

Psalms 3-14

Psalms 3 through 14

Macro View of Book 1

Robertson and other analysts suggest several major chunks in Book 1 (Figure 1, chart).

- Pss 15-24 form a “poetic pyramid,” a kind of chiasm, framed by conditions for approaching God and centered on 19.¹
- 26-32 are another pyramid, about God’s dwellingplace, centered on 29
- 34-37 (with acrostic brackets) and 38-42 deal with the righteous and guilty sufferer, respectively.

This leaves 3-14 hanging. Let’s go through them and try to discern their structure.

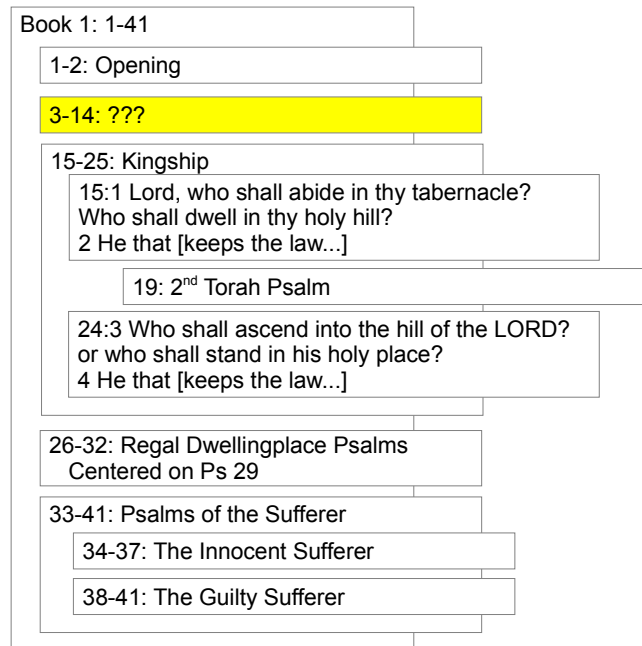


Figure 1: Structure of Book 1 (Pss 1-41)

A Closer Look at Pss 3-14

Psalm 8 is distinctive: it is a hymn, while the rest of Pss 3-14 are laments. In addition, though there are 12 psalms in this group, Psalms 9 and 10 are closely linked to each other, so structurally we are dealing with 11 units, not 12, five units on each side of Psalm 8. Robertson calls such a configuration of a distinctive psalm at the center of a group of others it a “poetic pyramid.”

We see three indications of this structure (Figure 2, chart): Psalms 7 and 9 frame Psalm 8; one theme shifts from one side of Psalm 8 to the other, and both sides share other themes.

Psalm 8 and its Neighbors

Psalm 8, applied to the Messiah in the NT, celebrates David’s victory

Psalms 3-14: God Delivers the Weak

3-7: Five Laments

Distinctive theme: **sleep** (3:5; 4:4, 8; 5:3; 6:6)

Paired terms and themes:

- **Numerous** enemies, 3:1, 2, 6
- God’s **temple**, 3:4; 5:7
- **God** brings suffering, Ps 6
- Wicked **words** (5:5, 9) and verbal remedies (5:3, 11)
- “Arise, O LORD” יהוה קום, 3:7; 7:6

7:17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will **sing praise to the name of the LORD most high**.

8: Hymn—Victory over Goliath

1 O LORD our Lord, **how excellent is thy name** in all the earth!...

4 **What is man, that thou art mindful of him? ...**

9 O LORD our Lord, **how excellent is thy name** in all the earth!

9-14: Four Laments (9-10 as one) + one confidence (11)= five
9:2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee:
I will **sing praise to thy name, O thou most High**.

Distinctive theme: the **poor** (עני, Strong 6041), 9:12, 13, 18; 10:2, 9, 12; 12:6; 14:6

Paired terms and themes:

- **Numerous** enemies, 14:1, 3
- God’s **temple**, 11:4
- **God** brings suffering, Ps 13
- Wicked **words** (12:2-5) and verbal remedies (12:6)
- “Arise, O LORD” יהוה קום, 9:19; 10:12

Figure 2: Tentative Structure of Psalms 3-14

¹ Robertson limits this structure to 20-24, centered on 22.

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over Goliath,² Its first and last verses echo the end of Psalm 7 and the beginning of Psalm 9.³

Psa 7:17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will **sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.**

Psa 8:1 O LORD our Lord, **how excellent is thy name** in all the earth!

Psa 8:9 O LORD our Lord, **how excellent is thy name** in all the earth!

Psa 9:2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will **sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.**

These phrases, like the prongs in a ring, hold up the central stone, the main part of Psalm 8.

Distinctive themes on each side

Robertson notes that the pinnacle of a poetic pyramid often divides distinctive themes on each side of the center. Lund⁴ also notes that a “shift at the center” is common in chiasms. So here:

- Before Psalm 8, but not after, we see numerous references to night, morning, sleep, awaking, and the bed (3:5; 4:4, 8; 5:3; 6:6).⁵
- After Psalm 8, but not before we have numerous descriptions of the ones being oppressed by the wicked as “poor” עני, Strong 6041: 9:12, 13, 18; 10:2, 9, 12; 12:6; 14:6)

Both themes emphasize the vulnerability of the righteous. The poor are of course vulnerable. In sleep we cannot watch out for ourselves, and must be guarded by someone else. The section is introduced with David’s flight from Absalom (3:1), and we recall that Ahithophel counseled Absalom to overtake David while he is tired and therefore weak (2 Sam 17:1-2). Psalm 8, at the center (v. 4), also emphasizes man’s weakness and insignificance: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” The entire collection thus emphasizes the message of David’s victory over Goliath: the righteous are weak and vulnerable in the world’s eyes, but God glorifies his name by delivering them.

The laments before Psalm 8 are all individual, but several of those after it are collective. David learns the Lord’s care in the first half of the section, then communicates it with others.⁶

Repeated Themes

In addition to focusing on a central psalm that separates distinctive themes on each side, the editor repeats certain words and themes on both sides. In a chiasm, we expect the repetitions to occur in strict inverse order. Since the editor is keeping the individual psalms intact, he has less flexibility in arranging the order of the terms, but several correspondences are clear.

- 5:7 and 11:4 refer to God’s temple (היכל, Strong 1964) as the source of deliverance.⁷
- God himself is an agent in bringing the suffering in Psalms 6 and 13.

2 The observation is due to Thirtle. See the Kingdom of God studies, and our later exposition of Ps 8 in this series.

3 The observation is due to Delitzsch.

4 N. Lund. Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte. Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 1942.

5 The reference in 13:3 “sleep the sleep of death” is metaphorical, not a reference to the daily cycle as are those before Ps 8.

6 This observation is due to Anita Parunak.

7 There is also a reference to God’s “holy hill” in 3:4.

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- The attack takes the form of wicked words (5:5, 9; 12:2-5), and the remedy is verbal, either in the devout words of God's people (5:3, 11) or in God's words (12:6).
- Twice on each side of the center we encounter the petition, "Arise, YHWH" קומה יהוה, 3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 10:12.; answered in 12:5 אקומ אמר יהוה⁸

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Recall the role of night when David flees Absalom (Ps 3:1). Ahithophel urges Absalom to pursue David while he is weary, and attack him at night while he slept. Warned by Jonathan and Ahimaaz, David pushes his followers all night to get safely across the Jordan, where Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai meet him with provisions. Notably, the first item that they bring is "beds" (2 Sam 17:28). So it is not surprising that when David expresses his feelings during the flight in poetry, he does so with frequent references to sleep (chart). Psalm 4 is an evening Psalm:

Psa 4:8 I will both **lay me down** in peace, and **sleep**: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Psalm 6 recalls the disturbed rest of a fleeing person, in the middle of the night:

Psa 6:6 I am weary with my groaning; **all the night** make I my bed to swim; I water **my couch** with my tears.

Psalms 3 and 5 are morning psalms, looking back on God's care during the night:

Psa 3:5 **I laid me down and slept; I awaked**; for the LORD sustained me.

Psa 5:3 My voice shalt thou hear **in the morning**, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

Psalms 3 and 4 have the same structure: the Psalmist speaks to God, then to people, and then again to God. But the people are different, and the psalms emphasize different things.

Psalm 3: Outnumbered

The historical notice in 3:1 fits well also for Psalms 4-6.

1 A Psalm of David,--The composition is called a מזמור, perhaps calling for instrumental accompaniment.⁹ It is the most common title, appearing 57 times in 56 psalms.¹⁰

when he fled from Absalom his son.--The record is in 2 Samuel 15-18. This is one of the last episodes in David's life, but the post-exilic editor puts these psalms first, perhaps because lessons from David's exile are relevant to the Babylonian exile from which he has just returned.

1b-3, Plea to the Lord

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. 2 Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God.--Here and in v. 6, David finds himself in the minority. He is not the first. When Elijah flees from Jezebel and meets

⁸ The request is answered in 12:5, אקומ אמר יהוה

⁹ Delitzsch

¹⁰ By our division, it appears at both the start and end of Psalm 87, though conventionally the second of these is associated with Psalm 88, properly משכיל a

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God on Mount Horeb, twice he protests (chart),

1Ki 19:10, 14 I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

The Lord responds that there are still 7000 faithful in the nation, but this is still a great minority of the entire population. But remember the theme of the section: God's name is exalted when he delivers those who have no strength of their own. The "moral majority" movement had it all wrong. God's people will triumph, not by forming a political majority, but by trusting in him.

Selah.--We saw this term in Hab 3:3, 9, 13. It probably is an instruction to strike up the instruments to emphasize a point.¹¹ Here it would emphasize the dilemma posed in vv. 1-2 and introduce the contrast in v. 3.

3 But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.--The single Lord is able to deliver David from his numerous opponents.

4-5, Testimony to the people

Now David turns from speaking to the Lord and tells the people of his experience. In this psalm, he bears witness to other saints of his deliverance.

4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.--The "holy hill"¹² is Mount Zion, site of David's tent for the ark and later of Solomon's temple.

Absalom has driven David out of Jerusalem, and David no longer has access to God's "holy hill." But God still hears his prayer, and can come out of the holy hill to deliver him.

Years later, Ezekiel learns the same lesson as God leaves the temple in his throne-chariot to minister to his people, exiled in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.--With such a protector, David was able to sleep soundly, knowing that the Lord watched over him.

6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.--As in vv. 1-3, the Lord alone can deliver him from the many who are against him.

7-8, Plea to the Lord

Now he once again turns to ask the Lord for protection.

7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.--The answer to "many" who "rise up" (v. 1) is that the Lord "arise." He alone is sufficient to overcome many adversaries.

8 Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people.--David confesses that his trust is in the Lord, and in God's favor to his people.

Selah.--The psalm ends with an instrumental climax.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth—David dedicates this psalm for public performance, accompanied by strings.

We can summarize the psalm: *Vastly outnumbered by Absalom's forces (vv. 1, 6) and driven out*

¹¹ See discussion in the notes.

¹² Recall 2:6; the expression is central to the bracketing references in 15:1 and 24:3.

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of Jerusalem (v.1), David calls on God to deliver him (v. 7), confident that if he cannot come before God, God will come out to save him (v. 4). The dominant theme is that the Lord alone can overcome large numbers of adversaries.

Psalm 4: Confident in God's Love

1 A Psalm of David.--Again, "Psalm" is מזמור, indicating instrumental accompaniment.

1, Cry to God

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness:--This title identifies God as the one who will vindicate David, "God who vindicates me."¹³ Jeremiah picks up this title 400 years later when, contemplating an exile greater than that of David, he promises,

Jer 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall **execute** judgment and **justice** in the earth. 6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**.

Like David, Jeremiah looks forward to a time when justice (צדקה, that is, "righteousness") will be executed in the earth, and God defends his anointed king against usurpers.

thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress;--He recalls God's past deliverance (perhaps thinking of his troubles under Saul).

have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.-- "Mercy" here is חן, emphasizing the need of the recipient. If God does not intervene for him, he has no help.

2-5, Address to his Enemies

This time, the people whom he addresses in the middle are not saints, but his enemies.

2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.--The rebuke recalls the people David met on his way out of Jerusalem: the curses of Shimei, the vanity of Abishai who could think only of slaying Shimei, the deceitfulness of Ziba.

We might expect David to return cursing for cursing. But like the messianic king of Psalm 2, he tells them how they can avoid the wrath of God.

3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.--First, they should recognize God's power to protect his own. David always refused to lift his hand against Saul because Saul was the Lord's anointed. His enemies in turn should recognize him as God's chosen one.

4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.--Second, they should consult their consciences before they act foolishly.

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.--Absalom's followers in Jerusalem can offer sacrifices before the ark from which David is shut out. His third advice is that they must offer their sacrifices as righteous men, and not as rebels, echoing the

¹³ See notes

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lesson he has already learned at such great personal cost in the affair of Bathsheba:

Psa 51:16 For **thou desirest not sacrifice**; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19 **Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness**, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

6-8, Cry to the Lord

6 There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?--As in 3:2, we hear the voice of "many." There, the many were his adversaries, who declared him abandoned by God. Now they appear to be among his friends, who are discouraged and depressed by their forced march. Compare their challenge to him in 11:1.

LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.--If he were still in Jerusalem, he would enjoy this blessing from the priests:

Num 6:22 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 23 Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, 24 The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: 25 The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: 26 The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. 27 And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.

Now he turns to God himself to ask for it, combining the second petition ("light") and the third ("lift up ... countenance").

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.--Faced with hostile opposition and fearful friends, he testifies that God's presence brings him joy, greater joy than one experiences in the harvest festival. We are reminded of the book of Philippians, Paul's great epistle about Christian joy, written from a Roman prison.

8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.--In this confidence, he can sleep peacefully. Not only is the Lord able to keep him safe; he is the only one who can do so.

To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth,--The versions relate "Nehiloth," apparently the name of a tune, to "inheritance."¹⁴ This theme is appropriate to a song written when David was driven out of the inheritance of the Lord. Cf. David's words to Saul:

1Sa 26:19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; **for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD**, saying, Go, serve other gods.

We may summarize Psalm 4: *Confident of his position as God's chosen one (v. 3), David asks God, in view of his righteousness, to deliver him (v. 1), while exhorting his enemies to turn from their rebellion (vv. 2-5) and encouraging his discouraged followers to rest in the Lord's blessing (vv. 6-8).* There is no thought here of numerous adversaries; the focus is rather on the privileged position occupied by those whom God has chosen for himself.

14 See Thirtle.

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Psalms 5 and 12: Verbal Attacks

All of Psalms 3-14, with the exception of the central Psalm 8, are prayers concerning the attacks of the wicked (laments, except for the psalm of confidence in 11). Psalms 5 and 12 are distinctive because the attack of the wicked takes a particular form.

The wicked can attack the righteous through many avenues, as summarized by Solomon in Prov 6:16-19 (Table 1, chart). We will track which of these we see in the various psalms of lament.

Psalms 5 and 12 both emphasize how the wicked attack using speech. Interestingly, in both cases the defense is also speech —by the righteous in Psalm 5, and by God in Psalm 12.

	16 These six <i>things</i> doth the LORD hate: yea, seven <i>are</i> an abomination unto him:		
Dissension	17 A proud look,		and he that soweth discord among brethren.
Wicked speech	a lying tongue,		19 A false witness that speaketh lies,
Wicked acts	and hands that shed innocent blood,		feet that be swift in running to mischief,
Malice	18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,		

Table 1: How the Wicked Attack (Prov 6:16-19)

This theme is especially appropriate to the period of Absalom’s persecution. Absalom and his party “counseled” (5:10) against David, while Shimei is the very archetype of the direct verbal attack that is in focus in both of these Psalms.

We’ll study each of the psalms, then summarize what they teach us about speech.

Psalm 5

1 A Psalm of David.--Again, a מזמור, a song intended for accompaniment.

The psalm alternates **requests** to God with **motives** for the requests, each introduced by “for” כי. Unlike Psalms 3 and 4, the Psalmist speaks only to God, never to the Lord’s people.

There are four cycles of Request and Motive (chart). Green marks the word “for” introducing each motive, the words of the righteous are blue, and the words of the wicked are red.

1-7: Prayer for the Lord’s Attention

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. 2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God:--David not only prays for the Lord’s help, but he describes his speech as he comes. His first request is that the Lord will hear his words.

The first request has two motives.

For כי unto thee will I pray. 3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.--The first motive is that David is making his petition a top priority. He is coming to the Lord in the morning, before allowing himself to be distracted by other affairs.

4 For כי thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.--The second motive is that David, unlike his adversaries, is qualified to appear before the Lord, who will not tolerate sin.

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5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. 6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.--First he characterizes his enemies, emphasizing their wicked speech. “Leasing” is an archaic term meaning “lying,” saying things that are not true, and is parallel with “deceitful.”

7 But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy מִרְחָמֶיךָ: and in thy fear יִרְאָהוּ will I worship toward thy holy temple.--Unlike them, David can enter God’s house because he is in covenant with the Lord (“mercy”), and has the appropriate attitude of fear toward God.

8-9, Prayer for Direction

8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness¹⁵ because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.--David’s next request, after entering the Lord’s presence, is not for the destruction of his enemies or blessing on himself (though both of those come later), but for the Lord’s direction. His desire is to walk in the Lord’s righteousness.

The desire to live according to God’s law is foundational to the life of God’s people. The repentance that is the first step in coming to Christ is a turning away from our sin and a desire to be free from it, and failure to resolve to obey the Lord will block any further progress. Consider our Lord’s words to the Jews who could not understand what he was teaching (chart):

Joh 7:17 If any man will [wants to] do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

The first “will” is not the future tense, but the verb “to will,” “to desire.” In other words, “If any man desires to know what he desires,” If we start with the desire to be delivered from our sin and walk in God’s will, all of his revelation will open before us. Like the upright man of Psalm 1, we will find our lives flourishing. If we do not surrender our will to him, we will be in the dark.

9 For כִּי there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.--The motive for seeking God’s guidance is the wickedness of his adversaries, expressed again through their speech. He must not be led by what they say, because it is unreliable.

Paul quotes these words in Rom 3:13, supporting his conclusion that all have sinned.

10, Prayer for Defense from the Wicked

10 Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions;--Only after aligning his will with the Lord’s does he ask God to defend him, by overthrowing his adversaries. Several points about this request merit attention.

1. This is an example of “imprecation,” a prayer for judgment on the adversaries. Imprecations are common in the laments, and often cause confusion because of their apparent conflict with “love your enemies.” But in Psalms 2 and 4, he counseled his adversaries to turn from their sin and worship the Lord in righteousness. His first thought is not for their destruction, but for their salvation. But if they persist, they must perish,

¹⁵ Requests modified by “in thy righteousness” appear in Pss 5:9; 31:2; 69:28; 71:2; 119:40; 143:1, 11. Sometimes the phrase appears to suggest that God’s righteousness requires him to behave in a certain way, but here the request appears to be that David would behave in a way consistent with it.

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and if he is to walk in God's righteousness, he must agree with this judgment.

2. Again, he emphasizes their speech, in this case, their "counsels," in which they talk together to plan his destruction.
3. The judgment that he asks for them is simply that their own wicked plans fall on their own heads, a common sentiment in the wisdom books. We'll see it in this same poetic pyramid, on both sides of the pinnacle (chart),

Psa 7:15 He made a pit, and digged it, and **is fallen into the ditch which he made.**

Psa 9:15 The heathen are **sunk down in the pit that they made:** in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

16 The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is **snared in the work of his own hands.** Higgaion. Selah.

For כִּי they have rebelled against thee.--His prayer for their judgment is grounded, not on the inconvenience it causes him, but on their opposition to the Lord. He is God's anointed, and in driving him out of Jerusalem, Absalom and his followers are setting themselves against God.

11-12, Prayer for Joy for the Righteousness

11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.--Finally, he prays that the Lord would give his people cause to use their voices in praise and rejoicing.¹⁶

12 For כִּי thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.--His motive for this final request is his assurance that God desires to bless the righteous

To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith,--Though David speaks only to the Lord and not to other people, he does dedicate the psalm for public use. "Neginoth" is again stringed instruments. "Sheminith" (also ending Ps 11) is contrasted with the term "Alamoth" in the description of David's choir when he brought the ark to Jerusalem (chart):

1Ch 15:19 So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass; 20 And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on **Alamoth**; 21 And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obedom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the **Sheminith** to excel.

The latter word (also in the subscript to Ps 45) means "virgin" (as in Isa 7:14), and probably describes a female choir, so this term (which means "the eighth") may refer to a Psalm pitched an octave lower, for male singers. (See notes for antiquity of the octave.)

We may summarize: *David responds to the verbal opposition of his enemies by asking the Lord for his attention, direction, defense, and joy.*

Psalm 12

The psalm is chiasmic: AB C D D C AB (Table 2, chart). As in Psalms 3 and 4, he speaks to the Lord in the outer members, and to other believers in the center.

12:1 A Psalm מְזוֹמֵר of David.

16 See note for further detail on this verse.

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The Psalm starts and ends speaking to the Lord, each time with a comment on one of the two kinds of people from Psalm 1. V.1 laments a dearth of the godly, while vv. 7-8 declare the ubiquity of the wicked. The center speaks about the Lord and his dealings with the wicked. Again, David focuses on the role of words.

Address to the Lord	1 Help, Lord		7 Thou shalt keep them, O Lord
The state of the world	For the godly man ceaseth...		8 The wicked walk on every side ...
Description of words	2 <the words of the wicked>		6 The words of the Lord ...
The Lord's actions	3-4 Described by David		5 Promised by the Lord

Table 2: The Chiasm of Psalm 12

Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.--The “faithful” אמונים are those who speak truth.

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.--The offense of the wicked is in the words that he speaks.

The two paragraphs at the center of the chiasm deal with the Lord’s actions against the wicked.

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: 4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?--First, David describes their actions, with terms that focus on their speech.

5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.--Now the Lord intervenes in the conversation. David reports an oracle he has received from the Lord, in response to his lament.¹⁷ The wicked have set themselves against “the poor” and “the needy,”¹⁸ without the resources to resist them. The attack of the wicked is again described in terms of speech (he “puffeth at” his adversaries),¹⁹ but so is the Lord’s response (“saith the Lord”).

Note the statement, “now will I arise.” Four times in this pyramid the Psalmist has prayed, “Arise, O Lord” (3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 10:12), and now the Lord responds, “I will arise.”

6 The words of the LORD are pure טָהוֹר words: as silver tried צָרוּרָה in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.--The “words of the Lord” to which David refers must be the ones that the Lord has just uttered in v. 5, the promise to arise against David’s abusers.

How can words be “pure”? David explains the word by comparing it to the refining of silver by melting it. There are two possible points to this metaphor, and David may have both in mind.

First, the refining process *removes extraneous material or impurities*, so pure words are what they appear to be, just as a pure silver coin is all silver, with no impurity mixed in. This sense is encouraged by the chiastic structure, which invites comparison with the words of the wicked in v. 2. Those words are “vain,” empty, deceptive, consisting all of worthless material, while the Lord’s words, like refined silver, are free of such impurities. The speech of the wicked is “flattering,” saying things that they do not mean from a “double heart,” while the words of the Lord truly reflect his mind and his purpose.

¹⁷ Other examples are Psalms 60, 81, and 95 (Kidner).

¹⁸ We are now on the right-hand side of the pyramid, where these terms are common.

¹⁹ Modern translations understand יָפִיחַ לוֹ of the cry of the righteous for help (Delitzsch, Kidner), but פָּוֵחַ is more common in a malicious sense, Ps 10:5; Prov 29:8; Ezek 21:31(Longman); see HALOT.

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Second, the refining process tests the silver under the stress of heat, so pure words are those that have been tried and found reliable. This sense is encouraged by related expressions elsewhere. This is the only verse that describes the Lord’s words as pure, using this Hebrew word,²⁰ but David illustrates this purity with the metaphor of refined silver, and that vocabulary (צָרִיף, passive participle “refined,” Strong 6884) is used elsewhere of the word of the Lord (chart):

Psa 18:30 = 2 Sam 22:31 As for God, his way is perfect: **the word of the LORD is tried** צָרִיף: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

Psa 119:140 **Thy word is very pure** צָרִיף: therefore thy servant loveth it.

Pro 30:5 **Every word of God is pure** צָרִיף: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

In each case, the emphasis is on the response of the believer to God’s word. Like an honest silver coin, it can be trusted. Perhaps (as the KJV in Psalm 18 suggests), the sense is that through the ages, God’s people have relied on his word, and it has never failed them.

7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.--

David closes by again speaking to the Lord. Initially, he was asking, “Help, Lord.” Now, having heard God’s word of promise in v. 5, he is confident that the Lord will intervene.

8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.--His confidence has changed, though the environment has not. As in 1b, the wicked are everywhere.

To the chief Musician,--Again, he dedicates the psalm to public worship.

We may summarize, *Overwhelmed by the vain words of the wicked, David appeals to the Lord, who responds with his pure promise of deliverance.*

The Moral of the Story

The common theme in these two psalms is that the conflict between good and evil, between the wicked and the righteous, can be embodied in speech. Throughout the Bible we are warned of the destructive power of the tongue. James summarizes (chart),

Jam 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

As believers, we can expect to be attacked verbally. These psalms tell us how to respond.

We have seen three parties involved in speaking in these psalms. We can organize them in a triangle (Figure 3, chart). In both psalms, the wicked speak destructively against the righteous (5:6, 9; 12:2-5). In Psalm 5, the righteous cries out to the Lord (5:1-3, 11), while in Psalm 12, the Lord speaks, promising to deal with the

The World’s Way: Wicked ↔ Righteous

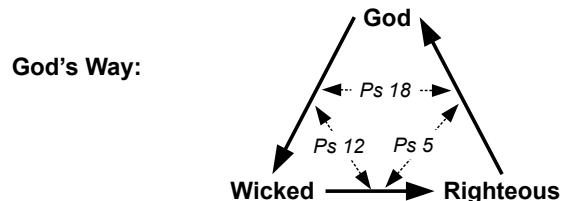


Figure 3: Patterns of Ungodly and Godly Speech

²⁰ It is applied to the words of the righteous, in contrast with the thoughts of the wicked, in Prov 15:26.

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offender (12:5-6). We will see that Psalm 18 mentions the plea of the righteous (18:3, 6) and the words of the Lord (18:30).

Notably, the righteous does not answer back to the wicked, but commits the matter to the Lord, trusting him to care for the matter. This pattern is in contrast with the world's wisdom, in which an attack by one party demands a response by the other. The scriptures do not forbid us to speak to our attackers. But they do instruct us how we are to speak (previous chart):

Col 4:6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Recall that David's words to his adversaries urge them to seek the Lord (2:10-12; 4:2-5). His imprecations (5:10) are prayers to God, not addressed to them directly.

We have a beautiful picture of this pattern in action in Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, recorded in 2 Kings 19 and repeated in Isaiah 37. First, we hear the words of Rabshakeh, the representative of the Assyrian king, challenging Hezekiah's faith in God:

Isa 37:9 he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?

Hezekiah responds as does David. He does not attack Rabshakeh, but goes to the Lord:

Isa 37:14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

The Lord then responds with a word of encouragement, which is fulfilled in the destruction of the Assyrian army. Verse 22 is particularly abusive, but note that it is spoken by the Lord, and delivered to Rabshakeh, not as the word of Hezekiah, but as the Lord's message.

Isa 37:22 This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel. ... 29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

May God give us grace to follow David's example in our speech with unbelievers.

Psalms 6 and 13: Divine Chastisement

Again, the editor repeats a similar theme on both sides of the pinnacle. In most laments, David confronts his adversaries, but in these psalms he feels the Lord opposing him. He confronts a deep question: if God is love (1 John 4:8, 16), why does he allow his children to suffer?

These two psalms are marked by the cry to God, "How long?", once in 6:3 and four times in 13:1-2. Thirteen times in the Psalms (but only in these two in Psalms 3-14) the Psalmist cries out

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thus to God, indicating that he does not understand what the Lord is doing to him.²¹

These are not the only psalms in which the psalmist is conscious that God is opposing him. Psalm 38 begins the same way that Psalm 6 does (chart):

Psa 38:1 O LORD, rebuke יכה (Strong 3198) me not in thy wrath קצף: neither chasten יסר (Strong 3256) me in thy hot displeasure תהמה. 2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of **my sin**. 4 For **mine iniquities** are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. 5 My wounds stink and are corrupt because of **my foolishness**.

But there is a critical difference. In Psalm 38 and other psalms of confession, David confesses his sin, and is turning to God for his restoration. In Psalms 6 and 13, and the other “How long” psalms, he does not mention his sin as the cause for his suffering.²²

By repeating the first line in these two psalms, David directs us to compare and contrast these two experiences. The “How long?” psalms and the psalms of confession highlight two reasons for human suffering. In the psalms of confession, suffering draws our attention to our sin and motivates us to forsake it, but in the “How long” psalms, it develops godly character.

Solomon recognizes God’s purposes in human suffering when he echoes the initial lines of Psalms 6 and 38,

Pro 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening מוסר (Strong 4148) of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction תוכחה (Strong 8433): For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth יכה (Strong 3198); even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

So these psalms provide us with a lesson in divine chastisement, particularly the variety that is leads, not to repentance from some obvious sin, but to spiritual growth.

Psalm 6

Psalm 6:1 A Psalm of David.--Again, a מזמור.

Two unmotivated petitions frame the psalm. The first is that the Lord would not be angry with David, the last, that he would vex the wicked. In between, we have four motivated requests: three to the Lord, and the fourth to his enemies (Table 3, chart).

O LORD, rebuke יכה me not in thine anger אף, neither chasten יסר me in thy hot displeasure תהמה.--As we have seen, this psalm, with no consciousness of sin, starts the same way as Psalm 38, where David clearly recognizes his sin. God’s chastisement is such that we cannot always tell whether his motive is correction from sin or development of character.²³

21 See note. Since Cassiodorus (6th century), this psalm, along with 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143, have been known as the “penitential psalms,” sung to express sorrow for sin. But none of the others includes the lament “How long?” It is better to distinguish this psalm from those and associate it with the others listed in the note as indicative of chastisement other than for sin. The other “how long” psalms are 35, 74, 79, 80, 89, 90, and 94. Psalm 102 also has no reference to personal sin, though it does not include the cry, “How long?”

22 In addition to the “How long” psalms and the psalms that confess sin, we have 102 (commonly grouped with the penitential psalms) and 88. Both complain of God’s wrath, but mention neither sin nor “how long.”

23 Though the first word for anger differs between Psalm 6 and Psalm 38, the three words for God’s displeasure (anger, wrath, displeasure) are often grouped together: Dt 29:27; Jr 21:5; 32:37.

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Description	Petition	Motive
	1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.	
	2 Have mercy הַחַן upon me, O LORD;	for I am weak:
	O LORD, heal me;	for my bones are vexed.
3 My soul is also sore vexed : but thou, O LORD, how long? ... 6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. 7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.	4 Return , O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' חַסְדֶּיךָ sake.	5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?
	8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;	for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. 9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.
	10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed : let them return and be ashamed suddenly.	

Table 3: The Structure of Psalm 6

The verse recalls Psalm 2:5,

Psa 2:5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

From the point of view of the symptoms, sometimes God seems to treat his children and his enemies the same way. But recall David's plea to the adversaries in Psalm 2:

Psa 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Anyone who is in suffering can cry out to the Lord. A big difference between God's people and his adversaries is not whether or not they suffer. In a fallen world, all suffer. The difference is whether we respond in proud rebellion, or whether we humbly bow before him and seek his help.

David offers three appeals to the Lord, at different levels and with different motives.

2 Have mercy upon me הַחַן, **O LORD**; **for I am weak**: **O LORD, heal me**; **for my bones are vexed**.--In the two petitions, David is concerned with his physical well-being, and appeals to God's חַן, his undeserved favor.

The English word "mercy" translates at least three different word families in the OT. All three appear in God's revelation of himself to Moses (chart):

Exo 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD

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God, merciful רחום (Strong 7349) and gracious חנון (Strong 2587), longsuffering (ארך אפים), and abundant in goodness חסד (Strong 2617) and truth אמת (Strong 571).

To avoid confusion, I'll use "pity" for the first one, which emphasizes the miserable condition of its object. It appears, for instance, in Psalm 102:

Psa 102:13 Thou shalt arise, and **have mercy** upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.

For the second root, we'll use "grace," which emphasizes the undeserved nature of the favor, and is always extended from a superior to someone of lower class. The third, which we'll call "lovingkindness," is faithfulness to a covenant. We'll see it in Psa 13:5.

In this verse, we are dealing with the second of these: "Be gracious unto me." David has no claim on God's favor, but asks that God would condescend to help with his discomfort.

References to healing and his bones might imply physical illness, but could also reflect the physical impact of deep grief (compare Psa 32:3). His physical ills stem from inner, psychological anguish, and that is the subject of his second appeal.

3 My soul is also sore vexed בַּהֲלֵי:--The verb describes God's action toward the wicked in Ps 2:5, and he asks that his enemies experience it in 6:10.

but thou, O LORD, how long?--Here, as in 13:1-2, he shows that he does not know why this suffering has come upon him.

4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me—His third appeal is that the Lord, who appears to have abandoned him, would return to him.

for thy mercies' [חַסְדֵיךָ singular] sake.--By repeating the English word "mercy," our translation obscures an important contrast with the first request. That was based on God's grace toward the unworthy. This is based on his חַסְדֵיךָ, his lovingkindness, grounded in his covenant with his people. David reminds himself that in spite of the depth of his suffering and the appearance that God has forsaken him, he is still in a covenant relation with God, which is unbreakable.

5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?--As he turns his focus from his suffering to God's covenant love, his motive shifts. Now, instead of seeking relief from his discomfort, he seeks God's glory. He wants deliverance, not for his comfort, but so that he can continue to worship and serve the Lord.

David's words here are in keeping with the understanding of OT saints about death (chart).

Psa 30:9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

Psa 88:10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah. 11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? 12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Psa 115:17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.

With the coming of the Lord Jesus and the institution of the new covenant, the curtain has been pulled back, and we now understand that death is not the end of our service to our Lord:

2Co 5:6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, I say,

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and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.--As in Psalms 3, 4, and 5, he draws our attention to the hours of sleep. But unlike the confidence and peace that he describes in those psalms, here he is tormented all night long.

The reference to his weeping may help us to situate this psalm in the history of David's life. Five times David is said to weep.

- He weeps over the death of Saul and Jonathan (1:12) and Abner (3:32), but there is no evidence that it kept him up at night.
- Though he wept while fleeing from Jerusalem (15:30), Pss 3, 4 tell us that he was able to sleep peacefully.
- That leaves his extended mourning over the death of his first son by Bathsheba (12:21) and the death of Absalom (19:1). The second has the advantage of offering clear candidates for the "workers of iniquity" and "enemies" of vv. 7, 8, in Joab and his associates.

7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.--The eye here is not just the organ of weeping, but represents his whole sense of consciousness of the world around him. Recall our Lord's words, "The light of the body is the eye" (Matt 6:22).

Now for the first time, we learn of the enemies who are the immediate cause of his suffering. God uses worldly mechanisms to discipline us.

8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;--Having asked the Lord to return, he asks his enemies to depart.

for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. 9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.--His motive is that God will certainly hear his petition.

10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.--The first unmotivated petition was for the Lord to turn his anger away from David. The final petition is that he would bring it to bear on his enemies, who are the immediate cause of his suffering.

Unlike the previous three psalms, this intensely personal struggle is not dedicated to the chief musician. We may summarize: *Faced with unexplained suffering (1) both physical (2) and emotional (3, 6-7), David is confident that his appeals to God's grace (2) and covenant love (4) will be heard (8-9), to the frustration of his enemies (10).*

Psalm 13

Here, the Lord's opposition is more passive than in Psalm 6. There, David feared that God might be angry with him, but here it simply looks as though the Lord has forgotten him.

Psa 13:1 A Psalm of David.--Again, מזמור.

The psalm has three stanzas. The first (vv. 1-2) is the four-fold lamentation "How long?" Next (vv. 3-4), he brings his petition to the Lord, motivating it in two ways. Finally (vv. 5-6), he emerges from his darkness into triumphant rejoicing.

Each instance of "how long" highlights a different aspect of his suffering.

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How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?--First, it appears to him that God has forgotten him, that he is of no account to God.

how long wilt thou hide thy face²⁴ from me?--The next plea asserts that God has not just lost track of him, but is deliberately shunning him.

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?--The third plea turns from what God may or may not be doing, to describing his sorrow, the inner confusion and mourning as he tries unsuccessfully to figure out what is going on.

how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?--Finally, he looks outward and recognizes that his depression gives his adversary an advantage. As in Psalm 6, God uses worldly obstacles to exercise him.

The second stanza gives two requests with two motives (introduced with “lest,” meaning “in order that not”). These four items align with the four laments in the first stanza (Table 4, chart). The requests correspond to the laments about God’s apparent neglect of him, while the motives deal with the last two laments, describing himself and his adversaries.

1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?	3 Consider and hear me, O LORD my God:
How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?	lighten mine eyes,
2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?	lest I sleep the sleep of death;
how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?	4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

Table 4: Alignment of 13:3-4 with 13:1-2

3 Consider and hear me, O

LORD my God:--He wants to

be assured that God has not forgotten him, but has him in his mind.

lighten mine eyes,--As in Psalm 6:7, his eye, his sense of the world around him, has been dimmed by his experience. The alignment of this petition with the hiding of God’s face is based on the notion that God’s favorable look upon us enlightens us:

Num 6:24 The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: 25 The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: 26 The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

Psa 4:6 LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

lest I sleep the sleep of death;--His first motive is that extension of his moody sorrow will ultimately lead to his death. If the Lord does not return to him, he has no hope. This motive recalls 6:5, and further links the two psalms together.

4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.--Here is the exultation of his enemies that he mentioned in v. 2.

The third stanza is also chiasmic, ABBA. The outer members, in the past tense, give the basis for his confidence, while the inner ones, in the present/future, describe the joy he will experience.

5 But I have trusted בטה in thy mercy חסד;--The first basis for his future rejoicing is God’s

24 See notes for instances of this expression in the psalms.

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covenant love, which was also the foundation of his confidence in Psalm 6. This must always be the ground of our confidence—not our feelings, but our knowledge of God’s sure promises.

Heb 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

We might fear that God’s grace $\eta\eta$ may vary toward us, but his $\eta\eta$ is based upon his promise, and he cannot lie. So it is a stronger basis for our confidence.

my heart shall rejoice $\eta\eta$ in thy salvation. 6 I will sing unto the LORD,--The two future statements both anticipate the joy that he will experience as a result of the Lord’s intervention.

because he hath dealt bountifully with me.--David again looks back. Certainly, at this moment he does not feel God’s bounty, but reflecting on God’s covenant, he is able to recall past blessings that assure him of God’s favor toward him. Counting our blessings is a powerful antidote to spiritual depression.

To the chief Musician—This psalm is dedicated for public worship.

We may summarize, *David appeals to the Lord for deliverance (vv. 3-4) during a prolonged period of spiritual emptiness (vv. 1-2), confident because of his covenant relation with God (v. 5) and the memory of God’s past goodness to him.*

Principles of Divine Chastisement

By comparing these two psalms, we can identify several features of divine chastisement (Table 5, chart). It originates with God, though it may use wicked men as his instruments. It is not always punishment for sin, but sometimes has no apparent reason. It affects our perception of the world and leaves

	Psalm 6	Psalm 13
Originates with God	1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.	1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?
Enemies as immediate irritant	7 it waxeth old because of all mine enemies. 8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity	2 how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
No apparent reason	3 How long?	1-2 How long? (4x)
The eye	7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.	3 lighten mine eyes,
Concern with death	5 For in death <i>there is</i> no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?	3 lest I sleep the <i>sleep of death</i> ;
Confidence in God’s $\eta\eta$	4 oh save me for thy mercies' sake.	5 But I have trusted in thy mercy

Table 5: Parallels between Psalms 6 and 13

us with no purpose for living, but can be overcome by recalling God’s covenant lovingkindness.

A thousand years later, Paul points out the benefits of chastisement that is not directed to our sin:

Rom 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that **tribulation worketh patience**; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

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Psalms 7 and 11: David's Encounters with Saul

The outer parts of Psalms 3-14 are dominated by laments. The psalms we have considered so far (to the degree we can date them) originate in David's flight from Absalom, but these two psalms both have links to David's flight from Saul. The first one reflects his encounter with Saul outside the cave at En Gedi, while the second reflects his later encounter near Ziph.

Numerous connections suggest that they (like 5 and 12, and 6 and 13) to join the two sides of the pyramid (Figure 4, chart).

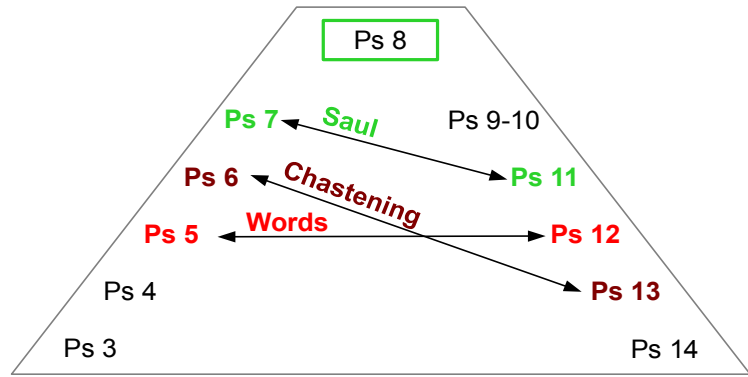


Figure 4: Correspondences in Psalms 3-14

- Both echo his flight from Saul.
- Both open with a claim to “take refuge” חסה Strong 2620 in the Lord (7:1; 11:1; only here and 5:12 in 3-14), which is particularly appropriate to this period.
- Both emphasize words for righteousness (הַצְדִּיק, צְדִיק, צְדִיקָה, Strong 6666, 6662, 6664).²⁵
- Both (and only these in 3-14) speak of bending the bow (God in 7:12; the wicked in 11:2).

These correspondences lead us to watch for links among Psalms 3-4 and 9, 10, and 14.

Psalm 7

Psa 7:1-8:1 Shiggaion of David,--This word appears only here and in the plural in the heading to Habakkuk 3. The underlying verb שָׁגָה means “stumble, stagger,” and the heading may refer to a singer whose faith staggers under the apparent injustices of life. That certainly fits Habakkuk’s attitude, and is appropriate to David, who loves Saul and does not understand why Saul is pursuing him.

which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.--The name “Cush” is a puzzle. Elsewhere, the term describes the country of Ethiopia, which is definitely not populated by Benjamites. But it is noted in Gen 10:8-11 as the ancestor of Assyria and Babylon. A post-exilic editor, knowing of the oppression that Asshur (Assyria) and Babylon brought on David’s heirs, might well have been drawn to the symbolism of the name, using Israel’s enemies in the eighth and seventh centuries to represent David’s adversary three hundred years earlier.

But what does it symbolize? Hengstenberg sees “Cush” as a pun on “Kish,” pointing to Saul.²⁶ We’ll see that the Psalm, referring initially to Saul’s persecution of David, looks beyond to the international scope of David’s reign, and “Cush” may be a suggestion to view Saul as an example of all who set themselves against God’s messianic king.

This psalm shows detailed parallels with Psalm 57 (Table 6, chart)²⁷, whose superscription says

²⁵ These words appear 5x in Ps 7 and 4x in Ps 11, but no more than 2x in any other psalm in 3-14 (16x in all).

Psalm 11, at 4.7%, uses this word family more densely than any other Psalm, and Psalm 7 is #5 in the list.

²⁶ See notes for evidence of the interchange between קָ and קִ.

²⁷ Due to Alexander Maclaren, *The Life of David as Reflected in his Psalms*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903.

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Psa 57:1 Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

Figure 5 (chart) shows the structure of the psalm. It begins with three petitions to the Lord. The outer two ask deliverance from his adversaries. In the center, he protests his own righteousness by inviting God to judge him if he is wrong. Next (10-16) he describes the basis of his confidence, before concluding in praise.

In his first petition, he asks the Lord to deliver him from one particular enemy.

O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust:-- בָּךְ הִסִּיתִי.²⁸--This verb actually means “to take refuge,” which is what David was doing in the cave at En Gedi. He acknowledges that his true refuge is the Lord.

save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me: 2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.--Note the singular “he.” Though an armed force is arrayed against him, his focus is on Saul.

The next petition claims his innocence and invites the Lord’s judgment if he is in the wrong. These three verses offer striking parallels with 1 Sam 24 (chart). Note the frequent reference to David’s hand, and his cry for the Lord to be judge between him and Saul.

1Sa 24:10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into **mine hand** in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth **mine hand** against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed. 11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in **my hand**: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in **mine hand**, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. 12 **The LORD judge between me and thee**, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but

28 Same statement in Ps. 7:2; 11:1; 31:2; 71:1; 141:8; 144:2; only in these two pss in 3-14.

Psalm 7	Psalm 57
2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion , rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.	4 My soul is among lions :
5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour כבודי in the dust. Selah.	8 Awake up, my glory כבודי ; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.
6 Arise , O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself	5, 11 Be thou exalted , O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.
9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end גמר ; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.	2 I will cry ... unto God that performeth גמר all things for me.
15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.	6 ... they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.
17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high .	2 I will cry unto God most high ;

Table 6: Parallels between Psalm 7 and Psalm 57

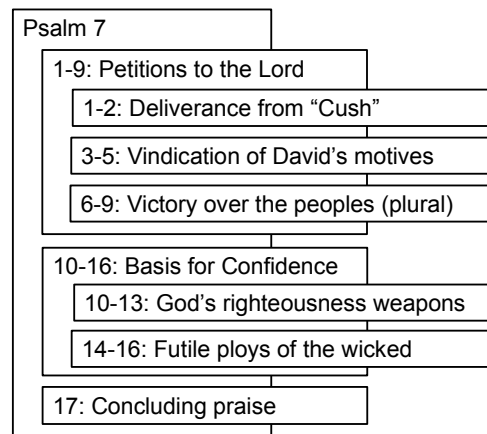


Figure 5: Structure of Psalm 7

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mine hand shall not be upon thee. 13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but **mine hand** shall not be upon thee. 14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. 15 **The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee**, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

3 O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;--The frequent reference to his innocent hand in the narrative leads him to deny any iniquity "in my hands."

4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:)--This is exactly how he has treated Saul.

5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.--His request in these three verses corresponds to the repeated invitation in the narrative, "The Lord judge between me and thee."

The third request once again asks for the Lord's blessing. But this time his vision goes beyond the threat of Saul. Twice he refers to "the peoples" in the plural (overlooked by our version).

6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. 7 So shall the congregation of the people[s] compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high. 8 The LORD shall judge the people[s]:--David realizes that his reign must contend not only with Saul, but with other nations as well. He is conscious, even at this early point in his career, of the messianic scope of his dynasty.

judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. 9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.--Now David introduces the theme of righteousness that dominates this Psalm and Psalm 11. He is innocent of the malice that Saul attributes to him, and because God is righteous, he must deliver his servant. David pleads not just for physical deliverance, but for God's upright rule. This international reference may have made the psalm popular during the captivities, leading to the description of Saul as "Cush" in the superscription.

The second section of the psalm is descriptive, not a request. He begins by describing God's defense of him, then describes his adversaries.

10 My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.--Literally, "my shield is upon God."²⁹ That is, God is carrying it in front of him. Recall the description of Goliath's armor, which concludes, "one bearing a shield went before him." (1 Sam 17:7). So God is here pictured as David's armorbearer, carrying a shield in front of him.³⁰ In fact, the next verse says that God wields all the weapons.

11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. 12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. 13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.--God is the one who wages war on David's behalf, completely protecting him.

After describing God's fearsome artillery, David mocks the feeble efforts of his enemies.

29 Cf. 1 Chr 18:7.

30 From 1 Sam 17:7 we know that the large shield, the one that was usually carried by someone else, was called a זָנָב (Strong 6793), while the small shield is a מָגֵן (Strong 4043). But David says that God is carrying his מָגֵן.

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14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. 15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. 16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.--They stumble over their own feet, victim to the threats that they intended for him.

His conclusion is to praise the Lord.

17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.--Once again, he emphasizes God's righteousness. His case is before God's court, where he trusts in God to give the right outcome.

To the chief Musician upon Gittith,--גִּתִּית is probably a variant for גִּתּוֹת, which means "winepresses" (Neh 13:15), and was so understood by the LXX (chart).³¹ The description (probably a tune-name) also follows Psalms 80 and 83, and may indicate that these psalms were intended for the feast of Tabernacles, the great harvest festival. All three psalms use terms associated with agriculture and harvest (7:5 "tread down"; 80:8-16 the vine; 83:13 stubble). Moreover, all three seek God's aid against his enemies, a reminder that the winepress is an image, not only of joy in harvest, but also of judgment on the wicked (Isa 63:3-6).

We may summarize, *David asks the Lord to vindicate his righteousness (vv. 3-5) while judging his unjust accuser (1-2) and establishing his authority over the peoples (6-5), confident that the Lord's weapons will overpower the adversary's clumsy attacks(10-16) and enable him to praise the Lord's righteousness (17).*

Psalm 11

Psa 11:1-12:1 A Psalm of David.--The description of the composition is missing.

I have described this psalm as a lament, but in fact he never speaks to the Lord, and only to other people (his enemies in v. 1, and to others about his enemies in vv. 2-7). It might be better to call the psalm a psalm of confidence. The closest he comes to a petition is his question in v. 3.

Structurally, the psalm has a two-point summary that is developed chiasmically (Figure 6, chart).

In the LORD put I my trust:--בִּיהוָה חִסִּיתִי. The expression is the same as in 7:1, literally, "Take refuge." Again David, hiding from Saul, finds his ultimate hiding place in the Lord.

how say ye to my soul, Flee³² as a bird to your mountain?--The second part of the summary rebukes David's associates, who urge him to flee. Compare their discouraging words in 4:6.

Their language may be reflected in David's words to Saul near Ziph (chart),

1Sa 26:20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the

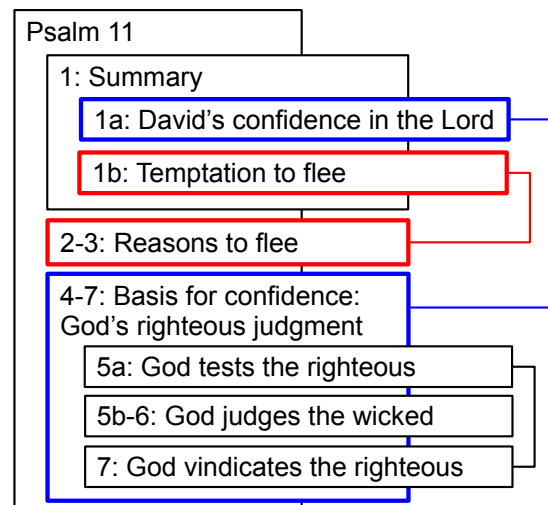


Figure 6: Structure of Psalm 11

31 Thirtle

32 The *ketiv* is plural, agreeing with "your mountain," and appears to refer to David and his associates

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king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, **as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.**

David rejects this counsel. But God does sometimes send his people to the mountains to escape coming judgment:

Gen 19:17 And it came to pass, when [the angels] had brought them [Lot and his daughters] forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

Mat 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

How can we explain this difference?

This psalm reflects a contrast between David's earlier experience in Keilah (1 Sam 23), and his later behavior in Hachilah (1 Sam 26), which may be the occasion of this psalm.

In both cases, David has been protecting the people around him from marauders:

1Sa 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, ... So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

1Sa 25:15 But the men were very good unto us, ... 16 They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

In both cases, someone discloses his location to Saul:

1Sa 23:7 And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

1Sa 26:1 And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?

In both cases, Saul comes against him.

1Sa 23:8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

1Sa 26:2 Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

But David's response is very different.

1Sa 23:13 Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, ... 14 And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph.

This flight led him to En Gedi, where he encounters Saul in 1 Samuel 23. But in Halichah,

1Sa 26:4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed. 5 And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, ...

The difference is that in ch. 23, David had an oracle from the Lord warning him of the danger of staying in Keilah.

1Sa 23:9 And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said

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to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. 10 Then said David, ... 11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? ... And the LORD said, He will come down. 12 ... They will deliver thee up.

But in ch. 26, he has no such oracle. His associates, extrapolating from past experience, urge him to flee, but in fact he comes to confront Saul directly.

The lesson is that believers should base their actions in the face of adversity, not on their fears or the advice of friends, but on direction from the Lord.

2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. 3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?--These statements amplify the second part of the summary in v. 1. They are the observations of David's associates, who are trying to persuade him to flee.

These are true statements with which we can sympathize. We might well agree with David's friends that he should flee such conditions—but David has no instruction from the Lord to flee, and he responds with a statement of confidence corresponding to the first part of v. 1.

4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven:--This is another allusion to 1 Sam 26. David was conscious that Saul's actions drove him away from the Lord (chart).

1Sa 26:19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.

But he takes comfort that the Lord though he may be driven out, the Lord is still in heaven, overseeing his people and caring for the righteous.

Psa 18:6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

Psa 2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

This reference to the temple recalls 5:7 on the other side of the pinnacle.

his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.--As long as he reigns in heaven, men cannot escape his judgment. David summarizes that judgment chiastically:

5 The LORD trieth the righteous:--“Try” here means “test, prove.” As we saw in Psalms 6 and 13, the Lord allows difficulties to come on the righteous, for their good.

but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. 6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.--But his treatment of the wicked is severe and merciless.

7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.--Only the upright can expect his favor.

To the chief Musician upon Sheminith—Like Psalm 5, this psalm is intended to be sung by the male choir.

We may summarize, *In spite of friends who urge him to flee through fear of the wicked (1b-3), David confidently takes refuge in God (1a), trusting him for protection (5b-6) and vindication (5a, 7).*

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Psalms 9-10: Two Paradoxes

Though these two psalms appear separately in the KJV, there is abundant evidence that they were composed as a single piece. Hints in this direction include:

- They form one psalm in the LXX, and this division is followed in the Catholic Douay.
- Psalm 9 has opening but no closing; 10 has closing but no opening. These tend to go together.
- A partial acrostic spans both psalms. This means that the letters of the alphabet begin successive lines, verses, or paragraphs of the Psalm.
- The psalms share a number of phrases or ideas, listed in Table 7 (chart)³³

	Psa 9	Psa 10
The wicked one	5, 16	2, 3, 4, 13, 15
Heathen destroyed	5, 15, 17, 19, 10	16
Times of trouble	9	1
The Oppressed	9	18
(Weak) man	19, 20	18
Forget	12, 17, 18	11, 12
Humble	12, 18	12, 17
Not always, never	18	11
For ever and ever	5	16
Evil backfires	16	2
Arise, O Lord	19	12

Table 7: Common Phrases in Psalm 9-10

Following these clues, if we analyze the two as a single Psalm, we find a strongly unified structure.

A Psalm מזמור of David.

Figure 7 (chart) shows the structure of the combined psalm, suggested by three sets of repetitions.

1. The first two verses are set apart by the acrostic structure. The other letters in the alphabet begin only a single line, usually followed by other lines with letters that don't fit the acrostic, but all four lines in vv. 1-2 begin with א. This and their theme (a resolution to praise the Lord) sets them apart as an introduction to the Psalm.
2. The petition "Arise, O Lord" appears in 9:19 and 10:13, followed in each case with a question about God's lack of intervention.

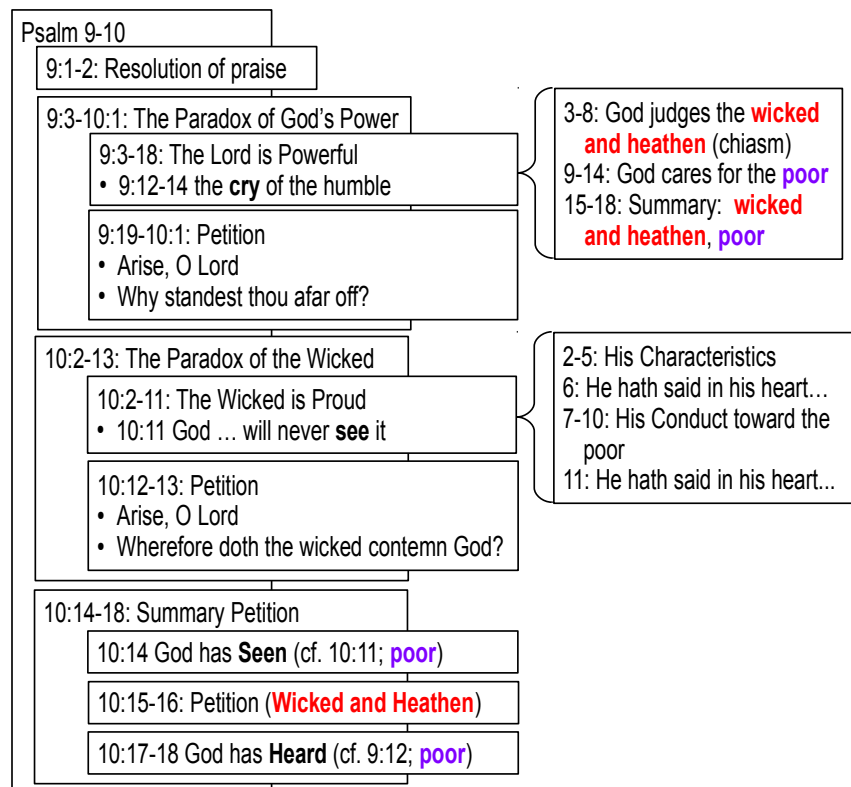


Figure 7: Structure of Psalm 9-10

This refrain sets off a description of the power of God in 9:3-18 and a description of the pride

33 Most of these are from Bullinger, *Companion Bible*

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of the wicked in 10:2-11. The first refrain spans the break in the psalms, reinforcing their unity. 3.10:14-18 have internal symmetry that sets off this section as a conclusion.

The theme of the psalm is a paradox: why is God silent in the face of his own superior power (9:3-18), and the pride of the wicked (10:2-11)? Faced with this paradox, the conclusion affirms that God has indeed seen and heard his people, justifying the praise in the first two verses.

The psalm emphasizes both God's enemies and their victims.

In the first paradox, the enemies are described as heathen/nations/peoples and the wicked, while in the second they are simply the wicked. The final summary covers both categories. Recall 7:6, where David prayed for victory over both the wicked of his own people (Saul), and other peoples (the heathen). We see that same double emphasis here, recognizing his responsibility not only to rule over Israel, but also to bring in God's kingdom over the whole earth.

The Psalm also repeatedly mentions the victims, called variously the humble עני, the poor עני, הולכה, the oppressed דך, the fatherless יתום, the needy אביון. These appear in the two paradoxes, and in the summary. David in this psalm is concerned not just for his own well-being, but for the people over whom he rules.

Thus both collections of words emphasize David's consciousness of the nature of his rule.

1-2, Resolution of Praise

¶ I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart;

¶ I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

2 ¶ I will be glad and rejoice in thee:

¶ I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.--This declaration of praise for the Lord repeats the first letter of the alphabet with each line. Other stanzas of the acrostic have the distinctive letter only on the first line. Its positive note is echoed briefly in the prayer of the humble in 9:14, but otherwise does not recur until the conclusion in 10:14-18.

9:3-10:1, The Paradox of God's power

The first paradox is why God does not intervene, given his great power.

3-18, Description of the Lord's Power

God's power is seen in two ways, subduing David's enemies (vv. 3-8) and caring for the poor (vv. 9-14). Vv. 15-18 summarize these two themes.

3-8, God as king over all the earth

This section is chiasmic (Figure 8, chart). Let's work in from the outside.

First, vv. 3-4 and 7-8 both share three words: throne, judgment, and right(eousness). Note the expansion in God's interest: in vv. 3-4 he cares for David, but in 7-8 he rules over the world and the peoples (plural, as in Ps 7:7,8). The words "judge" and "judgment," functions of God's rule ("throne"), are prominent.³⁴

³⁴ Psalm 9's 6 occurrences make it the second densest Psalm in the Psalter in this term (after Psalm 82). Treated as

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9:5 and 9:6 are also parallel, though this is not obvious in the AV. The syntax of v. 6 is difficult. Among other anomalies (see Delitzsch), “their” is masculine and so can’t apply to the cities, but must describe the enemies. A preferable translation sees the verse, like v. 5, addressed *to* the Lord and *about* the enemies, rather than *to* the enemies. Here’s a retranslation that is close to the KJV:

<p>3 כ When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.</p> <p>4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.</p>	<p>7 ו But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.</p> <p>8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people[s] in uprightness.</p>
<p>5 ג Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.</p>	<p>6 ה The enemy are ended like perpetual ruins; and thou hast destroyed cities; their very memory is perished.</p>

The enemy are ended like perpetual ruins; and thou hast destroyed cities; their very memory is perished.

Figure 8: Chiasmic Parallels and Broken Acrostic in 9:3-8

Now we can see the parallels between these two verses.

- Both of them describe the enemy (recalling also v. 3). 9:5 introduces the two terms heathen and wicked.
- Both say that God has done something bad to the enemy.
- Both end by claiming that the enemy is missing forever.³⁵

The acrostic reinforces this parallel claim. Starting with 9:3, the corresponding members work through the alphabet: כ introduces 9:3-4, 9:5 begins with ג, then 9:6 begins with ה, followed by ו at the beginning of 9:7-8. But the letter ז is missing. It looks as though a whole verse has just dropped out of the Psalm, right at the center of the chiasm.

But God has taken better care of his Word than that. The omission of ז is deliberate,³⁶ calling attention to the declaration of the verses on either side. The wicked have vanished completely, and to emphasize the point, David skips a letter. We naturally ask, “Where is the ז verse?” The answer is, “It’s gone—just like the wicked.”

9-14, God as Protector of the Poor

Now we begin the second theme in David’s exaltation of the Lord. He not only brings judgment to the entire world, but he also cares for the poor and needy.

9 ו The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:

for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion:

declare among the people[s] his doings.--First, David expresses his confidence in the Lord, and instructs people of all nations (plural) to praise the Lord for his mighty works.

a single Psalm, 9-10 with 8 instances would be the fourth densest Psalm, after 82, 98, and 99.

35 שם (v. 5) and זכר (v. 6) are parallel in Ps 135:13.

36 Ronald Benun, *Evil and the Disruption of Order: A Structural Analysis of the Acrostics in the First Book of Psalms*. <http://www.jhsonline.org/cocoon/JHS/a055.html>

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12 † When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them:

he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.--Note the reference to the verbal cry of the humble. We might end this verse with a colon, since the next two verses appear to be a quotation.

**13 π Have mercy [חַנּוּן, be gracious] upon me, O LORD;
consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me,
thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:**

14 That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion:

I will rejoice in thy salvation.--The humble person has heard David's exhortation in v. 11 to praise the Lord, and in v. 14 promises to do what David has instructed him.

15-18, Summary

The last four verses summarize these two themes. First, we hear again about the heathen and the wicked, and the judgment that the Lord has prepared for them, just as in 9:3-4, 7-8.

**15 † The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made:
in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.**

**16 The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth:
the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgsion. Selah.**

17 † The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.--God's judgment on them is the evil that they intended for others, a theme that will recur in the description of the wicked in 10:2-22.³⁷

Then he returns to God's care for the needy, repeating the keyword "forgotten" from v. 12.

**18 † For the needy shall not always be forgotten:
the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.**

9:19-10:1, Call on the Lord

The refrain consists of a call to God to arise, and (at the beginning of what is now Psalm 10) a question. Together, these two statements recall the two themes of vv. 3-18.

19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

**20 Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men.
Selah.**--Here is the emphasis on God's judgment of the nations, from 9:3-8.

10:1 † Why למה standest thou afar off, O LORD?

why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?--The phrase "times of trouble" recalls 9:9, describing the difficulties of the needy.

This question captures the first paradox. If God is so powerful, why does he stand afar off while the nations rage and the wicked oppress the poor?

10:2-11, Description of the Wicked

Now we begin the second paradox. From God's great power, he moves to the depravity of the wicked and the upset of society that the wicked bring.

³⁷ Recall the same theme in 7:15-16, another link across the two sides of the pyramid.

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David marks this upset in the acrostic structure. From 9:1 through 10:1, he covers the alphabet in order, with the exception of ך, which he leaves out to illustrate the destiny of the heathen and the wicked. 10:1 brings us to ך. At this point the acrostic breaks off. Six letters, ך, ך, ך, ך,אך, and ך, are missing, though 10:2-11 are just the right size to contain them. The next letter we expect is ך, and that pops up as soon as this description ends, in the refrain in 10:12. From that point the acrostic finishes as expected. Just as David emphasized the final judgment of the wicked by leaving out ך, so he emphasizes the confusion and disorder brought by the wicked by leaving out the six letters that should have marked the verses that describe them.

The description of the wicked has two parts, each with a refrain beginning, “He hath said in his heart....”

2-5, His Characteristics

Here we have several characteristics by which we may recognize the wicked.

2 The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor:--First, he takes advantage of those who cannot defend themselves.

let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.--As in 9:16, such wickedness will return on the head of the perpetrator.³⁸

3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous,

whom the LORD abhorreth.--The second characteristic is a delight in wickedness, boasting of one's own corruption and lionizing other wicked people.

4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God:

God is not in all his thoughts.--The third characteristic is trying to eliminate God from his consciousness.

5 His ways are always grievous;

thy judgments are far above out of his sight:

as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.--In particular, he is oblivious to God's judgment, even though it falls on him in the form of the return of his malice on his own head.

6, His False Confidence

6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved:

for I shall never be in adversity.--His first false confidence is in his own cleverness to keep him out of trouble.³⁹

7-10, His Conduct toward the Poor

The next four verses emphasize his love of deceit and secrecy in overcoming the poor.

38 The subject of the first verb might alternatively be the poor, and the imperfect indicating the usual outcome: “The poor are routinely taken in the devices that the wicked have imagined.” But the connection with 9:16, and his inability to see God's judgments in v. 5, encourages us to understand both verbs of the wicked.

39 This is one of three “I shall not be moved” statements in Psalms. This one represents the false confidence of the wicked; 30:6 describes the carnal believer who trusts in God's blessings rather than in God; 16:8 describes the confidence of the godly man, who even in the midst of adversity trusts in God.

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7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud:⁴⁰

under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages:

in the secret places doth he murder the innocent:

his eyes are privily set against the poor.

9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den:

he lieth in wait to catch the poor:

he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

10 He croucheth, and humbleth himself,

that the poor may fall by his strong ones.

11, His False Confidence

11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten:

he hideth his face; he will never see it.--Again David shows us his inner thoughts. This time, they are directed, not to his own skill, but to his presumption that God will not notice what he is doing, or hold him to account.

12-13, Call on the Lord

As with the description of God's power, the refrain combines an appeal for God's intervention with a perplexed question.

12 ¶ Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.--The petition recalls the wicked's claim in v. 11, "God hath forgotten."

13 Wherefore על-מה doth the wicked contemn God?--The verb "contemn" means "treat with contempt." That is the substance of his behavior in vv. 3-5 and of his inner thought in v. 11.

he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.--And here is his characteristic refrain from 10:6 and 11.

The first refrain asked why a powerful God does not act. The second asks why he does not act against such wickedness as we see around us. These are the two sides of the paradox of evil: given how bad it is, and how powerful God is, why does he not end it?

If we only started with 9:3 and ended with 10:13, we would be discouraged. But recall from 9:1-2 that David's purpose in this psalm is to praise the Lord, and he concludes with a statement of confidence that God will intervene.

Summary Confidence and Petition

David's final expression of confidence has three parts.

Recall the frequent references in the psalm both to the enemy (wicked, heathen, peoples) and to their victims (the poor, humble, oppressed, fatherless). The outer two parts of the conclusion focus on the victims, while the center (vv. 15-16) deals with the adversaries.

⁴⁰ Like Psalm 14, this is one of the verses on which Paul draws in Romans 3 to prove that all have sinned.

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14, God has Seen (link to 10:11 in description of the wicked)

14 ᵐ **Thou hast seen it;**--This statement seems focused specifically on the claim of the wicked in 10:11, declaring that God will never see what he does. But in fact God does see:

**for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand:
the poor committeth himself unto thee;
thou art the helper of the fatherless.**--God will not abandon the helpless.

15-16, Petition

The center emphasizes the two categories of enemies, the (Israelite) wicked and the heathen. David begins with a petition, but even here moves into a powerful statement of confidence.

15 ᵐ **Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man:
seek out his wickedness till thou find none.**

16 The LORD is King for ever and ever:--This is the first instance of an expression that we will find repeatedly, mostly in the fourth book (Psalms 90-106). We have heard already of God's "throne" and his "judgment," which are the signs of his role as king.

the heathen are perished out of his land.--Note "his land." David may be king, but he rules in God's stead over his land.

17, God has Heard (link to 9:12 in description of the Lord)

17 ᵐ **LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble:**--As 10:14 emphasized what God has seen, this verse emphasizes what he has heard. In particular, it recalls 9:12, which promised that he would not forget the cry of the humble.

**thou wilt prepare their heart,
thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: 18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.**

To the chief Musician—David or the editor dedicates this psalm for public performance.

We may summarize, "Appealing to God to intervene because of his power and the wicked abuse of the helpless, David is confident in God's intervention, and raises praise to him."

Psalm 8: God's Care for the Weak

Psalm 8 is the pinnacle of Psalms 3-14 (Figure 2, chart).

- It has five psalms on each side (counting Psalms 9 and 10 as a single psalm);
- there are numerous correspondences between these bracketing psalms;
- it is a hymn of praise while the others are laments (or a psalm of confidence in the face of opposition, Psalm 11);
- and its first and last verses are linked to the last words of Psalm 7 and the opening words of Psalm 9, exalting the name of the Lord:

7:17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to **the name of the LORD most high.**

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8:1 O LORD our Lord, **how excellent is thy name** in all the earth!

8:9 O LORD our Lord, **how excellent is thy name** in all the earth!

9:1 I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works. 2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to **thy name, O thou most High**.

The Psalm clearly recalls the creation story of Genesis 1. We will see that David is probably recalling his confrontation with Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. We'll also review the psalm's use in the New Testament, and finally its relation to the rest of Psalms 3-14.

Psalm 8 and its Old Testament Roots

Psa 8:1 A Psalm מזמור of David.

The framework of the psalm consists of three rhetorical questions in 1, 4, and 9, each beginning with the Hebrew particle *מה* "how, what." The first and last invite us to contemplate the majesty of God's name, while the center one focuses on man, using a term (*אנוש*, Strong 582) that emphasizes his use of man, though weak and frail, in doing his work.

David begins by contrasting God's glory and man's weakness in vv. 1-2. He amplifies the contrast in 3-8, then asserts God's glory once more in v. 9 (Table 8, chart).

O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.--First

he emphasizes God's glory. We might better translate, "bestowed thy majesty upon the heavens," that is, made them the canvas upon which you display your majesty.⁴¹

2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings--Next, he focuses on man's humility. "Babes and sucklings" may be hyperbolic, contrasting people with God, but we will see that it has a more direct reference as well.

God's glory	1 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above [upon] the heavens.	3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;	9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!
Man's weakness	2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings	4 What is man , that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?	
Man's exaltation	hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.	5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels [God], and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: 7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.	

Table 8: Correspondences in Psalm 8

⁴¹ Compare the use of *נתן הדר* in 1 Chr 29:25, "bestowed majesty."

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hast thou ordained strength [founded ramparts] because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.--He entrusts his work to man in spite of man's weakness. In general he does not fight his enemies with miracles, but sends people to do the job.

The verb "ordained" יסד Strong 3245 is literally "founded," as in a building, and "strength" עז Strong 5797 can have the nuance "rampart," as in its parallel with "city" in Prov 21:22 and with "palace, citadel" in Amos 3:11. This suggests that the words that come from the mouths of the babes and sucklings provide a wall of defense against the enemy. We do not ordinarily think of words as having much effect against the devices of wicked people, but the Word of God is the sword of the spirit (Eph 6:17), and when we speak it, we can triumph over our adversary the devil (1 Pet 5:8). This theme recalls the verbal warfare of Psalms 5 and 12.

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;--Now he returns to the theme of God's glory, as manifest in the night sky. "Consider" is literally "see, look upon," which may explain why he focuses on the heavenly bodies that he can observe directly.⁴² The night-time reference, and the fact that he begins his list of man's earthly dominion with "sheep," suggest that the poem recalls his night-time watches with Jesse's sheep. Recall the emphasis on sleep in Psalms 3-6.

4 What is man אָנוּשׁ, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?--In 2a he emphasized our weakness with the image of babes and sucklings; here he does so by using a word for "man" אָנוּשׁ (Strong 582) that emphasizes weakness and frailty.

5-8 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels [אלהים God], and hast crowned him with glory and honour. ...--As in 2b, he contrast our weakness with our high calling.

The word translated "angels" is אֱלֹהִים, which is usually rendered "God." God has placed us just below himself. David is clearly paraphrasing Genesis 1 (Table 9, chart).

- In man's position "a little lower than God" he is God's image, his representative.⁴³
- "Glory and honor" come from God's blessing of fruitfulness.
- Ps 8:6-8 directly echo the promise of dominion.

9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!--Finally, he

Genesis 1	Psalm 8
26a And God said, Let us make man in our image , after our likeness: ... 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.	5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels [God] ,
28a And God blessed them , and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: ...	and hast crowned him with glory and honour .
26b and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea , and over the fowl of the air , and over the cattle , and over all the earth , and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ... 28b and have dominion over the fish of the sea , and over the fowl of the air , and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.	6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet : 7 All sheep and oxen , yea, and the beasts of the field ; 8 The fowl of the air , and the fish of the sea , and <i>whatsoever</i> passeth through the paths of the seas.

Table 9: Psalm 8 and Genesis 1

⁴² The great bodies of the heavens are only the work of God's fingers, but he describes redemption as requiring his strong arm (Exod 6:6).

⁴³ This theme is developed at length in my studies on the kingdom of God: <http://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/KingdomOfGod/>.

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returns once more to the overall theme: the excellence of God's name.

To the chief Musician upon Muthlabben,--Like all of the tune names, this one is a puzzle. "Muth" is pretty clearly "death," but what is "labben"?⁴⁴ Some people think the word means "Nabal," spelled backwards; others take "la" as the preposition "to," and then "Ben" might be someone's name, perhaps the choirmaster to whom the psalm is delivered.

The best solution, recognized long ago by some Jewish commentators,⁴⁵ recognizes "ben" as a noun derived from the preposition "between." This is a reference to Goliath, suggested by the term that describes him twice in 1 Samuel 17 (chart):

1Sa 17:4 And there went out a **champion** אִישׁ־הַבְּנִים out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. . . . 23 And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the **champion** אִישׁ־הַבְּנִים, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them.

"Champion" is literally, "the man who is between two." While it appears in the Bible only in 1 Sam 17, it is used much later in the "Rule of War" from Qumran (in the plural, אֲנָשֵׁי הַבְּנִים) to describe foot soldiers who advance between the two lines of armies to begin the combat.

The Aramaic Targum renders the verse,

concerning the death of the man who went out between the camps

Now the "babes and sucklings" of v. 2 is not just a hyperbolic reference to the lowliness of man as the instrument by which God subdues his enemies. David is recalling his conflict with Goliath, when both Saul and Goliath mocked his youth and inexperience:

1Sa 17:33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for **thou art but a youth**, and he a man of war from his youth.

1Sa 17:42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for **he was but a youth**, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

Nevertheless, God used him to "still the enemy and the avenger."

Use in the NT

The NT quotes Psalm 8 frequently (chart).

The first citation, of the first half of the Psalm at v. 3, is at the triumphal entry,

Mat 21:15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, 16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, **Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?**⁴⁶

The Lord's words reflect his earlier emphasis (Matt 18; 19:13-14) on "little ones." The chief

44 Gill has an excellent summary of ideas, settling finally on Goliath, with the Jewish sages.

45 Gill cites Kimchi and Ben Melech, and the Targum. Thirtle develops the relation with Psalm 8. LXX draws on this meaning in translating בְּיַיְנוּ in Job 9:33 as ὁ μεσότης ἡμῶν.

46 "Praise" instead of "strength" is due to the LXX.

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priests and scribes felt that only credentialed religious leaders were qualified to evaluate the Galilean teacher, just as Saul felt that only a mature warrior could confront Goliath, but the Lord rebukes them in the words of the psalm. The little children, in praising the Savior, were raising up a bulwark (Ps 8:2) to frustrate Satan's attacks against him.

The rest of the references interpret the second half of the Psalm as a prophecy of the Lord Jesus.⁴⁷ The next verse to which the NT alludes is 8:5, "thou ... hast crowned him with glory and honor." Paul may have this verse in view in Philippians 2,

Phi 2:9 Wherefore God also hath **highly exalted him**, and given him a name which is above every name:

That name is "Lord," corresponding to the title that begins and ends the Psalm, "O Lord, our Lord." Psalm 8:1 says that God has set his glory above *υπερανω* (Strong 5231) the heavens, as Paul emphasizes in Ephesians, also emphasizing his name:

Eph 1:20 he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 **Far above *υπερανω*** all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, **and every name that is named**, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 **And hath put all things under his feet**, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Eph 1:22 also draws on the phrase from Psalm 8:6, "thou hast put all things under his feet." The NT frequently draws on this language to describe the exalted Christ.

1Co 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies **under his feet**. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For **he hath put all things under his feet**. But when he saith **all things are put under him**, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

Paul leaves the Father out of Christ's dominion, just as the one spoken of in the Psalm is "a little lower than God." Again in Philippians, using the word *υποτασσω* (Strong 5293) that translates "put under,"

Phi 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to **subdue *υποτασσω* all things unto himself**.

The most extensive citation of the Psalm is in Hebrews 2, where the author is showing the superiority of Christ to the angels. The LXX translates *אלהים* in Psalm 8:5 as *αγγελου*, and Hebrews follows this rendering (chart):

Heb 2:5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. 6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? 7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: 8a Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. ...

Now the author makes two observations, one from the Psalm and one from experience:

Heb 2:8b For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

⁴⁷ Thus the NT restricts the second half to the Messiah, but not the first half. This is consistent with David's distinction: the first half recalls his personal experience with Goliath, while the second goes beyond that experience to the deeper theological significance of the original creation.

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The Psalm says that all things are under man, whom God has exalted. But man is not in control. So the Psalm must not be speaking of man generically. What could the reference be?

He concludes, “But we see Jesus” (2:9a), and shows how the language of the Psalm fits our Lord. The verse makes the most sense if we punctuate it to reveal a chiasm (Figure 9).

Humiliation	Heb 2:9b who was “made a little lower than the angels,”	↑	that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.
Exaltation	for the suffering of death	↓	“crowned with glory and honour;”

Figure 9: Chiasm in Heb 2:9

The outer members describe his humiliation “lower than the angels” and its purpose: that he might “taste death for every man.” The center describes the reward that the Father gives him for his work. The argument is the same as in Philippians 2,

Phi 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

First Paul describes how he is made low in order to taste death:

Phil 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Then, because of this death (“wherefore”), he is exalted:

Phil 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So David’s victory over Goliath becomes the pattern for our Lord’s victory over death. In both cases, the victory is not by means of brute force, but by the power of God working through things that are weak in the eyes of the world, “that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor 4:7).

Psalm 8 and the Poetic Pyramid

We have already noted that the two sides of Psalms 3-14 emphasize the weakness of God’s people, in the repeated image of fatigue in Psalms 3-7, and the references to the poor and oppressed in Psalms 9-14. Psalm 8 explains why God allows this state of affairs. He will exalt his name, by using weak people to achieve his glorious ends.

Supporting this structure are numerous ties between the two sides of the pyramid. While not ordered symmetrically as in the chiasms we find throughout the Bible, there are sufficient correspondences to establish the overall cluster, with its focus on Psalm 8 (Table 10, chart). These include the correspondences between whole Psalms: 5 and 12 describing verbal rather than physical attacks; 6 and 13 emphasizing the Lord’s role in David’s suffering; 7 and 11 focusing on his flight from Saul.

In addition, there are numerous detailed correspondences. These incorporate Psalms 3-4, 9, and 14, so that every Psalm in the section supports the overall structure. Note in particular the role of Psalm 14, which we studied earlier. It emphasized the universal opposition of the world to God,

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and corresponds to Psalm 3, which emphasizes the “many” who oppose David.

So we may summarize the entire pyramid, *The Lord exalts his name by using weak people, who often need chastening themselves, to subdue numerous, powerful enemies.*

Whole Psalms		
Verbal Attacks	5	12
Divine Chastening	6	13
Flight from Saul	7	11
Individual Verses		
Size of opposition	3:1 many ... rise up against me. 2 Many ... say ... There is no help for him in God. ... 6 ... ten thousands of people,	14:1, 3 there is none that doeth good
God hears from his sanctuary	3:4 he heard me out of his holy hill; 5:7 thy house ... thy temple	11:4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven:
Appeal to God's righteousness	4:1 My righteous God	11:7 the righteous Lord
Disheartening associates	4:6 many there be that say...	11:1 how say ye to my soul ...
Both Israelite and Gentile foes subdued	7:1 Cush the Benjamite; 8 the Lord shall judge the peoples	9-10, the wicked ... the heathen

Table 10: Links across the pyramid of Psalms 3-14

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Notes

Selah

This marker appears 71x in 39 different Psalms. The two prominent explanations are that it marks stanza breaks (Thirtle), or that it reflects a musical inflection (K&D). In support of the latter:

1. As in Psalms 3 and 4, it often is not well aligned with the structure of a psalm on other grounds. Note in particular how it can divide two cola with very similar statements:

Psa 57:3 He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. *Selah*. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

Psa 88:10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? *Selah*. 11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? 12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
2. The marking is almost always accompanied with either an assignment to the choirmaster (25 psalms) or in a psalm introduced as *מזמור* (10x). See K&D on this term at the head of Psalm 3 for the meaning “music” as contrasted with “song,” emphasizing the accompaniment. Only four psalms with *סלה* lack both of these notations: 32, 81, 88, and 89.

God of My Righteousness (4:1)

Delitzsch parses this “my (God of righteousness)” = “my righteous God” rather than (as the KJV suggests) “God of (my righteousness).” This parsing follows Gesenius 135.n, referencing 128.o and 128.p. It is also favored by several other examples of the construction: Ps 42:9 “God of my rock” (KJV “God my rock”), which only makes sense this way; compare also 59:17 “God of my mercy” = “my merciful God” and 43:2 “God of my strength” = “my strong God” (when the Psalmist is evidently weak). This reading of 4:1 would go along with the expression, “Deliver me in thy righteousness” (31:1; 71:2), and the frequent (23x) appeal to “thy righteousness” throughout the Psalms.

But some examples of the construction seem to take an alternate meaning.

109:1 “God of my praise”: Is this “my praiseworthy God”? That seems forced. But if the meaning is “God whom I praise,” we would expect “God,” not “praise,” to be in the genitive, as an objective genitive. There is a third option. Delitzsch compares this to Deut 10:21 “He is thy praise” and Jer 17:15 “thou art my praise.” Compare “God of my rock” 42:9 with “thou art my rock” 31:1. Delitzsch calls this a “genitive of apposition” (Gesenius 128.k-p, “epexegetical genitive”). In this case, either construction (predicate or construct) equates “God” with “rock,” a specific rock, the one belonging to me. Compare also “God of my/his salvation,” the God who saves me.

We may have a clue in the name *יהוה צדכנו* assigned to the Davidic messiah in Jer 23:6 (cf. 33:16), which probably draws on Ps 4:1 as well as playing on the name Zedekiah. There, as often in the literature of the captivity, God’s *צדך* is his coming vindication of his people, delivering them from their enemies and restoring their land and privileges. See Jer 23:5, where this king

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“shall execute judgment and justice צדקה in the earth.” This meaning would fit Ps 4:1, “God who vindicates me.” Then “my righteousness” would be objective genitive, and the appositional or epexegetical genitive between “God” and “righteousness” would fit well: “God who vindicates me.”

This seems the preferable meaning in 4:1. The point is not just that God is righteous and that David can claim him in some undefined way, but that God will vindicate David by restoring his throne.

Here’s a general way to look at it:

1. The genitive in the construction “God of my X” often appears in other contexts as the predicate of a verbless clause, “God is my X.” This suggests that the relation between “God” and “X” is epexegetical, presenting X as an example of what God is.
2. The pronominal suffix often makes sense as subjective or objective genitive. Thus “my praise” would be “the one I praise,” and “my salvation” would be “the one who saves me.”
3. Then the whole construction identifies God with the missing case in the suffix construction: “God of my praise” (Ps 109:1) → “God of (I praise X)” → “God whom I praise.”
4. Without the pronominal suffix, getting a verbal relation between “God” and a verbal noun would require “X of God,” e.g., “praise of God” (e.g., Ps 145:21 my mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord), “salvation of God” (Ps 50:23). Such a construction, with both subjective genitive (God) and objective genitive (personal pronoun), does occur: Ps 98:3 = Isa 52:10 all the ends of the earth have seen **the salvation of our God**. The parallel clause in Psa 98:3 confirms this understanding: “He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel.” But by fronting the verb it emphasizes the action. “God of my X” reflects much the same deep structure, but by fronting “God” it puts the focus on him, either as the subject (“righteousness,” “salvation”) or object (“praise”) of the activity reflected in the noun.

Purity of God’s Words (12:6)

12:6 describes God’s words as pure using the adjective טהור, while 19:8 uses בר and Psa 119:140 and Pro 30:5 use צרופה.

טהור appears 96x, and refers to gold, ceremonial cleanness (e.g., of animals, Gen 7:2), and of ethical cleanness. The first two categories in particular refer to the absence of any impurity or defilement.

בר appears only 7 times in the OT, all in Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Song. Once (Prov 14:4) it refers to an empty manger. The other instances are applied to people (Job 11:6; Song 6:9, 10), words (Prov 19:8, cf. Sirach 40:21 the tongue), and the heart (Ps 24:4; 73:1). It appears to emphasize ethical cleanness, which is possible but unmarked with טהור.

צרופה is the passive participle of צרף, meaning “to refine, smelt,” and appears only five times, of silver in Ps 12:6 (though as metaphor for words), of God’s words in Psa 18:31 = 2 Sam 22:31, Prov 30:5, and Ps 119:40. The instances in Ps 18 and Prov 30 in particular focus on this feature as allowing us to trust in the Lord.

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Growing Joy in 5:11

David describes the joy of the saint with three verbs, each with a distinct motive.

But let all those that put their trust in the rock rejoice. --Trust here means to take refuge, not just to adopt a mental attitude (for which the OT uses another, more frequent word, *בָּתַח*). It frequently appears with reference to images of God as a rock

	Ελπίζω	πειθω	Total
בטח	47	73	161
הסה	19	9	41
Total	117	181	

Table 11: Verbs for "Trust" in the OT

Psa 18:2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Or offering sheltering wings:

Psa 91:4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

It is submitting ourselves to the Lord, drawing close to him, allowing him to come between us and the threat. The result is rejoicing—the most common term for happiness. When you want to wish someone a happy birthday or happy holiday, this is the term you use.

let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them. --Now the joy progresses from an inner sense of happiness to an outward shout. If all we did was take refuge, we might be reluctant to make any noise, but in the Lord’s care we can let others know about our joy by crying aloud. The motive here is not simply that we take refuge in him, but that he actively covers us—this is the verb “cover” in Ps 91:4. It’s what the veil in the tabernacle does to the ark of the covenant (Ex 40:21—it hides it, makes it inaccessible).

let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. --This verb for joy is the least common of the three, occurring only 8 times in the OT. Its uses suggest that it is the joy that occurs when our hopes are realized. LXX often translates it “boast.” After Hannah bore Samuel, she prayed,

1Sa 2:1 And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart **rejoiceth** in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

Compare

Pro 11:10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city **rejoiceth**: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.

This level of joy belongs to those “that love thy name.” Recall that in the OT, a person’s name represents the person, in all of his character. So to “love thy name” is to love God as he has revealed himself. This is the heart of the law, the command to love God with all of our heart, soul, and abundance (Deut 6:5).

The levels of joy progress from happiness, to bold shouts, to victorious joy. The first two causes similarly progress, from taking refuge to seeing his action on our behalf. But this last cause emphasizes what we have seen in Habakkuk:

Hab 3:17-18 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18 Yet I will rejoice [a variant of our final

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verb] in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Verbs for trust: חסה is by far the less common, thus the more marked. Taking refuge is a subset of ways that one might בטח.

Table 12 show the words for joy in this verse and elsewhere. Here is another verse using the figure of anabasis with joy, which also shows the increase from שמח to עלץ:

	ευφραينو	(επι)χαιρω	αγαλλιαω	(κατα)- καυχασομαι	Total
שמח	141	24			177
שמחה	7				94
שוש	8	4	4		27
רנן	12		24	1	53
עלץ עלז		1	6	5	8
גיל		9	27		57
הלל				10	165
Total	254	109	73	44	

Table 12: Words for Joy

Psa 68:3 But let the righteous be glad שמח; let them rejoice עלץ before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice בשמחה שוש.

Antiquity of the Octave

The interpretation of השמנית as referring to a musical octave depends on a musical culture (like that of Western Europe) that is familiar with an eight-tone scale. Evidence for the antiquity of such a scale is found in a Babylonian text, UET VII 74, dating to 1800 BC, which implies a scale supporting seven modes, like the modern diatonic scale (http://flutopedia.com/mesopotamian_flutes.htm).

How Long? (6:3; 13:1-2)

A common feature of these two psalms of chastisement is the cry, “How long?” This English phrase translates several different Hebrew expressions. Table 13 lists the Hebrew, and LXX expressions involved. All are translated “How long” in the AV, which also has the phrase in italics once each in 4:2 and 94:4. In Ps 3-14, it appears only in Pss 6 and 13. Notably, though Ps 6 is included among the penitential psalms, this expression occurs in none of the others (32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143), and the lack of any confession of sin in Ps 6 suggests that we should distinguish it from the others. The protest “How long” is appropriate only when we do not understand what God is doing to us.

Ref	To	MT	LXX
4:2	Men	עַד־מָה	Εως ποτε
6:3	God	עַד־מַתִּי	Εως ποτε
13:1,2 (4x)	God	עַד־אֵנָה	Εως ποτε (3x), εως τινος
35:17	God	כִּמָּה	ποτε
62:3	Men	עַד־אֵנָה	Εως ποτε
74:9	God	עַד־מָה	ετι
74:10	God	עַד־מַתִּי	Εως ποτε
79:5	God	עַד־מָה	Εως ποτε
80:4	God	עַד־מַתִּי	Εως ποτε
82:2	Men	עַד־מַתִּי	Εως ποτε
89:46	God	עַד־מָה	Εως ποτε
90:13	God	עַד־מַתִּי	Εως ποτε
94:3 (2x)	God	עַד־מָה	Εως ποτε

Table 13: "How long?" in the Psalms

Psalms 3-14

Hiding of God's face סתר פנה

False confidence of the wicked

Ps. 10:11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: **he hideth his face**; he will never see it.

Laments and requests not to hide his face

Ps. 13:1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou **hide thy face** from me?

Ps. 27:9 **Hide not thy face** far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

Ps. 69:17 And **hide not thy face** from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.

Ps. 88:14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? **why hidest thou thy face** from me?

Ps. 102:2 **Hide not thy face** from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.

Ps. 143:7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: **hide not thy face** from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

Assurance that he does not hide his face

Ps. 22:24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he **hid his face** from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

Statements that he does hide his face

Ps. 30:7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst **hide thy face**, and I was troubled.

Ps. 104:29 Thou **hidest thy face**, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

Requests to hide his face

Ps. 51:9 **Hide thy face** from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

Motives for God's Deliverance (6:4)

Psa 6:4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' **דון** sake.

Psa 71:2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. cf. 31:1

Interchange of כ and ק

The pun that Hengstenberg proposes between כוש and קיש in the heading to Psalm 7 depends on

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the interchangeability of these two plosives. Other evidence for this:

We see a hint of this in 9:19, where the acrostic requires כ but the verse begins with ק. (Unless we are to take כ in 9:18b as the appropriate line)

<http://www.balashon.com/2006/10/kaf.html> traces some interchanges in later Hebrew

<https://books.google.com/books?id=7rcX7dlGvwUC&pg=PA68&lpg=PA68&dq=hebrew+kaf+qof+interchange&source=bl&ots=C5Wa2O99Y9&sig=HzMsZDqNOvDXbkfkDd58zX3O7ko&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEw7uB5E5rbYAhWjz4MKHX69DtsQ6AEIMDAB#v=onepage&q=hebrew%20kaf%20qof%20interchange&f=false>

Words for Trust: בטח and חסה (Pss 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; Table 14)

Trust חסה means to take refuge, not just to adopt a mental attitude (the more frequent word בטח). It frequently appears with reference to images of God as a rock or a sheltering wing:

Psa 18:2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will **trust**; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Psa 91:4 He shall cover סך thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou **trust** חסה: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Trust is drawing close to the Lord, allowing him to come between us and the threat. The result is rejoicing—the most common term for happiness, used to wish someone a happy birthday or happy holiday.

Isaiah promises this function in a God-man, anticipating Christ:

Isa 25:4 For **thou** [יהוה] hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a **refuge מהסה** from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

Isa 32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. 2 And **a man** shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

	בטח	חסה
Ελπίζω	47	19
Πειθω	73	9

Table 14: Words for "hope"

Hebrew Words for "Shield"

צנה and מגן occur together frequently, usually translated "shield and buckler" (though the correspondence is sometimes inverted, and other words sometimes replace מגן). The key to the meaning is that Goliath's armorbearer carries a צנה, which therefore is the large shield.

1 Chr. 12:8 And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield צנה and buckler רמה (lance), whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains;

Ps. 35:2 Take hold of shield מגן and buckler צנה, and stand up for mine help.

Ps. 91:4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth

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shall be thy shield צנה and buckler סהרה.

Jer. 46:3 Order ye the buckler מגן and shield צנה, and draw near to battle.

Ezek. 23:24 And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, which shall set against thee buckler צנה and shield מגן and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments.

Acrostic Psalms

Psalm 9-10 is the first of the acrostic psalms. Like many of them, it lacks some letters:

Acrostic psalms: 22 letters (ו and ו are not distinguished; cf. Jud 12:6).

- 25, 34: ו is duplicated and פ is duplicated
- 37 lacks ע (Bullinger: hidden behind ל in v. 28)
- 111, 112, 119: complete
- 145: missing between vv. 13, 14, Bullinger follows versions to restore it

Following Benun's insights,⁴⁸ we can explain many of these deviations as intentional stylistic devices to enhance the message of the Psalm.

The Wicked One רשע in Psalms 9, 10

Bullinger sees these psalms as prophetic of the time of great tribulation, and the Wicked One as the Antichrist. It is interesting that Paul describes this one as ο ανομοος in 2 Thess 2:8, and that the most common Hebrew antecedent of this word is רשע (corresponding 31 times). However, other Greek words are more common translations: ασεβης (141 x) and αματωλος (71x), plus cognates of all three.

48 Ronald Benun, *Evil and the Disruption of Order: A Structural Analysis of the Acrostics in the First Book of Psalms*. <http://www.jhsonline.org/cocoon/JHS/a055.html>