

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith

LXXVIII: Invitation To Learn To Heed God From The Lessons Of History

B. Invitation To Learn To Heed God From Israel's Failure In The Wilderness

(Psalm 78:17-41)

I. Introduction

- A. The spiritual lessons of Biblical history are more important than even the lessons of secular history.
- B. Psalm 78:1-72 deals with Biblical history's repeat lessons on heeding God, and we view the second segment of that psalm in verses 17-41 on the lesson of Israel's failure in the wilderness for our insight and edification:

II. Invitation To Learn To Heed God From Israel's Failure In The Wilderness, Psalm 78:17-41.

- A. The introductory remarks of this psalm comprise the first part of verse one in the Hebrew text (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 1042), so we stay with the numbering system of the English Bible.
- B. By way of review, in our last lesson, we learned the men of Ephraim failed to recall God's faithfulness to help their forefathers in Israel's wilderness journeys, thus failing to trust God in the trials they themselves faced.
- C. However, Psalm 78:17-41 **then** reports how their **forefathers** in the **wilderness ALSO failed to trust God**, so we translate those verses (with help from the NIV) as follows: (17) "But they continued to sin against Him, rebelling in the desert against the Most High." (18) "They willfully put El(ohim) to the test by demanding the food they craved." (19) "They spoke against Elohim, saying, 'Can El(ohim) spread a table in the desert?'" (20) "'When He struck the rock, water gushed out, and streams flowed abundantly. But can He also give us food? Can He supply meat for His people?'" (21) "When Jahweh heard them, He was very angry; His fire broke out against Jacob, and His wrath rose against Israel," (22) "because they did not believe in Elohim nor did they trust in His deliverance." (23) "Yet He gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens;" (24) "He rained down manna for the people to eat, He gave them the grain of heaven." (25) "Men ate the bread of angels; He sent them all the food they could eat." (26) "He let loose the east wind from the heavens and led forth the south wind by His power." (27) "He rained meat down on them like dust, flying birds like sand on the seashore." (28) "He made them come down inside their camp, all around their tents." (29) "They ate until they had more than enough, for He had given them what they craved." (30) "But before they turned from the food they craved, even while it was still in their mouths," (31) "the anger of Elohim rose against them; He put to death the sturdiest among them, cutting down the young men of Israel." (32) "But in spite of all this, they kept on sinning; in spite of His wonders, they did not believe." (33) "So He ended their days in futility and their years in terror." (34) "Whenever He slew them, they would seek Him; they eagerly turned to El(ohim) again." (35) "They remembered that Elohim was their Rock, that El(ohim) Most High was their Redeemer." (36) "But then they would flatter Him with their mouths, lying to Him with their tongues;" (37) "their hearts were not loyal to Him, they were not faithful to His covenant." (38) "Yet He was merciful; He forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time He restrained His anger and did not stir up His full wrath." (39) "He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return." (40) "How often they rebelled against Him in the desert and grieved Him in the wasteland!" (41) "Again and again they put El(ohim) to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel!"
- D. We note significant observations and applications of this psalm (as follows): where the men of Ephraim had failed to recall God's goodness to the generation of Israel that experienced the wilderness journeys to the Promised Land (Psalm 78:1-16), even that generation in the wilderness in turn miserably failed to trust the Lord (Psalm 78:17-41), for though witnessing God miraculously provide water from the rock, they sinfully put Him to the test, questioning if He could set a table of food in the wilderness, v. 17-22. Then, when God abundantly provided what to Israel then was a delicacy in quail, instead of being thankful, they lustfully gorged on the meat, so God in wrath slew many of them, v. 23-31. However, that generation kept on sinning, so God would keep on terrorizing them with painful judgments until they flattered God, producing a lying repentance (v. 32-37). Yet, God was still merciful to them, remembering their human weakness, v. 38-41.

Lesson: *Though the men of Ephraim failed to recall God's great provisions for their forefathers who had made the wilderness journey to the Promised Land, that generation in the wilderness in turn was also dreadfully unfaithful to the Lord, inciting His wrath and terrorizing punishment. Yet, in His grace, God did not destroy that generation!*

Application: *May we learn from the lessons of Bible history to trust God in facing hardships lest we gravely sin!*