play “the pleasant harp with the lute” (verses 1-2), to “blow the trumpet” (the *shofar* or ram’s horn) because it was a statute and law of God to do so (verses 3-4)-revealed by God at the time of the Exodus (verse 5). It is important to recognize the congregational nature of worship here. As commentator George Knight remarks on these verses: “You cannot hold a festival all by yourself. It is God’s will, however, that we should hold festivals. These verbs *sing aloud*, *shout for joy* and so on are all expressed in the plural” (*Psalms*, comments on Psalm 81). The word for “statute” (verse 4) or “decree” (NIV) “refers in its original usage to something that is meant to be imperishable for it has been chiseled in stone. God then ‘demands’ our regular worship. In his wisdom he knows that it is our regular participation in congregational worship that keeps us right with himself. Public worship is God’s good idea, not ours” (same comments).

Verse 3 causes some confusion as to the timing of this particular celebration and trumpet blowing. Some take it to mean every New Moon (new month), every full moon and every sacred festival day. However, there was no law or statute to blow the ram’s horn or celebrate at all of these times. Indeed, in the law God gave through Moses the blast of the ram’s horn was commanded for only one festival, the Feast of Trumpets (see Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1). This Holy Day actually falls on a New Moon-and is the only annual festival that does. Yet what of the mention of the full moon in Psalm 81:3? Some see other annual festivals indicated here. Passover and the First Day of Unleavened Bread come at the time of the full moon in the first month of the Hebrew sacred calendar. The beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles does as well-and many see verse 3 as indicating the entire fall festival period in the seventh month, from the Feast of Trumpets through Tabernacles. However, the word translated “full moon” can simply mean “full” or “fullness,” and could here imply the completion of a month-thus the beginning of a new one. The Ferrar Fenton Translation makes no mention of the full moon-only the New Moon. So it may well be that the Feast of Trumpets is exclusively meant here, though the call to celebration and reflection on God’s deliverance fits with all of God’s festivals.

Note again the timing of God’s revelation of the statute in verse 5: “This He established in Joseph [representative of all Israel] as a testimony, when He went throughout the land of Egypt.” This translation would indicate the time that God sent the plagues against Egypt. However, nothing is recorded in Moses’ writings about God revealing the command to blow the shofar at the Feast of Trumpets until Israel was later gathered at Mount Sinai. It is possible that He gave Moses an earlier revelation while in Egypt. Yet it seems more likely that a very general

time frame is meant-that is to say, God gave the Israelites this statute long ago around the time that He destroyed Egypt to free them. Alternatively, some versions translate verse 5 as saying that God established the statute when Joseph (i.e., Israel) went out of Egypt (compare Tanakh, New and Revised English Bible, New American Bible, Fenton).

The end of verse 5 says, "I heard a language [literally, lip] I did not understand." There is some dispute as to who is speaking here. In the remainder of the psalm, from verses 6-16, it is clearly God who is speaking, referring to Himself as "I." That would seem to argue for the "I" at the end of verse 5 also being God. Yet how could the omniscient God not understand the Egyptian language? For this reason, many take the "I" in verse 5 to refer to each Israelite singing the song-following the Jewish understanding that each and every Jew even today was personally and individually delivered from ancient Egyptian bondage.

Yet the word rendered "understand" in verse 5, *yada*, has the general meaning of "know." As Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary notes, this word can mean "acknowledge...regard, have respect [for]" (*Abingdon Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Strong's No. 3045). Indeed, just as God says He does not "know" those who do not obey Him, He could just as well say that He does not "know" (acknowledge or regard) the speech of those who defy Him. Consider that Egypt's language and speech was thoroughly polluted with idolatrous references. "As in [Psalm] 114:1, there is a disdain for the history, culture, and language of Egypt" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 3-5).

In Psalm 81:7, God answering in "the secret place of thunder" is evidently a reference to the giving of His law and covenant at Mount Sinai, when "there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.... Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire... And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice" (Exodus 19:16-19; compare 20:18). Thus, it would seem that in the "memorial of blowing of trumpets" at the

Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24), the Israelites were to recall this earlier trumpet blast when God came down in power and glory, descending with thunder and fire, as a prelude to giving His law. Interestingly, the Feast of Trumpets primarily represents the time of Christ's return, when He will come in great power and glory, in a devouring fire, as a prelude to revealing His law anew to Israel and all nations. Moses gave the point: "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin" (Exodus 20:20)-as they had at Meribah, when they questioned whether God was among them after having experienced the Exodus (17:1-7; Psalm 81:7).

In verses 8-10, God reminds the people of what He told them at Sinai-and implicitly holds out His offer of covenant relationship anew. In verse 9, He reiterates the first of the Ten Commandments-that there be no foreign gods among His people (see Exodus 20:3). And in verse 10 of Psalm 81, He repeats the preamble to the Ten Commandments: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (see Exodus 20:2). This great episode

should have been enough to convince them to trust and obey Him. God promised to be His people's provider (Psalm 81:10b).

Historically, Israel failed to listen (verse 11), so God allowed them to go their own way (verse 12)-although that's not what He wanted (verse 13). If His people would obey, He would subdue their enemies (verse 14). It seems likely that God inspired Asaph to write this psalm while Israel was experiencing problems from enemies-perhaps while David was still battling foreign nations. And the words would certainly take on greater urgency in later times of foreign oppression.

In verse 15, the Israelites' enemies are referred to as *God's* enemies-"the haters of the Lord" (compare 83:1-4). The NKJV says that when God subdues them, they "would pretend submission to Him" (81:15). The NIV alternatively says they "would cringe before him." Then note the latter phrase in verse 15: "But their fate would endure forever." The Hebrew word translated "fate" here actually means "time." Most see this as meaning judgment on the enemies. But "their" might refer back to the Israelites, just as "them" in the next verse does-in which case the verse would mean that obedient Israelites would endure for all time.

God's desire is to give His people the very best of everything (verse 16)-and He eventually will if they will only heed Him and walk in His ways. The Feast of Trumpets and the other fall festivals picture the ushering in of a time when Israel will repent and all God's promises will come to fruition. Even other nations will be grafted into Israel to learn God's way and share in the promises as well. This is certainly a wonderful reason to joyfully celebrate.

Luke 2

There is a call to be registered by the Roman Governor and so Joseph and Mary leave Galil in Natsareth to go to Judea to be registered. Why? That is where their family line was from, their ancient home city, for they were of the tribe of Judah. Miryam was pregnant at that time and gave birth during those days and during that time of the Roman census. It was not yet winter season for the shepherds were still out in pasture with their flocks. A Messenger appeared to these shepherds telling them of the Good News of the birth of the Master and Messiah. The sign – a baby wrapped in blankets laying in an animal feeding trough.

The shepherds witnessed Hosts of Heavens singing and praising Elohim and they immediately believed. They left that place and went directly to Beyth Lechem to see the babe and they indeed found Him just as was witnessed by the Messengers. They told everyone they could of what happened, what they had witnessed, and they praised Elohim.

When eight days had been completed, they took the child to receive the circumcision and named Him Yeshua according to the instruction from the Messenger prior to His birth. Upon the time of Miryam's cleansing, they brought the child to Jerusalem to present Him to YHWH. For it is written – "Every male who opens the womb shall be called set-apart to YHWH." They also gave two young pigeons as an offering according to the Torah.

A man named Shim'on was at the temple and he was told by the Spirit of Elohim that he would not die until he saw the Deliverance of Israel, the Messiah. He took the child in his arms and proclaimed this over Him. Yoseph and Miryam were astounded. Another woman, Hannah, also prophesied over the child.

After this, the small family returned to Natsereth in Galil where Yeshua grew in wisdom. Their family went up to Jerusalem every year to the Passover as per the Torah. When Yeshua was 12 years of age, he stayed behind without his parents knowing and they travelled a day's journey back to Galil before they realized Yeshua was not with them. They returned along their path anxiously looking for Him. They found Him back in the temple in Jerusalem and were asking Him why He had done this to them. He was surprised that they did not understand that He was to be about His Father's business. He was teaching and asking questions of the learned men and all were amazed at His Wisdom.