

Legacy

March 23, 2014

Generational Legacy

Psalm 78:1-8

Cross Reference:

Wicked Generation- Mark 8:12; 9:19; 11:29; Acts 14:16; Hebrews 3:7-11

1 Corinthians 10:1-11 Let our father's be an example of their mistakes

Word Studies:

Verse 1

Listen- *ear*, perceive by the ear,

Instruction- direction, instruction, law, the content of what is being taught

Incline- to concentrate, pay attention, listen attentively, to bend or turn (one's ear) towards a speaker in order to listen well

Verse 2

Parable- A short moral story with a symbolic meaning

Dark Sayings- lesson taught indirectly

Verse 4

Conceal- hide

Generation-his own gen. and those immediately contiguous, before and after). **c.** especially of a future generation Gn 15:16 (JE), with numer¹

Tell- count, Pi. recount, relate

¹ Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (2000). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

Praise- qualities, deeds, demanding praise Ex 15:11 (song), i.e. terrible in attributes that call for praise²

Verse 5

Testimony- the code of law in gen. (late), as a *testimony* of God³

Verse 8

Generation - generation characterized by quality or condition, *class* of men: דֹּר עֲקָשׁ *crooked generation*⁴

Commentary Notes

Introduction (78:1–11). The first verses of this lengthy psalm establish the intention of the author. Through it Israel is to learn “about riddles of things past” (v 2) that will teach future generations (v 6) to place their confidence in God.

1–4 The speaker urges the audience to pay heed to the “teaching” about to be offered. The word used, תּוֹרָה, is found also in v 5, where it refers to the “instruction” (or, as above, “body of teaching”) God appointed in Israel (a reference to the giving of the law at Sinai); the speaker seeks to pass on the “story” of God and Israel, which includes the commands that are part of תּוֹרָה.

The knowledge to be conveyed is ancient, “riddles” handed down from previous generations that apparently must be understood if Israel is to continue as the people of God. The “riddle,” of course, is not immediately accessible. It is not even explicitly stated, but apparently its solution lies in telling the “story” to those yet to come, a “story” of Yahweh’s wonderful deeds and Israel’s failures.

2–8 Israel has been able to know Yahweh in two ways. One way is through his words, the law that he has established for her. Even before the law, however, was the divine action: exodus preceded covenant. Both are necessary for an understanding of Yahweh and the way to live in relationship with him. In Deut 6, immediately after the giving of the Ten Commandments, Moses tells Israel: “And this is the commandment, the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord your God commanded me to teach you” (v 1); the people are told to “teach [these words] carefully to your children and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the way and in your lying down and in your rising up” (v 7). God’s instruction is to be the subject of discourse among God’s people. Deut 6:20–21 link the תּוֹרָה with the tradition of the signs and

² Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (2000). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

³ Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (2000). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

⁴ Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (2000). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

wonders God has performed: “If your son asks you in the future, saying ‘What are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord our God commanded you?’ you will say to your son, ‘We were servants to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out from Egypt with a mighty hand...’” The commandments and practices need the tradition of God’s active love to give them life and to set them in context. *Torah* is a combination of story and commandments; the commandments are understood in the context of the story and the story is incomplete without the commandments. Only by understanding the old traditions can the present generation avoid repeating the sins of the previous ones. Maillot and Lelièvre (171) point out that “the man without memory is not able to be a faithful man.”⁵

Pt. I., Str. I. Two syn. couplets.—1–2. *O give ear || incline your ears*], attentively in order to hear—*my teaching || words of my mouth*], instruction to be given by the psalmist, as RV. m, JPSV., and not “my Law,” EV^s, as if there were a reference to the divine Law. This instruction is to be given in the balanced measure of a *poem* in the emblematic style || *enigma*], setting forth problems and mysteries difficult to solve and understand, cf. 49:5. —*I will open my mouth || I will pour forth*], in the melodies of sacred song.

Str. II. Two synth. couplets.—3. *What we have heard and know || What our fathers have told us*]. The story has come down by oral tradition from father to son through many generations. This implies not that there was no written narrative, for the author gives ample evidence of dependence upon the earlier prophetic narratives, but that he recognised that the story, though recorded, was essentially tradition, and not based on original records.—4a. *We will not hide from their children*]. We will transmit it in our turn to our successors.—7b. *That they may not forget the works of God*], that the story of the divine works of redemption and judgment may never be forgotten. A glossator, wishing to emphasize the importance of this oral instruction, added the clause from a legal point of view: *His commands might keep*; but also inserted a long expansive gloss: 4b–7a, *telling to a coming generation the praises of Yahweh and His might and the wondrous deeds that He did*]. This is an expansion of “the works of God,” explaining them as wonders and worthy of songs of praise. The remainder of the gloss is legalistic: *And He established a testimony in Jacob; a law He appointed in Israel*], doubtless referring to the legislation of the Pentateuch, using a term characteristic of P.—*which He commanded our fathers to make known to their sons; in order that a coming generation might know, sons to be born; that they might rise up and tell them to their sons*]. A long prosaic sentence enlarging upon the commands, cf. Ex. 10:2, 12:26–27, 13:8, 14, Dt. 4:9, 6:20–25.—*that they might put in God their hope*] a very late phr. of WL., cf. Ps. 49:14, Pr. 3:26; an expansive gloss to v. 7b.

Str. III. Two synth. couplets.—8. *That they may not be as their fathers*]. The instruction here takes the form of warning. —*A stubborn and rebellious generation*], based on Dt. 21:18, 20. A

⁵ Tate, M. E. (1998). *Psalms 51–100* (Vol. 20, pp. 288–289). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

glossator enlarged by adding: *a generation that did not fix its mind, whose spirit was not faithful with*⁶

78:1–8. Asaph called the **people** to **hear** his instruction (v. 1) about the Lord's **deeds ... power, and ... wonders** (v. 4) that He would make **known** to his **generation**. These had been handed down from earlier generations as God had commanded. **The LORD** planned this so that the nation might **trust** Him and obey the Law (v. 7), not stumbling in unbelief and rebellion **like their** unfaithful **forefathers** (v. 8).⁷

In a manner like the author of Psalm 49 (see 49:1–4), the psalmist begins his work by telling his readers what he is about to do. He instructs them, as a teacher does his pupils. The nominal phrase *my teaching* must be shifted in some languages to a verb phrase; for example, “Listen to the things which I teach you” or “Hear the words that I teach you.”

I will open my mouth in verse 2a is a way of calling attention to what follows, and may be translated as TEV has done, or else as NJV has it, “I will expound....”

Parable translates *mashal* “**proverb**, saying” (see 49:4a and comment), and *dark* saying translates the word “**riddle**,” as in 49:4b; the two words are used synonymously in parallel position. NEB (for *mashal*) has “a story with a meaning”; NJV “**I will expound a theme.**” **The meaning is that he will teach by means of proverbs (parables, wise sayings). The meaning of verse 2b is “to expound (or, explain) lessons from the past”** (see TOB, FRCL, NJV, NJB). TEV intends to say that the psalmist proposes to explain past mysteries. GECL translates the whole verse as follows: “**I will remind you of the past, to point out to you God’s guiding instructions.**”

Verse 2 is quoted in Matthew 13:35. Line a in Matthew 13:35 is exactly the same as the Septuagint translation of this verse; line b translates the Hebrew text differently from the Septuagint.

The term *parable* or TEV’s “*wise sayings*” is sometimes rendered as “word examples,” “picture words,” or “sayings of the old men.” RSV’s *dark sayings* renders the Hebrew term for riddle, and in the present context refers to secret sayings shared by the people. In the Americas riddles are known and used among nearly all Indian speakers, but in other areas of the world they **may be less known or totally absent. In the latter cases it is best to translate as “secret sayings” or “words that hold secrets.”**

The psalmist is going to deal with the recital of Israel’s history as transmitted by succeeding generations (verses 3–4). So he switches from the singular *I* in verse 2 to the plural *we* in verses 3–4. As the former generations had done (verse 3), so the psalmist’s generation will tell the story of the great deeds of the Lord to the coming generation (verse 4).

Psalm 78:4

⁶ Briggs, C. A., & Briggs, E. G. (1906–1907). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Psalms* (pp. 181–182). New York: C. Scribner’s Sons.

⁷ Ross, A. P. (1985). Psalms. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 851). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The Hebrew text in verse 4a is *We will not hide them from their children*, which would, strictly speaking, be the psalmist's own generation (since *them* refers back to "our fathers" of verse 3b). It seems more likely, however, as TEV interprets it, that the meaning is "their descendants," referring to the generation following that of the psalmist. So the translation should be "*our children*," which is parallel with *the coming generation* in line b (see also GECL, FRCL, SPCL). The negative expressions used in RSV and TEV *will not hide them* may have to be recast as positive expressions in some languages; for example, "We will tell them to our children." If this is done, lines a and b of verse 4 will become fully parallel, and in some languages may have to be reduced to one line, adding an element to emphasize the verb phrase.

The glorious deeds translates "the praises," in the sense of "*praiseworthy deeds*." So FRCL "the reasons why they should praise the Lord." For *wonders* see comments on "wonderful deeds" in 9:1.

Psalms 78:5–6

The two words *testimony* and *law* are used synonymously here, as they are in 19:7 (see comments there); they both refer to the Torah, God's Law given the people of Israel by Moses. In verse 5 TEV has placed "*the people of Israel*" in line a and "*the descendants of Jacob*" in line b, for greater ease of understanding. In languages being translated for the first time, it may be necessary to provide a note that identifies the descendants of Jacob with the people of Israel. If this is not done, readers may think that these are two different groups. Alternatively, it is possible to handle this problem in the translation by saying "God gives laws to the people of Israel, who are the descendants of Jacob."

In verses 5c–6 the psalmist again emphasizes the duty of each generation to obey God's command and to transmit to the succeeding generation the story of the great things that God has done for Israel (see Deut 6:7). In verse 6a *the next generation* is further defined as *the children yet unborn*, which TEV does not formally represent, since it is redundant. Should the translator wish to include it, something like the following can serve as a model for verse 6: "... so that the next generation, children yet to be born, might learn God's laws and in turn should teach them to their children." In the last line of verse 6 the verb *arise* is used in the sense of beginning an action; it does not mean to stand up.

Psalms 78:7–8

RSV has verses 5–8 as one sentence, which is too complex and long for easy reading. It is better to divide the material into several sentences.

The purpose of the instruction in Israel's "history of salvation" is not simply to transmit information; it is to ensure that each generation will *set their hope in God, not forget the works of God, and keep his commandments*, unlike their ancestors, who proved faithless and fickle. In many languages it will be necessary to shift from the nominal phrases in RSV and TEV to verb phrases in verse 7; for example, "they will hang their hearts on what God has said to them ... and will obey what he has commanded them to do." In verse 7b *forget* means to ignore, to disregard.

Since verse 8 is a logical conclusion to the preceding verses, it may be clearer in many languages to represent this fact by making that relation explicit; for example, "Because of this ..." or "Therefore...." In some languages it will be necessary to avoid the apposition of RSV and TEV (*fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation*) and say, for example, "their ancestors, who were a stubborn...." In verse 8b *rebellious* refers to the tendency of the Israelites to go against

God's commands. The expression *heart was not steadfast* is rendered in some languages idiomatically as "they did not rest on God with one heart" or "they did not put their heart in God's hands."

In line *c* *heart* is parallel with *spirit* in verse 8d; in each case the word denotes qualities of trust and faithfulness.⁸

Ps. 78:1–11. The poet begins very similarly to the poet of Ps. 49. He comes forward among the people as a preacher, and demands for his *tôra* a willing, attentive hearing. תּוֹרָה is the word for every human doctrine or instruction, especially for the prophetic discourse which sets forth and propagates the substance of the divine teaching. Asaph is a prophet, hence v. 2 is quoted in Matt. 13:34f. as ῥηθὲν διὰ τοῦ προφήτου. He here recounts to the people their history מִיְּמֵי־מִצְרָיִם, from that Egyptaeo-Sinaitic age of yore to which Israel's national independence and specific position in relation to the rest of the world goes back. It is not, however, with the external aspect of the history that he has to do, but with its internal teachings. לִשְׁמָהּ is an allegory or parable, παραβολή, more particularly the apophthegm as the characteristic species of poetry belonging to the *Chokma*, and then in general a discourse of an elevated style, full of figures, thoughtful, pithy, and rounded. דְּחִידָהּ is that which is entangled, knotted, involved, *perlexe dictum*. The poet, however, does not mean to say that he will literally discourse gnomic sentences and propound riddles, but that he will set forth the history of the fathers after the manner of a parable and riddle, so that it may become as a parable, i.e., a didactic history, and its events as marks of interrogation and nota-bene's to the present age. The LXX renders thus: ἀνοίξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὸ στόμα μου φθέγξομαι προβλήματα ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. Instead of this the Gospel by Matthew has: ἀνοίξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὸ στόμα μου ἐρεῦξομαι κεκρυμμένα ἀπὸ καταβολῆς (κόσμου), and recognises in this language of the Psalm a prophecy of Christ; because it is moulded so appropriately for the mouth of Him who is the Fulfiller not only of the Law and of Prophecy, but also of the vocation of the prophet. It is the object-clause to נִכְחֵד, and not a relative clause belonging to the "riddles out of the age of yore," that follows in v. 3 with אֲשֶׁר, for that which has been heard only becomes riddles by the appropriation and turn the poet gives to it. V. 3 begins a new period (cf. 69:27, Jer. 14:1, and frequently): What we have heard, and in consequence thereof known, and what our fathers have told us (word for word, like 44:2, Judg. 6:13), that will we not hide from their children (cf. Job 15:18). The accentuation is perfectly correct. The *Rebîa* by מְבַנִּיהֶם has a greater distinctive force than the *Rebîa* by (לְדוֹר) אַחֲרֵינוּ; it is therefore to be rendered: telling to the later generation (which is just what is intended by the offspring of the fathers) the glorious deeds of Jahve, etc. The *fut. consec.* יִקְרָא joins on to אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. Glorious deeds, proofs of power, miracles hath He wrought, and in connection therewith set up an admonition in Jacob, and laid down an order in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, viz., to propagate by tradition the remembrance of those mighty deeds (Ex. 13:8, 14, Deut. 4:9, and other passages). לְהוֹדִיעָם has the same object as וְהוֹדִיעָם in Deut. 4:9, Josh. 4:22. The matter in question is not the giving of the Law in general, as the purpose of which, the keeping of the laws, ought then to have been mentioned before anything else, but a precept, the purpose of which was the further proclamation of the *magnalia Dei*, and indirectly the promotion of trust in god and

⁸ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991). *A translator's handbook on the book of Psalms* (pp. 681–684). New York: United Bible Societies.

fidelity to the Law; cf. 81:5f., where the special precept concerning the celebration of the Feast of the Passover is described as a **עֲדוּת** laid down in Joseph. The following generation, the children, which shall be born in the course of the ages, were to know concerning His deeds, and also themselves to rise up (**יָקוּמוּ**, not: come into being, like the **יָבֵאוּ** of the older model-passage 22:32) and to tell them further to their children, in order that these might place their confidence in god (**שִׁים כָּסֶל**, like **שִׁית מַחֲסֶה** in 73:28), and might not forget the mighty deeds of God (Ps. 118:17), and might keep His commandments, being warned by the disobedience of the fathers. The generation of the latter is called **סֹנִיר וּמֶרֶה**, just as the degenerate son that is to be stoned is called in Deut. 21:18. **הִכִּין לֵב**, to direct one's heart, i.e., to give it the right direction or tendency, to put it into the right state, is to be understood after v. 37, 2 Chron. 20:33, Sir. 2:17.⁹

Homiletical Outline

⁹ Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol. 5, pp. 523–524). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

Psalm 78:1-8

Introduction:

Attention: I know I saw many of you at the funeral yesterday and it was tough day for our church, but one thing that remained constant was the talk of their legacy. What they left behind in the hearts of their family and people around them.

Subject: At times when people talk about legacy they are concerned what they left their future generations and that they were left better than when they grew up. That is true but that is not God's intention, God wants you to pass down his legacy not yours. A legacy is left by one generation listening to teachings of God, knowing God and teaching the next generation so that they won't make the mistakes of the past generation

Scripture: Psalms 78:1-8

Body:

- I. First Generation Hears V.1-3
 - a. Listen and Incline v.1
 - i. God's people
 - ii. Need to perceive
 1. God's instruction
 - iii. Concentrate and pay attention
 1. To the words of God's mouth
 - b. God will give you stories and lessons v.2
 - i. You will be given a parable
 1. A short moral story with symbolic meaning
 2. All of it was oral tradition
 - ii. You will be given a dark saying
 1. Lesson taught indirectly
 - iii. That which you have heard and known
 1. **You have known God's word**
 2. **You have known His actions**
 3. Your fathers have told you the word
 - c. Your generations depend on you listening
 - i. If you don't know what will you pass
 - ii. You will pass down what you know
- II. First Generation Teacher V.4-5
 - a. The teachings will not be hidden from the children
 - i. **Deuteronomy 6:2**
 - b. Generations will be told to praise the Lord
 - i. Based on wondrous works and deeds **Joshua 4:21-24**
 - c. His strength and wondrous works will be told
 - i. He established a testimony of Jacob
 1. doubtless referring to the legislation of the Pentateuch,

2. God gives laws to the people of Israel, who are the descendants of Jacob.”
 - ii. Appointed the law of Israel
 1. The Torah
 2. Which He commanded the fathers
 3. Deut 6:20
 - d. Your generations depend on you
 - i. To pass down the teachings
 - ii. To pass down God’s testimony in your life
 - iii. They can not praise what they do not find praiseworthy
- III. Second Generation Changes V.6-8
 - a. Teaching will bring the next generation to know Him
 - i. Even the next generation will know
 - b. The next generation will put their confidence in God
 - i. Not forgetting His works
 - ii. But keep His commandments
 - c. Not being like the previous generation **1 Corinthians 10:1-11**
 - i. Who were stubborn and rebellious
 - ii. Did not prepare their hearts
 - iii. Their spirit was not faithful to God

Conclusion: