

Psalm 77: 1, 2, 11-20 NIV

“Have you thought about God’s mighty deeds?”

For the director of music.

For Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A psalm.

“I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. 2 When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands, and I would not be comforted.

“11 I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. 12 I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.” 13 Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God?

“14 You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. 15 With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

“16 The waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. 17 The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. 18 Your thunder

was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked.

“19 Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. 20 You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”¹

Last week we talked of the difference between an assumption and a presumption.

You possibly share my difficulty finding differences in them.

We said that folks assume-presume many things about the Bible.

Consider three common presumptions regarding the Bible:

1. In Bible times, folks were old fashioned, not sophisticated or advanced;

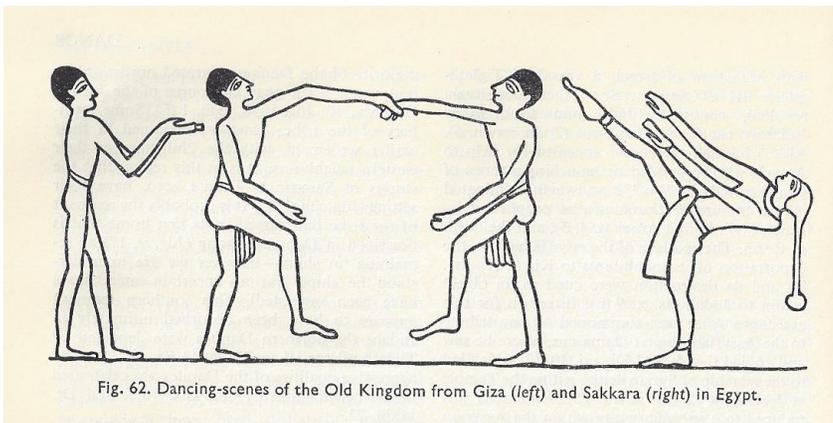
¹ In the Hebrew of verses 3, 9, & 15 of this Psalm, the word *Selah* appears. Many scholars think *Selah* may be a musical notation similar to *forte*, to lift up or sing loudly. The contexts in which *Selah* occurs make me wonder if the term might rather be related to a similar sounding word meaning weigh or balance (see Job 28:16). *Selah* would be a call to silence, where one weighs carefully what was just said or consecrates.

2. The Bible is filled with meaningless old names and long lists that make little sense today;
3. Miracles constantly occurred, which people naively believed.

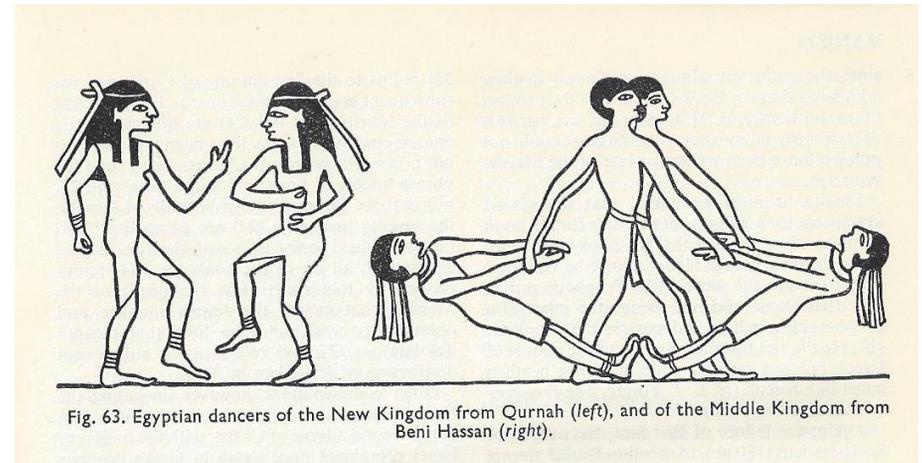
That all people in Bible times were ignorant and old fashioned is myth.

Dancing style often reflects the contemporary culture.

Do you see any similarities between these dancing styles of antiquity and those currently practiced?



Old Egyptian Kingdom-2686-2181 BC²



Middle, circa 2015-1710 BC; New, 1570-1070 BC

Most modern philosophies merely modify what Greek, Persian and other thinkers originated centuries ago.

A great deal of modern architecture is based on centuries-old concepts.

In fact many ancient construction methods remain a mystery.

How the ancients moved massive foundation stones long distances and elevated them leaves modern engineers scratching their heads.

Roman aqueducts stretched for miles across hills and valleys bringing fresh water to their cities across Europe and the Ancient Near East.

² *New Bible Dictionary*, J.D. Douglas, editor, Inter-Varsity Fellowship, London, 1962, pp. 290,291 and see accompanying article by Douglas on page 289.



Roman engineers designed a main water system that ran under some seats of Rome’s 50,000 seat Colosseum.



Many thirsty Roman citizens watching gladiator contests probably never knew that precious water ran beneath them.

The ancients didn’t enjoy the benefits of steam power, combustion engines, and electronics, but they did not lack sophistication.

They knew clothing elegance, exquisite dining, and fine wines.

They loved music,³ companionship, travel, and entertainment.

The same issues afflicted people in Bible times that vex modern societies.

Their sophistication and ability to adapt equaled our contemporaries’.

In my opinion, we wrongly assume that people in Bible times were less advanced.

Why did the Bible writers concern themselves with long lists of names?

County recorders and title offices today keep careful records of land ownership.

Most of us have bought or sold some type of real estate.

Inheritance is always important.

“Perhaps the most unusual legacy was by the poet and radical writer, Heinrich Heine.

³ Job (21:11, 12 NIV) observed how the children of wealthy folks “dance about. They sing to the music of tambourine and harp; they make merry to the sound of the flute.”

Married for 15 years to a vain and rude wife, he bequeathed to her his whole estate on condition that she marry again ‘**because then there will be at least one man who will regret my death.**’⁴

Heine could not have done that in ancient Israel.

When Israel first entered the land of Canaan, each family of each tribe received land into perpetuity.

They could lease their land for 49 years, but never sell it.

They set permanent boundary stones to mark each family’s property.

Israel’s kings and authorities could not take that land from the family’s heirs.

The arrangement prevented homelessness and poor people.

When those Bible genealogies mentioned “Joe the son of John, the son

of . . .” those family records originally helped them trace land ownership.⁵

Psalm 77’s names involved another factor.

The psalm begins: “**For the director of music. For Jeduthun. Of Asaph.**”

Israel’s twelve tribes descended from Jacob’s dozen sons (God changed Jacob’s name to Israel).

When the tribes received their land inheritances, the tribe descended from Jacob’s son Levi obtained no land.

THE REASON: God chose the Levi tribe to be priests and religious workers.

The Levites received little real estate.

The other tribes tithed so the Levites would be free to do religious duties.

About 1000 BC, King David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem because he intended to build a permanent Temple there.

David reassigned many of the Levite duties.

⁴ Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), German poet and writer, *THE WIT'S THESAURUS*

⁵ Genealogies also traced qualifications for the priesthood.

Those who formerly carried the big tabernacle (tent), its hardware, and all the other implements became musicians: singers, percussionists, harpists, etc.

David put Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun (aka Ethan) in charge of the worship music.

These facts help us see that descendants of Asaph and Jeduthun either composed Psalm 77 or someone wrote it according to their style. Thus: **“For the director of music. For Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A psalm.”**

- 1. Ancient people evidently faced the same concerns as modern folks and had equal ability to deal with life issues.**
- 2. Bible people kept careful genealogical records primarily for inheritance reasons.**
- 3. It seems as if the Bible records constant miracles.**

Most of those phenomena occurred, however, during the lives of Moses and Elijah, who probably lived about 600 years apart.

The miracles Psalm 77 mentions occurred during Moses’ time about 1450 BC.

The author of this psalm lived almost a thousand years later and wondered why he and his contemporaries didn’t see wonders like the ones performed in Moses’ day.

The verses in left out of today’s Psalm 77 reading tell the author’s disappointment.

“My heart meditated and my spirit asked:

⁷ ‘Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? ⁸ Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time?

“⁹ Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?” ¹⁰ Then I thought, ‘To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand.’”

The Book of Exodus refers to God’s mighty hand, which empowered Moses and Israel during the exodus.⁶

⁶ Exodus 6:1; 7:5; etc.

The first 15 chapters of Exodus refer often to God stretching out his mighty hand while rescuing Israel.

The Psalm 77 author and we face a hard truth:

At times, God intervenes with a mighty hand.

Sometimes He remains silent.

God acts according to His purposes, not our wishes and plans.

Human logic fails in efforts to comprehend His ways.

- **Jesus’ forerunner, John the Baptist, performed no recorded miracles.**
- **King Herod Agrippa I beheaded the Apostle James.**
- **Herod’s men moved quickly to arrest Peter intending to execute him; God miraculously rescued Peter.**
- **James’s brother John lived to be an old man.**

Was John more important to the Kingdom than James?

We cannot answer that question.

God never told us the why of these inequities.

Is there a miracle you could see performed that would lead you completely to God?

The psalmist reflected on the “glory” days, when rescuing Israel from Egypt, God performed dozens of miracles.

No people ever enjoyed as many miracles on their behalf as Israel saw.

Yet as soon as Israel got out in the desert and became thirsty, they complained.

During their wilderness testing, they offended God by constantly murmuring.

Jesus’ contemporaries said, “Show us a sign from heaven and we’ll believe you.”

Jesus showed them many miraculous signs but they attributed them to the devil.

That’s why Jesus said, that they would see no more signs except the sign of Jonah—meaning his resurrection.

Unless we repent, give ourselves to God in Christ, and fully trust Him, no miracle will help us.

We must rid ourselves of jealousy, rage, greed--everything that grieves God’s Spirit.

In our time, many, especially young people, are renouncing or disregarding God.

In this turmoil and unbelief, we believers must seriously, openly, faithfully trust God our Creator.

We must earnestly, consciously, encourage one another.

We would do well to post this scripture where we shall see it daily:

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us

encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”⁷

**On that Day,
every Democrat,
every Independent,
every Republican
and those with no political affiliation
will stand before God
with people of all nations
from all eras to be judged
by Christ’s standard of love and obedience.**

“A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.”⁸ Jesus . . .

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⁷ Hebrews 10: 24, 25 NIV

⁸ John 5:28, 29, NIV