

Introduction to the Psalms

1. Thumbnail of Israel's History

- ❑ Flood
- ❑ Abraham (2000 BC-ish)
- ❑ Sojourn in Egypt (ends around 1400BC or 1250BC with Exodus)
- ❑ Wanderings
- ❑ Transition from Moses to Joshua and entrance into the Land
- ❑ The Conquest
- ❑ The Judges
- ❑ Monarchy and the United Kingdom
- ❑ The Divided Kingdom
- ❑ Exile of Israel (N. Kingdom)
- ❑ Exile of Judah (S. Kingdom)
- ❑ Return under Ezra
- ❑ 2nd Temple Period (Zerubabel and Herod)
- ❑ Jesus
- ❑ Apostles
- ❑ First Jewish War
- ❑ Second Jewish War (expulsion from Jerusalem)

2. What is going on in the rest of the world at this time...

ANE: 22nd dynasty of Egypt (Sheshonk), declining power

ANE: Assyrian supremacy

ANE: First recorded strike by laborers in Egypt (inflation related)

ANE: Famous Head of Nefertiti sculpture

ANE: Regulations concerning the sale of beer in Egypt

ANE: Wigs are used by aristocrats in Egypt and Assyria

ANE: Later Pyramids of Egypt

China: Chinese cut ice and use for refrigeration

China: Chinese dictionary with 40,000 characters

China: Chinese math textbook, multiplications, geometry, equations

China: Confucianism arises in China

China: Fish farms in China

China: Peking in existence

China: Prohibition in China

China: Fall of Shang Dynasty

Europe: Iron Age moves to Europe (400 years later than ANE)

Europe: Etruscans settle Italy

Greece: Greek script/alphabet, based on Phoenician, later to become English

Greece: *Iliad and Odyssey* written

Greece: Unification of Attica under the Athenians; rise of city-states

India: Caste system in India arises

New World: Mexican sun pyramid in Teotihuacan

New World: Mounds of Poverty Point (LA).

New World: No writing in the New World yet

3. Israelite Life at the Time of David

- ❑ Villages and Cities
- ❑ Literacy
- ❑ The Homestead
- ❑ Tribal relations
- ❑ Government
- ❑ Religious life
- ❑ International relations

4. Nature of the Psalms

“The Hebrew designation of Psalms is *Tehillim*, meaning "praises," a term that reflects much of the book's content (cf. Ps 145, title). Its name in Latin and English Bibles, however, comes from the Greek, *Psalmoi*, which means "twangings [of harp strings]," and then, as a result, songs sung to the accompaniment of harps. Its alternate title, *Psalterion*, means "psaltery," a collection of harp songs, from which comes the English term "Psalter.””

Psalms is organized into five books: 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, and 107-150; and, since the same psalm appears in more than one collection--e.g., Pss 14 and part of 40 (Book I) as 53 and 70 (Book II), and the latter halves of 57 and 60 (Book II) as 108 (Book V)--it seems likely that each compilation originally experienced independent existence. Furthermore, since the last psalm of each collection was composed with terminal ascriptions that were designed for the book as a whole (41:13; 72:18-20; 89:52; 106:48; and the entire 150th Psalm for Book V), it appears that the origins of these five concluding psalms provide clues for the compilation of their respective books.

Each of the 150 psalms exhibits the formal character of Hebrew poetry. This consists, not primarily in rhyme, or even rhythmic balance, but rather in a parallelism of thought, whereby succeeding phrases either repeat or in some way elaborate the previous line. The poems vary in content.

Particularly significant are the 17 specifically messianic psalms, in the whole or in parts of which Christ either is referred to in the third person (8:4-8; 72:6-17; 89:3-4, 28-29, 34-36; 109:6-19; 118:22; 132:11-12), is addressed in the second person (45:6-7; 68:18; 102:25-27; 110), or speaks himself in the first person (2; 16:10; 22; 40:6-8; 41:9; 69:4, 21, 25; 78:2).” [NBD]

“It would be difficult to overestimate the significance, for Jew and Gentile, of the book of Psalms. Here are mirrored the ideals of religious piety and communion with God, of sorrow for sin and the search for perfection, of walking in darkness, unafraid, by the lamp of faith; of obedience to the law of God, delight in the worship of God, fellowship with the friends of God, reverence for the Word of God; of humility under the chastening rod, trust when evil triumphs and wickedness prospers, serenity in the midst of storm.

The Hebrew poets were inspired to take these spiritual insights and experiences and make them the themes of their songs. But it should be remembered that ‘the Psalms are poems, and poems intended to be sung, not doctrinal treatises, nor even sermons’ (C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 1958, p. 2)—hence the Hebrew title of the Psalms, *tehillim*, ‘songs of praise’—also that they were giving expression to the religion of Israel to which the psalmists were heirs, not merely to their personal religious experiences. So the Psalms belong to all believers, Jew and Gentile.

II. The formation of the Psalter

It has been customary to describe the book of Psalms as ‘the hymn-book of the second Temple’, and such it undoubtedly was. The title is misleading, however, if it is interpreted to mean that all the psalms were written in the exilic or post-exilic periods. It is important to notice that this type of literature is not only confined to the Psalter in the OT but is found in many different periods in Hebrew history. It is found among the Hebrews as early as the Exodus period (Ex. 15), and another example comes from a time subsequent to, but relatively close to, the invasion of Canaan under Joshua (Jdg. 5). Hannah’s psalm (1 Sa. 2:1-10) comes at the close of the Judges period.

The pre-exilic prophetic literature also contains examples of psalm composition (*cf.*, *e.g.*, Ho. 6:1-3; Is. 2:2-4; 38:10-20; Je. 14:7-9; Hab. 3:1ff., *etc.*). And from the post-exilic period come such passages as Ezr. 9:5-15 and Ne. 9:6-39, which are strongly reminiscent of many of the psalms. Clearly, then, the Psalter is not an isolated literary phenomenon. Indeed, the same type of *poetry is found among the Babylonians and the citizens of Ugarit as the Ras Shamra tablets testify. The OT Psalter is a collection of poems which are typical of a literary form which the Hebrews, in common with other cultures, used from at least the Exodus right up until the post-exilic or second Temple period.¹

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5. The notion of parallelism and chiasm

“The Poetry of the Psalms

The chief characteristic of Hebrew poetry in the Bible is balance or symmetry, commonly called parallelism. Biblical poetry is also marked by the use of repetition, a fondness for alphabetical acrostics, and the employment of metaphor and simile.

1. Balance or Parallelism. A line of Hebrew poetry is made up of two parts or cola (singular colon) which may be designated A and B. For example:

- (A) When Israel went forth from Egypt,
- (B) the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, (114:1)

In this example, “Israel” is balanced by “house of Jacob” and “Egypt” by “a people of strange language.” Since the balancing words and phrases are synonymous and since the two cola parallel one another in meaning, this is called “synonymous parallelism.” The book of Psalms, and indeed the entire Hebrew Bible, is full of this kind of synonymous parallelism (*e.g.*, Pss 4:2–6; 8:4; 19:1–2; 24:1–3; *etc.*).

Parallelism or balancing may extend to more than two cola, with whole lines balancing one another:

(A + B) The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
(A' +B') the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes (19:8; cf. vv 7, 9).

In the examples given, the ordering of the words in the balancing cola is the same. In Ps 114:1 “Israel . . . Egypt” is balanced by “house of Jacob . . . people of strange language.” This order may be represented as A+B balanced by A'+B'. The order may also fall into a chiasmic pattern, where A+B is balanced by B'+A' (cf. “When the going gets tough, the tough get going”). For example:

(A + B) His mischief returns upon his own head,
(B' + A') and on his own plate his violence descends (7:16)

(A + B) Praise the Lord with the lyre,
(B' + A') with the ten-stringed harp make melody to him (my trans., 33:2; cf. also 137:5–6).

It is also possible that B may stand over against A, stating its opposite or standing in contrast to it. This is called antithetic parallelism:

(A) The wicked borrows, and cannot pay back,
(B) but the righteous is generous and gives;
(A) for those blessed by the Lord shall possess the land,
(B) but those cursed by him shall be cut off (37:21–22; cf. 1:6; 20:8; 32:10, etc.).

Antithetic parallelism is especially characteristic of proverbial literature (e.g., Prov 10:1–12; Eccl 8:4; 10:2, 12).

2. Other Relationships between A and B. The cola A and B may relate to one another in a number of other ways:

A makes a statement, B provides a reason:

(A) Blessed be the Lord!
(B) for he has heard the voice of my supplications (28:6).

A makes a statement: B balances with a question:

(A) For in death there is no remembrance of thee;
(B) in Sheol who can give thee praise? (6:5).

A asks a question; B gives an answer:

- (A) How can a young man keep his way pure?
- (B) By guarding it according to thy word (119:9).

A makes a statement; B balances with a quotation:

- (A) I had said in my alarm
- (B) "I am driven far from thy sight" (31:22).

A sets forth something "better than" B:

- (A) Better is a little that the righteous has
- (B) than the abundance of many wicked (37:16; cf. 118:8–9; 119:72; also Proverbs).

A varies; B repeats

- (A) O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
- (B) for his steadfast love endures forever.
- (A) O give thanks to the God of gods,
- (B) for his steadfast love endures forever. (136:1–2 and throughout).

A makes a statement with an abstract noun; B sharpens the focus with a concrete noun:

- (A) Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
- (B) according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight (18:24).

A states the whole; B balances with a part which stands for the whole (synecdoche):

- (A) For thou dost deliver a humble people;
- (B) but the haughty eyes thou dost bring down (18:27).

A and B name two terms which mark boundaries in order to designate a totality (merismus):

- (A) The sun shall not smite you by day,
- (B) nor the moon by night (121:6).

A may provide a simile, B balancing with reality:

- (A) As a father pities his children,
- (B) so the Lord pities those who fear him (103:13; cf. 103:11–12; 42:1).²

The Importance of Structure (e.g. Chiasm):

“Chiasm is a literary device of structure, wherein the ORDER of topics discussed is REVERSED after some pivotal point or couplet). Chiasm facilitates memory of the material, since the order of either 'half' of the structure can be 'calculated' from the other half, generally. “ (Thinktank). Examples:

Genesis 6.8-9: A chiasm in the Hebrew word order (BAW, 86)

Noah
found favor
in the eyes of the Lord
These are the generations of Noah
Noah was a righteous man
perfect he was
in his generations
with God
walked
Noah

Genesis 11-22: The entire story of Abraham (BAW, 96)

- (A) Abraham's call; Promise of Seed (11:31-12.3)
- (B) Sojourn in Canaan (12.4-9)
- (C) Sojourn in Egypt; Denial of Sarai (12.10-20)
- (D) Separation of Lot; Manifestation of Land (13.1-18)
- (E) War on Sodom; Rescue of Lot by Abraham (14.1-24)
- (F) Covenant Made: Land (15.1-21)
- (G) Sarai's Effort (16.1-16)
- (H) Covenant Made: Abraham (17.1-14)
- (G') Sarah's Blessing (17.15-27)
- (F') Covenant Made: Seed (18.1-15)
- (E') Destruction of Sodom; Rescue of Lot by Angels (18-16-19.38)
- (C') Sojourn in Gerar; Denial of Sarah (20.1-8)
- (D') Manifestation of Seed; Separation of Ishmael (21:1-21)
- (B') Sojourn in Gerar (21.22-34)
- (A') Abraham's Test: Blessing of Seed (22.1-19)

Genesis 6.10-9.19: The Flood Story

(G. J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative"
in VT,28 (1978): 336-48 , (cited in BAW p. 105)

- A Noah (10a)
- B Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10b)
- C Ark to be built (14-16)
- D Flood announced (17)
- E Covenant with Noah (18-20)
- F Food in the Ark (21)
- G Command to enter the Ark (7.1-3)
- H 7 days waiting for flood (4-5)
- I 7 days waiting for flood (7-10)
- J Entry to ark (11-15)
- K Yahweh shuts Noah in (16)
- L 40 days flood (17a)
- M Waters increase (17b-18)
- N Mountains covered (18-20)
- O 150 days waters prevail (21-24)
- P GOD REMEMBERS NOAH (8.1)
- O' 150 days waters abate (3)
- N' Mountain tops become visible (4-5)
- M' Waters abate (6)
- L' 40 days (end of) (6a)
- K' Noah opens window of ark (6b)
- J' Raven and dove leave ark (7-9)
- I' 7 days waiting for waters to subside (10-11)
- H' 7 days waiting for waters to subside (12-13)
- G' Command to leave the ark (15-17)
- F' Food outside the ark (9.1-4)
- E' Covenant with all flesh (8-10)
- D' No flood in future (11-17)
- C' Ark (18a)
- B' Shem, Ham, Japheth (18b)
- A' Noah (19)

The Story of Biblical History--a Chiasm?

- A Creation of Heavens and Earth (Gen 1-2)
- B Humanity's rebellion against God (Gen 3-11)
- C God's Kingdom on Earth (Gen 12-David)
- D The Apostasy of Humanity (Solomon-Malachi)
- E The Hidden Years (The Intertestamental period)
- F God enters History in the Messiah
- E' The Hidden Years (The "Church Age")
- D' The Apostasy of Humanity (cf. 2 Thess 2.3)
- C' God's Kingdom on Earth (Rev 20:1-6)
- B' Humanity's rebellion against God (Rev 20.7-9)
- A' Creation of New Heavens and Earth (Rev 21-22)

¹Douglas, J. (1982; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996). New Bible Dictionary. Includes index. (electronic ed. of 2nd ed.). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

²Freedman, D. N. (1996, c1992). The Anchor Bible Dictionary (electronic ed.). New York: Doubleday.

אֲשֶׁר־י אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִלְךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים
wicked-ones in-counsel-of he-walks not who the-man blessednesses-of (1:1)

וּבִדְרֹךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד וּבִמְוֶשֶׁב לְצִיִּים לֹא יָשָׁב :
he-sits not ones-mocking or-in-seat-of he-stands not sinners or-in-way-of

כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה חֲפֵצּוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה
he-meditates and-on-law-of-him delight-of-him Yahweh in-law-of rather but (2)

יּוֹמָם וּלְיָלֵלָה : וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שֶׁחָדַל עָלַי פְּלִי מַיִם
waters streams-of by being-planted like-tree and-he-is (3) and-night by-day

אֲשֶׁר פְּרִיּוֹ יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ וְעַלְהוֹ לֹא יִבֹּל
he-withers not and-leaf-of-him in-season-of-him he-yields fruit-of-him which

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה יֵצְלִיחַ : לֹא-בֵן הַרְשָׁעִים כִּי אִם-
rather but the-wicked-ones so not (4) he-prospers he-does that and-all

כַּפֵּיץ אֲשֶׁר- תִּדְפְּנוּ רֵיחַ : עַל- כֵּן לֹא יִקְמוּ
they-will-stand not this for (5) wind she-blows-away-him that like-the-chaff

רְשָׁעִים בְּמוֹשֶׁפֶט וְחַטָּאִים בְּעֵבֶר צְדִיקִים : כִּי-
for (6) righteous-ones in-assembly-of or-sinners in-the-judgment wicked-ones

יִרְעַ יְהוָה הַדֶּרֶךְ צְדִיקִים וְדֶרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים
wicked-ones but-way-of righteous-ones way-of Yahweh watching-over

הַתֹּבָה :
she-will-perish

BOOK I

Psalms 1-41

Psalms 1

'Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the
counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.
'But his delight is in the law of
the LORD,
and on his law he meditates
day and night.
'He is like a tree planted by
streams of water,
which yields its fruit in
season
and whose leaf does not
wither.
Whatever he does prospers.
'Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
'Therefore the wicked will not
stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly
of the righteous.
'For the LORD watches over the
way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked
will perish.

Psalm 1

How blessed is the man who
does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.

And he will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season,
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.

[A]

“Psalm 1 introduces the whole book of Psalms. First, it is a psalm of faith (3d). This promise of prosperity is not a pledge of good fortune in return for good behaviour—the Psalms know life too well for that! (*see* 42, 73). Rather, just as we continue to say ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty’ yet find that life often seems to deny both his fatherliness and his almightiness, so also v 3 professes a ‘creed’: this world is God’s world and those who side with him will surely and ultimately enjoy blessing (6). Secondly, it is a psalm of commitment: to a distinct lifestyle (1) and to the word of God (2). Indeed ‘distinctiveness’ is the theme around which the poem is structured.

- A¹ (v 1) The way of blessedness
- B¹ (v 2) Continuance in the Lord’s law
- C¹ (v 3) The enduring fruit tree
- C² (v 4) The impermanent chaff
- B² (v 5) No standing in the Lord’s judgment
- A² (v 6) The way of perishing [NBC]

[B]

*“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”*¹

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 “And these words,

which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; 7 and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 “And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 “And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.²

Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out, Even strife and dishonor will cease.³

[C] *Wisdom shouts in the street,
She lifts her voice in the square;
At the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
At the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings:
“How long, O naive ones,
will you love simplicity?
And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing,
And fools hate knowledge?”⁴*

.....

[D] “The righteous man is positively identified by his association with “the law of the LORD.” The “law” is not to be limited to the Five Books of Moses or even to the OT as a whole. The Hebrew word *torah* (“law”) signifies primarily instruction that comes from God. This is the distinctive difference between revelation and religion (J. Ellul, *A Living Faith* tr. Peter Heinegg [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983], pp. 111-25). Revelation comes from God for the purpose of helping man to live in harmony with God’s will, whereas religion is man’s attempt to order his path and to explain the world around him.” [EBCOT]

[E] “Unlike trees growing wild in wadis or planted in the fields, where the amount of rainfall varies, the tree the psalmist envisions has been planted purposely by irrigation canals (*palge mayim* “streams of water”), artificial water-channels made for the purpose of irrigation (cf. [Prov 21:1](#); [Eccl 2:5-6](#); [Isa 30:25](#)).

The imagery of the leaves and the fruit assure the godly that they will receive God’s blessing and will enjoy life as a gift of God (cf. [Ezek 47:12](#)). True to the language used in wisdom literature, the godly are characterized by the success the Lord sends their way. The “prosperity” of the righteous does not necessarily extend to the assurance of great wealth but primarily to God’s blessing on their words and works (cf. [90:14-17](#)). The psalmist thus encourages the godly to pursue the way of wisdom. The wise man is characterized by success. Nevertheless, the psalm does not encourage a success-oriented faith. The godly do not seek success for its own sake, but they *do* receive a measure of blessing on their lives. The prosperity of the righteous--guaranteed or limited to the godly--is a gift of God, a by-product of wise living; cf. Joseph ([Gen 39:2-3, 23](#)), Joshua ([1:8](#)), Solomon ([2 Chronicles 1:11-12](#)), and Hezekiah ([2 Chronicles 32:30](#)). But success is not an infallible token of God’s presence, for the wicked may also prosper ([Ps 37:7](#)). Rather, the righteous live with the *hope* of God’s blessing.” [EBCOT]

[F] “For all who take their delight in living by God’s Word, there is prosperity. Under the image of a fruitful **tree**, the psalmist declared that **whatever** the righteous do will prosper (cf. [92:12-14](#)). Two qualifications need to be noted. First, the **fruit**, that is, the prosperity, is produced **in its season** and **not necessarily immediately after planting**. Second, what the godly person does

will be controlled by the Law of God (1:2). So if a person meditates on God’s Word, his actions will be godly, and his God-controlled activities will prosper, that is, come to their divinely directed fulfillment.” [BKC]

.....
[G] “But a person who is to be happy must also engage in a positive task, which is identified in v 2 as being related to the Torah. Although the term *Torah* can be used of the law, or of the Pentateuch, or even (at a later date) of the whole OT, its significance here is the most fundamental one. **Basically, the word *Torah* means “instruction”; specifically, it is the instruction which God gives to mankind as a guide for life. Thus it may include that which is technically law, but it also includes other more general parts of God’s revelation.** The Torah is to be a source of “delight”, a delight which is discovered by means of constant meditation on its meaning. Just as the king would learn to live a life of humility and righteousness through constant reflection on the meaning of Torah (Deut 17:18–20), so too could all mankind. And an understanding of Torah contributed to long life, peace and prosperity (Prov 3:1–2), for in its words God has set down the nature of a life which would reach the true fulfillment for which it was created.” [WBC]

.....
[H] “The happy estate of the righteous is illuminated in v 3 by the simile of the tree. A tree may flourish or fade, depending upon its location and access to water. A tree transplanted from some dry spot (e.g. a wadi, where the water runs only sporadically in the rainy season) to a location beside an irrigation channel, where water never ceases to flow, would inevitably flourish. It would become a green and fruitful tree. The simile not only illustrates colorfully the prosperity of the righteous, but also make a theological point. **The state of blessedness or happiness is not a reward; rather, it is the result of a particular type of life.** Just as a tree with a constant water supply *naturally* flourishes, so too the person who avoids evil and delights in Torah *naturally* prospers, for such a person is living within the guidelines set down by the Creator. Thus the **prosperity of the righteous reflects the wisdom of a life lived according to the plan** of the Giver of all life” [WBC]

.....
[I] “The doom of the wicked, as it is expressed in this psalm, is **not primarily a punishment**, any more than the happiness of the righteous is a reward. Each is presented as the **natural outcome of a way of life which has been chosen.**” [WBC]

¹New American Standard Bible. 1986; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996 (electronic edition.) (Jos 1:8). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

²New American Standard Bible. 1986; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996 (electronic edition.) (Dt 6:4). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

³New American Standard Bible. 1986; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996 (electronic edition.) (Pr 22:10). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁴New American Standard Bible. 1986; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996 (electronic edition.) (Pr 1:20). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

למה רגשו גוים וילאמים יהנוי ריק:
vanity they-plot and-peoples nations they-rage why? (2:1)

יתנצבו מלכי ארץ ורוזנים נוסדו יחד
together they-gather and-ones-ruling earth kings-of they-take-stand (2)

על יהודה ועל משיחו : ננקה את
*** let-us-break (3) anointed-one-of-him and-against Yahweh against

מוסרותימו ותשליכה ממנו עבתימו:
fetters-of-them from-us and-let-us-throw-off chains-of-them

ישקב בשמים ישחק אדני ילעג למו:
at-them he-scoffs Lord he-laughs in-the-heavens One-being-enthroned (4)

אז ידבר אלימו באפו ובחרונו
and-in-wrath-of-him in-anger-of-him against-them he-rebukes then (5)

יבהלמו : ואני נסכתי מלכי על ציון הר-
hill-of Zion on king-of-me I-installed indeed-I (6) he-terrifies-them

קדשי : אספנה אל חק יהודה אמר אלי
to-me he-said Yahweh decree-of to I-will-proclaim (7) holiness-of-me

בני אמה אני היום ילדתיך : שאל ממני
of-me ask! (8) I-became-father-of-you the-day I you son-of-me

ואתנה גוים נחלתך ואחזתך אפסי ארץ :
earth ends-of and-possession-of-you inheritance-of-you nations and-I-will-make

תרעם בשעט ברזל ככלי יוצר
one-making-pottery like-article-of iron with-scepter-of you-will-rule-them (9)

תנפצם : ועתה מלכים השקילו הוסיפו
be-warned! be-wise! kings therefore-now (10) you-will-dash-to-pieces-them

שפסי ארץ : עבדו את יהנה ביראה והילו ברעדה:
with-trembling and-rejoice! with-fear Yahweh *** serve! (11) earth ones-ruling-of

ושקור בר שון יאגף וואברו נרף כי יבער
he-can-flare-up for way and-you-be-destroyed he-be-angry lest son kiss! (12)

במעט אפו אשתי כל חוסי בו:
in-him ones-taking-refuge-of all-of blessednesses-of wrath-of-him in-moment

Psalm 2

"Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in
vain?
"The kings of the earth take
their stand
and the rulers gather
together
against the LORD
and against his Anointed
One."
"Let us break their chains,"
they say,
"and throw off their
fetters."
"The One enthroned in heaven
laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
"Then he rebukes them in his
anger
and terrifies them in his
wrath, saying,
"I have installed my King'
on Zion, my holy hill."
"I will proclaim the decree of the
LORD:
He said to me, "You are my
Son";
today I have become your
Father."
"Ask of me,
and I will make the nations
your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your
possession.

² Or anointed one
⁶ Or king ⁷ Or son; also in verse 12
⁴ Or have begotten you

"You will rule them with an
iron scepter";
you will dash them to pieces
like pottery."
"Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the
earth.
"Serve the LORD with fear
and rejoice with trembling.
"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry
and you be destroyed in
your way,
for his wrath can flare up in a
moment.
Blessed are all who take
refuge in him.

announcing the installation of a king of his own choosing in Zion (2:4–6). (3) The Davidic king speaks and declares the words of God contained in his kingly deed (2:7–9). (4) The nations and their kings are warned of God’s wrath and of the consequences of his anger and pleasure (2:10–12). Although it is possible that the whole psalm should be viewed as containing the words spoken by the Davidic king (so Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 111), it is **perhaps better to note the change of speakers throughout the psalm. From a literary perspective**, the psalmist or poet presents a variety of persons, each of whom speaks. First, he presents foreign nations and kings (2:1–2) who speak their words of arrogance (2:3). Second, he presents the Lord (2:4–5) who speaks concerning the, chosen king (2:6). Third, he presents the words of the king, who in turn proclaims the divine words of royal proclamation (2:7–9). Fourth, he addresses his own words of advice to the foreign nations and their rulers. Thus, the whole psalm has a dramatic character.²

.....
[C] The theme is developed in four balancing sections: the *kings* who oppose *the LORD* and *his Anointed One* (1–3) are invited to *take refuge*, serving *the LORD* and paying homage to *the Son* (10–12). In between two voices are heard: the Lord speaks of the appointment of his Son to reign (4–6), and the Son speaks of the divine promise of world rule (7–9). **The psalm is rooted in 2 Samuel 7, the promise to David of a supreme name, a relationship of sonship to the Lord, and an enduring line.**³

.....
[D] The divine words which the king declares are words pertaining to the royal covenant. At the heart of the covenant is the concept of *sonship*; the human partner in the covenant is *son* of the covenant God, who is *father*. **This covenant principle of sonship is a part of the Sinai Covenant between God and Israel. The covenant God cares for Israel as a father cares for his son (Deut 1:31) and God disciplines Israel as a father disciplines a son (Deut 8:5).** The focus of the Sinai covenant is the relationship between God and nation; in the **covenant with the house of David, the focus is narrowed to a relationship between God and the king, but the concept of sonship** is still integral to this covenant. Thus God, through words spoken by Nathan, declared of David: “I will be his father and he shall be my son” (2 Sam 7:14); David, in return, could say to God: “You are my father” (Ps 89:26).⁴

.....
[E]

Chains ... fetters. It is Satan’s delusion (Gn. 3:1–5) to represent divine **conditions of blessing as hostile restrictions** holding mankind back from proper freedom.”⁵

.....
[F]

“7–9 A relationship of sonship, a promise of *inheritance* and an endowment with power. *My Son*. God figuratively adopted the kings of David’s line. *Today*, their accession day, the beginning of the relationship. When used of Jesus at his resurrection (Acts 13:32–37) the meaning rather is that **God has made publicly plain what had always been the case.**”⁶

.....
“Take refuge. “There is no refuge from him: only in him”” (Kidner) [NBC]

.....
[G] “2:7. The psalmist now spoke of God’s affirmation of the king to show by what right the king rules. **The decree** refers to the Davidic Covenant in which God declared that He would be **Father** to the king, and the king would be His son. So when David became king, God described their affiliation as a Father-son relationship. So the expression “son” took on the meaning of a messianic title.

You are My son (cf. NIV marg.), quoted from the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:14), is appropriated here by the king to show his legitimate right to rule. **Today** then refers to the coronation day, and the expression “I have begotten you” (NIV marg.) refers not to physical birth but is an extended metaphor describing his becoming God’s “son.”

2:8. The **significance of this adoption of the king as God’s anointed son** is seen in his **inheritance**. As a son inherits from his father, so the king inherits the kingdom from his “Father.” The verse continues the quotation from the Lord’s decree, extending an invitation to the king to **ask** for his inheritance, which someday will encompass **the ends of the earth**. People living in these **nations**, including the rebellious nations (v. 1), will be subjugated by the Lord’s anointed.⁷

.....

[H] “**2:6. deity installing king.** The term to anoint or install has been found as a Ugaritic root in a mythological text. The office of king was a divine appointment in ancient Israel and other areas of the Near East. Sargon of Akkad (c. 2300 B.C.) claims to have been installed by Ishtar, while the Sumerian King List (compiled sometime after 2000 B.C.) claims that towns received their monarchs by divine appointment. This ideology continued into the Israelite period. Kings of Assyria and Babylon celebrated yearly enthronement festivals in which the chief deity was celebrated as king and the whole enthronement process for both god and king was reenacted. Mesopotamian kings saw themselves as established on the throne by means of a divine decree. In Egypt Horus installed the kings in a coronation ceremony that involved consecration and purification rites.

2:7. king as son of deity. In the ancient Near East kings were commonly understood as having a filial relationship to deity and **were often considered to have been engendered by deity**. Egyptian kingship was particularly strong on this point, since the kingship of the pharaoh was seen as derived from the divine realm. More particularly he was conceived as the son of Re, the sun god. In Ugaritic literature, Keret, king of Khubur, is identified as the son of El, the chief god of the Canaanites. Furthermore, iconographic evidence shows two princes suckling the breasts of the goddess Anat. Among the Aramean kings the designation was even included in their throne names (Ben-Hadad means son of Hadad). In Mesopotamia, from Gilgamesh in the mid-third millennium through kings such as Gudea, Hammurabi, Tukulti-Ninurta and Ashurbanipal, just to name a few, it was part of the royal prerogative to claim divine heritage. **The Israelite kings, however, were sons of the deity on the basis of a covenant and not sons by nature** (see Ps 89:26; 2 Sam 7:14).

2:9. iron scepter. The scepter was representative of kingship, and iron was symbolic of strength. Egyptian rulers as early as the Narmer palette are portrayed as striking enemies with a rod/scepter. Of particular interest is the fact that the evidence from the execration texts (see next entry) suggests that the pots were smashed with a mace.

2:9. dashed to pieces like pottery. Egyptian kings celebrated their rule by **writing the names of their enemies on pots and symbolically smashing them**. These are referred to as the execration texts. Assyrian kings likewise used the metaphor of smashed pottery to assert their supremacy over enemies.⁸

²Craigie, P. C. (2002). Vol. 19: Word Biblical Commentary : Psalms 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary (Page 64). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

³Carson, D., & Guthrie, D. (1997, c1994). New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition (electronic ed. of the 4th ed.) (Ps 2:1). Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

⁴Craigie, P. C. (2002). Vol. 19: Word Biblical Commentary : Psalms 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary (Page 67). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

⁵Carson, D., & Guthrie, D. (1997, c1994). New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition (electronic ed. of the 4th ed.) (Ps 3:1). Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

⁶Carson, D., & Guthrie, D. (1997, c1994). New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition (electronic ed. of the 4th ed.) (Ps 3:1). Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

⁷Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁸Matthews, V. h., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). The IVP Bible background commentary : Old Testament (electronic ed.) (Ps 2:6). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

מזמור לדוד בקרחו מפניו אבשלום בנו:
 son-of-him Absalom from-faces-of when-to-flee-him of-David psalm *(3:1)

יהוה מה רבו ערי רבים קמים עלי:
 against-me ones-rising-up many foes-of-me they-are-many how! Yahweh (2)

רבים אמרים לנפשי אין ישועתה לו באלהים סלה:
 selah by-God for-him deliverance no of-self-of-me ones-saying many (3)

ואתה יהוה מגן בערי כבודי ומרים
 and-one-lifting Glorious-One-of-me around-me shield Yahweh but-you (4)

ראשי: קולי אל יהוה אקרא ויענני מהר
 from-hill-of and-he-answers-me I-cry Yahweh to voice-of-me (5) head-of-me

קדשו סלה: אני שכבתי ואישנה וקיצותי כי יהוה
 Yahweh because I-wake and-I-sleep I-lie-down I (6) selah holiness-of-him

יסמכני: לא אירא מרבבות עם אשר
 who people of-tens-of-thousands-of I-will-fear not (7) he-sustains-me

סביב שתי עלי: קומה יהוה הושיעני אלהי
 God-of-me deliver-me! Yahweh arise! (8) against-me they-are-drawn-up every-side

כי הפית את כל איבי לחי שני רשעים
 wicked-ones teeth-of jaw ones-being-enemies-of-me all-of *** you-struck for

שברת: ליהוה תישועה על עמך ברכתך
 blessing-of-you people-of-you on the-deliverance from-Yahweh (9) you-broke

סלה:
 selah

Psalm 3

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

O LORD, how my adversaries have increased!

Many are rising up against me.
Many are saying of my soul, "There is no deliverance for him in God."

But Thou, O LORD, art a shield about me,

My glory, and the One who lifts my head.
I was crying to the LORD with my voice,
And He answered me from His holy mountain.

I lay down and slept;

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.
Who have set themselves against me round about.

Arise, O LORD;

save me, O my God!
For Thou hast smitten all my enemies on the cheek;
Thou hast shattered the teeth of the wicked.

Salvation belongs to the LORD; Thy blessing *be* upon Thy people!

.....

[A] The mood of the psalm is established by its genre. It is an *individual lament* psalm in which the main speaker expresses confidence in personal and individual deliverance by God (vv. 3-8). Because of the parallels with [Psalm 4](#) ("sleep," 3:5; 4:8; "glory," 3:3; 4:2), these psalms (3 and 4) may be read together. It has been suggested that [Psalm 3](#) is a morning psalm (cf. v. 5) and [Psalm 4](#) is an evening psalm (cf. v. 8).

A. Lament Over the Enemies (vv. 1-2)

B. Prayer to the Lord (vv. 3-4)

C. Trust in the Lord (vv. 5-6)

B'. Prayer for Deliverance (v. 7)

A'. Hope in the Lord (v. 8)

[B] The Hebrew text begins with the personal pronoun "I" as an **emphatic way of expressing the inner quietness of the psalmist**. In fact, it may be translated "as far as I am concerned." Lying down to sleep expresses David's confidence in God's response to his plea. He is the Great King who will come to the aid of his son. **Instead of being vexed in his soul or making plans to relieve the pressure, he has learned to console himself with God** (e.g., the well-known example of Peter in Acts 12:5-6). Too often plans come before prayers. How many blessings we may miss by conceiving our own schemes only to see God frustrate them later and work out his own plan!

[C] The striking of the enemies on the jaw (v. 7b) is an expression of **humiliation** (cf. 1 Kings 22:24; Isa 50:6; Lam 3:30; Mic 5:1). The metaphor of the breaking of teeth likens the enemies to **wild animals** whose strength is taken away when their teeth are crushed (cf. Ps 58:6). This expression of vindication may seem harsh to our ears, but the psalmist is putting before us the hope that, **regardless what enemies may arise** from within or from without the kingdom of God, God will be victorious. [EBCOT]

.....

[D] As the psalmist moves his eyes from the multitude of enemies to God, **the tone of the psalm changes abruptly**. The principle that is involved in this change of tone is one which is well established in the biblical literature. **If one gazes too long upon the enemy and his might, the enemy grows in the mind's eye to gigantic proportions and his citadels reach up to the skies (Deut 1:28). The hypnotic power of the enemy is broken when one turns one's gaze toward God, who is able to fight and grant victory (Deut 1:29–30)**. The psalmist, faced by foes, now recalls that God is a “shield round about,” that is, protecting him on all sides. His glory, as king, lies not in past accomplishments or present potential; God, the sovereign king, is his glory! The psalmist's description of God as “the One who holds up my head” (3:4b) can be interpreted in a number of ways. If the psalm applies initially to David, the words imply contrast; David, whose head was covered in shame on the Mount of Olives (2 Sam 15:30), will be helped by God to hold his head high again through this time of crisis. But if the psalm is of general royal significance, then the expression, “to hold/lift up the head” relates to a divine action, or sovereign action, which may include restoration to a former position (see Gen 40:20–21). In general terms, the lifting of the head signifies the movement from despair to hope (see Luke 21:28).

Craigie, P. C. (2002). Vol. 19: Word Biblical Commentary : Psalms 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary (Page 73). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

.....

[E] The God who had installed the king on the holy mountain would also come to his aid from that place which symbolized his earthly presence.

The psalmist trusts fully in God (3:6–7). It is the psalmist's conviction that God heard and answered prayer, which makes possible the transition to this quiet statement of trust. **Surrounded by enemies who want to kill him, the psalmist finds himself in a situation naturally inviting insomnia. But it is his conviction that “the Lord sustains” (3:6b) that makes sleep possible in an impossible situation.**

Craigie, P. C. (2002). Vol. 19: Word Biblical Commentary : Psalms 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary (Page 74). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

.....

[F] The psalmist prays that God would smite his enemies “on the cheek” (3:8c). The words are symbolic; to smite someone on the cheek was to **administer a gross insult** (cf. 1 Kgs 22:24; Job 16:10; Lam 3:30). **As the psalmist had been insulted by the words of his enemies (3:3b)**, so now he prays for an insult to be administered to them. The parallel line (3:8d) takes the thought further. He prays that God would “smash the teeth of wicked men”; although the words have been interpreted as the imagery of savage beasts rendered harmless through fractured teeth, it is **possible that their primary significance is with respect to speechlessness**. The enemies had

spoken wicked words (3:3d), but mouths cluttered with shattered teeth could no longer voice their enmity.

Craigie, P. C. (2002). Vol. 19: Word Biblical Commentary : Psalms 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary (Page 75). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

.....

[G] This psalm is set in 2 Samuel 15:13–17:24. The initial flight from Absalom covered two nights, the first of which could understandably have found David despondent (1, 2). But the antidote to despondency is, first, to assert divine truth (3), and secondly to seek divine aid (4). The consequence is the blessing of a night’s sleep (5) and fresh confidence for the new day (6). Just as one day ended in prayer (4) so the new day begins in calling on God to deliver (7), for he has ever been the foe of David’s foes: thus, confident prayer draws on past experiences of grace and begets assurance for the future (8).

Carson, D., & Guthrie, D. (1997, c1994). New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition (electronic ed. of the 4th ed.) (Ps 3:1). Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

.....

Psalm 4

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David.

¹Answer me when I call to you,
O my righteous God.
Give me relief from my distress;
be merciful to me and hear my prayer.

²How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame?
How long will you love delusions and seek false

gods?
Selah
³Know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;
the LORD will hear when I call to him.

⁴In your anger do not sin;
when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.
Selah
⁵Offer right sacrifices and trust in the LORD.

⁶Many are asking, "Who can show us any good?"
Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD.

⁷You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.

⁸I will lie down and sleep in peace,
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

לְמַנְצֵחַ בְּנִינּוֹת מְזֻמָּר לְדָוִד :
of-David psalm with-stringed-instruments for-the-one-directing (4:1)

בְּקִרְאִי עֲנֵנִי | אֱלֹהֵי צְדִיקִי בְצָר
from-the-distress righteousness-of-me God-of answer-me! when-to-call-me (2)

הִרְתַּבְּתָּ לִּי חַנּוּנִי וּשְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתִי : בְּנֵי
sons-of (3) prayer-of-me and-hear! be-merciful-to-me! to-me you-give-relief

אִישׁ עַד-מָה קְבוּרִי לְקִלְמָה תִּאְהַבּוּן רִיק תִּבְקָשׁוּ
will-you-seek delusion will-you-love into-shame glory-of-me when? until man

כֹּזֵב סֵלָה : וְדַעוּ כִּי-הִפְלִיחַ יְהוָה חֲסִיד לּוֹ יְהוָה
Yahweh for-him godly Yahweh he-set-apart that and-know! (4) selah lie

יִשְׁמַע בְּקִרְאִי אֵלָיו : רְגִזוּ וְאַל-תִּחַטְּאוּ אַמְרוּ
search! you-sin and-not be-angry! (5) to-him when-to-call-me he-will-hear

בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל-מִשְׁכַּבְּכֶם וְדַמּוּ סֵלָה : זְכַחוּ זְכַחַי-
sacrifices-of offer! (6) selah and-be-silent! bed-of-you on in-heart-of-you

צְדִק וּבִטְחוֹ אֶל-יְהוָה : רַבִּים אֹמְרִים מִי-יִרְאֶנּוּ טוֹב
good he-can-show-us who? ones-asking many (7) Yahweh in and-trust! right

נֹסֶה - עָלֵינוּ אֹר פְּנֵיךָ יְהוָה : נִתְתָּה שְׂמֵחָה
joy you-put (8) Yahweh faces-of-you light-of upon-us let-shine!

בְּלִבִּי מֵעַתָּה דִגְנָם וְתִירוֹשָׁם
and-new-wine-of-them grain-of-them more-than-time-of in-heart-of-me

רְבוּ : בְּשָׁלוֹם יַחְדָּו אֲשַׁכְּבָה וְאִישׁן כִּי-אַתָּה
you for and-I-will-sleep I-will-lie-down together in-peace (9) they-abound

יְהוָה לְבַדְּךָ לְבִטָּח תּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי :
you-make-dwell-me in-safety alone Yahweh

Psalm 4

For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! Thou hast relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? (How long) will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? *Selah*.
But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him.

Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. *Selah*.
Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.

Many are saying, "Who will show us any good?" Lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us, O LORD!
Thou hast put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound.

In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For Thou alone, O LORD, dost make me to dwell in safety.

A. Prayer (v. 1)

B. Call for Trust in the Lord (vv. 2-5)

A'. Prayer (vv. 6-7)

B'. Expression of Trust (v. 8)

The message of the psalmist is that his confidence is in the Lord who will not abandon his beloved in distress but will restore his blessings and joy to them. This confidence gives rise to one blessing that the enemies cannot take away: inward peace (v. 8)...By a series of four imperatives, the psalmist pours out his heart before God: "Answer me," "give me relief," "be merciful," and "hear my prayer."...Boldly, and yet humbly, he casts himself on the "mercy" of God, who has covenanted to be loving and faithful to his own (Exod 34:6). Prayer is a form of communication in which the child of God casts himself on the mercy of God. The verbal phrase "be merciful to me" (*honnemi*) is related to the noun "favor" (*hen*) and to the divine attribute "gracious" (*hannun*).

The "men" (*bene 'ish* v. 2) belong to the class of prominent citizens. As a class they form the landowners, the wealthy, and the powerful in Israel's society (cf. 49:2; 62:9; Isa 2:9; 5:15; note: EVV do not bring out the distinction as in Heb.). The leadership has gone astray. They are opposed to the king and have shown their enmity in two ways.

First, the leaders have scoffed at his "glory"; i.e., they have despised the position of the king. "Glory" (*kabod*) is bestowed by God on his anointed king (3:3). Second, they characterize themselves by a diligent pursuit of what is "vain" (NIV, "delusions") and "deceptive" (NIV, "false gods"; NIV mg., "seek lies"). These words explain how they have trodden the king's glory into the ground by betraying it for an unspecified worthless cause. [EBCOT]

“It is not clear who the "many" were. Were they the skeptics, or were they his supporters who honestly questioned what was happening? Whoever they were, **David prayed for them also and called on God to make his covenant blessings evident.** He did this **by an allusion to the priestly benediction (Num 6:24-26).** They asked, "Who can show us any good?" David responded by pointing away from himself and to the Lord as the author of blessing.

He committed his way to the Lord as he went to sleep. **The enemies may have vexed themselves on their beds (v. 4), but he experienced "peace,"** the peace that comes as a blessing from God (Num 6:26). His confidence in Yahweh "alone" is the reason for his peaceful sleep. The expression "make me dwell in safety" connotes **not only the absence of enemies and hostilities but also the presence of peace** (Deut 33:28; Jer 23:6; Ezek 34:25, 27-28; 38:8, 14; Hos 2:18; cf. Mic 7:14). [EBCOT]

.....

“light of God’s face. The metaphor “light of God’s face” is found in royal letters from the Egyptian city of Amarna and in Ugaritic correspondence. For example, “the face of the Sun (i.e., Pharaoh) shone brightly upon me” is a statement made by one of the Egyptian king’s subordinates. Two small silver scrolls (about one inch long) have been found in the area known as Keteph Hinnom in Jerusalem. They were **amulets in a burial cave from the sixth or seventh century b.c., and they contained the benediction from Numbers 6:25,** which includes the request that the Lord “make his face shine upon you.” At present they represent the oldest example of any text of Scripture. The concept of the shining face of the deity resulting in mercy is found in Mesopotamian documents and inscriptions from as early as the twelfth century b.c.” [Matthews, V. h., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). *The IVP Bible background commentary : Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ps 4:6). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.]

.....

“Because the Lord had set apart the psalmist in love, He would answer his prayer. David described himself as one of the godly, an object of God’s covenantal loyal love. In the care of God, David was safe and God would hear and respond to his prayers. 4:4-5. **The only recourse, then, for the wicked was to abandon their sinful plans** and become worshipers of the Lord. **Diligent souls searching for the Lord would be led to act properly toward David.** They would desist from their opposition, that is, they would be silent.

“The joy and contentment David experienced in trusting in the Lord was **greater than the mirth of the harvest festivities.** Even in distress and away from the visible evidence of God’s goodness, he enjoyed peace and safety in his God (on sleep; cf. 3:5). **True joy and peace depend not on circumstances but on God’s protection and provisions** (cf. Gal. 5:22; Rom. 14:17).” [Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures.* Wheaton, IL: Victor Books].

Num 6.22ff:

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 23 Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites:

You shall say to them,

24 The Lord bless you and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

27 So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them. [NRSV]

.....

“The interrogative (“how long?”) is used only once at the beginning of the first clause, but it is to be understood as introducing all three clauses. Alternatively, the second two clauses could be rendered simply as **exclamations: “You love vanity! You seek falsehood!” (and their love of falsehood and vanity is the source of the reproach upon the character of the righteous).**

Tremble ... but don't sin

speak within yourselves ... but be still on your beds

.....

(a) call	בִּקְרָאִי (v 2)	(e) bed	מִשְׁכָּב (v 5)
	בִּקְרָאִי (v 4)	lie down	אֲשַׁכַּב (v 9)
(b) righteousness	צְדָקָי (v 2)	(f) trust	בַּטְחוּ (v 6)
	צְדָק (v 6)	safety	בַּטַּח (v 9)
(c) hear	שָׁמַעַ (v 2)	(g) many	רַבִּים (v 7)
	יִשְׁמַעַ (v 4)	abound	רַבוּ (v 8)
(d) heart	לִבָּב (v 5)		
	לֵב (v 8)		

.....

“The Lord who answers prayer (4:2–4). The psalmist turns to prayer with trouble brooding in his mind; **he has been accused, quite unjustly, of some crime or sin and though he knows that he is innocent, the reproach hangs heavily upon him. All he can do is turn to God;** he has no particular request, other than that God hear him and grant him some peace of mind... The source of his anxiety is described as the “sons of man” (v 3), who are **persons of significance** or influence, as distinct from the common people (see the distinction between the **שִׂיָּא יִנֵּב** “sons of a man” and the humbler **בְּדָא יִנֵּב** “sons of a human” in Ps 62:9). These “sons of man,” in their

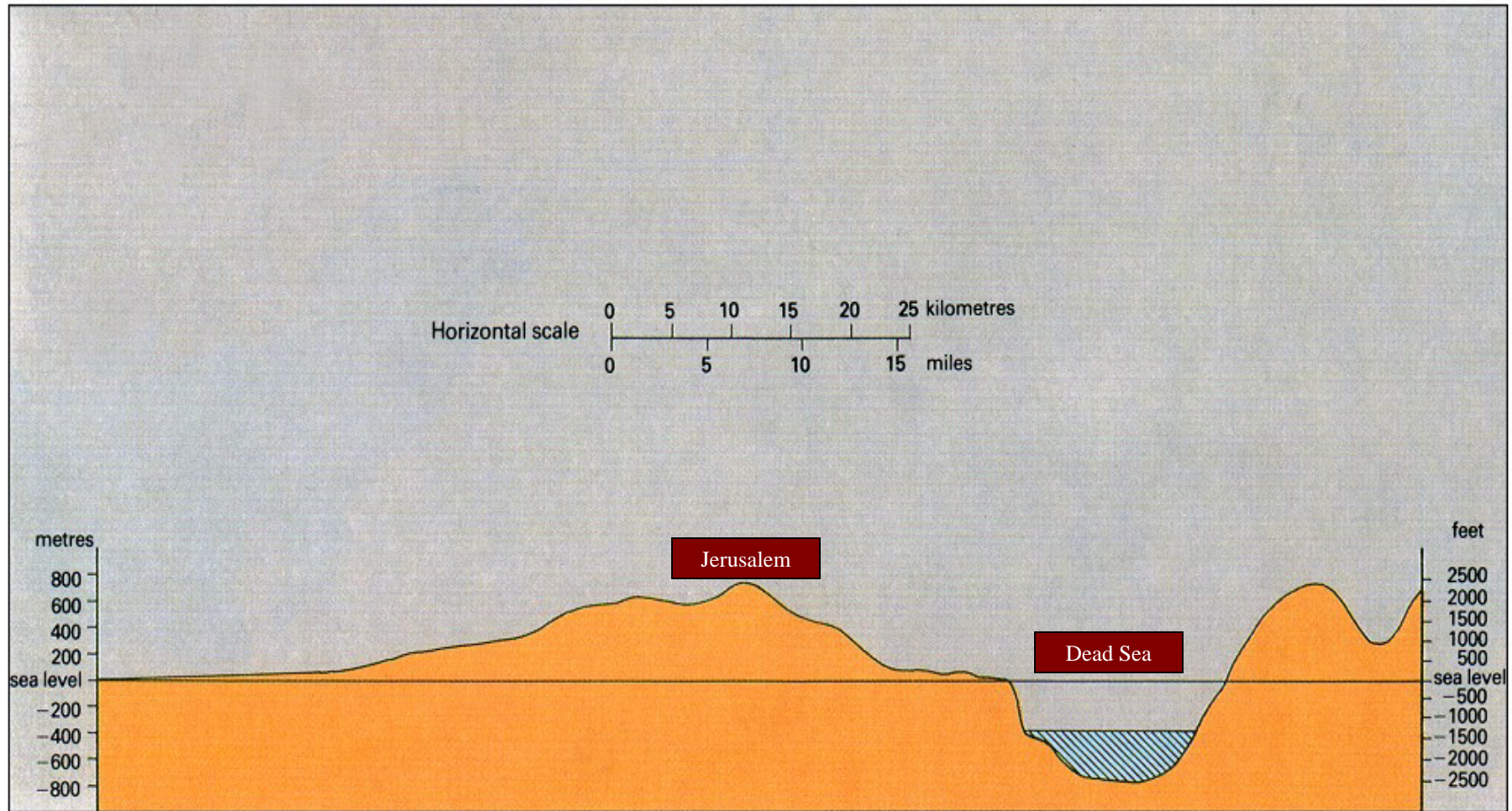
persistent pursuit of vanity and lies, **have made the psalmist's reputation as nothing, a word of reproach**, and their words come to his mind as he engages in prayer. So he prays for God to answer, for the accusers will not answer his protestations of innocence, but merely persist in their falsehood. Feeling hemmed in and constrained by his human enemies, he asks the God of his "righteousness" (the One who knows he is innocent) to give him room, or to release him from the straits and pressures to which he has been subjected. He requests God's grace, which would bring release from the human accusations." [WBC]

"V 5 is difficult, both with respect to translation and interpretation. It might be paraphrased as follows: **"You can tremble with anger and rage, but don't sin by doing anything! You can speak your evil words within your hearts, but don't speak them out loud! Lie still and silent upon your beds, where you can do no harm."** The psalmist advises his adversaries to keep their rage within themselves, to maintain control of their actions and their evil words. It was when they spoke out loud and acted (v 3) that their inner evil was released to afflict the innocent. And though silence and lack of action would not remove the rot within, it would at least curtail its evil effects.

"Early in the prayer, the psalmist recalled mentally the words of the **arrogant adversaries** (v 3), but now, as his thoughts progress, it is the words of the **pusillanimous doubters** which come to mind, the people who say: "Who will show us good?" **And the dubious help of doubters can sometimes be as dangerous as the arrogant words of enemies!** An attack by enemies can be thwarted if the innocent person has trust in God, **but when nagging doubts arise, confidence can easily be undermined.** Enemies are real and all too visible, but is there anybody who can really help against them? Can God really do any good? And so the psalmist, as his confidence grows, must not only transcend the attacks of opponents, but must also overcome the voice of doubt within himself. And he overcomes it by recalling an ancient blessing, the Blessing of Aaron, **which he had doubtless heard hundreds of times during his participation in worship:** "The Lord will make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord will lift up his face to you and give you his peace" (Num 6:25–26). In a shortened form, he makes that blessing his own to quash the uncertainties within him. **He prays for an inner joy which would be greater than those outward manifestations of joy which characterized his society, the joy and rejoicing which stemmed from a successful harvest of corn and grapes for new wine.** The greatest joy for which he prayed was not that of a harvest home, but of an awareness of the light of God's countenance.

"It is **not a psalm of penitence**, arising out of the recognition of sins committed; there are other psalms for that purpose. It is rather a psalm which reflects the **anguish of the innocent and oppressed, or of the righteous sufferer.** And thus it is a particularly important kind of psalm, for it addresses a fundamental human experience, the experience of injustice, suffering and oppression. ... **There is no suggestion in this psalm that the accusers go away or cease in their accusations. What changes as a consequence of prayer is not the external circumstance, but the inner spirit of the worshiper.** The accusations are like barbs in the mind, needling and prodding, causing anxiety; prayer leads to that **calmness of mind in which the accusations can be accepted and carried, for a greater peace of mind has come from God.** Psalm 4 is thus a prayer which can be used by every believer, for there are none who do not experience, to some degree or another, the turmoil of mind expressed in this poignant psalm. [WBC]

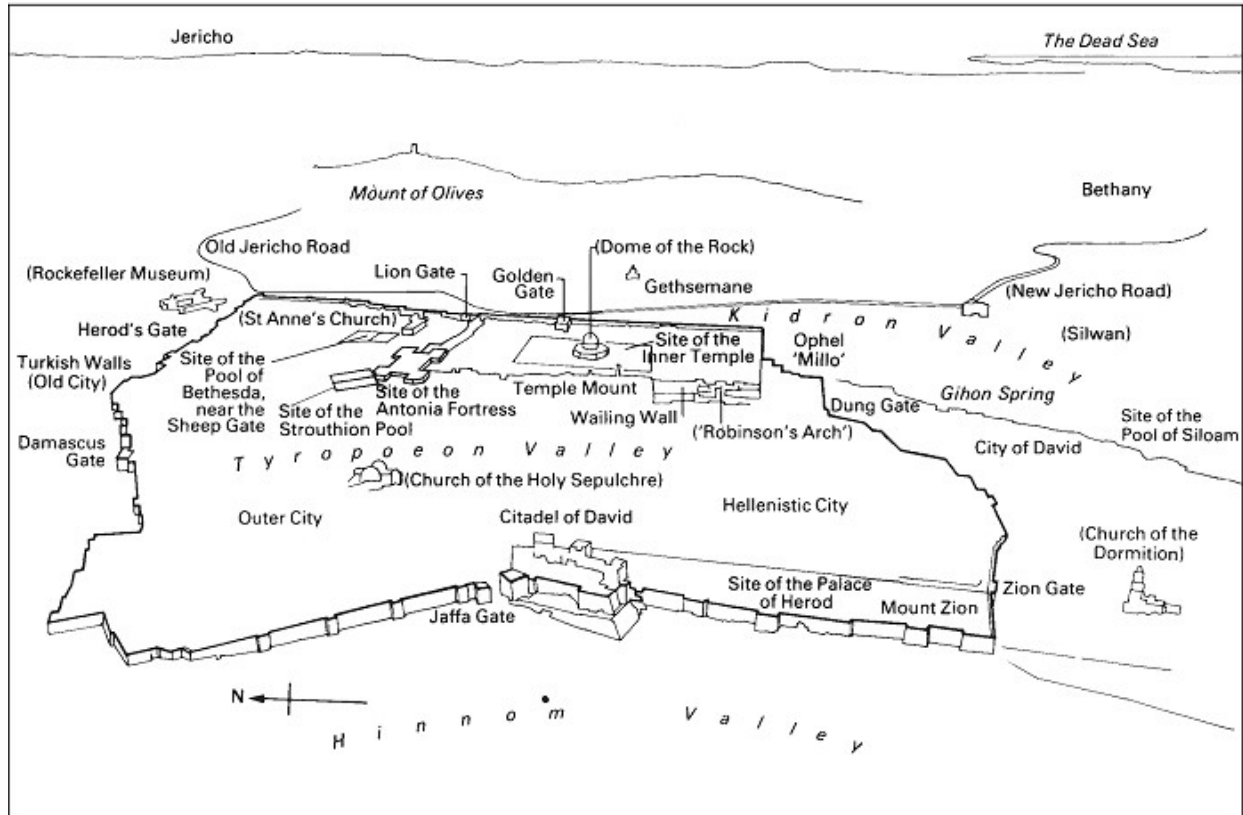
Elevation of Palestine



(looking North, *New Bible Atlas*)



Looking West from Moab
(New Bible Atlas)



לְמַנְצַח אֵל -

for for-the-one-directing *(5:1)

הַנְּחִילוֹת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד : אִמְרֵי הַאֲזִינָה | יְהוָה בִּינָה
 the-flutes psalm of-David (2) words-of-me Yahweh give-ear! consider!

הִגִּינִי : הַקְשִׁיבָה | לְקוֹל שׁוֹעֵי מֶלְכִי
 sighing-of-me (3) listen! to-sound-of cry-for-help-of-me King-of-me

וְאֵלֵהִי כִי- אֲלִיךָ אֶתְפַּלֵּל : יְהוָה בֶּקֶר תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי
 and-God-of-me (4) I-pray to-you for and-God-of-me Yahweh morning you-hear voice-of-me

בֶּקֶר אֶעֱרֹךְ- לָךְ וְאֶצְפָּה : כִּי לֹא אֵל - חֲפִץ
 I-lay-request morning (5) and-I-wait before-you I-lay-request God-of not for pleased-in

רָשַׁע | אֶתָּה לֹא יִגְרַת : רָע : לֹא יִתְיַצְּבוּ
 evil you not (6) wicked he-can-dwell-with-you not they-can-stand

הוֹלְלִים לִנְגַד עֵינֶיךָ שִׂנְאָתָּ כָּל- פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן :
 ones-being-arrogant at-before eyes-of-you you-hate all-of ones-doing-of wrong

הַתֹּאבֵד דִּבְרֵי כֶזֶב אִישׁ- דְּמַיִם וּמְרֻמָּה וְהֶעֱבַד |
 you-destroy (7) ones-telling-of lie man-of bloods and-deceit he-abhors

יְהוָה : וְאֲנִי בְרַב חַסְדֶּךָ אָבוֹא בֵּיתְךָ
 Yahweh (8) but-I by-greatness-of mercy-of-you I-will-come-into house-of-you

אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֵל- הַיְכָל- קֹדֶשְׁךָ בִּירְאָתְךָ : יְהוָה |
 I-will-bow toward (9) holiness-of-you temple-of in-reverence-of-you Yahweh

נְחִינִי בַצְדִקְתְּךָ לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרֵי
 lead-me! in-righteousness-of-you because-of ones-being-enemies-of-me

הוֹשֵׁר לְפָנַי דְּרַכְךָ : כִּי אֵין בְּפִיהוּ נְכוֹנָה
 make-straight! before-me way-of-you not for (10) being-trusted from-mouth-of-him

קִרְבָּם הַנוֹת קְבָר- פְּתוּחַ גְּרוֹנָם לְשׁוֹנָם
 heart-of-them destructions grave being-open throat-of-them tongue-of-them

יַחְלִיקוּןז : הַאֲשִׁימָם | אֱלֹהִים יִפְלוּ
 they-speak-deceit (11) declare-guilty-them! God let-them-fall

מִמַּעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרַב פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם הַדִּיחָמוּ כִי- קָרוּ
 by-intrigues-of-them for-many-of sins-of-them banish-them! for they-rebelled

בָּךְ : וְשִׂמְחוּ כָּל- חוֹסֵי בְּךָ
 against-you (12) but-let-them-be-glad all-of ones-taking-refuge-of in-you

לְעוֹלָם יִרְנְנוּ וְתִסַּף וְעַלֵּימוּ
 for-ever let-them-sing-for-joy and-you-spread-protection over-them

וַיִּשְׂעֲלְצוּ בְּךָ אֲהַבֵי שְׁמֶךָ : כִּי- אֶתָּה
 that-they-may-rejoice in-you ones-loving-of name-of-you for (13) you

תְּבַרְךָ צַדִּיק יְהוָה כַּצִּנֵּה רְצוֹן תַּעֲטֶרְנוּ :
 you-bless righteous Yahweh as-the-shield favor you-surround-him

God hates both the sin and those who sin against him (v. 5). The **particular sins are examples of a way of life**. The liar is only a hairbreadth away from the murderer (v. 6). Though the liar may claim that he only goes so far with his deception, when he is caught, the liar is a dangerous man, because he may attempt to cover his tracks. **Deception and greed** mark the man who is unfaithful to God and man; he is a potential candidate for **murder**. The "**bloodthirsty**" man is, therefore, **not necessarily one who is guilty of murder, but one who no longer knows the limits between "mine" and "thine" and thus twists and perverts justice, even at the cost of human lives or dignity** (cf. Isa 3:13-15; 5:8-10; Amos 6:12). Instead of "taking pleasure" in evil, the Lord "abhors" all who practice wickedness.

The hope of fellowship with God is based, not on his righteousness, but on God's sovereign "love" (*hesed*; "love" or "unfailing love"). The entrance into the house of God was not limited to the godly, because **the priests could not distinguish between the godly in heart and the godly in appearance**. It is to this end that the people were reminded of the conditions for entrance into God's presence and fellowship in Psalms 15 and 24. For the psalmist the hope of entering into the temple is much more than the physical walking into the courts of the temple. The psalmist seeks the affirmation of God's love for him in an evil world and, hence, the assurance of God's presence with him.

Second, the psalmist prays that the **Lord's righteousness will triumph by holding the wicked culpable for their acts and, once culpable, that he will remove them from the covenant community. The wicked cannot continue to live as if their way is blessed or condoned by the Lord.** The seeds sown in unrighteousness and unfaithfulness must **bear their fruits** by bringing "calamities" on the wicked. **God's justice must cause the schemes of the wicked to backfire on themselves** [EBCOT]

[B] **5:9** *word from their mouth*. **The most frequent weapon used against the psalmists is the tongue** (for a striking example see Ps 12; see also note on 10:7). The psalmists experienced that the tongue is as deadly as the sword (see 57:4; 64:3-4). Perhaps appeals to God against those who maliciously wield the tongue are frequent in the Psalms because only in God's courtroom can a person experience redress for such attacks. For the plots and intrigues of enemies, **usually involving lies to discredit** the king and bring him down, see Ps 17; 25; 27-28; 31; 35; 41; 52; 54-57; 59; 63-64; 71; 86; 109; 140-141--all ascribed to David. **Frequently such attacks came when the king was "low" and seemingly abandoned by God** (as in Ps 25; 35; 41; 71; 86; 109). **In that case he was viewed as no longer fit to be king--God was no longer with him** (and so he could no longer secure the safety of the nation; see 1Sa 8:20; 11:12; 12:12; 25:28; 2Sa 3:18; 7:9-11). In any event, he was an easy prey (see 3:2; 22:7-8; 71:11).

The presence of so-called "**imprecations**" (curses) in the Psalms has occasioned endless discussion and has caused many Christians to wince, in view of Jesus' instructions to turn the other cheek and to pray for one's enemies (see Mt 5:39, 44), and his own example on the cross (see Lk 23:34). **Actually, these "imprecations" are not that at all; rather, they are appeals to God to redress wrongs perpetrated against the psalmists by imposing penalties commensurate with the violence done (see 28:4)--in accordance also with normal judicial procedure in human courts (see Dt 25:1-3).** The psalmists knew that he who has been wronged is not to right that wrong by his own hand **but is to leave redress to the Lord, who says, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay"** (Dt 32:35; see Pr 20:22; Ro 12:19). Therefore they appeal their cases to the divine Judge (see Jer 15:15). [NIV Study Bible Notes]

[C] **Verse 10.** Is such a request as this proper? Like most of the imprecations **it asks God to do what he has asserted he will in any case do—expose and punish sin and sinners (10a, c); do to false accusers what they would have done to the object of their spite (10b; cf. Dt. 19:16–19);** leaves action to God, not proposing to take personal vengeance (Pr. 20:22; Rom. 12:19); and is motivated by the hurt done to God (10d), not personal animosity. [New Bible Commentary]

[D] The psalmist expressed his confidence in approaching a God who hates iniquity (evil). An evil person cannot dwell with such a God. **People who are presumptuous and boastful, who do not shrink from murder or deceit, God hates and will destroy. They are totally detestable to Him.**

In contrast with such wickedness David did not extol his own virtues. Rather he stressed God's mercy (chesed, "loyal love") toward him. By this he could approach the tabernacle [BKC]

[E] Evil persons may not enter God's presence (5:5–7). **The psalmist, whose opening words indicate his own preparations for entering the presence of God, now indicates the nature of those persons who cannot enter God's presence.** God's hatred of all forms of evil and wickedness is such that persons **who live by those norms cannot expect to enter his presence.** Because God takes no pleasure in wickedness, evil (or evil persons) **may not be his guest or stand in his presence,** as the psalmist is doing (vv 2–4, 8–9). **God is not merely a God of power with whom powerful (but evil) persons might hope to stand as guests and companions; God's nature as good and righteous specifies the character required of human beings who desire to "sojourn" (or be as guests) with him.**

Though evil persons are excluded from God's presence because of their sin, it does not follow that the psalmist is admitted by virtue of his own goodness. The psalmist's entrance into God's house would be based only upon "the abundance of your lovingkindness" (v 8); that is to say, it was only God's grace and covenant love (חסד) toward his people which made entrance into his presence possible. **But those who knew and understood this love of God sought not only to turn from evil, but also sought forgiveness for the evil they had done.**

The evil are **characterized here entirely in terms of their speech** in a manner which illustrates forcefully the potential evil of the tongue (cf. Jas 3:6–12). Their words, in the absence of "truth," were without foundation or certainty, and hence **altogether unreliable. The inner emotions and desires of the wicked are of such a destructive nature** that their throat is like an "open grave," symbolizing death, but more forcefully (in a hot climate) **an abominable stench;** in the pure air of morality, then-words created an unbearable smell. Their tongues articulate no truth, but only the smooth words of flattery, **which are lies designed cunningly to enable the evil to achieve their ends.** With respect to such evildoers, the psalmist can only pray for their destruction (v 11); their thought and words are not only a danger to the righteous, but an insult to God

He does not ask for thunderbolts from heaven; **he asks only that their evil might reverberate upon themselves,** that they might be tripped up in their own devious schemes, and thus become their own victims.

Psalm 5 illustrates with clarity the **polarity and tension which characterize certain dimensions of the life** of prayer. On the one side, there is God: on the other, evil human beings. And the thought of the psalmist alternates between these two poles. He begins by asking God to hear him, but recalls that evil persons have no place in God's presence. He turns back to God again, expressing his desire to worship and his need of guidance, but then is reminded of the human evils of the tongue. Eventually, he concludes in confidence, praying for protection and blessing. **But the prayer is not only for protection from wicked persons, but also a prayer for protection from becoming like them.** Those who use their tongues to exult in God, cannot also use them to boast and flatter. [WBC]

הַשְּׁמִינִית עַל- בְּנִינּוֹת לְמַנְצֵחַ
the-sheminith according-to with-stringed-instruments for-the-one-directing *(6:1)

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד : יְהוָה אֵל- בְּאַפָּךָ תוֹכִיחֵנִי וְאֵל-
or-not you-rebuke-me in-anger-of-you not Yahweh (2) of-David psalm

בְּחַמְתֶּךָ תִּסְרְנֵנִי : חַנּוּנֵי יְהוָה כִּי אִמְלֵל
faint for Yahweh be-merciful-to-me! (3) you-discipline-me in-wrath-of-you

אֲנִי רָפְאֵנִי יְהוָה כִּי נִבְהָלוּ עַצְמוֹתַי : וְנַפְשִׁי
and-soul-of-me (4) bones-of-me they-are-in-agony for Yahweh heal-me! I

נִבְהָלָה מְאֹד וְאַתָּה יְהוָה עַד- מָתַי : שׁוּבָה יְהוָה חַלְצָה
deliver! Yahweh turn! (5) when? until Yahweh but-you great she-is-in-anguish

נַפְשִׁי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי לְמַעַן חַסְדֶּךָ : כִּי אֵין בְּמוֹת
in-the-death not for (6) unfailing-love-of-you because-of save-me! soul-of-me

זְכָרְךָ בְּשֵׂאוֹל מִי יוֹדֶה- לָךְ : יִגְעַתִּי
I-am-worn-out (7) to-you he-praises who? from-Sheol remembrance-of-you

בְּאַנְחֹתַי אֲשַׁתַּח בְּכָל- לַיְלָה מִטְּתִי בְּדַמְעֹתַי
with-tear-of-me bed-of-me night through-all-of I-flood from-groaning-of-me

עַרְשִׁי אִמְסָה : עֹשֶׂשָׁה מִכְּעֵס עֵינַי עָתָקָה
she-fails eye-of-me with-sorrow she-grows-weak (8) I-drench couch-of-me

בְּכָל- צוֹרְרֵי : סוּרוּ מִמֶּנִּי כָּל- פְּעֻלֵי
ones-doing-of all-of from-me away! (9) ones-being-foes-of-me because-of-all-of

אֲוֹן כִּי- שָׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹל בְּכִי : שָׁמַע יְהוָה
Yahweh he-heard (10) weeping-of-me sound-of Yahweh he-heard for evil

תְּחַנְּתֵנִי יְהוָה תְּפִלָּתִי יִקַּח : יִבְשׁוּ
may-they-be-ashamed (11) he-accepts prayer-of-me Yahweh cry-for-mercy-of-me

וַיִּבְהָלוּ מְאֹד כָּל- אֵיבֵי
ones-being-enemies-of-me all-of greatly and-may-they-be-dismayed

יָשׁוּבוּ יִבְשׁוּ : רָנַע
suddenly may-they-be-disgraced may-they-turn-back

Psalm 6

1 O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger,
2 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing;
3 My soul also is struck with terror,

or discipline me in your wrath.
O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror.
while you, O Lord—how long?

4 Turn, O Lord, save my life;
5 For in death there is no remembrance of you;

deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.
in Sheol who can give you praise?

6 I am weary with my moaning; // every night I flood my bed with tears; // I drench my couch with my weeping.
7 My eyes waste away because of grief;

they grow weak because of all my foes.

8 Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
9 The Lord has heard my supplication;
10 All my enemies shall be ashamed and struck with terror;

for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.
the Lord accepts my prayer.
they shall turn back, and in a moment be put to shame.

[A] A. Prayer for God's Favor (vv. 1-3)
 B. Prayer for God's Love (vv. 4-5)
 B'. Need of God's Love (vv. 6-7)
 A'. Prayer for God's Favor (vv. 8-10)

The verbs "rebuke" (*tokiheni*) and "discipline" (*teyassereni*) are often synonymous. The "rebuke" of the Lord may be a form of judgment, **but it may also be in the form of a lesson in life** (Deut 4:36; 8:5; 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 94:10; Prov 3:12). Eliphaz states the argument that the Lord delivers man from calamities even when he has inflicted them in the process of "maturation" (Job 5:17-26, esp. vv. 17-18).

In his suffering, the nature of which is only intimated in vv. 8-10, David turned to Yahweh as if to say, "Father, my covenant faithful God." **He does not confess his sins but asks the Lord to demonstrate his covenant promises: restoration (v. 2) and loyalty (v. 4).** The discipline of the Lord appears to him as too severe. In a manner characteristic of the OT, **he identifies suffering with judgment (reproof) and judgment with God's wrath (cf. 38:1-3).** The OT describes vividly the terrible effects of God's wrath.

The verb "faint" (*b-h-l*) may express the process of **withering** of leaves, crops (grapes, olives, cf. Isa 24:7; Joel 1:10, 12), and verdant regions, such as the Bashan, Mount Carmel, and the Lebanon (Nah 1:4). Metaphorically it signifies the weakness of strong people and of fortifications (Isa 24:4; Jer 14:2; Lam 2:8). For the psalmist it shows how **his vigor (spiritual, psychological, and physical) has been brought down.**

These verses mark **a radical change in tone.** Instead of the lament there is a renewal of strength by which the psalmist proclaims to the enemies that the Lord has been victorious in him and that, consequently, they need to prepare themselves for God's vindication of him. The transition from lament to a note of victory is not unknown in the Psalms (cf. 20:6; 22:22; 28:6; 31:19; 56:10; 69:30; 140:13).

The Lord has come to the rescue of his servant. He has heard his child crying for favor. He will now deal with the enemies who "do evil" (v. 8; see 5:6) **by bringing on their heads the terrible fate they brought on David: shame, agony, and sudden disgrace.**

The psalmist urges that God's praise is at stake. **It is the living, not the dead, who remember God's mercies and celebrate his deliverances.** The Israelites usually viewed death as they saw it--the very opposite of life. And resurrection was not yet a part of their communal experience with God. The grave brought no escape from God (see 139:8), but just how they viewed the condition of the godly dead is not clear. (Non-Biblical documents from the ancient Near East indicate a general conception that immortality was reserved for the gods but that the dead continued to have some kind of shadowy existence in the dismal netherworld.) The OT writers knew that man was created for life, that God's will for his people was life and that he had power over death. They also knew that death was every man's lot, and at its proper time the godly rested in God and accepted it with equanimity (see Ge 15:15; 25:8; 47:30; 49:33; 1Ki 2:2). Death could even be a blessing for the righteous, affording escape from the greater evil that would overtake the living (see 2Ki 22:20; Isa 57:1-2). Furthermore, the death of the righteous was reputedly better than that of the wicked (see Nu 23:10). It seems clear that there was even an awareness that death (as observed) was not the end of hope for the righteous, that God had more in store for them (see especially 16:9-11; 17:15; 49:14-15; 73:24; see also Ge 5:24). But when the psalmists wrestled with God for the preservation of life, it was death as they saw it, in its radical contradiction to life, that was evoked. [EBCOT, NIV SBN]

[B] 6:6. Israelite **beds**. The poetical metaphor of crying on one's bed is also found in Ugaritic literature: "His tears are poured forth like shekels upon the ground, like pieces-of-five upon the bed." Beds in ancient Israel were most likely like those represented iconographically in the Near East. They were in essence reclining couches and high beds. The poor probably slept on flat mats on the floor, while the average person used a cot. [BBC]

[C] Through prayer **David's terror (1-3) becomes his enemies' terror** (10) dismayed, lit. 'terrified', as (2, 3); the return of the Lord in answer to prayer (4, 5) is the signal for the enemies to go (8, 9); when he was weak (6, 7) David found that he was strong. [New Bible Commentary]

[D] In his introductory cry David pleaded that God would stop chastening him in His anger. In Hebrew the words *not . . . in* Your anger **precede** the words rebuke me, and "not" in Your wrath comes first in the second line. The **forward position of these words emphasizes** the manner of the chastening. If God's wrath against David were to continue, he could not survive.

6.4 In his earnest prayer for deliverance, David gave two reasons why God should answer. One is that the Lord should rescue him because of His unfailing love. **God had shown Himself again and again to be abundant in loyal love (chesed)**, so David pleaded for deliverance on the basis of God's character. 6:5. David said the second reason the Lord should turn to him is because of the absence of praises (tôdah) in the grave. If he died because of his illness, he then could not praise God for delivering him from it. **So David reasoned that if God desired someone to stand in the sanctuary and proclaim that God delivered him, then God would have to do so.** [BKC]

[E] *The psalmist's cry of anguish* (6:2-4). The anguished cry with which the psalm begins reflects the psalmist's experience of **physical illness and spiritual travail**. The psalmist has become feeble and weak

as a result of the course of his illness, though the poetic language of the psalm does not permit the identification of the disease. **Both the inner and the outer person have been affected; the double use of the same verb (להבנ “be disturbed”) indicates** that both the bones (representing the physical being) and the soul (representing the inner or spiritual being) have been profoundly disturbed.

A prayer for deliverance from misery (6:5–8). Gaining strength again, the psalmist returns to his plea and explicitly asks God to deliver him from his sickness. He begins the next stage in his prayer by saying **“Return” (v 5), presumably implying that the state of sickness had been an experience in which it seemed that God had deserted him;** now he asks for God to return.

Deliverance was requested on the basis of God’s “lovingkindness” or covenant love (חסד), and the request is entirely appropriate. Just as Israel as a nation received God’s love in covenant in, and after, the great deliverance from Egypt, **so too each member of the covenant community could request the continuing experience of God’s lovingkindness** in the act of divine deliverance.

The word “memory” does not refer to the abstract possibility of remembering God in Sheol, but rather to the **role of memory in the worship and praise of God. It was memory which evoked the praise of God, for the memory of what God had done for the living** was a basis for the living to both praise God and to go on living within the perspective of a good memory

The psalmist’s sickness had created both exhaustion and insomnia. “I soak my bed” (v 7); the literal sense is that **he caused his bed to swim, or float, so profuse were his tears.** The insomnia was the result partly of the pain accompanying sickness, and partly of the spiritual anguish and sense of separation from God which resulted from that pain. **As for most sufferers, it was in the long watches of the night, when silence and loneliness increase and the warmth of human companionship is absent, that the pain and the grief reached their darkest point.**

But the psalmist’s eye had faded before its time, partly as a result of the grief stemming from his sickness, and partly because of “enemies” (v 8). **The reference to enemies may be the result of a common experience of the sick in ancient Israel; many persons believed that the sick were sinners, being judged by God, so that even a sick man’s friends might become enemies.** Such was apparently the experience of Job (30:1–15). **The tragedy of enmity in a time of sickness is that it compounds the pain, for the person who is ill needs friendship, not enmity,** and his diseased condition undermines that robustness of character which may simply shoulder the experience of enmity and bear it as an inevitable part of the experience of living. The psalmist has no such spiritual and emotional reserves; he has reached rock bottom.

In the concluding verse, the process of liberation can be seen. Whereas at the beginning, both his body and **his soul had been “exceedingly disturbed” (vv 3–4), now the psalmist perceives that his enemies would be “exceedingly disturbed”** (the same terminology is employed in v 11). And whereas early in his prayer, he had asked God to “return” to him (using the root שׁוּב), now he perceives that his enemies would “turn back” or “return” (v 11b; the same verb is used). In his newfound confidence, he perceives not only that God will answer his own prayer, but also that his malicious enemies would find their sin boomeranging upon themselves. [WBC]



When God's Face Shines--

[A] *P nim* is the most common word in the OT for “presence” in a broader sense than just “face.” Thus *p nim* was used in reference to entering or leaving the presence of a king or a superior, or of being in Yahweh’s presence. The technical term *lipnê YHWH*, literally, “before or to Yahweh,” occurs 225 times in the OT and regularly refers to cultic activity in Yahweh’s presence. In a number of uses, *p nim* becomes synonymous with the person. Thus references to “the angel of his (Yahweh’s) presence” and to “the bread of the presence,” and even a statement as “My (Yahweh’s) presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” refer respectively to Yahweh’s own angel, his own personal bread, and his own presence. When the king, or God, with whom one has an audience recognizes the person, he turns his face toward the person. This is a way of expressing the king’s attention and usually his positive response. Turning away the face, or turning the back and not the face, is a lack of attention and response; it is normally a sign of rejection. Hiding the face normally has a similar meaning. When, however, Yahweh hides his face from one’s sins, it is a gracious act. Also, one response of mankind to the presence of God is to hide the face, usually out of fear. Strong determination was shown by the phrase “to set the face” or “to set one’s face like flint.” When Yahweh set his face on one it was usually set against one in judgment.

The face could be either cheerful or sad, or even tearful. The light of one’s face represented a bright, beaming, or cheerful face and therefore one’s favor. A shining face speaks of a cheerful or joyful person. Thus when Yahweh caused his face to shine on someone or gave the light of his face, it represented Yahweh’s joy and, therefore, his blessing.¹

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[B] Several passages speak of God shining on his people, usually in the context of temple worship (Ps 76:4 [5], ni. na'or; 118:27). In Ezekiel's vision of the future temple, this becomes a promise extended to everyone living in the Promised Land (Ezek 43:2). God's shining presence is often said to be communicated through his face. This is particularly significant in the Aaronic blessing (Num 6:24-26), where the prayer for God's face to shine (v. 25) is followed by a request for God to “turn his face toward you” (turn, Heb. nasa', lit. lift up [H5951], is used only here with God as its subject). The form of the blessing assumes the specific benefits of God's favor (cf. Prov 16:15), grace, and peace will result from God's moving towards his people (P. D. Miller, *Int* 29, 1975, 245). The Aaronic blessing has also influenced a prayer for worldwide blessing in Ps 67:1 [2], which is one of several prayers for God's face to shine. The anticipated consequences in all these prayers are quite general, ranging from deliverance in trouble (Ps 31:16 [17]; Dan 9:17) to increased knowledge of God and of his ways (Ps 67:2 [3]; 119:135). Israel clearly regarded God's shining face as a guarantee of blessing that was sufficient for many different circumstances. [NIDOTTE]

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[C]

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²³ Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them,

²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;

²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.²

¹Freedman, D. N. (1996, c1992). *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (electronic ed.). New York: Doubleday.

²The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version. 1996, c1989 (Nu 6:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

[D] 6:22–27 The priestly blessing. The place of this blessing is appropriate. Israel had been set in order and consecrated to the Lord, and now God provided the blessing following their obedience. The blessing is not a thoughtless cliché which trips off the tongue; it is packed with meaning. It falls into six parts.

1. *The LORD bless you.* Blessing sums up the covenant benefits which God shows to his people (Dt. 28:1–14). Sons would expect a blessing from their father (e.g. Gn. 27:27–29, 38; 49:1–28). God’s blessing was given to Adam, whom Luke calls ‘the son of God’ (Gn. 1:28; 5:1–3; Lk. 3:38). Through Adam’s fall the curse came in (Gn. 3:14–19), but blessing was promised again to Abraham and his descendants (Gn. 12:1–3). Blessing entails fruitfulness (descendants, flocks, harvests), but these benefits are tokens of the true blessing, the relationship with the Lord. Only if God is our Father are we truly blessed (Gn. 17:16; 22:17–18; Lv. 26:3–13; Dt. 28:2–14).

2. *And keep you.* The purpose of the protection was to keep Israel in covenant relationship with God. The Lord was Israel’s keeper (Ps. 121:7–8; cf. Heb. 13:6). Christ, the good shepherd, kept his sheep and lost none except for Judas Iscariot (Jn. 6:37–40; 10:11–16; 18:9).

3. *The LORD make his face shine upon you.* *His face* means his presence, revealed in the cloud of fire (Ex. 40:34ff.); *shine upon you* means that God takes pleasure in his people and saves them (Pr. 16:15; Pss. 31:16; 67:1f.; 80:3, 7, 19).

4. *And be gracious to you.* The outcome of God’s pleasure is his grace; his covenant mercy. It is fundamental to salvation that God’s favour is unmerited. It is not deserved in any way; rather God shows mercy because of his own love and faithfulness to his oath (Dt. 7:7–8). This principle can be traced throughout Scripture (Ezk. 16:1ff.; Rom. 5:1–11; 9:10–13, 18; 11:5; 1 Cor. 1:26ff.).

5. *The LORD turn his face towards you.* This is more emphatic and asks that God might pay attention to Israel. It may reflect the fact that he had chosen them and not other nations. If God hid his face, Israel would suffer and perish (Pss. 30:7; 44:24; 104:29).

6. *And give you peace.* *Peace* means completeness and well-being. This has long been recognized as covenant language. Covenants were made to secure peace through a right relationship. But when God gives peace, it extends to the whole of life; even human enemies are quiet (Lv. 26:6; Pr. 16:7). These words were later seen as a promise of the Messiah, the ‘Prince of Peace’ (Is. 9:6), and find their true depths in Christ (Jn. 14:27; Eph. 2:14–18).

We should note two points about the form of this blessing. First, it is poetic, having three lines divided into two parts. Each line is longer than the previous one, making the blessing stronger and more emphatic. Secondly, it uses repetition. Twice it speaks of God’s *face* (presence); that we might enter the presence of God is the goal of all redemption. It repeats the divine name *the LORD* (Heb. YHWH) three times. Some think that this anticipates the Trinity (see Rom. 10:9; 2 Cor. 3:17). Scholars regard this as very ancient poetry. In 1979, two small silver scrolls from the seventh century BC were unearthed in Jerusalem. They were found to contain the words of Nu. 6:24–26 in a form almost identical to the Hebrew text.

[E] The influence of these words runs through the Bible (Pss. 67; 121; 122; 124; 128). Paul’s letters begin with a greeting which always uses the words ‘grace’ and ‘peace’ (e.g. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; and 2 Tim. 1:2 adds ‘mercy’). In most cases Paul says the grace and peace are from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and without doubt he is taking up the priestly blessing.

God says, *so they will put my name on the Israelites* (27), which is a mark of ownership. This idea appears again at two key places in Scripture. First, in Isaiah’s prophecy of Israel’s restoration: ‘One will say, “I belong to the LORD” ... still another will write on his hand, “The LORD’s” ’ (Is. 44:5). This was a

time of great blessing when Judah and Israel were restored from captivity. Secondly, in the final gathering of God's people, foreseen in Revelation: 'They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads' (Rev. 22:4; see 2:17; 14:1). The Bible closes with a glimpse of the final blessed state of the saints (Rev. 22:1-5), foretold in language that reflects the priestly blessing: 'no longer ... any curse' (Rev. 22:3; cf. Nu. 6:24, 27); 'the Lord God will give them light' and they will not need sun nor lamp (Rev. 22:5; cf. Nu. 6:25). Thus, these ancient words hold promise of that fulness of covenant blessing for which God's children in every age have longed, and which will be granted in its perfection on the day which God has appointed.³

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[F]

*29 And it came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. 30 So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. 32 And afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. 34 But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, 35 the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.*⁴

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[G]

*AND six days later Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and *brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. 2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.*⁵

³Carson, D., & Guthrie, D. (1997, c1994). New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition (electronic ed. of the 4th ed.) (Nu 6:22). Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

⁴New American Standard Bible. 1986; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996 (electronic edition.) (Ex 34:29). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁵New American Standard Bible. 1986; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996 (electronic edition.) (Mt 17:1). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.