

Exodus Psalms: Psalm 105, Remember and Obey

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Keywords

Psalm 105, Abrahamic Covenant, Exodus, Divine Providence, Biblical Remembrance, Plagues of Egypt, Joseph Narrative, Covenant Promises, Historical Editing, Obedience

Abstract

This lecture by Dr. David Emanuel analyzes Psalm 105, emphasizing how the psalm selectively recounts Israel's historical narrative from the Abrahamic covenant through the wilderness journey to highlight God's absolute sovereignty and unyielding faithfulness. Unlike Psalm 78, which centers on human rebellion and failure, Psalm 105 intentionally filters out Israel's shortcomings to present God as a master puppeteer who supernaturally protects His covenant promises and orchestrates every event. The psalmist demonstrates that biblical remembrance is an active, vocal, and life-altering commitment rather than passive nostalgia. Ultimately, the historical retrospective culminates in the primary theological message that God's faithful fulfillment of His promises places an ongoing obligation on His people to observe His statutes and keep His laws.

Outline

I. Introduction and Macro-Structural Context of Psalm 105

A. Comparison with Psalm 78

1. Psalm 78 focuses heavily (80–90%) on Israelite rebellion set against divine miracles.
2. Psalm 105 presents a long historical scope starting from the patriarchs to the Promised Land, omitting negative events.

B. Literary Intertextuality and Written Tradition

1. Extensive use of biblical allusion linking back to earlier Israelite written traditions (Genesis and Exodus).
2. Reuse of Psalm 105:1–15 in 1 Chronicles 16, where the chronicler appropriates the psalmist's material.

C. Post-Exilic Context and Theological Purpose

1. Likely composed during or after the Babylonian exile to reassure a displaced or newly returned population of their divine right to the land.
2. Centers on God's covenantal faithfulness, divine protection, and the promise of land.

II. Summons to Worship and the Nature of Biblical Remembrance (vv. 1–6)

A. Call to Praise and Public Declaration

1. The imperative to give thanks (Hebrew: *todah* / *hoda'a*) implies verbal confession and detailed public recitation of God's deeds.

2. Illustration from Joshua 7 (Achan's confession) demonstrating *todah* as vocalizing truth.

B. The Concept of Biblical Remembrance (v. 5)

1. Remembrance in biblical thought is 99% action-oriented rather than a passive mental or nostalgic exercise.

2. Designed to transform behavior and prompt practical obedience based on God's miraculous works (*niflahot*).

III. The Abrahamic Covenant: The Foundational Plot Element (vv. 7–11)

A. Allusion to Genesis 15

1. Direct connection to the divine oath pledging the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants.

2. Subtle modification: filters out promises of progeny and protection to focus exclusively on the inheritance of land.

B. The Threat-and-Preservation Motif

1. The overarching narrative structure follows the covenant promise hanging in jeopardy across history.

2. God intervenes supernaturally at every critical juncture to shield the covenant from failure.

IV. Historical Narratives of Divine Preservation of the Promise

A. The Patriarchal Era (vv. 12–15)

1. Allusion to Genesis 34: The phrase 'few men in number' recalls Jacob's fear of destruction after the massacre at Shechem.

2. Allusion to Genesis 20: God rebukes King Abimelech ('touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm') using a chiasmic poetic structure.

B. The Joseph Narrative (vv. 16–22)

1. Elevated divine causality: God directly calls for the famine (unlike Genesis, which simply notes its occurrence).

2. The trials of Joseph treated as divine testing ('the word of the Lord tested him') to refine and prepare him.

3. Omission of human evil: Potiphar's wife and the brothers' betrayal are completely absent.

4. Ambiguity of 'the king sent and released him'—can be read as God sending the king to execute His divine plan.

C. Israel's Growth and Oppression in Egypt (vv. 23–27)

1. God explicitly causes Israel to become fruitful and strong.

2. Use of literary *inclusio*: The word 'Egypt' opens the section and is intentionally avoided (using 'land of Ham' or pronouns) until Israel departs.

3. Moses and Aaron receive a perfunctory cameo, while God performs all signs and wonders directly.

V. The Seven-Plague Sequence: Increasing Divine Intensity (vv. 28–38)

A. Structure and Unique Order of the Plagues

1. Presents seven plagues rather than the ten of Exodus (similar to the seven-plague rendition in Psalm 78).
2. Begins with darkness (moved from ninth position in Exodus to first position) as an initial, non-destructive warning.

B. Progressive Intensity of the Plagues

1. Blood: Affects water and kills fish without directly harming humans.
2. Frogs: Nuisance plague penetrating royal chambers without physical destruction.
3. Swarms and Gnats (Arov): Non-destructive infestation across the territory.
4. Hail and Locusts: Two verses allocated per plague, destroying crops, vegetation, and fruit.
5. Death of the Firstborn: The ultimate plague demonstrating God's direct, sovereign judgment and selective holy power.

VI. The Wilderness Journey and Desert Preservation (vv. 39–43)

A. Exodus Departure and Wealth

1. Israel exits with silver and gold, accompanied by Egypt's relief at their departure.

B. Creation Threats and Divine Protection

1. Threat shifts from human kings to environmental harshness (sun, heat, hunger, thirst).
2. The cloud as a protective covering against intense heat (reflecting Isaiah 4:5 and Ben Sira) rather than merely a navigational guide.

C. Total Exclusion of Desert Rebellions

1. Omission of complaints for food/water, the golden calf, Kadesh-barnea rebellion, and Sinai law-giving.
2. Presents the journey as a purely joyous and triumphant procession guided by divine faithfulness.

VII. Conclusion and Human Obligation (vv. 44–45)

A. Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant

1. God faithfully grants the lands of the nations and the fruits of others' labor to His people.

B. The Purpose of Salvation: Covenant Obedience

1. Final climax (v. 45): God's redemption demands that His people keep His statutes and observe His laws.
2. Chiastic structure in v. 45 reinforces the ultimate lesson: divine grace and covenant preservation require a lifestyle of responsive obedience.