

A Royal Petition for Cosmic Justice

Psalm 7

A *shiggaion* (“lament”) by David, which he sang to the LORD concerning the accusations of Cush, a Benjamite.

1 “I AM,” my God, I seek refuge in you;
save me from all who pursue me, and rescue me,
2 otherwise he will tear me apart like a lion
that snatches me away with no one to rescue me.
3 “I AM,” my God, *if* I have done this:
if there is guilt on my hands;
4 *if* I have repaid my ally with evil;
and rescued his foe without cause,
5 *then* let my enemy pursue me and overtake me;
let him trample my life to the ground
and cause my glory to dwell in the dust. Selah
6 Arise, “I AM,” in your anger;
rise up against the rage of my enemies.
Awake, my God; decree justice.
7 Let the assembled peoples gather around you,
and return on high over them.
8 Let “I AM,” judge the peoples.
Vindicate me, “I AM,” according to my **righteousness**,
according to my integrity, O Most High.
9 Let disaster, I pray, bring the wicked to an end,
but establish the **righteous**;
for the One who tests hearts and emotions
is a **righteous** God.

I. Defense against the accusation of treason

A. Affirmation of trust and urgent appeal

“The throne of God is sought as the ultimate court of appeal, since the wicked king (Saul) functions as Israel’s supreme court of appeal. His enemies like a pack of lions chase him down.”

B. The oath of innocence

David’s purgatory oath (*if...if...if...then*) unveils the situation. Cush slanderously accused David of treason (“*rescued his foe without cause*”), during the time Saul sought to kill him (1 Sam 20:3; 24:10ff; 26:18ff). Because David is falsely accused, he does not fear God’s wrath and freely opens his heart to a thorough examination.

C. The necessity of having **clear conscience** before engaging in holy war

II. Plea to “I AM,” the righteous Judge to convene court

A. “*Arise*” – “On the one hand, God’s king must not begin holy war without God’s presence; on the other hand, God desires the king to prosecute holy war with unqualified zeal. “I AM” waits for David’s zeal to rouse him from his apparent slumber and decree justice.”

Consider how the zeal for God’s house consumed Jesus (John 2:17).

B. David seeks a worldwide audience: “By rescuing David, who relies totally on prayer, against an enemy who relies totally on might, God will display his righteousness and justice in the sight of all peoples.”

C. “*My integrity*” (“completeness”) – “This comprehensive term denotes that David is committed to communal loyalty, including to his king, with the completeness of his heart. There is not a treacherous bone in David.”

Transition: We can trust ourselves to a **righteous God** who alone knows the depths of human hearts.

¹Translation and quotes taken from Bruce K. Waltke and James M. Houston & Erica Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 79-97.

10 God takes it upon himself to be my shield,
the one who saves the upright of heart.

11 God is a **righteous** judge,
a God who is indignant every day.

12 If he does not relent,
he will sharpen his sword;
he will bend and string his bow.

13 And he will prepare his deadly weapons;
he will make ready his flaming arrows.

14 Observe: whoever is pregnant with evil
conceives **trouble** and gives birth to deception.

15 Whoever digs a pit and hews it out
falls into the trap they have made.

16 The **trouble** he causes recoils on his head;
and upon his own skull his violence descends.

17 I will give thanks to “I AM,” because of his **righteousness**;
I will sing the praises of the name of “I AM,” Most High.

8.1 To the director of music, James Garcia. Upon the *gittith*.

III. Confidence that the righteous Judge is our mighty warrior

- A. **God is a shield** protecting his innocent king: God takes the initiative (“he feels the weight or burden”) to shield his chosen king from harm.
- B. **“God is a mighty warrior** who dispatches his guilty enemies quickly and decisively. His arrows strike suddenly, so swiftly that time stands still (Hab 3:11). The divine warrior puts into action the necessary means to secure the success of his *flaming arrows* (lit. “he makes his arrows into burning ones”). Incendiary arrows (tipped with tow or pitch) are even more fearful. Are they metaphors for lightning bolts (cf. Ps 18:14; Zech 9:14)?”

IV. Praise to God for poetic justice

- A. **Three proverbs teaching poetic justice**
 1. Like birth, once evil is conceived the consequences are inevitable
 2. Their intricate planning and strenuous labor devours them. In the cave of Engedi Saul literally fell into the pit he had made.
 3. Like Abimelech (Judg 9:52-53, 56), who was killed when a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head, their evil will recoil on them and smash their skulls. Saul suffered the same fate as Goliath and was beheaded.
- B. **The key to confidence:** “The warrior’s faith in God’s righteousness as cosmic ruler of all and the examiner of every hidden, human thought and emotion attenuates these fervid pleas into calm confidence, purging them of cowardly fear.”

The Message of Psalm 7: Engaging in Holy War

Psalm 7 reminds persecuted and defamed saints that they are elected to engage in a holy war occasioned by the persistence of evil within the cosmic and social orders. Humans apart from God’s saving grace, are pregnant with evil, plan trouble, and bring forth deception. Malice, deceit, and murder ever war against righteousness, justice, and truth. There can be no truce, for evil loves company. So God’s persecuted elect must fight the good fight— that is to say, as trusting lambs against ferocious lions. Saints win in this holy war both by seeking refuge in God and by their zeal for the honor of his name. Sluggards, the apathetic, idolaters, and the self-confident go down in defeat in this spiritual warfare. Seeking refuge in God is not a retreat into passivity but an advance into spiritual warfare in the name of “I AM.” The warrior’s faith in God’s righteousness as cosmic ruler of all and the examiner of every hidden, human thought and emotion attenuates these fervid pleas into calm confidence, purging them of cowardly fear, of showing inappropriate pity and of ‘stupid humility’ (Luther). The Lord Jesus Christ exemplifies this ideal warrior, of whom David was a type, and is the Christian’s sword and shield.³

³Waltke *The Psalms as Christian Lament*, 86-87.