

**The Way Out of the Den of Damned Liars
into the Sacred Tent of Eternal Joy
Psalm 5***

A psalm by David.

- 1 Give ear to my words, "I AM,"
understand my burning meditation.
- 2 Pay attention to my cry for help, my King and my God,
for to you I pray.
- 3 "I AM," in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I arrange [my words] for you
and **watch vigilantly**.
- 4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil cannot sojourn with you.
- 5 Arrogant boasters cannot stand before your eyes;
you hate all who do wrong.
- 6 You destroy those who tell lies;
the bloodthirsty and deceitful "I AM" detests.
- 7 But I, by your great loyal-love, can come into **your house**;
I bow down toward your holy palace in fear of you.
- 8 "I AM," lead me in your righteousness
because of my enemies—
make your way straight before me.
- 9 For there is nothing in their mouths that is steadfast;
their heart is filled with violence.
Their throat is an **open grave**;
they make their tongues smooth.
- 10 Make them liable, God!
Let them fall from their intrigues.
Banish them for their many obstinate rebellions,
for they are obstinate against you.
- 11 And so, all who take refuge in you will be **exuberant**;
they will **shout for joy** forever.
Spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may **exult** in you.
- 12 For you, "I AM," bless the righteous;
you surround them with favor like a **shield**.
- 6.1 For the director of music, [James Garcia],
With stringed instruments. According to sheminith.

I. Climb up the Watchtower (1-3)

- A. Surround God with petitions
to be truly understood and rescued
- B. Worship "I AM" then **watch**
with urgency (at sunrise)
with thoughtfulness and methodical care
with vigilance and patience

II. Enter the Sacred Tent (4-8)

- A. Know that God's holiness bans the depraved
his **emotional responses** escalate from
no delight→hate→abhor
his **divine actions** escalate from
cannot sojourn→cannot stand→destroy
- B. Accept God's loving invitation and
holy embrace that exceeds human kindness
Ask directions to the **sacred highway** of
salvation and moral beauty

III. Reflect in the Morgue (8-10)

- A. On the anatomy of the depraved
a Not a word from their mouth can be trusted
b Their inward part is filled with malice
b' Their throat is an open grave
a' Their tongues drip honey-coated lies
- B. On the anatomy of justice
equitable → wicked fall by their own devices
permanent → wicked banished because they
are obstinate

IV. Join the Party and Dance! (11-12)

- A. Worship "I AM"
with spontaneous, unrestrained joy
with dancing, music and shouts of joy
with joy so effusive you are beside yourself
- B. For God has you completely covered
like the wings of a bird that protect from above
like the large **shield** used to protect the whole
body during the siege of a city

*Controlling metaphors are in **blue**. The translation is from Waltke in Bruce K. Waltke and James M. Houston & Erica Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 23-24.

The Watchtower

Caught in the crucible of evil, gashed
and bleeding through the terrors of the night,
your *'ebed* ever so carefully arranges
his well honed words on the altar;
lit with soul-fire,
they ascend like an *'olah* consumed in smoke—
a ringing cry splits the dawn
darkness flees
and our sentinel is seen standing
still
eyes fixed upon another place,
waiting for you in the watchtower.

Watching, waiting, gazing, penetrating –
its seems so foreign to my divided
distracted, doing heart,
but what little of it I have tasted,
has sent me longing for more.

The Morgue

Caught in the crucible of evil
our *'ebed* is forced to stand up
and take a good long look at evil in the eye.
It is a dreadful trip to the morgue,
who can endure an autopsy?
But the medical examiner is relentless,
he pulls back the sheet,
hands you the knife and says,
“Take him apart piece by piece.
He was a chain smoker, but don't worry,
he's dead, though he is still breathing.”

The gruesome task turns your world upside down,
there are no more greys, or self-seeking lies,
only flaming, everlasting truth
and the invitation to dine at Le Meurice
on the rue de Rivoli with Royalty.
Who could refuse?

If I'm honest...
I must confess I want to dine
in all the wanton extravagance of You,
yet I dread the thought of doing
what my father* did in the morgue.
Who will I see when the examiner
pulls back the sterile sheet...
will it be me?

The Party

From the towering heights of the watchtower,
out of reach of ribald rebels
and bloodthirsty assailants
our *'ebed* peers past history's horizon and sees
an explosion of light that sets things aright.

When the smoke clears
“unblemished eyesights now pierce time,”
the future leaps out of its holding tank
to invade the painful present,
infecting everything it touches with *simchah* –
that spontaneous, unrestrained, riotous joy
that overtakes all our sensibilities,
such that even the Pope lifts his robes to dance
unabashedly like David before the ark of God.

It is a crucible of joy that remains and sustains,
it is perhaps the greatest gift poetry can give us,
or as we say among the “Men of Monday Night”
as we pass the cup
and look into our brother's eyes,
“It doesn't get any better than this!”

rabbi morganescu

The Literary Context¹

Psalms 3–5 are royal petitions, asking God to protect his anointed king from stiff-necked rebels within his own kingdom. In Psalm 3 his enemies are numerous; in Psalm 4, in high positions; and in Psalm 5, malicious liars. The psalm typifies our Lord, Jesus Christ; his own people threatened his life with fraud and deceit. Christ comforts us, warning: “Slaves are not greater than their master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20). In the alchemy of grace, God uses nefarious enemies to drive us to prayer and so to know him better and to participate more fully in redemptive history.

Psalms 3-5 all fit the context of Absalom's rebellion. These royal petitions alternate between morning prayers (Psalm 3 and 5) and an evening prayer (Psalm 4).

Psalm 5 argues the case why God should save his king, punish the king's enemies, and protect the faithful. He paints his enemies as black as they really are. Absalom's chief advisor, Ahithophel, counseled Absalom to have sex with David's concubines on the roof of the royal palace and Absalom and his council plotted the anointed king's death and implicitly that of those loyal to the king (2 Sam 16:21–23).

¹Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Lament*, 24-24.

Hebrew words: *'ebed* – “servant”; *'olah* – a whole burnt offering that is utterly consumed and ascends in smoke; *simchah* – “a spontaneous, unrestrained joy” that manifests itself in joyful frolicking, clapping, dancing and music.

*“father” – My father was a surgeon, but the image is dual edged. In one sense, Saul was David's father, and the fear of every son is inheriting their father's sins.