

# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School  
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## Psalm 76 — The Resplendent Lion of Judah

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 76

- It is not possible to associate this psalm with any particular background events that may have contributed to its writing.
  - ✓ The Assyrian invasion of Judah is a popular view (Boice, Perowne, Wilcock; cp. the Septuagint's addition to the psalm heading: "with reference to the Assyrians").
  - ✓ Lord Byron, in his poem entitled "The Destruction of Sennacherib," may have borrowed some of the imagery from Psalm 76.
- Psalm 76 has clear divisions due to the use of "Selah" and balanced references to God:
  - ✓ "God is known" (*noda'*)—verse 1 (vv. 1-6).
  - ✓ God "is to be feared" (*nora'*)—verse 7 (vv. 7-12).
  - ✓ "Selah" (vv. 3 and 9) divide each of these two halves of the psalm into quarters: verses 1-3 and 4-6; verses 7-9 and 10-12.

### 2.0 Reading Psalm 76 (NAU)

**76:1** A Psalm of Asaph, a Song.

God is known in Judah;  
His name is great in Israel.

**76:2** His tabernacle is in Salem;  
His dwelling place also is in Zion.

**76:3** There He broke the flaming arrows,  
The shield and the sword and the weapons of war.

**Selah.**

- 76:4** You are resplendent,  
More majestic than the mountains of prey.
- 76:5** The stouthearted were plundered,  
They sank into sleep;  
And none of the warriors could use his hands.
- 76:6** At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,  
Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep.
- 76:7** You, even You, are to be feared;  
And who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?
- 76:8** You caused judgment to be heard from heaven;  
The earth feared and was still
- 76:9** When God arose to judgment,  
To save all the humble of the earth. **Selah.**
- 76:10** For the wrath of man shall praise You;  
With a remnant of wrath You will gird Yourself.
- 76:11** Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill *them*;  
Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared.
- 76:12** He will cut off the spirit of princes;  
He is feared by the kings of the earth.
- For the choir director; according to Jeduthun.

### 3.0 Understanding Psalm 76

#### 3.1 Outline

- I. Reputation of God (vv. 1-3)
- II. Rescue by God (vv. 4-6)
- III. Retribution from God (vv. 7-9)
- IV. Reverence for God (vv. 10-12)



#### 3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “His name is great”
  - See study notes on Psalm 75:1.
  - Judah knows and testifies to God’s reputation (His character and His works).
- **v. 2** “tabernacle . . . dwelling place”
  - These two terms are not the usual terms employed in reference to either the Tabernacle or the Temple.
  - Old Testament writers use both of these terms for the lair or the den of a lion.
    - ✓ “Tabernacle” (*sok*) = “lair” —see Psalm 10:9 and Jeremiah 25:38.
    - ✓ “Dwelling place” (*me’ona*) = “den” —see Job 38:39-40 (both words occur in v. 40) and Psalm 104:22.

- Cf. Amos 1:2 (“The LORD roars from Zion”); 3:8.
- **v. 2** “Salem”
  - Salem is the ancient name for the city that became known as *Jerusalem*.
  - See Genesis 14:18 (“Melchizedek king of Salem”).
- **v. 4** “You are resplendent”
  - An inclusio occurs with the personal pronoun “You” and the adjective “resplendent” (Hebrew: *na’or*) in this verse and the personal pronoun “You” and the adjective “feared” (Hebrew: *nora’*) in verse 7, thus marking of this section of the psalm.
  - “Feared” also marks verses 7 and 12 (another inclusio), thus effectively marking out the two halves of the second half of the psalm (confirmed by the placement of “Selah”).
- **v. 4** “the mountains of prey”
  - The “prey” of lions: Job 38:39; Psalm 104:21; Isaiah 5:29; 31:4.
  - Another possible way to translate the Hebrew is “the everlasting mountains,” a possible reference to Mt. Zion (VanGemenen).
- **v. 9** “To save all the humble of the earth”
  - Israel is not the only object of God’s mercy. He cares for all oppressed and afflicted people on earth.
  - Universal references such as this one indicate that the psalmist has the ultimate kingdom of God on earth in mind.
- **v. 10** “the wrath of man shall praise You”
  - Hostility against God results in praise to God (see Acts 4:24-28).
- **v. 11** “Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill *them*”
  - The theology of hope expressed in verse 10 “must go hand in hand with a present quality of life. So verse 11 sounds the challenge to those who share such a hope not only to ‘make vows to the LORD’ but also to ‘perform [or fulfill] them,’ and to acknowledge in daily life that they stand under the authority of an awesome God to whom they must bring gifts or pay tribute. To live with hope is not a form of escapism. It is a challenge to live day by day responsibly and in obedience to the God who is central to such hope. . . . Hope without commitment is wishful daydreaming; commitment without hope can end in disillusionment.” — Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 247.

- **Subscript:** “according to Jeduthun”
  - See notes on Psalm 61:Subscription.
  - See 1 Chronicles 16:41-42; 25:1-6—name of a Temple choirmaster.

#### 4.0 Singing Psalm 76

##### Israel Saved, and the Assyrians Destroyed

(Tune: “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” or “Am I A Soldier of the Cross?”)



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| <p><b>1</b> In Judah God of old was known;<br/>His name in Isr’el great;<br/>In Salem stood his holy throne,<br/>And Zion was his seat.</p> <p><b>3</b> From Zion went his dreadful word,<br/>And broke the threat’ning spear,<br/>The bow, the arrows, and the sword,<br/>And crushed th’ Assyrian war.</p> <p><b>5</b> ’Twas Zion’s King that stopped the breath<br/>Of captains and their bands;<br/>The men of might slept fast in death,<br/>And never found their hands.</p> <p><b>7</b> What power can stand before thy sight,<br/>When once thy wrath appears?<br/>When heav’n shines round with<br/>dreadful light,<br/>The earth lies still and fears.</p> <p><b>9</b> [Vow to the Lord, and tribute bring,<br/>Ye princes, fear his frown;<br/>His terror shakes the proudest king,<br/>And cuts an army down.</p> | <p><b>2</b> Among the praises of his saints<br/>His dwelling there he chose;<br/>There he received their just complaints<br/>Against their haughty foes.</p> <p><b>4</b> What are the earth’s wide kingdoms else<br/>But mighty hills of prey?<br/>The hill on which Jehovah dwells<br/>Is glorious more than they.</p> <p><b>6</b> At thy rebuke, O Jacob’s God,<br/>Both horse and chariot fell:<br/>Who knows the terrors of thy rod?<br/>Thy vengeance who can tell?</p> <p><b>8</b> When God in his own sovereign ways<br/>Comes down to save th’ oppressed,<br/>The wrath of man shall work his praise,<br/>And he’ll restrain the rest.</p> <p><b>10</b> The thunder of his sharp rebuke<br/>Our haughty foes shall feel;<br/>For Jacob’s God hath not forsook<br/>But dwells in Zion still.]</p> |
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— Isaac Watts

#### 5.0 Praying Psalm 76

- Oh God, You are great in this world, our church, and my life. [v. 1]
- Lord, put an end to wars against Your people. [vv. 3-6]
- Create in my heart a godly fear of You, Father. [v. 7]
- Help me to fulfill my commitment to honor and serve You. [v. 11]
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#### 6.0 Applying Psalm 76

- We ought to fear God and Him alone.
- Hope should be the catalyst for commitment and service.