

Finally Free
Psalm 18
The Voice of Ecstatic Praise
or
The Silence Between Storms¹

Section A
War
Subject: God

Hymnic Intro: Strophe 1

Stanza I: Strophes 2-3 a b
Stanza II. Strophes 4-8 Theophany c d X (vs. 11-12) d' c'
Stanza III. Strophes 9-10 b' a'

Center Section X
Character and Integrity

Stanza IV: Strophes 11-12
Stanza V: Strophes 13-15

center: silence
 meditation

 deepening
 mirroring of man
 and God (vs. 26-27)

Section A'
War
Subject: David

Stanza VI. Strophes 16-17 Training
Stanza VII. Strophes 18-20 Battle
Stanza VIII. Strophes 21-22 Victory

Conclusion: Hymnic Praise
 Strophes 23-24

The middle of the poem provides reflection in moral/religious terms; it offers a focus for meditation. The center of this center is strophe 13, vs. 26-27, which speaks of the symmetry of retribution in both a good and an evil sense. On the other side of the middle we find stanzas V-VII. On either side of the center there are two panels about war, full of noise and battle. First, God personally goes to war, descending from heaven in order to rescue David, and after that the rescued king finishes off his enemies in stanzas V-VI.

The metaphors David uses to describe his personal rescue by Yahweh carry strong, resonant echoes of the Exodus. Thus, David views what God did for him to rescue him from Saul, was of equal magnitude of what God did for Israel to rescue her from Pharaoh.

¹ Adapted from Jan P. Fokkeman, *Reading Biblical Poetry* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 151.

1 לְעֶבֶד יְהוָה לְדָוִד
אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר | לִיהוָה
אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת
בַּיּוֹם הַצִּיל־יְהוָה אוֹתוֹ
מִכַּף כָּל־אֹיְבָיו וּמִיַּד שָׁאוּל :

By David the servant of I AM,
who spoke to I AM
the words of this song
in the day that I AM delivered him
from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

2 וַיֹּאמֶר

And he said,

Hymnic Introductory Praise

אֶרְחַמְּךָ יְהוָה חַזְקִי :

1 I love you, I AM, my strength.

3 יְהוָה | סִלְעִי וּמְצוּדָתִי וּמִפְלִטִי

2 I AM is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,

אֱלֹהֵי צוּרֵי אַחְסֵה־בּוֹ

My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge;

מִגְּנִי וּמִקֶּרֶן־יְשׁוּעִי מִשָּׁנֵבִי :

my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

4 מִהִלָּל אֶקְרָא יְהוָה

3 I call upon I AM, who is worthy to be praised,

וּמִן־אֹיְבֵי אֲנֹשָׁע :

and I am saved from my enemies.

5 אֶפְפוּנֵי חֲבַל־מָוֶת

4 The cords of death entangled me,

וַנַּחֲלִי בַלְעֵל יִבְעֵתוּנִי :

and the torrents of destruction terrified me.

6 חֲבַלֵי שָׁאוּל סָבְבוּנִי

5 The cords of Sheol surrounded me;

קִדְמוּנֵי מוֹקְשֵׁי מָוֶת :

the snares of death confronted me.

7 בַּצַּר־לִי | אֶקְרָא יְהוָה

6 In my distress I called upon I AM,

וְאֶל־אֱלֹהֵי אֲשֻׁעַ

and cried to my God for help;

יִשְׁמַע מִהִיכָלּוֹ קוֹלִי

he heard my voice out of his temple,

וְשׁוֹעַתִּי לְפָנָיו | תָּבוֹא בְּאָזְנוֹ :

and my cry for help came before him into his ears.

Stanza 1: Cry of Distress

Stanza 2: Theophany

8 ותגַעַשׁ ותַרְעַשׁ | הָאָרֶץ

וּמוֹסְדֵי הַרִים יִרְגָזוּ
וַיִּתְגַעַשׁוּ כִי־תָרַח לֹא :

9 עָלָה עָשָׁן | בְּאֵפוֹ

וְאֵשׁ־מִפִּי הֵאֱכַל
גֹּחַלִים בָּעָרוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ :

10 וַיִּטַּשׁ שָׁמַיִם וַיֵּרַד

וַעֲרַפֵּל תַּחַת רַגְלָיו :

11 וַיִּרְכַּב עַל־כְּרוּב וַיִּעָף

וַיִּזְרַח עַל־כַּנְפֵי־רוּחַ :

12 יִשֶׁת חֹשֶׁךְ | סִתְרוֹ סְבִיבוֹתָיו סִכְתּוֹ

חֹשְׁכַת־מַיִם עָבֵי שְׁחָקִים :

13 מִנֹּגַה נִגְדּוּ עָבָיו עָבְרוּ

בְּרָד וּגְחָלֵי־אֵשׁ :

14 וַיִּרְעַם בַּשָּׁמַיִם | יְהוָה

וַעֲלִיזוֹן יִתֵּן קֹלוֹ

15 וַיִּשְׁלַח חֲצָיו וַיִּפְיֹצוּם

וּבְרָקִים רָב וַיִּהַמֵּם :

16 וַיִּגְרָאוּ | אֲפִיקֵי מַיִם

וַיִּגְלוּ מוֹסְדוֹת תְּבֵל

מִגַּעְרַתְךָ יְהוָה

מִנִּשְׁמַת רוּחַ אֲפִיךָ :

7 Then the earth trembled and quaked;

and the foundations of the mountains shook;

and they trembled, because he was angry.

8 Smoke rose from of his nostrils,

and consuming fire came from his mouth;

burning coals blazed out of it.

9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down

with thick darkness under his feet.

10 He rode upon a cherub and flew;

he soared on the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness his hiding place, his canopy around him—

darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.

12 Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced,

with hailstones and bolts of lightning.

13 I AM thundered in the heavens,

and the Most High uttered his voice,

14 He shot his arrows and scattered them,

with great lightning bolts he routed them.

15 The valleys of the sea were exposed,

and the foundations of the world laid bare

at your rebuke, I AM,

at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

Stanza 3: The Rescue	
<p>17 יִשְׁלַח מִמְרוֹם יִקְחֵנִי וְיִצִילֵנִי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים :</p> <p>18 וְיִצִילֵנִי מֵאֵיבֵי עָז וְיִמְשָׁנֵנִי כִּי־אֲמַצּוּ מִמֶּנִּי :</p> <p>19 וְקָדְמוּנִי בְיוֹם־אִיְדִי וַיְהִי־יְהוָה לְמוֹשָׁעַן לִי :</p> <p>20 וַיֹּצִיאֵנִי לְמִדְבָּר וַיִּחַלֶּצֵנִי כִּי תִפְּזֵן בִּי :</p>	<p>16 He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of many waters.</p> <p>17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from my foes, for they were too mighty for me.</p> <p>18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but I AM was my support.</p> <p>19 He brought me forth also into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.</p>
Stanza 4: Vindication	
<p>21 וַיְגַמְלֵנִי יְהוָה כְּצַדִּיק כְּכֹר יָדָי וַיְשִׁיב לִי :</p> <p>22 כִּי־שָׁמַרְתִּי דְרָכַי יְהוָה וְלֹא־רָשָׁעַתִּי מֵאַלְהֵי :</p> <p>23 כִּי כָל־מִשְׁפָּטָיו לִנְגֹדִי וַחֲקֹתָיו לֹא־אָסִיר מִנִּי :</p> <p>24 וְאֵתִי תָמִים עִמּוֹ וְאֶשְׁתַּמֵּר מֵעֲוֹנִי :</p> <p>25 וַיִּשְׁבֵּ־יְהוָה לִי כְצַדִּיק כְּכֹר יָדָי לִנְגֹד עֵינָיו :</p>	<p>20 I AM rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has recompensed me.</p> <p>21 For I have kept the ways of I AM; and have not wickedly by turning away from my God.</p> <p>22 For all his judgments are before me, and I have not put away his statutes from me.</p> <p>23 I have been blameless with him, and have kept myself from my iniquity.</p> <p>24 Therefore I AM has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.</p>
Stanza 5: Deeping mirror of God and man	
<p>26 עִם־חֲסִיד תִּתְחַסֵּף עִם־גִּבּוֹר תָּמִים תִּתְמַם :</p> <p>27 עִם־נָכוֹר תִּתְפָּרַר וְעִם־עֲקִוִּשׁ תִּתְפַּתֵּל :</p>	<p>25 With the faithful you show yourself faithful; with the blameless warrior you show yourself blameless;</p> <p>26 With the pure you show yourself pure, and with the crooked you show yourself shrewd (lit. <i>twisted</i>).</p>

Stanza 6: David trained by God for Holy War

<p>28 כִּי־אַתָּה עִם־עַנִי תוֹשִׁיעַ וְעֵינָיִם רָמֹזֹת תִּשְׁפֹּיל׃</p> <p>29 כִּי־אַתָּה תִּאָּזֵר נִרְי יִתְּנָה אֱלֹהֵי נִגִּיתַי חֹשְׁקָי׃</p> <p>30 כִּי־בְךָ אֶרְצֵן גְּדֹוד וּבְאֱלֹהֵי אֲדָלְגָ־שׁוּר׃</p> <p>31 הָאֵל תָּמִים דְּרָכָו אִמְרַת־יִתְּנָה צְרוּפָה מִגֵּן הוּא לְכָל ׀ הַחֹסִים בּוֹ׃</p> <p>32 כִּי מִי אֱלֹהִים מִבְּלַעֲרֵי יִתְּנָה וּמִי צֹוד זֹולַתִּי אֱלֹהֵינוּ׃</p> <p>33 הָאֵל הַמְּאַזְרֵנִי תִיל וַיִּתֵּן תָּמִים דְּרָכָי׃</p> <p>34 מְשֹנֶה רַגְלֵי כַּאֲיִלֹת וְעַל כַּמְתֵּי יַעֲמִידֵנִי׃</p> <p>35 מְלַמֵּד יָדַי לַמִּלְחָמָה וַנִּחַתָּה קִשְׁת־נְחוֹשֶׁת זְרוּעֵתַי׃</p> <p>36 וַתִּתֵּן־לִי מִגֵּן יְשׁוּעָה וַיִּמְיֵנֶךָ תִּסְעָרֵנִי וְעֲנוּתֶךָ תִּרְבֵּנִי׃</p> <p>37 תִּרְתִּיב צַעְדֵי תַחְתֵּי וְלֹא מְעָדוּ קַרְסְלֵי׃</p>	<p>27 For you yourself save the afflicted (or “humble”), but haughty eyes you bring down.</p> <p>28 For you, I AM, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.</p> <p>29 For with you I can advance against a troop; and by my God I can leap over a wall.</p> <p>30 As for God, his way is blameless; the word of the I AM is tried (flawless); he is a shield to all who take refuge in him.</p> <p>31 For who is God, besides I AM? And who is a Rock, except our God, the God who girds me with strength and makes my way blameless?</p> <p>33 He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and sets me secure upon my high places.</p> <p>34 He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.</p> <p>35 You have also given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand upholds me; and your gentleness makes me great.</p> <p>36 You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet have not slipped.</p>
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Psalm 18

Stanza 7: The Battle

38 אָרְדָּוָךְ אֹיְבֵי וְאֲשִׁיגֶם

37 I pursued my enemies and overtook them,

וְלֹא־אָשׁוּב עַד־כְּלוּתָם :

and I did not turn back until they were consumed.

39 אֶמְחָצֵם וְלֹא־יִכָּלּוּ קוּם

38 I crushed them, so that they were not able to rise;

יִפְּלוּ תַּחַת רַגְלֵי :

they fell beneath my feet.

40 וַתֵּאָזְנֵנִי תֵּיל לַמְּלָחָמָה

39 You have girded me with strength for the battle;

תִּכְרִיעַ קַמִּי תַחְתָּי :

you have subdued under me those who rose up against me.

41 וְאֹיְבֵי נִתְּתָה לִי עֶרְךָ

40 You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me,

וּמִשְׂנְאָי אֶצְמִיתָם :

and I destroyed those who hated me.

Stanza 8: The Victory

42 יִשְׁעוּ וְאִין־מוֹשִׁיעַ

41 They cried for help, but there was no one to save—

עַל־יְהוָה וְלֹא עָנָם :

even to I AM, but he did not answer them.

43 וְאֲשַׁחֲקֶם כַּעֲפָר עַל־פְּנֵי־רוּחַ

42 Then I beat them fine as windblown dust;

כַּטִּיט חוּצוֹת אֲרִיקָם :

I poured them out like mud in the streets.

44 תִּפְּלֹטֵנִי מִרִּיבֵי עַם

43 You delivered me from the contentions of the people;

תִּשְׁיַמְנֵי לְרֹאשׁ גּוֹיִם

you placed me as head of the nations.

עַם לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי יַעֲבֹדוּנִי :

People I did not know now serve me.

45 לְשִׁמְעַע אָזְן יִשְׁמְעוּ לִי

44 as soon as they hear of me, they obey me;

בְּנֵי־נֹכַר יִכְחָשׁוּ־לִי :

foreigners come cringing to me.

46 בְּנֵי־נֹכַר יִפְּלוּ

45 Foreigners lose heart (lit. *wither, fall like leaves*)

וַיִּחַרְגּוּ מִמְּסַגְרוֹתֵיהֶם :

and come trembling out of their strongholds.

Psalm 18

Concluding Hymnic
Praise

47 תִּיְהִי־יְהוָה וּבְרִיךְ צוּרִי

46 I AM lives, and blessed be my rock;

וַיְרֹם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵי :

and exalted be the God of my salvation,

48 הָאֵל הַנּוֹתֵן נִקְמֹת לִי

47 The God who executes vengeance for me,

וַיִּדְבֹּר עַמִּים תַּחְתָּי :

and subdues peoples under me.

49 מִכַּלְטֵי מְאִיְבֵי

48 He delivers me from my enemies;

אִךְ מִן־קָמֵי תִרְוַמְנֵי

surely you lift me above those who rise up against me;

מֵאִישׁ חָמָס תַּצִּילֵנִי :

you rescue me from the violent man.

50 עַל־כֵּן | אֹדוּךָ בַּגּוֹיִם | יְהוָה

49 Therefore I will give thanks to you among the nations, I AM,

וְלִשְׁמֹךְ אֲזַמְרָה :

and I will sing praises to Your name.

51 מִגְדֹּל יִשׁוּעוֹת מְלֶכֶו

50 He gives great deliverance to his king,

וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד | לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ

and shows loyal-love to his anointed,

לְדָוִד וּלְיִרְעוֹ עַד־עוֹלָם :

to David and his descendants forever.

19:1 לְמַנְצֵחַת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד :

19:1 To the choir director, Tim Paaske.