

Psalms 83:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

Analysis

Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

The mention of Ashshur (אַשּׁוּר, Assyria) escalates the threat dramatically. Assyria was the ancient world's military superpower, eventually conquering the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC. The verb nilvah (נִלְוָה, "is joined") indicates Assyria allied with the coalition, adding imperial might to regional powers. Hayu zero'a livnei-Lot (הַיּוּ זֶרְעָם לְבָנֵי-לֹט, "they have been an arm to the children of Lot") uses zero'a (זרע, "arm"), symbolizing military strength. Assyria provides muscle for Moab and Ammon's ambitions.

This alliance pattern appears throughout history: great powers backing regional conflicts to advance imperial interests. Assyria's involvement transforms local dispute into existential threat—the superpower's resources and military machine now serve the confederacy's genocidal aims. The children of Lot (Moab and Ammon) couldn't destroy Israel alone, but with Assyrian backing they pose mortal danger.

Selah (הֲלֹא) appears here, the musical notation meaning pause, reflect, consider the weight of what was just said. The psalmist wants readers to absorb this reality: the world's greatest empire has joined the conspiracy. This demands pause for meditation on danger's magnitude and corresponding need for divine intervention. When human powers align against God's purposes, only God Himself can deliver. The pause invites faith: Will you trust God even against imperial might?

Historical Context

Assyria dominated the ancient Near East from roughly 900-600 BC, perfecting military tactics, siege warfare, and brutal subjugation. Their policy of mass deportation and population exchange (2 Kings 17:24) destroyed national identities. Assyrian annals boast of cities destroyed, populations slaughtered, kings flayed alive. Isaiah 10:5-19 calls Assyria "the rod of mine anger," God's instrument for judging rebellious Israel, yet also prophesies Assyria's own judgment for arrogant pride. When Psalm 83 lists Assyria joining the confederacy, original audiences would understand this as ultimate threat—the military juggernaut that no nation could resist. Yet God delivered: one angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers besieging Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What "Selah moments" in your spiritual life require pausing to fully absorb the magnitude of challenges you face and your need for God?
2. How does recognizing that world powers (ancient or modern) may oppose God's purposes strengthen rather than weaken faith?
3. When have you experienced God's deliverance despite seemingly overwhelming opposition backed by superior force or authority?

Interlinear Text

גַם אֲשֶׁר נִלְתָּה עַמּוּד יְהוָה וְעַל־יְהוָה
H1571 Assur also is joined H5973 H1961 with them they have holpen
H804 H3867 H2220

לְבָנָיו לְוִתְּלָהָה:
the children of Lot Selah
H1121 H3876 H5542

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 2:9 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.

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