

Psalm 80:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us.

Analysis

Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. This urgent plea invokes God's presence associated with the wilderness tabernacle's marching order. The tribal sequence—Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh—deliberately recalls Numbers 2:18-24, where these tribes camped on the tabernacle's west side behind the ark. When Israel marched, these tribes followed the ark, positioned to witness God's visible glory leading them (Numbers 10:22-24).

"Stir up thy strength" (orerah et-gevuratekha, עֹרֶה אֶת-גְּבוּרָתֶךָ) uses *ur* (עוֹר), meaning to awake, rouse, stir up—not implying God sleeps but employing anthropomorphic language expressing urgency. The phrase parallels Psalm 44:23: "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?" The theology is bold: God appears inactive while His people suffer; therefore, awaken Your power, demonstrate Your strength on our behalf. *Gevurah* (גְּבוּרָה) emphasizes God's mighty acts, especially deliverance and warfare on Israel's behalf.

"Come and save us" (lekha lishu'at lu lanu, לְךָ לִשְׁעָתָה לְנוּ) directly requests divine intervention—not distant sympathy but coming in person to rescue. The verb *yasha* (עִשָּׂא, save) is root of *Yeshua* (Jesus), emphasizing deliverance, salvation, spacious relief from distress. The plural "us" indicates corporate lament: the entire community faces crisis requiring God's manifest presence and power. The verse asserts: as You led our fathers victoriously through wilderness, come lead us now to deliverance.

Historical Context

Psalm 80 is attributed to Asaph, a Levitical worship leader under David (1 Chronicles 25:1-2). The psalm likely originates from the Northern Kingdom crisis—either the Assyrian conquest of 722 BC (when Ephraim and Manasseh's tribal territories were destroyed) or earlier Aramean oppression under kings like Hazael. The specific mention of northern tribes (Ephraim, Manasseh) alongside Benjamin suggests concerns about Israel's northern territories. The vineyard imagery throughout Psalm 80 reflects Isaiah 5's vineyard parable, both addressing national judgment and hope for restoration.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically to ask God to 'stir up' His strength when He never actually sleeps or loses power?
2. How does recalling God's past mighty acts (wilderness journey, ark leading Israel) strengthen faith when facing present crises?
3. Why might the psalmist invoke these specific tribes, and how does corporate identity shape communal lament?

Interlinear Text

גָּבוֹתָת בָּ	אַת	עֹרֶך הַ	וּמְנַשֶּׁה הַ	וּבְנֵי מִ	אַפְרַיִם יַמָּן לִפְנֵי	בְּ
Before	Ephraim	and Benjamin	and Manasseh	stir up	H853	thy strength
H6440	H669	H1144	H4519	H5782		H1369
לְנַהֲוָה לְיִנְשַׁע מֶה וְלִכְתֵּב הַ						
H1980	and save	H0				
	H3444					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 35:23 (Parallel theme): Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

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