

Psalm 81  
Don't Let Holidays Become Hollow-days

**Introduction:** Psalm 81 is found in the third book of the Psalms (71-89). This book focuses on the end of the house of David. This psalm focuses on feasts that anticipate the restoration of David's house. (James Hamilton)

This psalm is recited on The Feast of Tabernacles in September/October.

**Superscription:** *For the choir director. According to the Gittith. Of Asaph.*

**1) Celebrate God's work—81:1-5**

a) **The commands to celebrate—81:1-3**

i) <sup>1</sup> *Sing for joy to God our strength;*

(1) This psalm describes various displays of His strength.

ii) *make a loud shout to the God of Jacob.*

iii) <sup>2</sup> *Lift up a song of praise,*

iv) *strike the tambourine, the sweet sounding lyre with the harp.*

v) <sup>3</sup> *Blow the trumpet [shofar] at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day.*

b) **The reason to celebrate—81:4-5a** <sup>4</sup> *For ...*

i) *it is a statute [hoq] for Israel,*

ii) *a judgment [mishpat] of the God of Jacob.*

iii) <sup>5</sup> *He established it for a testimony [eduth] in Joseph when he went forth over the land of Egypt.*

iv) God revealed this, man did not invent it.

**2) Commemorate God's work related to the Exodus—81:5b-10**

a) **What God did for Israel—81:5b-7** (not in chronological order)

i) *I heard a language (Egyptian?) that I did not know (acknowledge?):*

(1) Or perhaps this goes with the previous section and refers to amazement at God's working in ways we don't understand.

ii) <sup>6</sup> *"I relieved his shoulder of the burden, his hands were freed from the basket.*

iii) <sup>7</sup> *You called in distress and I rescued you;*

iv) *I answered you in the hiding place of thunder; (Mt. Sinai)*

v) *I tested you at the waters of Meribah. (cf. Ex. 17, Num. 20)*

vi) *Selah.*

b) **What God desires from Israel—81:8-10**

i) **Listen to Him—81:8**

(1) <sup>8</sup> *Hear, O My people, and I will testify against you;*

(2) *O Israel, if you would listen to Me!*

ii) **Obey His clear commands**—81:9 (paraphrase of the 1<sup>st</sup> two commandments)

(1) <sup>9</sup> *Let there be no strange god among you;*

(2) *and you shall not worship a foreign god.*

iii) **Remember His gracious work**—81:10a

(1) <sup>10</sup> *I am Yahweh your God,*

(2) *Who brought you up from the land of Egypt;*

iv) **Cling to His generous promise**—81:10b

(1) *open your mouth wide* (in prayer to God) *and I will fill it.*

### 3) **Correct the self-oriented mindset and lifestyle**—81:11-16

a) **God's accurate evaluation and discipline**—81:11-12

• These two verses appear to be the focal point of the Hebrew text.

i) <sup>11</sup> *“But My people did not listen to My voice, and Israel was not willing to obey Me.*

(1) Despite all that God has done for them. No loyalty, no gratitude.

ii) <sup>12</sup> *So I released them over to the stubbornness of their heart, that they would walk in their own devices.*

(1) Allowed them to go their own way. Ouch!

(2) Gary Schnittjer states: The warning ironically undercuts all bases for pride by reinforcing that Israel cannot even rebel except by divine permission.

b) **God's gracious invitation and promise**—81:13-14

i) <sup>13</sup> *Oh that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways!*

ii) <sup>14</sup> *I would quickly subdue their enemies and I would turn My hand against their adversaries.*

c) **God's righteous judgment and blessing**—81:15-16

i) <sup>15</sup> *Those who hate Yahweh would cower before Him, and their time of punishment would be forever.*

ii) Quotes Dt. 32:13, 14: <sup>16</sup> *But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”*

### 4) **Things to remember:**

a) There is a danger for a person to use their alleged election as an excuse for their deliberate rebellion.

b) We know it is possible to worship God externally while having a heart in need of repentance. May God grant us grace to guard against this.