

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

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Overview

Figure 1 (chart) is a revised outline of Book 2. In Psalms 49-50, God summons all peoples to confront the certainty of death, then convenes his people for judgment. In 51 David responds, and in 52 we learn of Doeg the Edomite, but the list of defendants doesn't stop there. Each of Psalms 53-60 either names or alludes to an enemy that the Messianic king faced during his life, recalling Psalm 2:1-2.

These nine Psalms¹ form a regular pattern (Table 1, chart).

Gentiles (as in Psalm 49) are at the start and end (Edomites), and in the center (Philistines), while the others are Israelites. The first half has individuals who opposed David personally while 57-60 has people who used their offices to oppose him (Saul, judges, Edom as a nation in contrast with the individual Edomite Doeg).

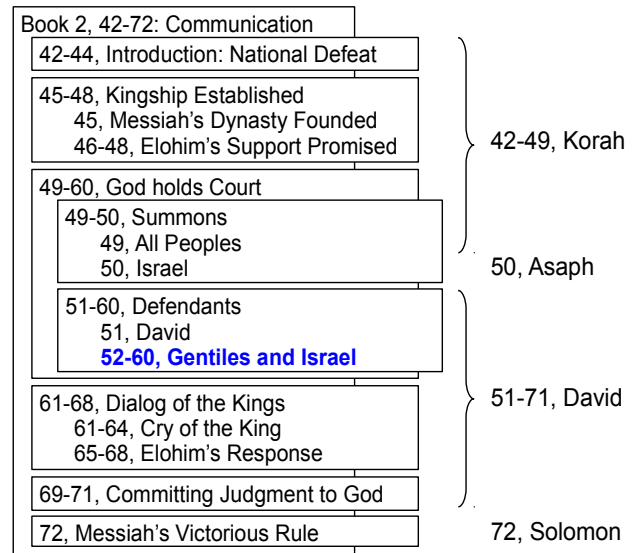


Figure 1: Analysis of Book 2

Psalm	Title or (Allusion)	History	Type	Tune	People
52	Doeg the Edomite	1 Sam 21-22	Maschil	Mahalath	Gentile Individual
53	(Nabal)	1 Sam 25		Neginoth	Private Opposition
54	People of Ziph	1 Sam 23:19; 26:1		Jonath elem rechokim	
55	(Ahithophel)	2 Sam 15-17	Michtam	Al Taschith	Official Opposition
56	Gath (Philistine)	1 Sam 21:10-15			
57	Saul in cave	Adullam, 1 Sam 22 En Gedi, 1 Sam 24			
58	(Silent judges)	Saul?		Shushan eduth	
59	Saul watched the house	1 Sam 19:11	Neginah	Gentile Nation	
60	Edom	2 Sam 8:13			

Table 1: Enemies of the Kingdom

Note the shift from from Maschil in 53-55 to Michtam in the later Psalms. Maschil indicates an instructional Psalm and is particularly appropriate to Psalms addressed to individuals.

Psalm 53, Nabal

This repeats Psalm 14 (chart). Noteworthy changes are:

- The change of LORD to God as expected in Book 2.

¹ The ties of 52 to 49 support Robertson's grouping, but the list of enemies fits very well as a continuation of 52.

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- The addition of *Maschil*, also distinctive to Books 2 and 3 (11 out of 13 instances), and appropriate to Book 2's theme of Communication.
- Added "to the chief musician," another mark of Book 2 (77% of the Psalms, less than 50% in 1 and 3, none in 4, and only 7% in 5).
- Modification of 14:5-6 in 53:6 (Table 2, chart), shifting the Psalm's

14	53	Comparison
5 There were they in great fear:	5 There were they in great fear,	
	where no fear was:	
for God is in the generation of the righteous .	for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee :	14: God's actions toward the righteous 53: God's actions toward the wicked
6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor , because the LORD is his refuge.	thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them .	14: rebuke to the wicked (plural) about the righteous (singular) 53: assurance to the righteous (singular) about the wicked (plural)
7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!	6 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!	

Table 2: Major changes between Psalms 14 and 53

emphasis from the folly of the God-denier (14) to God's judgment against him. Each of the other eight Psalms in this section not only describes the wickedness of the adversary, but predicts or invokes God's judgment on him.

This is one of three Psalms in this section (with 55 and 58) with no historical heading. Why is it included with other enemies of David? The answer lies in the subject of the first verse: "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" In Hebrew, "fool" has no article, which means that it is either a generic statement about all fools, or a proper name. The word for "fool" is *nābāl*, which is a pun (see note) on the name of the husband of Abigail who opposed David in 1 Samuel 25. Nabal was a wealthy farmer in the south of Judah. David showed kindness to his herdsmen and requested aid from Nabal, who accused him of unfaithfulness to Saul. His opposition is surprising: he is of the family of Caleb (1 Sam 25:3), who was of Judah, and thus related to David. There is also a link between the Calebites and Bethlehem (1 Chr 2:51), and Nabal knows of events in that town, for he recognizes David as "the son of Jesse" (1 Sam 25:10). He should know that Samuel had there anointed David to be king. He is rejecting David not only as an individual, but as the king. Nabal fits perfectly with the other individual enemies of the kingdom in Psalms 52-55.

Psalm 54, The People of Ziph

The Psalm is a straightforward lament with the usual components (chart).

54:1 Maschil, A Psalm of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?--These antagonistic members of the tribe of Judah are mentioned twice:

1Sa 23:19 Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?

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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?

Like Nabal, they were Calebites (1 Chr 2:42), David's kinsmen, but preferred Saul the Benjamite. Contrast the Benjamite Jonathan who recognized David's claims. After the rebellion of Absalom, the people of Judah were "the last to bring back the king" (2 Sam 19:11-12). "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house" (Matt 13:57). The situation anticipates the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews and his acceptance by Gentiles.

Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. 2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.--This is the Plea, where he calls on God for help.

3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.--In the Complaint, he gives two details about his opposition.

First, "strangers" זר Strong 2114 need not mean a foreigner. It is the standard term for a prostitute, the "strange woman" of Proverbs, that is, one who is not one's proper wife, and in the law of levirate marriage the term describes someone outside the immediate family:

Deu 25:5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a **stranger**: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

The title reminds us of the failure of the men of Ziph to live up to their responsibility to honor the responsibilities of kinship toward David.

The second detail is their neglect of God. They are in stark contrast with David's declaration,

Psa 16:8 I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

4 Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.--Next is the statement of his Confidence in the Lord.

5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.--The prediction and request (Imprecation) for God's judgment on his adversaries is not part of every lament, but all the Psalms in this section (52-60) include one or the other of these. These defendants are being called before God's bar, and must answer to him.²

6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. 7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen ~~his desire~~ upon mine enemies.--The Psalm closes with a Blessing to God for his deliverance.

The last clause is one of several that speak of the righteous seeing God's judgment on the wicked.³ In each case, "his desire" or "my desire" is a translator's addition. What we desire is not the destruction of the wicked, but vindication of God's rule:

Psa 58:10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: ... 11 So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

2 Recall that imprecation is appropriate when David speaks in his royal role, rather than as a private person. 23 Psalms have imprecations, or 15% of all. 19 of 56 laments, or 34%, have imprecations. The relation between statements of God's past judgment, statements of his future judgment, and prayers for his future judgment (imprecation proper) deserves more careful study.

3 37:34; 58:10, 11; 59:10; 91:8; 92:11; 112:8; compare Isa 66:23-24

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To the chief Musician on Neginoth—That is, stringed Instruments

	1-15, Lament	16-23, Confidence
David's Prayer	1-8, Plea	16-17, Resolve to pray
	9-11, Complaint	18-19, Victory
Betrayal	12-14, Past Fellowship	20-21, Recent Treachery
God's Action	15, Imprecation	22-23, Prediction

Psalm 55, Personal Betrayal

This Psalm has no historical introduction, but two paragraphs (12-14 and 20-21) describe a close personal associate of David who has turned against him, probably Ahithophel.⁴ Each of these corresponding paragraphs is followed by God's judgment on the wicked. The remaining verses are a lament in 1-11, and an expression of confidence in 16-19, each with two parts, leading to a clean alternation (Table 3, chart).

Table 3: Structure of Psalm 55

We have seen Ahithophel in the Psalms before. At the close of Book 1, David recalls,

Ps 41:9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Our Savior quoted this verse at the Last Supper, in reference to Judas:

Joh 13:18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

The NT does not quote Psalm 55 (nor any verse from Psalms 52-60).⁵ But with the clue from Psalm 41 and John 13, Psalm 55 can help us fill out our understanding not only of Ahithophel, but also of Judas, and of those in general who betray the Lord.

55:1 Maschil, A Psalm of David.

1-15, Lament

1-7 is a classic plea. David cries out to God in his fear and terror.

Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. 2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; 3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.--The picture of "casting iniquity upon" someone recalls Shimei, who met David's flight from Jerusalem by stoning him (a different verb) and accusing him of sin:

2Sa 16:5 And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. 6 And he **cast stones at David**, ... 7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, **thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial!**

My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. 5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. 6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. 7 Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.--David gave no thought to mounting a defense, but only sought to get out of the city as quickly as possible.

4 Thus Maclaren and Delitzsch. Perowne disagrees, based on 2 Sam 15:30, which says that David didn't learn of Ahithophel's treachery until after he had fled Jerusalem. But he may have harbored doubts before.

5 A possible exception is 53:1-3 in Romans 3, but these verses also appear in Psalm 14.

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There are two words in Hebrew for birds of the family *Columbidae*. This one describes the domesticated pigeon, while another (usually translated “turtle” or “turtle dove”) is a wild, migratory bird. See notes. Noah took the domestic kind on the ark; both were used in sacrifice (recall the common phrase, “two turtledoves or two young pigeons,” Lev 12:8; Luke 2:24).

David picks the word for the domestic dove. His departure is not the natural migration of a bird of passage, but the forced displacement of an animal that really would much rather be at home.

Next, in 8-11, is the complaint of widespread civil disruption and opposition.

Selah. 8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. 9 Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues:--This reflects David’s prayer in the history (Kidner),

2Sa 15:31 And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

for I have seen violence and strife in the city. 10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. 11 Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.--Absalom fomented civil discontent.

2Sa 15:2 And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, ... 3 And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. 4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! ... 6 so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

12-13 emphasize the unfaithfulness of Ahithophel’s actions.

12 For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: 13 But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.--Note the touching terms in which David describes his treacherous friend:

“A man” אָנוּשׁ Strong 582 emphasizes man’s weakness and mortality. This is a characterization of Ahithophel, but also of David, as the following expressions indicate.

“Mine equal” כְּעֵרְכִי, “of the same valuation as I,” using the word עֵרֶךְ (Strong 6187) used throughout Leviticus when the priests evaluated somebody for a vow, as in Lev 27:2-8. Before God, Ahithophel and David were of the same intrinsic value as reflected in Israel’s ceremonies.

The translation “my guide” אֶלּוּף (Strong 441) comes from the related verb, which means to learn or teach, and may have been preferred by the translators to capture Ahithophel’s role as David’s advisor. But the word also implies intimate friendship.

“Mine acquaintance” is a passive participle from the verb “to know,” commonly used to describe someone who is close to us. Boaz stood in this relation to Naomi (Ruth 2:1).

These terms give a touching portrait of the relation between David and Ahithophel, and of the deep treachery of the latter in supporting Absalom. He sought revenge for what David did to his granddaughter. He should have rebuked David openly and encourage him to turn to the Lord.

Based on the NT’s use of Ahithophel in Psalm 41 as a type of Judas, this verse encourages us to meditate on the condescension of our Lord in coming among us. He considered each of his disciples, including Judas, “a mortal man, mine equal, my friend, and mine acquaintance.”

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14 We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.--He highlights two activities that he shared with Ahithophel. The first is taking counsel, which was Ahithophel's role. The second was participating in the worship of God.

15 closes the first half anticipating God's judgment on Ahithophel and on all those who joined with Absalom to destroy God's anointed.

15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

16-23, Confidence

Now the Psalm turns from lament to confidence. Corresponding to the plea of 1-8 is a resolve to pray in 16-17.

16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. 17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.--Recall the emphasis on nighttime agonies of soul in Psalms 3-6, and our association of these (as well as 3:title) with the persecution under Absalom)

“Cry aloud” *המה* (Strong 1993) is used in Ezekiel to describe the voice of a dove (vv. 6-7),

Eze 7:16 But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like **doves** *יונה* of the valleys, all of them **mourning**, every one for his iniquity.

He is describing the people who flee Jerusalem in the face of the Babylonian invader. The echoes of Psalm 55 suggest he has David in mind as the pattern for their exile.

Answering the complaint of 9-11 is his confidence in the victory that God will give him.

18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me. 19 God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah.

Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.--The word “changes” *הליפות* Strong 2487 is used of the change of military troops, agreeable to the imagery of 9-11.⁶ His enemies never let up their opposition.

20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. 21 The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.--The second description of the traitor emphasizes his deceit. We should not speak softly when the situation calls for rebuke:

Pro 27:5 Open rebuke is better than secret love. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. 23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.--As in v.15, he anticipates the judgment on the wicked, and commits the affair to God.

To the chief Musician upon Jonathelemrechokim—The name of the tune means “a silent dove of far places,” and recalls vv. 6-7. David is harmless as a dove, silent before his accusers (cf. Shimei), and removed far off from Jerusalem.

⁶ Hengstenberg makes this case most persuasively.

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Psalm 56, The Philistines in Gath

56:1 Michtam of David,--The title Michtam appears only in Psalm 16 and 56-60, all by David.⁷ The best explanation of the word⁸ is that it means “epigram” (LXX) or “motto,” and refers to Psalm that emphasizes a prominent saying. Such sayings are marked either by repetition, or by explicit use of the verb “to say.” Psalms 56, 57, 59, and 60 use repetition:⁹

56:4 (10) In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

57:5 (11) 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.

59:17 (cf. 9-10) for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.¹⁰

60:10 (cf.1) Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off?

Psalms 16 and 58 mark the motto with “to say”:

Psa 16:2 O my soul, thou hast **said**¹¹ unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness does not surpass thee thee;

58:11 So that a man shall **say**, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth. (cf. vv. 1-2)

This Psalm’s Michtam is trust in the Lord, and the importance of this theme is clear in a LDP of words for trust (Figure 2, chart).

when the Philistines took him in Gath.--In 1 Sam 21:10-22:1, after leaving Nob, David fled to Achish the king of Gath. Perhaps he thought that since they had a common enemy in Saul, Achish would help him. But the servants of Achish feared him and forcibly detained him (21:13 “in their hands”).

David escaped by pretending to be mad, a circumstance commemorated also in Psalm 34.¹²

The two motto verses, 4 and 10, divide the Psalm into three parts (Figure 3, chart). There is a clear progression in confidence as David moves from one to the next.

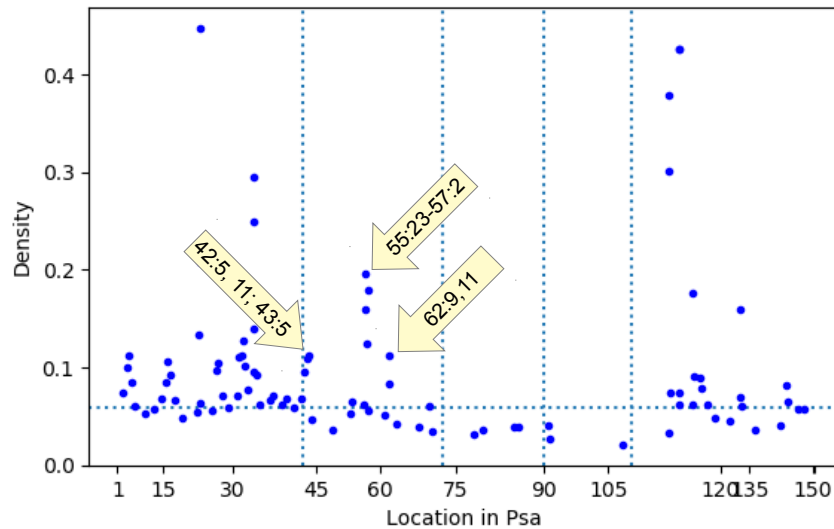


Figure 2: Verbs for "Trust" (בטח, טחל, חכה, חסה) in Psalms

7 Hezekiah’s Michtab (Isa 38:9-20) may be a variant of this, in which case the motto “I shall die” is both repeated and marked with “I said.”

8 Delitzsch; see my notes on Psalm 16 for relation to חתם "seal"

9 Some Psalms not marked as Michtam have a motto; compare the refrains in 42-43 and 49. But those are Psalms of the sons of Korah. I need to check whether any of David’s non-Michtam Psalms have a refrain?

10 The Psalm also repeats a comparison of the enemies with roaming dogs, less likely to be the motto.

11 Delitzsch argues that this is actually a defective spelling of “I have said.”

12 Hengstenberg: “the situation in the two Psalms is throughout different; here David prays for help in the midst of danger, there he gives thanks for it as already obtained.”

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First we hear David speak in *panic*. He is overwhelmed by his enemies, with no sense of any reason, and cries out to God for his condescending favor *הֲנִי* in spite of his fear.

Be merciful *הֲנִי* unto me, O God:--Mercy here is *הֲנִי*, God's undeserved and condescending favor, corresponding to the NT concept of grace.

for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. 2 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.--David feels overwhelmed by his rejection, first by Saul, and now by Saul's enemies, which seems groundless to him.

3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.--He confesses his fear, but then immediately rises above it in the first statement of his motto, which has four parts. Each builds on the one before.

4 In God I will praise his word,--God's word is his promise. David expresses his thankfulness for that promise, while acknowledging that only through God's help is he able to do so.

in God I have put my trust;--But the word is only valuable because of the God whose word it is, and in whom David's trust ultimately rests.

I will not fear—The Hebrew accents mark this as a separate clause. From trust during fear, David moves to trust without fear. Christians can travel in coach (v. 3) or first class (v. 4).

what can flesh ~~can~~ do unto me.--As in Rom 8:31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

In the second stanza, David gains *perspective* on his suffering.

5 Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. 6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. 7 Shall they escape by iniquity?--He is still conscious of his enemies, but now he recognizes their wickedness ("iniquity" v. 7). in deception (5a "wrest my words") and malice (v. 5b). Their opposition is not only unpleasant to him (as in vv. 1-2), but also an offense to God. This shift allows him to call confidently on God for help:

in thine anger cast down the people, O God.--Because their opposition to David is driven by wickedness, the problem is God's, not his, and he can call on the Lord to solve it.

Of course, he still suffers, but God notices, as he describes under three metaphors:

8 Thou tellest [numberest] my wanderings:--First, God counts his sufferings.

put thou my tears into thy bottle:--Second, God collects his tears. The "bottle" is a waterskin, such as a traveler would carry in arid lands. If God adds David's salty tears to his canteen, he will be reminded of David's sufferings every time he takes a drink.

are they not in thy book?--Third, God records them, to bring them to account in the judgment.¹³

¹³ God's book can be either to his book of decrees or to his ledger of events (<http://cyber-chapel.org/GodsLibrary.pdf>). If it is the book of decrees (Ps 139:16), then David takes comfort in knowing that his sorrows are planned by God and therefore under his control. But given the other two metaphors he invokes (counting and collecting tears), it seems more likely that the record book, as in Mal 3:16, is in view.

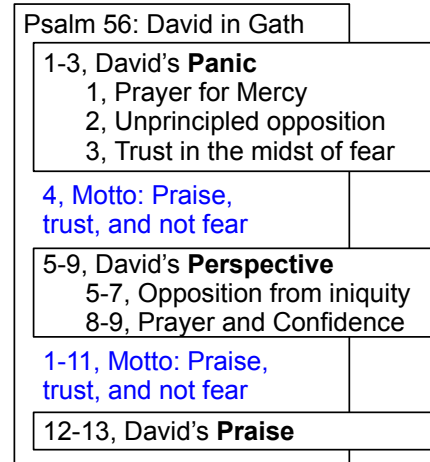


Figure 3: Structure of Psalm 56

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9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.¹⁴--His recognition of the spiritual dimension of the opposition gives him confidence that he has not been abandoned by God.

10 In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. 11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.--Again he repeats the motto.

In the third stanza he has risen so far that he can now praise God.

12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. 13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?--Having escaped from the men of Achish, he is confident that though he still faces many foes, God will continue to deliver him.¹⁵

To the chief Musician, Altschith—This tune name appears only in these three Psalms (56-58) and then in 74. David draws it from Moses (chart),

Deut. 9:26 I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, **destroy not** thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

Later, when tempted to destroy Saul, David tells Abishai,

1 Sam. 26:9 And David said to Abishai, **Destroy him not:** for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?

The petition asks God to spare his people, and David applies it to the anointed king. In these Psalms, he claims it for himself as the anointed king who represents the nation. It fittingly marks the first three of the five Psalms that deal with official opposition to the Messianic kingdom.

Psalm 57, Saul in the Cave

57:1 Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.--In principle, “the cave” could be either Adullam (1 Samuel 22) or the cave at En Gedi where he cut off Saul’s robe (1 Samuel 24). Maclaren notes the correspondence of 1 Sam 24:11 with Ps 7:3-4

1Sa 24:11 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.

Psa 7:3 O LORD my God, if I have done this; **if there be 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:**)

In turn, there are numerous alignments between Psalms 7 and 57 (Table 4, chart), making it likely that both Psalms refer to En Gedi.

The Psalm has two stanzas, each concluding with the motto (vv. 5, 11), a prayer for God to be exalted. Each stanza celebrates God’s mercy and truth **חסד ואמת**, the climax of God’s self-disclosure to Moses in Exod 34:6. The first stanza declares his purpose to cry unto God, while

¹⁴ אלהים לי, as in Gen 31:42.

¹⁵ A later Psalmist (116:7-9) builds his thanksgiving on the answer to these questions. The vocabulary of Psalm 116 is post-exilic. See Delitzsch.

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the second declares his purpose to praise the Lord, in each case paired chiasmically with a description of the enemy (Figure 4, chart)

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me:--As in 56:2, he cries out for God's grace הֲנִן.

for my soul trusteth חָסָה in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge חָסָה, until these calamities be overpast.--"Trusteth" and "make my refuge" are the same verb. Physically he was hiding in the cave, but his true refuge was God.

2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. 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.--He resolves to cry to God for help. God's "mercy and truth" are the climax of his attributes as he declared them to Moses in Exodus 34. In spite of David's situation, he is confident that God will keep his covenant with the nation (mercy חֶסֶד) and his promises to David (truth).

4 My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.--The first stanza ends with a description of the enemy's verbal attacks.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.--David is huddling in the bowels of the earth, but God cannot be so confined. This is the motto that encourages him during his seclusion.

6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.--The second stanza begins as the first ended, with a description of the enemy, this time attacking physically.

7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. 8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. 9 I will praise thee, O Lord,

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 כְּבוֹדִי in the dust. Selah.	8 Awake up, my glory כְּבוֹדִי ; 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 גִּמְרָה ; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.	2 I will cry ... unto God that performeth גִּמְרָה 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 4: Parallels between Psalm 7 and Psalm 57

Psalm 57: David in the Cave
1-4, Petition 1-3, Prayer for Mercy → God's Mercy and Truth 4, Description of the Enemy
5, Motto: May God be exalted
6-10, Praise 6, Description of the Enemy 7-10, Promise of Praise → God's Mercy and Truth
11, Motto: May God be exalted

Figure 4: Structure of Psalm 57

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

among the peoples: I will sing unto thee among the nations. **10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.**--This time, David resolves, not to cry for help, but to offer praise to the Lord, to all nations (note plural “peoples”).

11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.--Again he emphasizes the Lord’s transcendence.

To the chief Musician, Altaschith—Again, the official level of opposition requires God to save the nation by delivering the Messianic king.

Psalm 58, Silent Judges

58:1 Michtam of David.--The epigram in this Psalm is not quite as clear as in the refrains of 56 and 57, but it is marked with a verb of saying in v. 11: There is a God that judges in the earth. This statement is highlighted by parallelism between the outer members of a chiasm (Table 5, chart).


Judges (Righteousness, Judge, Earth)	1-2, Silent and corrupt		11, Active and Righteous
Wicked vs. Righteous	3-5, Insensitive wicked		10, Joyful righteous
Judgment	6-8, Requested		9, Declared

Table 5: Structure of Psalm 58

This is one of the three Psalms in 52-60 with no historical heading (along with 53 and 55). It begins by condemning judges (vv. 1-2, 11) for dereliction of duty.

Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?--Better, “Do you indeed speak the silence of righteousness?” The word translated “congregation” עֲדָתָא appears only here and in the phrase ending Psalm 55, Jonath elem rechokim. Its most common cognate is a verb meaning “to be dumb,” and it is best translated “silence.” The judges do not speak up to condemn wickedness. They are silent when they should speak.

do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? 2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.--The reason they are silent is that if they were to speak, they would have to condemn themselves.

Who are these silent judges, performing the wickedness that they ought to condemn? Judging is the fundamental responsibility of Israel’s leaders. It occupied most of Moses’ time:

Exo 18:13 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat **to judge the people**: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. 14 And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? 15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: 16 When they have a matter, they come unto me; and **I judge between one and another**, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.

After the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, Israel was ruled by a succession of judges, whose exploits are recorded in the book of the same name. The last judge was Samuel. The weakness of his sons led the people to ask for a king, whose main function would be to judge:

1Sa 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, 5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king **to judge us** like all the nations.

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

When Absalom turned the heart of the people against David in his bid to become king, his accusation was that his father had failed in judgment:

2Sa 15:4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made **judge** in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

When Solomon took the throne, the one thing he asked of God was wisdom to judge the people.

1Ki 3:9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to **judge** thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

Psalms 56-60 focus on adversaries to David who act in their official capacity—the Philistines in Gath, King Saul, and the nation of Edom. In the center of this panel, Psalm 58, the last of the *Altaschith* Psalms, speaks of failed judges generically.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. 4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; 5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.--The next level of the chiasm describes the wicked (here) and the righteous (in v. 10). In particular, David notes that sin is in-born—not only in them, but as he confessed in Psalm 51,

Psa 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD. 7 Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. 8 As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.--In the center of the chiasm David as king first requests, then predicts God's judgment on the wicked.

9 Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.--The verse is obscure, but all interpretations agree that it describes a frustrated cook whose plans for a meal are interrupted. God will disrupt the plans of the wicked.

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.--In contrast with the wicked in vv. 3-5, the righteous rejoices. Isaiah may be inspired by this verse when he describes the Messiah sauntering from his victory:

Isa 63:1 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2 Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? 3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4 For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

11 So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.--We have come full circle, from the wicked judges who oppressed David, silenced by their iniquity, to the assurance that God will execute judgment in the earth.

To the chief Musician, Altaschith.--Once more, David prays that God will spare his people by protecting him to be their righteous judge..

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

Psalm 59, Saul's Attempted Ambush

59:1 Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.--The history is in 1 Samuel 19.

1Sa 19:11 Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: ... 12 So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped. ... 14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick. 15 And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.

The scene is dominated by the image of murderous goons prowling around the house at night, ready to slay him the minute he comes out in the morning. These are the “dogs” whom David describes in vv. 6-7 and again in 14-15.

Vv. 9-10 and 17 are the motto. Both refer to strength and describe God as David's defense and mercy, dividing the Psalm into two stanzas (Figure 5, chart).

Each stanza has two parts, divided by *Selah* (vv. 5, 13). In both cases, the second part begins by describing Saul's goons as pariah dogs that roam the city at night to threaten him, and continues with a contrast, “but thou” (v. 8), “but I” (v. 16). The contrast in the first stanza focuses on God's judgment of the enemies, while in the second, it promises David's praise for God's deliverance, picking up the “mercy” and “defense” of the motto.

Now consider the first part of each stanza. In both cases he characterizes the enemy's sin in the center (3-4, 12). The first stanza opens with the theme of deliverance, and closes with God's judgment on the enemies. In the second stanza, the first part is entirely concerned with God's judgment, forming an imprecation against his enemies.

Thus the Psalm weaves together David's plea for deliverance and his dependence on God to judge his enemies, because God, whose strength is greater than that of his enemies and whose covenant love to David is certain, is his defense.

Deliver [נצל Strong 5337] me from mine enemies, O my God: defend [שגב Strong 7682] me from them that rise up against me. 2 Deliver [נצל] me from the workers of iniquity, and save [ישע Strong 3467] me from bloody men.--This verse unites three great words for salvation.

- “Deliver” means to remove from danger, to separate from the threat.
- “Defend” means to raise up on high, in a position of security. It is the root of the word “defence” in the motto.
- “Save” means to help. It is the dominant source of the LXX σωζω, which is the standard NT word for “save.

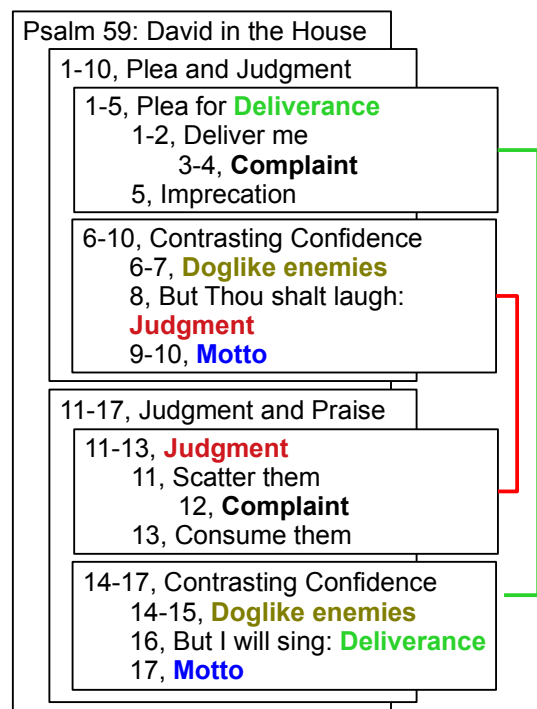


Figure 5: Structure of Psalm 59

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

David is crying out to God for every form of help he can describe.

3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD. 4 They run and prepare themselves without my fault:--The reason for this request is the opposition he senses against him.

The word LORD is uncommon in book 2. This is one of three places where it peaks (Figure 6, chart). The other two are 46-47, the response of the Messianic king to the defeat of 42-44, and 69-71, after the dialog of the kings, where David commits judgment to the Lord (Figure 1).

awake to help me, and behold.--“Awake” is עור
 “rouse from inaction,” not יקץ
 “awake from sleep.”¹⁶ “Help”
 is “meet.” God must come down and see the situation.

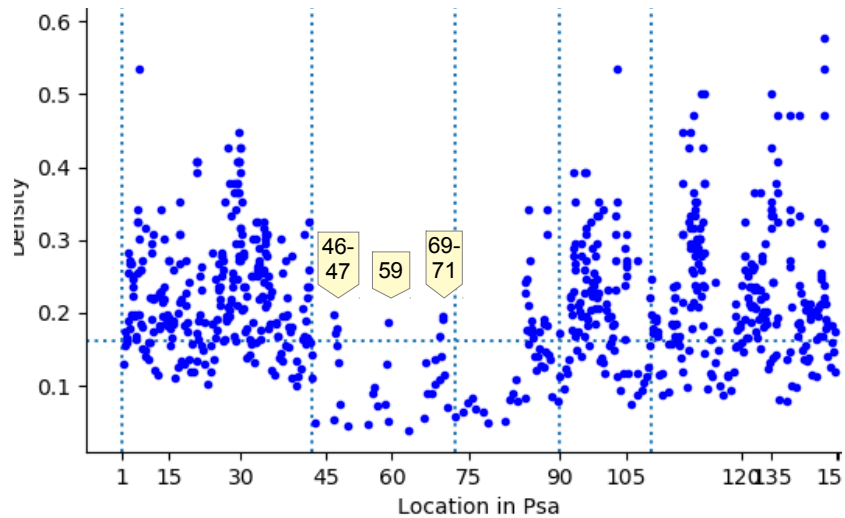


Figure 6: Distribution of יהוה in Psalms

5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,--A majestic title for the Lord.

awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.--This time, “awake” is קוץ, which refers specifically to sleep. Compare Acts 17:30, “the times of this ignorance God winked at.”

The reference to “all the heathen” (here and v. 8) is remarkable. Saul is an Israelite, and his men are acting on his orders. Why does David call for God’s intervention with “all the heathen”?

David knows that he is the Lord’s anointed, responsible for spreading the knowledge of God through all the earth (Deuteronomy 20). Saul’s opposition is only part of the larger opposition that he must face. After asking for God to “awake to help me” in the immediate situation with Saul, he expands the request to include all of those with whom it is his duty to deal.

The second half of the stanza poses a contrast with the behavior of David’s enemies.

6 They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear?--David compares Saul’s goons with roaming dogs. In many peasant cultures, dogs are not cuddly household pets, but half-wild scavengers who roam the city at night to look for food. Recall Elijah’s curse on Ahab and Jezebel,

1Ki 21:23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24 Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

¹⁶ The Psalms do sometimes use קוץ of God as a poetic pair with עור, as in 35:23 and 73:20, but more generally assert that the God of Israel does not sleep, 121:3-4.

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

They are unclean and people avoid contact with them, though they are tolerated because they will raise a noisy alarm against intruders.

8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.--

Again, we hear of the heathen, this time with a clear allusion to Psalm 2, the only other verse in Psalms with both “laugh” and “deride”:

Ps 2:1 Why do the **heathen** rage? ... 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall **laugh**: the Lord shall **have them in derision**.

David knows that his experience with Saul anticipates Messiah’s confrontation with all nations.

The next two verses, combining “strength,” “defence,” and “mercy,” are the motto, repeated with subtle changes in v. 17.

9 Because of his strength will I wait upon thee:--“Because” is in italics. The text reads, “His strength will I guard unto you.” The Psalm is preoccupied with the issue of strength (see Note).¹⁷

Notice first “his strength” **יָצוּק** Strong 5797, the strength of the adversary, a word already used to describe him in v. 3. Then in v. 16 David turns his attention to “thy power” (same Hebrew word), and finally in v. 17 appropriates this strength as his own.

What does David do with this hateful strength with which he is confronted? He guards it for the Lord to deal with it: “His strength will I guard unto you.” Compare Exod 22:7,

Exo 22:7 If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff **to keep**,

We fret ourselves over the strength of our adversaries, but that doesn’t belong to us. It belongs to God, and it is given into our keeping, until he is ready to deal with it.

for God is my defence מִשְׁגָּב.--From “defend” in v. 1.

10 The God of my mercy הוֹסֵד shall prevent me:--הוֹסֵד, “go before,” and with accusative of the person, “meet,” thus a synonym of קָרָא in v. 4. For a while David must carry this heavy charge of the strong enemy, but God will soon arrive to take over the burden.

God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.As in 54:7 and other verses discussed there, “my desire” is added. The point is not that David gloats over the defeat of his enemies, but that he will recognize the fulfillment of God’s purposes on them.

11 Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield. 12 For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak. 13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.--The petition in the first half was for deliverance, but now it is an imprecation, in which David, as king, calls for God’s judgment on his enemies.

14 And at evening ~~let them~~ they return; and ~~let them~~ they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 15 ~~Let them~~ They wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.--Delete the requests (“let them”); the verbs are the same as in v. 6. The imprecation is over, and he again describes Saul’s henchmen as ravenous feral dogs.

¹⁷ I follow Hengstenberg’s reading here. Virtually all modern commentators, going back to Delitzsch, harmonize v. 9 with v. 17. But then the change to the 3ms suffix would have been very unlikely.

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

16 But I will sing of thy power עֲזָרָה; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy חַסֵּד in the morning: for thou hast been my defence מִשְׁגָּב and refuge מִגֹּרֶס in the day of my trouble.--The contrast with the dogs the first time was God, bringing judgment on the heathen (v. 8). Now David has risen to the point that he is able to face the enemy with praise. He draws together four terms for God's resources, three of which are part of the motto: power (strength), mercy, and defence. In particular, he has progressed from a focus on "his strength" (v. 9) to God's strength, and in his final repetition of the motto goes one step further:

17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.--Now finally he is able to claim God as "my strength."

To the chief Musician upon Shushaneduth—"Lily of testimony." The "lily" Psalms (44, 68), pointing to the spring, were likely intended for Passover. The Passover season extended to Pentecost seven weeks later, from the sheaf of first fruits, Lev 23:10, to the barley loaves, 23:17). By Jewish tradition, Pentecost was the anniversary of the giving of the law, God's "testimonies."

We noted the emphasis on the heathen in this Psalm. They are also prominent in Psalm 79, the other Shushan Eduth Psalm, and anticipate the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The universal character of the feast is clear in Jewish tradition, which holds that God gave the law in 70 languages so all nations could understand it (VanderKam, CTJ 37 (2002): 239-254).

Psalm 60, War with Edom

60:1 Michtam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aramnaharaim and with Aramzobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.--We do not have an extended history of this event, but only some snapshots. The verse associates David's conflict with Syria (Aram) and Edom. Compare

2Sa 8:13 And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the **Syrians** in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men. 14 And he put garrisons in **Edom**; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

"The valley of salt" is south of the Dead Sea, where Edom is strong (Figure 7, chart). That is not where David smote the Syrians, but where he "gat him a name" *after* he finished smiting the Syrians (an event recorded in 2 Sam 8:3-12). We might add commas after "name" and "Syrians." As king, he got the credit for the victory over the Edomites as well as the Syrians, but Joab was apparently in charge of the army, and 1 Kings 18:12 records that his brother Abishai actually led the attack.

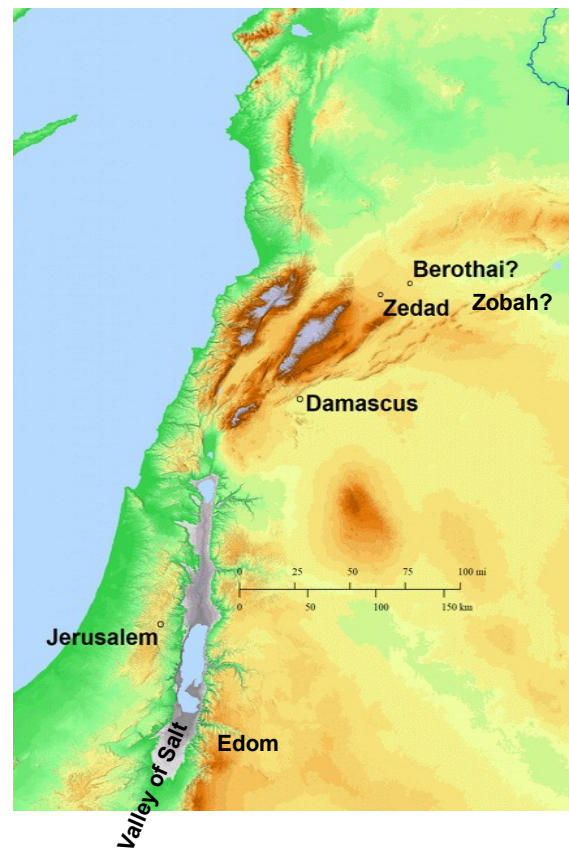


Figure 7: Geography of David's Syrian Wars (2 Samuel 8, 10)

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

Delitzsch suggests that Joab came south because the Edomites, learning that the main army was in the north and east with Syria, raided the south of Judah. This raid on the unprotected nation would lead to the destruction lamented in v. 1 (and perhaps Psalm 44, according to Hengstenberg). Thus the keyword of this Psalm is, “O God, thou hast cast us off,” vv. 1, 10. But this disaster was not permanent; when the motto is repeated, it is in the confidence that God will bring victory, when David sends Joab to deal with Edom.

Why did God cast off Israel at this time? Recall in our study of Psalm 30, how he thought of the plague that God sent on him when he numbered the people, and traced its origin to his proud numbering of the people to determine his military strength:

Psa 30:6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

The Syrian campaign was a great success for David. It’s not hard to imagine that it might have gone to his head, and God may have allowed the Edomites to chastise Israel in order to bring David into the appropriate state of mind. This may be why David labels this Psalm, “to teach,” recalling the divine purpose of the experiences that he records.

The Psalm has three parts (Figure 8, chart), marked by the shift in speaker from David (1-5) to God (6-8) and back to David (9-12). The first stanza alternates the complaint and the plea. In the second, God predicts victory. In the third, David once more asks God for help (9-11), then turns to the people and reassures them (12).

He begins with three cycles of complaints leading to pleas., starting with his sense of spiritual alienation from God.

O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased;-- “Scattered” פָּרַץ Strong 6555 is a military term, “to make a breach,” as in 2 Sam. 5:20; 6:8, reflecting Edom’s offensive against Israel.

O turn thyself to us again.--The plea is for God to pay attention to their predicament. Compare 59:4,5, “awake to help me,” “awake to visit all the heathen.” Sometimes it seems that God has forgotten us. David’s example is to cry out to him when this happens and tell him our feelings. Perhaps the very reason he has withdrawn is to draw our attention back to him.

2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble;¹⁸ thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.--The second cycle laments the civil disruption caused by conflict. David was a man of war, but he longed for peace.

3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. 4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah. 5 That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and hear me.--The third cycle shows the impact on God’s people, his “beloved ones” (plural).

Next, God responds. Note the order and nature of the geographical place names.

¹⁸ רעש, a favorite word in Book 2 (MT 46:4; 60:4; 68:9; 72:16), with only two other instances in the Psalter (18:8; 77:19). The parallel with Psalm 46 is particularly relevant here.

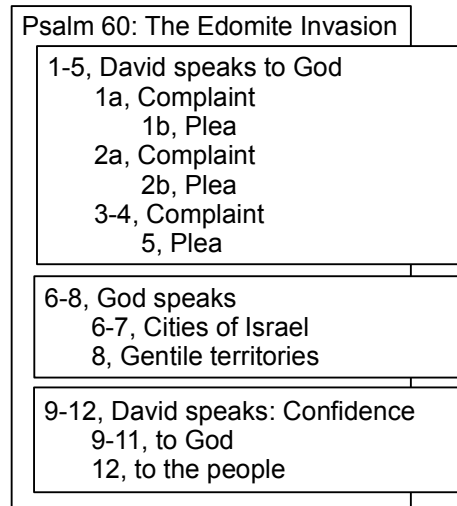


Figure 8: Structure of Psalm 60

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. **7** Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; **8** Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: **Philistia, triumph thou because of me.**--The names in vv. 6-7 are all Israelite. But v. 8 names three Gentile nations, including Edom, over whom God also claims authority.

In response to this divine promise, David expresses his confidence in God, and then encourages his armies.

9 Who will bring me into the strong city?¹⁹ who will lead me into Edom? **10** Wilt not thou, **O God, which hadst cast us off?** and thou, **O God, which didst not go out with our armies?** **11** Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.--The pain of God's chastisement has been replaced with the assurance of his favor. David reaffirms his trust in God alone, rather than the power of human armies.

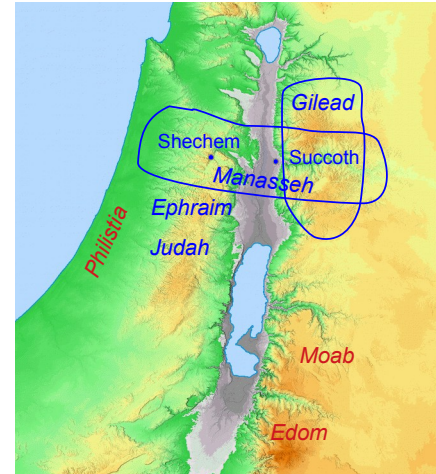


Figure 9: God claims the land

12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down (בִּיס Strong 947) our enemies.--In fact, God did give David's army victory over Edom. In describing the rise of Solomon's enemy Hadad, the writer of 1 Kings records,

1Ki 11:15 For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom; 16 (For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom:) 17 That Hadad fled, ...

But the image of victory extends beyond the ninth century BC. Isaiah picks up the combination of v. 9 and this verse 300 years later in his prophecy of the conquests of David's greater son, the Messiah. He envisions the Redeemer approaching Jerusalem, his garments spattered in blood. The question asked by the watchman corresponds to Psa 60:9. David asked, "Who will lead me into Edom?" Now the watchman bears witness that someone "cometh from Edom."

Isa 63:1 **Who is this that cometh from Edom**, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. ... 6 And I will **tread down** (בִּיס Strong 947) the peoples in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth. *Note plural—world-wide dominion*

The verb "tread down" in Isa 63:6 is exceedingly rare, in the Psalms only here (and the quotation in 108:14) and in 44:6 (reinforcing the notion that Psalm 44 describes the Edomite invasion), once in Proverbs, and eight times in Isaiah and later books. Isaiah's use of this verb along with the picture of returning in judgment from Edom certainly takes us back to Psalm 60.

No matter how often it seems that God has "cast off" his people through history, when our Lord returns, he will bring a glorious victory.

To the chief Musician upon Neginah—That is, stringed instruments.

19 Probably a reference to Petra, 2 Ki 14:17, per Hengstenberg.

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

Notes

Nabal the Fool (53:1)

It is doubtful that Nabal's parents would have named him "fool," and there is evidence in other semitic languages for words and personal names in *nbl* with positive meanings, such as "flame," "light" (cf. Uriel, Baraq), "one sent by God," "noble,"²⁰ or "skilled, clever."²¹ His churlish conduct led his wife to make a pun on his name in pleading for David's patience with him:

1Sa 25:25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him.

David's Dove (55:6-7)

There are two words in Hebrew for birds of the family *Columbidae*: תור (Strong 8449, LXX τρῦγων, usually translated "turtle" or "turtledove"), and יונה (Strong 3123, used here, LXX περιστέρω, usually translated "dove" unless it appears with תור, when it is rendered "pigeon"). ISBE explains that תור is wild and migratory, while יונה is domesticated, but then claims that David in 55:6 has in mind the wild bird, because he wants to fly far away. Gilchrist in TWOT maintains that "The term *yōnâ* ... may be used generically for all the different species," but gives no evidence. More likely David does have in mind the domestic dove. His departure is not the natural migration of a bird of passage, but the forced displacement of an animal that really wants to be at home.

אל-תשחית

The combination of אל with a 2ms prefix Hiphil of שחית appears in three other places besides the four Psalms that bear the subscription.

Deut. 9:26 I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, **destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.--Moses' prayer that the Lord would not destroy the nation in spite of their sin.**

1 Sam. 26:9 And David said to Abishai, **Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?--David's instruction to Abishai not to kill Saul when they found him unprotected in the camp.**

Isa. 65:8 Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, **Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.--A promise not to destroy the nation in spite of their sin, but to leave them a remnant.**

20 An example of semantic polarization with the meaning "fool," such as is documented elsewhere with נהם, ברך, נהם, פועל, and נכר (see my article on נהם, Biblica 56 (1975), p. 527 note 2).

21 Barr, Symbolism of Names in the OT, BJRL 51 (2):11-29 (1969)

Psalms 53-60, The Enemies of the Kingdom

God's Strength in the Psalms

Figure 10 shows the distribution of \aleph and \aleph in Psalms. It is concentrated in Psalms 28 (spilling over to 29), 59-62, most prominently 68, and 89. Watch for connections among these Psalms.

Gentile Domination Throughout these Psalms

These contain numerous allusions to the Messianic rule over all nations. We expect this in the three

Psalms whose subject is Gentile adversaries (52, 56:7, 60), and we explained “strangers” in Psalm 54 as referring to clan differences rather than Gentiles, but note these other instances in the Psalms dealing with official Israelite opposition to David:

Psa 57:9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the **peoples**: I will sing unto thee among the **nations**.

Psa 59:5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the **heathen**: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.

Psa 59:8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the **heathen** in derision.

The editor is preparing for the great proclamation of Messiah's world-wide kingdom in Psalm 72.

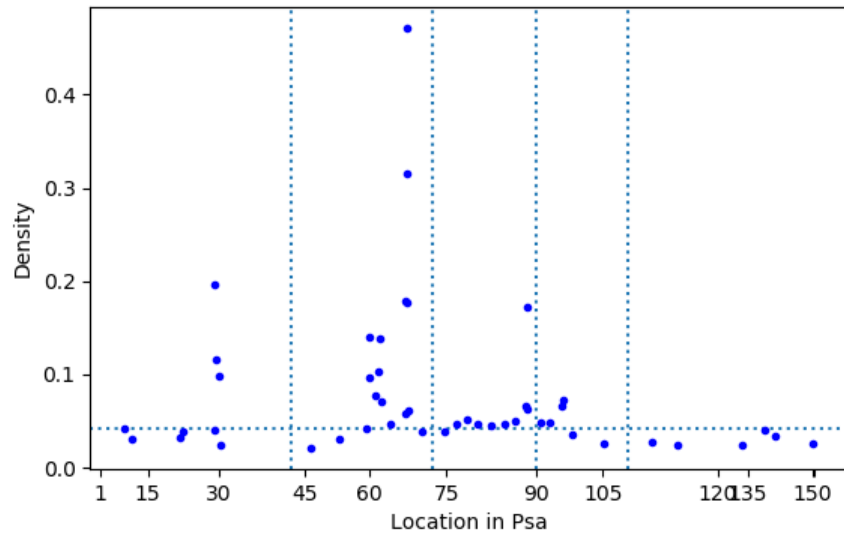


Figure 10: \aleph and \aleph in Psalms.