

Psalms 83:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

Analysis

For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. The psalmist directs God's attention to urgent danger: His enemies are in violent uproar. The Hebrew oyeyeikha yehemayun (אֹיְבֶיךָ יְהִמְמִין), "your enemies make a tumult") uses hamah (הָמָה), meaning to roar, growl, be in commotion—like waves crashing or armies assembling for battle. This isn't quiet scheming but open, aggressive mobilization against God Himself.

They that hate thee have lifted up the head (u-mesan'ekha nas'u rosh, וְמִשְׁתַּאֲגִיבְךָ נָשַׁעַ רָשֶׁךָ) depicts arrogant defiance. To "lift up the head" means to act boldly, assume authority, display confidence—the opposite of shame or submission. These enemies don't merely dislike Israel; they hate Yahweh Himself and openly challenge His authority. The parallelism emphasizes that opposition to Israel IS opposition to God—attacking His covenant people means attacking Him. This theological principle undergirds the entire psalm: Israel's enemies are ultimately God's enemies.

Notice the possessive pronouns: "thine enemies," "they that hate thee." The psalmist doesn't say "our enemies" but frames the conflict as belonging to God. This shifts the battle's nature from national survival to cosmic conflict between the Creator and rebellious creation. When believers face opposition, recognizing it as ultimately directed at God (not ourselves) transforms our perspective—we aren't defending ourselves but appealing to God to defend His own name and purposes.

Historical Context

The ancient Near East knew constant warfare between city-states and kingdoms. Nations formed alliances, broke treaties, and invaded neighbors regularly. Israel's unique vulnerability was geographic—situated at the crossroads between major empires (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon), lacking natural defenses, and surrounded by smaller hostile nations (Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia). Survival required divine intervention, not superior military might. The psalm reflects this precarious existence where confederated enemies could overwhelm Israel unless God intervened. This historical reality made trust in God's protection not merely theological but existentially necessary for national survival.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that enemies of God's people are ultimately enemies of God Himself change your perspective on opposition you face?
2. What does it mean practically to shift from "our enemies" to "thine enemies" when praying about conflicts or persecution?
3. In what ways do modern enemies of the gospel demonstrate the same arrogant defiance ("lifting up the head") described in this verse?

Interlinear Text

וְמִשְׁתָּא אַבְנֵת
H3588 H2009 For lo thine enemies H341 make a tumult H1993 and they that hate H8130

רָאשָׁךְ שָׁאוֹל
thee have lifted up H5375 the head H7218

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 81:15 (Parallel theme): The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever.

Matthew 27:24 (Parallel theme): When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

Isaiah 17:12 (Parallel theme): Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!

Jeremiah 1:19 (Parallel theme): And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Judges 8:28 (Parallel theme): Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.