

Lessons From the Past



SABBATH—MARCH 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 78; Psalm 105; Galatians 3:29; Psalm 106; Psalm 80; Numbers 6:22–27; Psalm 135.

The history about the Israelite people in the Bible is also the story about our own spiritual history.

MEMORY VERSE: “We have heard the story, and we know it well. Our fathers told it to us. And we will not forget it. Our people will be telling this story to the last [final] generation [people who live after us]. We will all praise the LORD and tell about the amazing [wonderful] things he did” (Psalm 78:3, 4, ERV).

THE BOOK OF PSALMS is filled with poems that praise the Lord and His mighty acts. These poems talk about Israel's history. These poems teach us about the things that God did in the past to save His people. These poems are named the history poems. Some of the history poems tell God's people to learn from the mistakes that their fathers made in the past. Some of the history poems are hymns. These hymns talk about the wonderful things God did for His people to make their faith strong in Him.

The history poems help us understand that our lives are part of Israel's history. Israel's history in the Bible is also our history. God adopted us into His family. Because of Jesus, God made us part of the people of Israel (Romans 8:15; Romans 9:24–26; Galatians 4:6, 7). So, the history about the Israelite people in the Bible is also the story about our own spiritual history. We must learn from their past, too. As God's people, we have a part in His plan in the worldwide war between good and evil, just as the Israelites did in Old Testament times.

GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES (Psalm 78)

Read Psalm 78. In this poem, the poet Asaph talks about three experiences that happened in Israel's past. What were they? What lessons do these experiences teach us?

Asaph reviews Israel's past. History shows us that God keeps His promises. But the people break their promises to God. The people should learn from the mistakes of the past. They should teach their children to trust God and have faith in His promises. Asaph's poem is the same as a picture story (Psalm 78:2). Jesus used picture stories to teach important Bible truth to His followers (Matthew 13:34, 35). In the same way, Asaph wants his poem to teach the Israelites important spiritual lessons.

The poem talks about the time of the Exodus (Psalm 78:9–54). The Exodus was the time when God saved His people from the Egyptians. The poem also talks about the time when God led His people to the Promised Land (Psalm 78:55–64) and the time of King David (Psalm 78:65–72). God did many mighty acts for His people during these times. But the people broke their promise with God. Israel's history shows us, again and again, that the people refused to trust God. Israel trusted false gods and worshiped them (Psalm 78:58).

Asaph wants his people to understand why their fathers rejected God in the past. Their fathers forgot everything God did for them. They didn't trust God. They gave God tests (Psalm 78:18, 41, 56). They fought against Him. They failed to keep His law, His promise, and His rules (Psalm 78:10, 37, 56). Asaph shows from history that the reason that Israel rejected God was because they failed to trust the Lord (Psalm 78:7, 8).

When we read Psalm 78, we may get upset with the people. We may ask ourselves, "Why are they so stubborn? Why don't they learn from the mistakes of the past?" Before we judge the Israelites, we should think about ourselves. How often do we forget the wonderful things God did for us in the past? How often do we forget to do the things God asks? Psalm 78 teaches us that we must not trust in ourselves. We must trust in God and His mercy. When Israel fought battles in their own strength, without God's help, they lost (Psalm 78:9, 62–64). We must trust in God first or we will fail in the end in everything we do.

What lessons have you learned from your past mistakes?



Israel's history shows us, again and again, that the people refused to trust God.

REMEMBERING OUR HISTORY (Psalm 105)

Read Psalm 105. What time in history does Psalm 105 talk about? What lessons do these experiences teach us?



God's wonderful works in the past help us to understand that His love for us never changes.

Psalm 105 talks about God's promise with His people. God promised to give the Promised Land to Abraham and his future children. God made the same promise to Isaac and Jacob. Then God kept the promise to Joseph, Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua. God gave His people the land of Canaan. Psalm 105 gives hope to God's people in all times. God's wonderful works in the past help us to understand that His love for us never changes. So, we can trust in God's love for us forever (Psalm 105:1–5, 7, 8).

Psalm 105 shows all the wonderful things God did in the past to help His people. (As we saw yesterday, Psalm 78 did the same thing.) God's wonderful works help us to praise God and trust in Him. Psalm 105 is different from Psalm 78 because it doesn't talk about the people's past mistakes. That's because Psalm 78 was written for a different reason.

In Psalm 105, we learn about Israel's history in the lives of its first fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and other early leaders. These men were patient during hard times. They obeyed God. God rewarded their obedience. So, Psalm 105 invites people to follow the example of the first fathers of Israel. We must have faith and trust in God. We must wait on Him to save us.

Psalm 105 is also a hymn (Psalm 105:1–7) that teaches us an important Bible truth: if we want to praise God fully, we must know about our history. When we know our history, our faith will grow strong. Knowledge about our past gives us many reasons to praise God.

In Psalm 105, the poet names God's people the children of Abraham and Jacob (Psalm 105:6). These names show us that Israel became a people because God kept His promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:3–6). The poet reminds the people that the whole earth is under the control of the Lord their God (Psalm 96:1; Psalm 97:1). This all-powerful God loves all people the same as He loves His people Israel.

Psalm 105 is an invitation to everyone in every age to trust in the Lord.

How are we, as Seventh-day Adventists, the children of Abraham? (Read Galatians 3:29 for the answer.) What lessons do we learn from Israel's history?

CONFESSING OUR SINS (Psalm 106)

Read Psalm 106. What things from Israel’s past does this poem talk about? What lessons do these things teach us?

Psalm 106 talks about important experiences in Israel’s history. These past experiences include Israel’s leaving Egypt, traveling in the desert, and living in the Promised Land. Psalm 106 talks about the awful sins that the Israelites did in the past. God punished His people for these sins. He allowed the Babylonians to take His people to Babylon. So, we believe that Psalm 106 was written either when the Israelites were prisoners in Babylon or after they came back home.

In Psalm 106, the poet tells God’s people about their past and the lessons they should have learned from their own history. Psalm 106 says that God keeps His promise. Because of His promise and His mercy, God saved His people in the past (Psalm 106:45). The poet hopes that God will again give blessings to His people who have confessed their sins. God’s people are living in foreign lands. The poet prays that God will bring His people home again (Psalm 106:47). The poet’s prayer of faith comes from his trust in God. The poet trusts God to save His people now because He saved them in the past (Psalm 106:1–3). The poet also trusts in God’s love for His people. The poet knows that the Lord always keeps His promise.

When the people remember their history, they confess their sins. They understand that they were not better than their fathers were in the past. The people know that they are really worse than their fathers were. Why? Because the people know that the Babylonians took their fathers away when they sinned, and the people sinned anyway. God was very patient with His people. He showed them mercy and saved them. We also know what happened in the past. We know about God’s love and His saving mercy. He gave Jesus to us to show us these things. So, we have no excuse for forgetting God.

Psalm 106 is good news. God’s love always wins in the end (Psalm 106:8–10, 30, 43–46). Our sin is no match for God or His strength!

Psalm 106:13 says: “But they quickly [soon] forgot about what he did. They did not listen to his advice” (ERV). Why is it so easy for us to do the same thing?



In Psalm 106, the poet tells God’s people about their past and the lessons they should have learned from their own history (Numbers 20:11).

THE PICTURE STORY ABOUT THE LORD'S VINE (Psalm 80)

Read Psalm 80. What does this poem compare God's people to? What do the people ask God for?



God is inviting His people who have wandered away to come back to Him.

In Psalm 80, the poet compares God's people to a garden of grapes. God dug up the garden of grapes with all its roots. Then He carried the garden to the Promised Land where He planted it. The word picture of a grape garden shows us God's special care for Israel (also read Genesis 49:11, 12, 22; Deuteronomy 7:7–11).

In Psalm 80, God is angry with His grape garden (Psalm 80:12). God's special messengers announce that God will destroy His grape garden because the vine changed and became evil (Isaiah 5:1–7; Jeremiah 2:21).

In Psalm 80, the poet accepts that God must judge His people. At the same time, the poet is confused. He knows that God can forgive. So, the poet has a hard time understanding why God refuses to stop His people's pain. The poet fears that God's anger may win over His mercy. If that happens, Israel will die, the same as the vine (Psalm 80:16).

Read about the blessing in Numbers 6:22–27. How does the poet talk about this same blessing in Psalm 80?

Psalm 80 helps us remember Aaron's promise to Israel that God will always bless them (Numbers 6:22–27). This promise shows us the poet's hope that God's mercy will save His people from their suffering: "God, accept us again. Smile down on us and save us!" (Psalm 80:3, ERV; also read Psalm 80:7, 19).

The word "accept" means that God is inviting His people who have wandered away to come back to Him. This word also is connected with the idea of confessing our sins. When we confess our sins, we stop sinning and come back to God. The Lord explains to Jeremiah about what happens when His people come back to Him: " 'I will make them want to know me. They will know that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will do this because the prisoners in Babylon will turn to me with their whole hearts' " (Jeremiah 24:7, ERV).

In the past, did you feel close to God in your heart after you confessed your sin? How did saying no to sin make you feel close to God in your heart?

THE LORD CONTROLS HISTORY (Psalm 135)

Read Psalm 135. What things in the past does Psalm 135 talk about? What lessons can we learn from them?

Psalm 135 asks God's people to praise the Lord. The Lord is good. We see His love in everything He made (Psalm 135:6, 7). Israel's past history also shows us that God is good. He saved His people from the Egyptians (Psalm 135:8, 9). He gave His people the Promised Land (Psalm 135:10–12).

The Lord showed His mercy when He chose the people of Israel to be His people. They became His special treasure (Psalm 135:4). The people had a special relationship with God (Deuteronomy 7:6–11; 1 Peter 2:9, 10). God chose Israel because He loved them, not because they were special. So, Israel can't brag about being better than any other people. Psalm 135:6, 7 shows us that God's plan to save the human family didn't start with Israel. God's saving plan started when He made the skies and the earth. So, Israel should have no pride in their hearts about being God's special people at all. Israel should work with God and do whatever He asks them to do to save other people.

Psalm 135 also talks about how God will judge His people. At the same time, God will show His people mercy (Psalm 135:14). As Judge, God will save the poor and the needy (Psalm 9:4; Psalm 7:8; Psalm 54:1). God will help His people (Deuteronomy 32:36). Psalm 135 helps God's people to trust in the Lord and His promise.

The poet compares the Lord to false gods. The false gods are nothing. They are not powerful. But the Lord is in control of the earth (Psalm 135:15–18). Psalm 135 helps us understand that we should praise God because He is One who made us, and He is our Savior. We see this same Bible truth about the Lord in the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8–11; Deuteronomy 5:12–15). No one is as powerful as God. He controls both the earth and all human history. So, God's people should always trust in Him and worship only Him. Because Jesus is the One who made us and is our Savior, He is the One we should worship. If we worship anyone or anything else, we are guilty of bowing down to false gods.

Why is it easy to worship false gods? How can we make sure that we don't have false gods in our lives?



Psalm 135 helps us understand that we should praise God because He is One who made us, and He is our Savior.



“We have nothing to fear about the future if we remember the way the Lord led us in the past.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Acts 7 and Hebrews 11. What do these chapters teach us about God’s leading His people?

“We have nothing to fear about the future if we remember the way the Lord led us in the past. We also must remember His teaching in our past history.”—Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, page 196, adapted.

God’s people must know their history. Then they move forward in God’s work and serve Him without any fear. Ellen G. White tells Christians to read Psalm 105 and Psalm 106 “at least once every week.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, page 98.

The history of God’s people shows us that God will keep every promise He has made in the Bible. He will keep His promise to take care of each one of us. He will keep His promise to come again. Then He will start His kingdom of peace. He will make the earth new again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why must we remember all the wonderful things God did for us in the past? What happens when we forget? Or what happens when we pay no attention to the lessons about the past? God chose Seventh-day Adventists to do the work that He asked Israel to do in Bible times. How can remembering our past history help us to do the work God gave us as a church to do?
- ② How does the Book of Psalms help us to see God’s special care for us in our lives? God is in control of history and of this earth. Sure, we may not always understand why things happen the way they do. But how does understanding God’s love for us help us to be patient during hard times and to trust in God?
- ③ How can we make the study of Israelite history an important part of both our personal worship and of our worship in church? Why is it important to tell our children about our own church history? Why should all Seventh-day Adventists know the history of their church?

SEKULE'S STORY (PART 6): NO WORK, NO FOOD

Sekule joined the army. He refused to work on the Sabbath because he was a Seventh-day Adventist. After Sekule refused to work on several Sabbaths, Sekule's commander soon knew that he couldn't force Sekule to break God's law or do anything he believed was wrong.

The commander said, "So, you really can't work on the Sabbath in the army?"

Sekule answered, "Yes I can't work during that time."

The commander said, "If you're not working, you don't need to eat. Eating is working. Also, some of the food is cooked on your Sabbath. So, you shouldn't eat it."

At that time, Sekule was eating only bread and drinking only tea because the rest of the army food was made with lard or pork grease. Sekule agreed not to eat bread or drink tea made on the Sabbath. Sekule was a new Seventh-day Adventist. So, he wasn't sure if he could, or couldn't, eat food made on the Sabbath. But Sekule needed to give his commander an answer that he could understand. What if Sekule refused to work on the Sabbath, but asked for bread and tea? Then his commander would think Sekule was not loyal to God.

Several months passed. Then the army cooks started to cook one meal each week without any lard or pig grease. That was the only meal that Sekule could eat. But the cooks made and served the meal on the Sabbath.

Sekule prayed, "God, please, please, could You change the day that the cooks make the lard-free meal from Sabbath to Sunday? Will You do that for me?"

Sekule prayed for a month, and the lard-free meal was moved to Sunday.

The army gave the soldiers Sundays off. Sunday was the only time during the week when the soldiers relaxed. They played football, basketball, and other sports. Sekule wished that the soldier's day off was on the Sabbath. Sekule knew he could refuse to play soccer on the Sabbath much more easily than he could refuse to work on the Sabbath.

Sekule prayed again. "Lord, I'm sorry to be so much trouble, but could I ask You one more favor? Could You move our day off in the army from Sunday to Sabbath? Then I won't need to explain to everyone why I can't work every Sabbath."

A week later, the soldiers' day off was moved from Sunday to Saturday.

Sekule Sekulić is a businessman who lives in Montenegro. He is a loyal Seventh-day Adventist. Read more about Sekule's story next week. Thank you for your Sabbath School offerings that help share the Good News about Jesus in Montenegro.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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