

The Invitation to a Journey
Meditations on Psalms 1-8
for Spiritual Formation

Give Me An Authentic Voice

The Invitation to a Journey

"It is a good belief that our life is a pilgrim's progress—that we are strangers on the earth...our life is a long walk or journey from earth to heaven." Psalm 1

VINCENT VAN GOGH

Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose hearts are the highways to Zion.
As they go through the Valley of Baca ("weeping")
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.

Psalm 84:5-7



King David Playing the Harp
The Rothschild Miscellany
Commissioned by Moses Ben Yekuthiel Hakohen in 1497

The Blessed Man: An Indispensable Guide⁷⁷

Psalm 1

אָשָׁרִי הָאִישׁ אָשָׁר

1 אָשָׁרִי־הָאִישׁ אָשָׁר |
 לֹא חָלַק בְּעֵצֶת רָשָׁעִים
 וּבְדָרְךָ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד
 וּבְמָנוֹשָׁבָּלְזִים לֹא יָשַׁב :

2 כִּי אָם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה חַפְצָוֹ
 וּבְתוֹרַתְוּ יְהוָה יוֹמָם וּלְילָה :
 וְהַזָּה בְּעֵין שְׂתִיל עַל־פְּלָנֶגֶת מִים

3 אָשָׁר פְּרִיוֹן יְתַן בְּעֵתָו
 וּעַלְהֹו לֹא־יָבֹל
 וְכָל אָשָׁר־יָעָשָׂה יָצַלְיָה :

4 לֹא־כָּנָן חַרְשָׁעִים
 כִּי אָם־כְּפֻנָּץ אָשָׁר־תְּדַבֵּר רְוִיחָה :

5 עַל־כָּנָן לֹא־יַקְמֵן רָשָׁעִים בְּמַשְׁפָט
 וְחַטָּאִים בְּעֵתָה צְדִיקִים :

6 כִּי־יָדַע יְהוָה בָּרוּךְ צְדִיקִים
 וּבָרוּךְ רָשָׁעִים הָאָבָר :

- 1 Blessed is the man who (אָשָׁר) does **not** walk in the counsel of the wicked, and does **not** stand in the **way** sinners take, and does **not** sit in seat of mockers;
- 2 but his delight is in the law of *I AM*, and in his law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He shall be like a tree transplanted by streams of water, which (אָשָׁר) yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither.
- and all that (אָשָׁר) he does prospers
- 4 **Not** so the wicked!
- For they are like chaff that (אָשָׁר) the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will **not** stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous;
- 6 For *I AM* knows the **way** of the righteous, but the **way** of the wicked will perish.

⁷⁷ Translation adapted from Bruce Waltke in Bruce K. Waltke and James M. Houston with Erica Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 88-92.



Meditation #1: The Invitation to a Journey *'ashrei ha'ish asher*

"How blessed is the man who" – though most translations interpret the opening word as "blessed," it is better understood as "commendable." As Waltke observes, "Sages reserve the laudatory exclamation for people who live life optimally, as the Creator Intended. The pronouncement does not confer blessing, but serves to hold up a human being as a model to be envied."⁷⁸

This praiseworthy life is available to any individual who will resolutely make a choice. Have you made that "choice"?

C. L. Seow writes:

Given the controlling metaphor of a journey in this poem, as indicated by the threefold repetition of the word *derek* דֶּרֶךְ ("way"; vv. 1a, 6a, 6b) and the reference to walking (v. 1a), the אֲשָׁרִי 'ashrei formula is especially appropriate in the title of the poem since the term, whatever its etymology, recalls the verb 'asher אָשַׁר which means "walk" (*qal*) and "make way, lead" (*piel*). Moreover, the three occurrences of the relative particle 'asher אֲשֶׁר (vv. 1a, 3b, 3b) echo the title, thus keeping the commendable person on track, as it were, whereas the wicked are not so.⁷⁹

Meditation #2: The Difficulty of the Journey

- Outnumbered** – one vs. the many
- Our weaknesses:** What influences are difficult to say **no** to?

Worldly motivations—money, pride, lust, ambition

Worldly ways—the paths and behaviors that lead to sin

Worldly participation—where we get caught up
applauding things the world values, while
denouncing the things that God honors

- Our accumulated sorrow** when our labors become like weightless chaff and driven away by God's holy wind



⁷⁸ Waltke, The Psalms as Christian Worship, 133.

⁷⁹ C. L. Seow, "An Exquisitely Poetic Introduction to the Psalter," JBL 132, no. 2 (2013): 279.

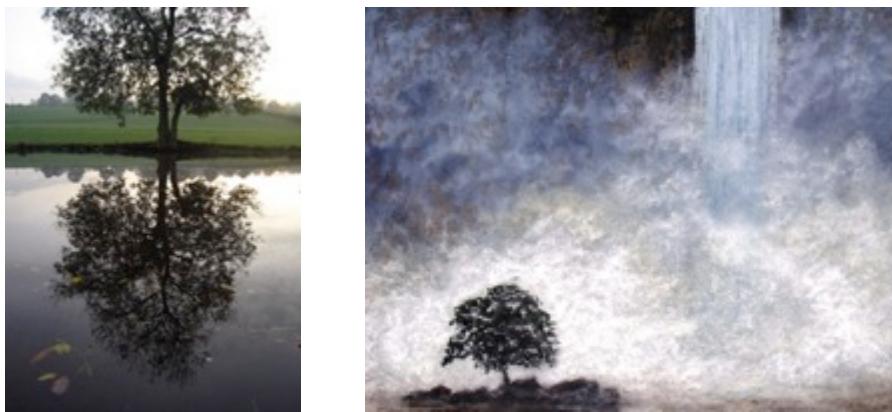
Meditation #3: Hope for the Journey – One Who Leads the Way



- a. "For many Christian interpreters, Christ is the quintessential commendable person and thus a model to those who desire to live a commendable life...and an indispensable guide."⁸⁰ The opening of this psalm, and thus the opening of the Psalter, is an implicit invitation to yoke ourselves to Jesus (the mountaineering term is "on belay") and follow in his sure steps in order to become such a commendable person.
- b. Reflect on Jesus' resolute "no" to temptation at the beginning of his ministry.
- c. Do you realize he never condemns us for our failures?
- d. Can you hear his voice or sense his presence in the midst of your battles?

Meditation #4: The Vision for our Journey – The well-rooted Tree

- a. What emotions do these images provoke in you?
- b. Consider how God may be inviting you to commune with him in his word.
- c. What fruit is God currently working on to produce in your life?
- d. When have you felt deeply "rooted" in the midst of suffering?



⁸⁰ Seow, "An Exquisitely Poetic Introduction to the Psalter," 278.

Meditation #5: Write you own Psalm 1

My Psalm 1

אָשְׁרִי הַאֲيָשׁ אָשֵׁר

'ashrei ha'ish asher

blessed /is the individual / who

How praiseworthy you are, O God to grant
our first word of prayer to be '*ashrei*
not agony, complaint or even petition, but a vision
of one who leads the way, blazing a trail
with steady steps to keep us on track
for a flourishing life beyond the original creation
one you so long for us as humans to fully enjoy

And it's available to any and every individual '*ashrei ha'ish*
who will but choose '*ashrei ha'ish* '*asher*
choose resolutely, "not walk"
choose persistently, "not stand"
choose passionately, "not sit"
choices made possible because they made the ultimate
choice to seek you
by renewing their hearts and minds in your word
and to their utter surprise –
they found their affections utterly transformed
and their steps (*ashrei*) kept on track

The arboreal image of the well-rooted tree
carefully planted by irrigation channels
"channeling abundant, gladdening, life-giving water
in an otherwise dry place" moves me deeply
Undoubtedly I need more pruning,
transform my affections, O LORD,
with a persistent, passionate "not"

Brian Morgan

My Psalm 1

On Earth as it is in Heaven⁸¹

Psalm 2

<p>1 לְפָה רָגְשׁוּ גּוֹיִם וְلְאַמּוּם יְהֻנוּרִיק :</p> <p>2 וַיְהִיאֶבּוּ מֶלֶכִי־אָרֶץ וּרְזִיגִים נָסְדוּ־יְהִידָה עַל־יְהֹוָה וְעַל־מֶשִׁיחָה :</p> <p>3 גָּנְתָקָה אֶת־מָסְרוֹתֵיכֶם וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִפְנֵי עֲבָתֵיכֶם :</p> <p>4 יוֹשֵב בְּשָׁמְעוּם יְשַׂחַק אָדָנִי יְלַעַג־לְמֹזָה :</p> <p>5 אָנָ יְדַבֵּר אֱלֹימָה בְּאָפָה וּבְחַרְזָנוּ יְבַחַלְמָה :</p> <p>6 וְאָנָי נְסַכְתִּי מֶלֶכִי עַל־צִוָּן הַר־קָדְשִׁי :</p> <p>7 אָסְפָרָה אֶל־תְּקִין יְהֹוָה אָמַר אָלִי בְּנִי אָתָה אָנִי הַיּוֹם يְלִדְתִּיךְ :</p> <p>8 שָׁאָל מִפְנֵי וְאַתָּה נָזִים נְחַלְתָּךְ וְאַתָּה תְּךָ אֶפְסִי־אָרֶץ :</p> <p>9 תְּרַעַם בְּשִׁבְט בְּרַזְלִים כְּכָלִי יוֹצֵר תְּנַפְּצָם :</p>	<p>1 Why do nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?</p> <p>2 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers band together against <i>I AM</i> and against his anointed one:</p> <p>3 "Let us break their chains, and throw off their shackles."</p> <p>4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Sovereign scoffs at them.</p> <p>5 Then he speaks to them in his anger and in his wrath terrifies them:</p> <p>6 "I install my king on Zion, my holy hill."</p> <p>7 I will proclaim the decree; <i>I AM</i> said to me: "You are my son; today I give you birth."</p> <p>8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.</p> <p>9 Break them with a rod of iron; Like a potter's vessel dash them to pieces."</p>
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⁸¹ Translation adapted from Bruce Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 157-60.

<p>10 וְעַתָּה מֶלֶכִים הַשְׁכִיל הַוּסְדוּ שְׁפֵטִים אָרֶץ :</p> <p>11 עֲבָדָיו אֶת־יְהוָה בִּירָאָה זָנִילָיו בְּרֻעָדָה :</p> <p>12 נְשַׁקְדֵּבָר פָּנִיאָנָף וְהַאֲבֹדָה דָּרָךְ כִּי־יַבְעַר כְּמַעַט אָפָו אָשָׁלִי כָּל־חֹסֵי בּוֹ :</p>	<p>10 Therefore, kings, be wise; be warned, rulers of the earth.</p> <p>11 Serve <i>I AM</i> with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.</p> <p>12 Kiss [his] son, lest he become angry, and you be destroyed in [your] way, for his wrath will soon flare up. Blessed are all who seek refuge in him!</p>
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Bruce Waltke sets forth the structure of the psalm:

Psalm 2 is a fine artistic piece of literary fiction in the literary form of a four-act play. The protagonists are *I AM* and his sacred king, and their antagonists are a worldwide confederation of foreign kings. The plot begins with the antagonists conspiring a *coup d'état*; develops with scenes of *I AM*'s resolve to install his king on Mount Zion and of the king's resolve to accept God's resolve by faith and prayer; reaches a climax with *I AM*'s command to his anointed king to shatter the conspirators; and ends with a denouement as the playwright stops on stage to warn the kings of their fate.

The **four acts** take place in distinct scenes, each with different speakers. The **first** takes place in a foreign court where the psalmist quotes the kings of the earth who convene to plot the assassinations of *I AM* and his king. In this scene the audience overhears their nefarious conspiracy encouraging one another throw off the galling rule of their overlords, *I AM* and his king. The **second** act takes place in heaven, where the psalmist opens the ears of his audience to hear *I AM*'s proclamation in blazing anger that installs his king on Mount Zion (vv. 4-6). The **third** act occurs on Mount Zion. In this scene the psalmist causes his audience to hear the new king declaring his divine right to rule the earth by smashing his antagonists (vv. 7-9). In the **final act** the psalmist steps on stage to admonish the kings to submit to the rule of *I AM* and his king and to seek refuge in *I AM* before his wrath breaks forth in battle (vv. 10-12).

The acts are artistically composed in three-verse stanzas:

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| I. Hostile kings conspire to throw off the rule of <i>I AM</i> and his king | 1-3 |
| II. <i>I AM</i> resolves to install his King on mount Zion | 4-6 |
| III. The king resolves to recite the decree granting him dominion | 7-9 |
| IV. The psalmist admonishes hostile kings to submit to <i>I AM</i> 's king | 10-12 ⁸² |

Note how each strophe is designed to face and overcome our **fears**.

⁸² Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 161-62.

I. Meditation #1: Voices in the News (vv. 1-3)

- a. What emotions do you experience listening to the world news every night (fear, denial, , shock, sadness, horror, impotency)?
- b. Why does the poet want us to see that the gospel *always* provokes fierce opposition that is universal, highly orchestrated, powerful, violent, and unifying opposing world forces ("band together as one") like nothing else?
- c. What do these rebels see as such a galling bondage (Deut 17:18-20; Jas 1:25; 1 John 5:3)?
- d. Does the poet's rhetorical "*why*," expressing his "exasperation, amazement and indignation at the stupidity of the nations to conspire their own death,"⁸³ resonate on your lips when you so the same in more subtle, covert ways?

II. Meditation #2: The Voice on the Throne (vv. 4-6)

- a. The poet "sees" the Sovereign Lord ('*adonay*) on his heavenly throne laughing in derision against his enemies, as if their opposition is ludicrous, posing no threat his rule.
- b. Does God's inward disdain and warlike resolve surprise you?
- c. How do we put these two opposing vistas together?

III. Meditation #3: The Voice of the Son (vv. 7-9)

- a. The third strophe speaks of the son's *identity* (v. 7), his *privilege* (v. 8) and his *destiny* (v. 9). A son is consecrated, given the privilege to pray, and guaranteed a victory that "is so lopsided that there is a comic side to the reversal of fortunes."⁸⁴ It all looks so simple on paper, but the rest of the Psalter, Isaiah's Servant Songs and the gospels add other surprising dimensions to the paradigm—suffering and waiting.
- b. Reflect on the God's faithfulness to Jesus' prayers in gospels and the victory of his enemies through the cross and resurrection.
- c. Reflect on your sonship in Christ. What do you "ask" for? Are you bold enough to "ask" for "the ends of the earth"?

IV. Meditation #4: The Voice of the Evangel

- a. With the heavenly vision and divine decree firmly fixed in his heart, the poet is transformed into a bold witness, courageously challenging the rulers of this world to serve the Lord by submitting to the rule of his chosen King.
- b. Read and reflect how the psalm transformed Peter from a fearful follower to a courageous disciple, as the dramatic poem comes to life in every detail in Acts 4:1-31.
- c. Who is the Sovereign Lord calling you to courageously challenge with the Good News?

My Psalm 2

⁸³ Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 163.

⁸⁴ Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 167.

On Earth as it is in Heaven

Act 1: Voices in the News

I find it difficult to grasp the polar extremities
that converge in this poem,
designed by the poet to one end –
to grant us unflinching confidence
to follow the “Son”
despite what we hear in the news
and everything read in our newspapers.

Take a good, long look at politics under the sun
and a clear eye can only conclude
that God’s righteous rule is a lightning rod for riotous rage,
a rage so fierce, it unites implacable enemies
with a fortified resolve to fight to the death.

These vicious voices terrify me.
The poet, however, has a different spirit –
his opening *lammah* (“why”) unleashes
his “exasperation, amazement and indignation”⁸⁵
over the absurd stupidity of the whole affair,
something akin to the tower of Babel.

Act 2: The Voice on the Throne

In the second act of this four act drama
we learn the secret to the poet’s unwavering faith.

Unveil my eyes, O God, that like the poet
I may perceive your immovable throne, unrivaled sovereignty,
and perhaps even catch a glimpse of the King,
relaxed at the breakfast table, sipping his espresso,
undisturbed by the morning’s news.

May I feel his commanding voice
reverberating deep in my gut as he reconfirms
his covenant choice of person and place,
irrevocable choices,
immovable as his heavenly throne.

And yet I ponder, “How
does your kingdom come on earth
as it is in heaven?”

⁸⁵ Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 163.

Act 3: The Voice of the Son

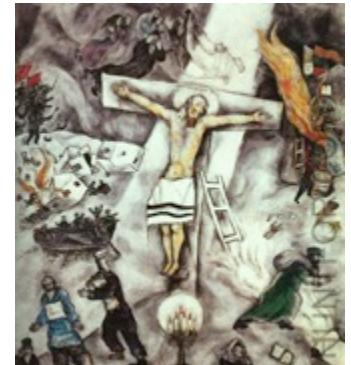
As the waters of baptism recede
a voice his heard, "beni attah" – ("You are my son")
birth, adoption, privilege,
and the simple invitation to *sha'al* ("ask"⁸⁶)
and with it the promise
that the rebellion *sha'al* be crushed.

I am amazed that just one *choq* ("statute"⁸⁷)
becomes the driving force and end of human history.
Is this the "one thing" Mary had chosen?

Act 4: The Voice of the Evangel

Peter standing before the Sanhedrin,
Paul testifying before Agrippa,
Luther refusing to bend the knee before the pope,
Bonhoeffer resisting Hitler,
Dorzs eternal songs recreated in prison,
and our beloved Harmanstein ever speaking,
"Kiss the Son."

The record shows that whenever the simple,
yet profound message of the gospel
is courageously proclaimed,
the hope is realized
"on earth as it is in heaven."



Such hope ignited my confidence when I was young
and took my stand before my peers and professors,
both home and abroad,
what JOY I found in your presence in those days;
but now my feet stumble as I consider the cost –
blood flowing everywhere
Palestine, Paris, Aleppo, Nepal –
which gives *sha'al* a whole new meaning.

Grant me courage, O God, for on most occasions
I fear that I have been ashamed.

⁸⁶ שָׁאֵל *sha'al* ("to ask") is a key word in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. It is especially prominent in the story of Hannah who "asks" for God to give her a son and then names him Samuel ("asked of God"). It is also the root of "Saul," Israel's first king who was "asked for" by the people, but ironically refused a life of dependent prayer. *Sha'al* now becomes the pivotal means granted to the Davidic kings to bring heaven to earth.

⁸⁷ פְּנִים *hōq* ("statute") comes from the verbal root *hāqaq* "incise, inscribe, engrave" and connotes the idea of permanence. The noun is "often found with 'olam ("eternal"), referring to an 'eternal decree' to be kept throughout the generations." Peter Enns, "*hōq*," NIDOTTE 2:250-251.

My Psalm 2

A Morning Prayer by a Father in Exile

Psalm 3⁸⁸

<p>1 מִזְמֹרֶר לְדוֹד בָּבְרָחוֹ מִפְנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם בֶּןּוֹ :</p> <p>2 יְהֹוָה מֶה־רָבוֹ אֲרֵי רַבִּים קָמִים עַלִּי :</p> <p>3 רַבִּים אָמָרִים לְנַפְשִׁי אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה לֹא בָּאֱלֹהִים סָלה :</p> <p>4 וְאַתָּה יְהֹוָה מֶגֶן בְּעָדרִי כָּבֹזְדִי וּמְלִיכִים רָאשִׁי :</p> <p>5 קוֹלִי אֶל־יְהֹוָה אֲקָרָא וַעֲנָנִי מִהָר קָדְשׁו סָלה :</p> <p>6 אָנָי שְׁכַבְתִּי וְאִישָׁנָה הַקִּיצֹתִי כִּי יְהֹוָה יִסְמְכָנִי :</p> <p>7 לֹא־אִירָא מִרְבּוֹת עַם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיב שְׂתוֹ עַלִּי :</p> <p>8 קָוָמָה יְהֹוָה הַזְּשִׁיעָנִי אֶל־הָרִי כִּי־הַפְּנִית אֶת־כָּל־אִיבִי לְחַי שְׁנִי רְשָׁעִים שְׁבָרָת :</p> <p>9 לְיְהֹוָה הַיְשׁוּעָה עַל־עַמְךָ בְּרָכָתְךָ סָלה :</p> <p>4.1 לְמִנְצָחָה בְּנִגְינָה</p>	<p>A psalm by David. When he fled from Absalom his son.</p> <p>1 <i>I AM</i>, how many are my foes! Many rise up against me!</p> <p>2 Many are saying of me, “There is no deliverance with God.” selah</p> <p>3 But you, <i>I AM</i>, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who lifts up my head.</p> <p>4 I cry aloud to <i>I AM</i>, and he answers me from his holy mountain. selah</p> <p>5 I lay down and slept; I awoke because <i>I AM</i> sustains me.</p> <p>6 I do not fear the tens of thousands of troops Who are drawn up against me on every side.</p> <p>7 Arise, <i>I AM</i>! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the cheek; break the teeth of the wicked.</p> <p>8 Deliverance belongs to <i>I AM</i>. Your blessing be on your people. selah</p> <p>4:1 For the director of music. With stringed instruments.</p>
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⁸⁸ Translation by Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 192-93.

I. Meditation #1: Why is this the “first” psalm in the school of prayer?

Whenever we take on a new skill or discipline, we normally begin with baby steps. We learn to crawl before we walk; we walk before we run; we float in the shallow end of the pool before we take off into the surf of the sea. Not so with the Psalter. When it comes to prayer, the inspired editors of the Psalter felt the best method is to plunge the uninitiated into a black hole of unspeakable human depravity and treacherous family relationships sin leaves in its wake.



David is fleeing into the wilderness to escape the advancing forces of a military coup spearheaded by his own son. The wilderness was familiar territory to David, laced with sacred memories of God’s faithful answers to his prayers for *deliverance*. In those early years David could pray with *confidence*, knowing God had a legal obligation to *deliver* him because of his integrity—he was innocent of any wrong against the tyrannical king. But how do you pray with *confidence* when you are in a wilderness of your own making? After a father commits adultery and uses his office to orchestrate the shedding of innocent blood and a cover-up, what possible moral ground can he stand on to combat the rage of a son who imitates his deeds?

The answer is God’s unmerited grace and his faithfulness to his covenantal promises. In 2 Samuel 7 God promised David an everlasting dynasty of sons. If they sinned, he said he would discipline them, however he would never take his loyal-love from them like he did Saul (vv. 14-16). God concluded by saying, “your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam 7:16). In the very first psalm God’s promise is tested to the limit. Will the covenant remain in tact after David’s unspeakable sins? Can the king pray with *confidence* for *deliverance* when he is in a literal hell of his own making?

To the uninitiated in prayer, Psalm 3 is a terrifying proposition. It’s as if you are lashed to the humiliated king as he is preparing to jump off the precipice of a cliff in order to test the strength of the longest bungee cord in the world. As you plunge off into the dark depravity of the human soul, terror seizes you by the throat. Flashes of David’s sordid story fly past you at breakneck speeds, while oblivion’s abyss opens its jaws to swallow you whole. But just when you think you’ve met your end, you are pulled upward into weightless, exhilarating joy. The rope held. Having survived sin’s steepest descent unscathed, you are confident to continue your trek through the psalms, knowing the fidelity of the rope (slightly changing the metaphor) can never be broken.

Structure

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a Direct address and lament over enemies | (1-2) |
| b Affirmation of trust | (3-4) |
| b' Validation of that faith | (5-6) |
| a' Petition to deliver him and punish enemies
and benediction upon the nation | (7-8) |

II. Meditation #2: Facing the facts (vv. 1-2)

- A. “Many...many...many” – David is *outmanned*, the attack is *immanent*, and his *reputation* as God’s son (“king”) is called into question. “The enemies’ taunt is painful and personal. It strikes at the very heart of the king’s covenant relationship with God...The responsibility to deliver for the cause of justice fell particularly upon the king (1 Sam 1:27; 2 Kgs 6:26) and above all upon *I AM*. If God fails to help the innocent sufferer, the afflicted is put to shame (Ps 44:8).”⁸⁹
- B. Consider a time in your life when you experienced a similar situation where you were completely overwhelmed and outmatched by those who opposed you. How would you give voice to the “many...many...many”?

III. Meditation #3: Grounds for confidence (vv. 3-6)

- A. David is following the example given in Psalm 2 of turning his gaze heavenward in the face of fierce, rebellious attacks and establishing his trust in the One who enthroned him (Ps 2:7-9).
- B. David counters the “many...many...many” with 3 metaphors describing God’s covenantal promises: “shield around me” (*inviolable protection*); “my glory” (God preserves his *royal reputation* by delivering him); “lifter of my head” (“David fled Jerusalem with his head covered, but vindicated in victory he returns as king with his *head held high*”).
- C. Note how David’s confidence grows: It is first *anticipated* (4), then *invigorated* (5) and finally *emboldened* erasing all his fears (6). “For the expression of sublime trust in God this psalm is not surpassed.” (W. O. E. Oesterley)
- D. What metaphors of God’s character might you use to give you grounds for confidence?

IV. Meditation #4: Praying with for confidence (vv. 7-8)

- A. David knows his deliverance is sure because is omnipotent and his cause is just.
- B. “*Breaking the teeth*’ signifies that the enemy, who like wild beasts had been eager to devour him, has been rendered harmless and helpless.”⁹⁰

V. Meditation #5: Reflect how the images and shape of Psalm 3 gave Jesus a voice

- A. “Many...many...many...no deliverance” (Mark 15:31-32)
- B. “But you....shield...glory...lift up my head” (Rom 1:4)
- C. “I lay down and slept; I awoke...” (Ps 16:10-11)
- D. “*Deliver me, my God*” – note the change in v. 7 – Jesus is *struck* on the cheek, and head and spit upon (Mark 15:19), but he says, “*Forgive them.*” (Luke 23:34)

⁸⁹ Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 199.

⁹⁰ Waltke, , *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 206.

Enemies, Psalm 3

Karen Dabaghian⁹¹

David wrote Psalm 3 when he was fleeing from his son, Absalom, who wanted to murder his father and claim Israel's crown for himself. Throughout the trajectory of David's journey —from the time he first confesses his sins of adultery and murder (Bathsheba and Uriah) and leaves Jerusalem, to his eventual return upon his son's death — David does not know what is going to happen to him or to the covenant God made with him. David believes by faith that God will do what is right, but he does not presume that God's decisions will be easy ones for him to bear.

As I sat with Psalm 3, I became increasingly aware of an area in my life that had the potential for overwhelming sin and its consequences; I was walking through an intricately planted minefield that could easily blow up my life as I knew it. In the past, I would have simply turned tail and run in the other direction, too afraid to survey the field, too afraid to trust that God wanted to walk me through. However, I was studying the story of David's journey from Jerusalem to the Judean Wilderness (2 Samuel 11-17, Psalms 51, 63, and 3), and decided to do as David did — to bear witness to the journey, to articulate it in all its tensions, and to offer it to God. Like David, I am never far from thinking the entire journey might end in a debacle, and that God's purposes for me might very well include handing me over to my enemies in order to take me deeper into His grace and truth.

My Enemies

Oh LORD,
My enemies surround me
 before me they taunt, "you have no future."
 behind me they mock, "you drip with sin."
 to my left they say, "there is nothing for you here"
 and to my right they say the same.

Oh LORD,
My enemies hound me
 their eyes feast on my destruction
 they lick their lips in anticipation
 shoulder to shoulder they cut off my escape
 my flickering torch is no match for their fangs.

Oh LORD,
I know that You will save me
 the question is,
 will you save by delivering me
 from
 or to
 my enemies?

⁹¹ Karen Dabaghian, unpublished poem.

My Morning Prayer

Give Me An Authentic Voice

An Evening Prayer in a Crisis of Drought

Psalm 4⁹²

<p>1 מַזְעֵזֶר לְדוֹד :</p> <p>2 בָּקְרָאִי עֲנֵנִי אֱלֹהִי צְדָקָה בְּאֶרְחָר הַרְחַבָּתְךָ לְיָ</p> <p>3 בְּנֵי אִישׁ עַד־מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכַלְמָה תְּאַחֲבָוִין רַיֵּק תְּבָקָשׁוּ כַּזְבָּבָסָה :</p> <p>4 וְךָעָזָק יְהִפְלָה יְהֹוָה חַסְדֵּךְ לוֹ יְהֹוָה יְשֻׁמַּע בָּקְרָאִי אֶלְיוֹן :</p> <p>5 רָגָז וְאַל־תְּחַטֵּא אָמְרוּ בְּלִבְבָּכֶם עַל־מִשְׁכְּבָכֶם וְלֹמֶשׁ סָלה :</p> <p>6 זְבָחוּ זְבָחוּ־צְדָקָה זְבָטָחוּ אַל־יְהֹוָה :</p> <p>7 רְבִים אָמְרִים מִי־יַרְאֶנּוּ טֹוב נְסָה־עַלְיָנוּ אֹור פְּנֵיכָה יְהֹוָה :</p> <p>8 נְתַנָּה שְׁמַתָּה בְּלִבְיָ מְשִׁתָּה דְּגָנָם וְתִירּוֹשָׂם רְבָבָה :</p> <p>9 בְּשַׁלּוּם יְחִידָה אַשְׁכָּבָה וְאַיִשָּׁן כִּי־אַתָּה יְהֹוָה ? בְּקָרְד לְבָטָה תַּוְשִׁיבֵנִי :</p> <p>5.1 לְמַנְגָּח אַל־הַנְּחִילֹת</p>	<p>A psalm by David.</p> <p>1 Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God.</p> <p>Give me relief from distress;</p> <p>be merciful to me and hear my prayer.</p> <p>2 You sons of noble men,</p> <p>how long, while my glory is turned into shame, will you love delusions and seek false gods? selah</p> <p>3 Now know that <i>I AM</i> has set apart the godly for himself; <i>I AM</i> will hear when I call to him.</p> <p>4 Tremble and do not sin;</p> <p>search your hearts while you are on your bed, and be silent.</p> <p>selah</p> <p>5 Offer the sacrifices of the righteous, and trust in <i>I AM</i>.</p> <p>6 Many are saying, “O that one would show us good!” Lift up the light of your face upon us, <i>I AM</i>.”</p> <p>7 Fill my heart with great joy when their grain, and new wine and oil abound.</p> <p>8 In peace I will lie down and fall asleep at once, for you <i>I AM</i>, make me dwell apart, in safety.</p> <p>4:1 For the director of music. For flutes.</p>
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⁹² Translation adapted from Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 223-24.

I. Meditation #1: Entering into the historical crisis

Reading the Psalm, it is clear the king is facing a monumental crisis that is casting a disparaging shadow over his ability to lead the nation. The exact nature of the crisis is more difficult to discover, since David fails to mention the name of any specific enemies.⁹³ But there are clues within the Psalm that help us piece together the specifics of David's distress. In verses 6 - 7 David mentions that the faithful are asking, "Who will show us any good?" The question is, What is the "good" that they are looking for? In response to their request, David mentions grain and new wine abounding when God's gracious countenance shines upon them once again. This suggests that David is confronting a severe drought and the threat of widespread famine from the lack rain. In other texts of Scripture "good" is found in parallel with God's gift of "rain" and the resulting harvest that ensues.

**Indeed, the LORD will give what is good,
And our land will yield its produce. (Ps 85:12 NASB)**

**They do not say in their hearts,
"Let us fear the LORD our God,
who gives the rain in its season,
the autumn rain and the spring rain,
and keeps for us
the weeks appointed for the harvest."
Your iniquities have turned these away;
and your sins have deprived you of good. (Jer 5:24-25)**

When Solomon dedicates the temple, he lists several different situations when the king, as God's anointed, is invited to petition God for forgiveness on behalf of the nation.

When the heavens are shut up and there is **no rain**, because they have sinned against you, and they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin when you afflict them, then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants and of Your people Israel, indeed, **teach them the good way** in which they should walk. And **send rain** on your land, which you have given your people for an inheritance. (1 Kgs 8:35-36 NASB)

When God answered the prayers of his king, not only would the people be healed from whatever affliction the Lord had brought on them, but also his reputation as God's anointed would be confirmed. Faithfully answering the prayers of his king was God's way of elevating his anointed both in Israel and before the nations.

**I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:
He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father.
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession." (Ps 2:7-8)**

In David's case, however, it seems as if his prayers have fallen on deaf ears. He called out to God for rain, and no rain was forthcoming. David, in obedience to God, prayed for the right thing ("rain") the right way ("trust in God") and yet, it seemingly did not work. Worse yet,

⁹³ Bruce Waltke observes that of the fifty petition ("lament") psalms in the Psalter, this is one of three that makes no mention of who the enemies are. I am indebted to Bruce for his exegesis on the background of this Psalm and for many of his insights over the years that have made the Psalms come alive for me. See Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 225-27.

as a result of God's delay, many in David's cabinet ("sons of noble men") lost confidence in the prayers of God's son and turned to idolatrous manipulation through false fertility gods such as Baal, the Canaanite deity of rain. Now, not only must David cope with his own personal stress, but as a public figure, he must also endure his reputation maligned by the stinging betrayal of those closest to him.

What does God's servant-leader do under this kind of stress? Consider our Lord, the greater Son of David, and how David's words prepared him to face his betrayal and mockery.

So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (Matt 27:41-43)

II. Meditation #2: When we are in a drought

We are adopted in Christ as "sons of God" and, like the king, we are invited to pray and intercede for God's people and the nations. In the **New Covenant** we are invited to pray for rain, but what it symbolized, the life of God's Holy Spirit pouring down from heaven (Joel 2:28-29). In the age of the Spirit we are encouraged to pray for "the salvation of all men," from our family members to kings and rulers, for "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4). In addition, we pray for fresh supply of the Spirit to strengthen us, equip us and bear fruit for God.

Yet, how often do we find like David, that God seems silent and deaf to prayers. Over time we may question our calling and become susceptible to the powerful and influential, who tempt us with pragmatic religion and manipulation. Perhaps "waiting" on God is the most difficult spiritual discipline for us to master.

David's psalm is instructive for us when faced with such situations. Confronted by the pain of failed prayer, fickle friends and a doubting populace, he goes through a deliberate, four-step process to re-orient his spiritual compass. First, he renews his trust in God through prayer; second, he courageously rebukes those who have lost faith in him; third, he gives a reflection to the faithful; and finally, he gives voice to his renewed confidence in God. The prayer is shaped in a chiastic abba structure.

Structure

A	David's Address and Petition to God	1
B	David's Rebuke to the Faithless	2-5
B'	David's Reflection for the Faithful	6-7
A'	David's Confidence and Praise to God	8

III. Meditation #3: Rebuking the faithless (vv. 2-3)

- A. Confronting the worthless deceptions of idolatry—this takes courage!
- B. Reaffirming our identity as “sons of God” – the pain of apostasy forces us to draw closer to God to reaffirm who he is (the one who keeps covenant) and our identity as precious “sons” of God, who have been “set apart” to pray. “Set apart” (*palah*) means to treat person or group with such distinction and excellence they become a public stage to display God’s power and presence.

IV. Meditation #4: Call for repentance (vv.4-5)

- A. **STOP** – “Tremble in fear and do not sin.”
- B. **LISTEN** – Why is it important to get off the public stage and be silent and alone to listen?
- C. **YIELD** – Worship in spirit and truth with integrity between the outer form and inward spiritual state of trust.

V. Meditation # 5: Nurturing hope: Identifying with the faithful (vv. 6-8)

- A. As the faithful remain constant in their prayers to God for rain, so the king makes their longing his longing and anticipates their joy as his joy.
- B. David demonstrates his unshakable trust in God’s commitment to answer his prayer by simply going to bed and falling asleep, knowing that God will be faithful to vindicate him in the midst of the crisis. He refuses to do anything more.
- C. Consider David’s Greater Son asleep on the boat during a raging storm, while his disciples were in a frantic frenzy trying to save themselves (Mark 4:38); or when Jesus committed his spirit to the Lord and went to sleep in the grave (Ps 31:5; Luke 23:46). Is God inviting you to sleep (Ps 127:2).

Evening, Psalm 4

Karen Dabaghian⁹⁴

Psalm 4 is set in the evening hours, an inevitable time of pondering the day that passed and trying to make sense of its temptations, evils and opportunities. Nighttime is my most coveted time of the day, when I am left alone to hear myself think, to pray, to articulate (if I can) whatever emotions and thoughts are swirling in my head and heart. More often than not, nighttime brings a palpable sense of spiritual hunger, of wanting to understand what transpired that day, wanting to see it in context and from a heavenly perspective—as my brother would say, wanting to know “what really happened.” In the end, the hunger is, of course, for God Himself—or His presence—and more often than not He graciously comes to keep me company. They are the most marvelous minutes of my day.

Night air carries the sounds of
cars on the freeway
and crickets.
Dark loiters just outside my door
minding its manners
and my lamp.

Alone at last, deep calls to deep
and hunger gnaws
at my soul.
Push just below the surface
and there I am,
wanting.

What? Everything. You. Me too.
To taste and see
what is real.
I think I'd give my whole life
for one day without
pretense.

⁹⁴ Karen Dabaghian, *A Travelogue of the Interior*, 264.

My Evening Psalm

Give Me An Authentic Voice

**Out of the Den of the Damned
into Your Sacred Tent of Eternal Joy**
Psalm 5⁹⁵

<p>1 מְזֻמָּר לְרוֹד :</p> <p>2 אֶמְרֵי הַאֲזִינָה יְהֹוָה</p> <p>בִּנְהָה בְּגִנְיוֹ :</p> <p>3 הַקְשִׁיבָה לְקוֹל שְׁוֹעֵי מֶלֶכִי וְאֱלֹהִי</p> <p>כִּי־אָלִיךְ אַחֲפָלְלָה :</p> <p>4 יְהֹוָה בָּקָר תְּשִׁמְעָ קֹלְלִי</p> <p>בָּקָר אַשְׁרָךְ־לְךְ וְאַצְפָּה :</p> <p>5 כִּי לֹא אָלְתָפֵן רְשָׁעָה אֲקָה</p> <p>לֹא יִגְרַךְ רָע :</p> <p>6 לֹא־יִתְאַבְּבוּ הַזְּלוּלִים לְנַגְדֵּן עִינֵיכֶם</p> <p>שְׂנָאתָה כָּל־פְּעָלָי אָנוֹ :</p> <p>7 תִּאֲבֹד דְּבָרַי לְזֹבֵב</p> <p>אִישׁ־דְּמִים וּמְרַמָּה יִתְעַב יְהֹוָה :</p> <p>8 וְאַנְיִ בְּלֵב חֲסִידָךְ אָבּוֹא בִּיתְךָ</p> <p>אָשְׁתָחָוָה אֶל־הַיְכָלָל־קְרִישָׁךְ בִּירָאָתָךְ</p> <p>9 יְהֹוָה נְתַנֵּי בְּצִדְקָתֶךָ</p> <p>לְמַעַן שֹׁרְרִי</p> <p>הַיָּשֵׁר לְפָנֵי דָּרְכֶךָ :</p>	<p>A psalm by David.</p> <p>1 Give ear to my words, "I AM," understand my burning meditation.</p> <p>2 Pay attention to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.</p> <p>3 "I AM," in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I arrange for you and watch vigilantly.</p> <p>4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil cannot sojourn with you.</p> <p>5 Arrogant boasters cannot stand before your eyes; you hate all who do wrong.</p> <p>6 You destroy those who tell lies; the bloodthirsty and deceitful "I AM" detests.</p> <p>7 But I, by your great loyal-love can come into your house; I bow down toward your holy palace in fear of you.</p> <p>8 "I AM," lead me in your righteousness because of my enemies— make your way straight before me.</p>
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⁹⁵ The translation taken 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.

Psalm 5

<p>10 קַי אֵין בְּפִיהוּ נָכֹנָה קְרֻבָּם הַגּוֹת קְבָרְפָּתָותָם גְּרוֹגָם לְשׁוֹנָם יְחִילִיקָן :</p> <p>11 הַאֲשֶׁרֶם אַלְהִים יַפְלוּ מִמְעָצָזָתֵיכֶם בְּרַב בְּשָׁעָרֵיכֶם הַדִּיחָמָנוּ כִּימָרוּ בְּךָ :</p> <p>12 וַיִּשְׁמַחוּ כָּל-חֹסֵי בָּךְ לְעוֹלָם יְרִגְנָנוּ וְתָסַךְ עַלְיָמוּ וַיַּעֲלִצּוּ בְּךְ אַהֲרִי שְׁמָךְ :</p> <p>13 קַי-אֲתָה תְּבִרְךָ צְדִיקִים יְהוָה כִּאֲתָה רָצֹן תַּעֲטָרָנוּ :</p> <p>6:1a לְמַנְצָחָה בְּגִינִּזָּה עַל-הַשְּׁמִינִית</p>	<p>9 For there is nothing in their mouth that is steadfast; their heart is filled with violence. Their throat is an open grave; they make their tongues smooth.</p> <p>10 Make them liable, God! Let them fall from their intrigues. Banish them for their many obstinate rebellions, for they are obstinate against you.</p> <p>12 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.</p> <p>13 For you, "I AM," bless the righteous; you surround them with favor like a shield.</p> <p>6.1 For the director of music, [James Garcia], With stringed instruments. According to sheminith.</p>
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Psalm 5
Notes & Reflections
The Literary Context⁹⁶

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).

Outline

Superscript

I. Invocation: “The Watch-Tower”	1–3
A. Introductory Petitions	1–2
B. Introduction: arranges words	3
II. Confidence: I AM abhors the wicked: “The Sacred Tent”	4–6
A. I AM has no delight in evil; cannot stand in his presence	4
B. I AM detests bloodthirsty and deceitful	5–6
III. Petitions	
A. Save me for the sake of my enemies: “The Highway”	7–8
B. Banish the liars for the sake of your people: “The Sepulcher”	9–10
C. Protect your faithful ones for the sake of your Name: “The Shield”	11–12

Postscript

⁹⁶ Literary context, outline and translation taken from Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Lament*, 24–27.

Psalm 5: Translation and Outline

<p>A psalm by David.</p> <p>1 Give ear to my words, "I AM," understand my burning meditation.</p> <p>2 Pay attention to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.</p> <p>3 "I AM," in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I arrange [my words] for you and watch vigilantly.</p> <p>4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil cannot sojourn with you.</p> <p>5 Arrogant boasters cannot stand before your eyes; you hate all who do wrong.</p> <p>6 You destroy those who tell lies; the bloodthirsty and deceitful "I AM" detests.</p> <p>7 But I, by your great loyal-love, can come into your house; I bow down toward your holy palace in fear of you.</p> <p>8 "I AM," lead me in your righteousness because of my enemies— make your way straight before me.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>10 Make them liable, God! Let them fall from their intrigues. Banish them for their many obstinate rebellions, for they are obstinate against you.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>12 For you, "I AM," bless the righteous; you surround them with favor like a shield.</p> <p>6.1 For the director of music, [James Garcia], With stringed instruments. According to sheminith.</p>	<p>I. Climb up the Watchtower (1-3)</p> <p>A. Surround God with petitions to be truly understood and rescued</p> <p>B. Worship "I AM" then watch <i>with urgency</i> (at sunrise) <i>with thoughtfulness and methodical care</i> <i>with vigilance and patience</i></p> <p>II. Enter the Sacred Tent (4-8)</p> <p>A. Know that God's holiness bans the depraved his emotional responses escalate from <i>no delight->hate->abhor</i> his divine actions escalate from <i>cannot sojourn->cannot stand->destroy</i></p> <p>B. Accept God's loving invitation and holy embrace that exceeds human kindness Ask directions to the sacred highway of salvation and moral beauty</p> <p>III. Reflect in the Morgue (8-10)</p> <p>A. On the anatomy of the depraved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a Not a word from their mouth can be trustedb Their inward part is filled with maliceb' Their throat is an open gravea' Their tongues drip honey-coated lies <p>B. On the anatomy of justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>equitable -> wicked fall by their own devices</i><i>permanent ->wicked banished because they are obstinate</i> <p>IV. Join the Party and Dance! (11-12)</p> <p>A. Worship "I AM" <i>with spontaneous, unrestrained joy</i> <i>with dancing, music and shouts of joy</i> <i>with joy so effusive you are beside yourself</i></p> <p>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</p>
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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 –
it 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

Notes

'*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, hand 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.

Morning, Psalm 5

Karen Dabaghian⁹⁷

Psalm 5 arrives with the dawn, and David finds that lament is the first word on his lips as he emerges from the blessed unconsciousness of sleep. None of his problems have dissipated over night, and David struggles to find his bearings.

It so happened that on this particular morning, when I opened to Psalm 5, I was drowning under the weight of unresolved emotions that I did not want to feel, leaving me with a miserable sense of being spiritual adrift. My enemies, this morning were confusion, fear, and a pervading sense of guilt over emotions that I could not wrestle down by willpower.

I decided that this sort of thing was precisely what an authentic voice was for, and that the worst sin I could commit was to pretend that the emotions roiling around in me weren't really there. The most God-worshiping thing I could do was speak them honestly to God. To my utter amazement and great delight, He graciously offered to hold the emotional tensions for me and to walk beside me to keep my path straight. Though the emotional tension did not instantly abate, fear and guilt took flight, and I found a renewed freedom and energy for the day ahead.

Morning

With a stretch and a yawn
daybreak arrives,
shooing away the shadows.

Another day to be a self again.

Emotions,
unwanted and unbidden
insist on being heard,
creating tensions only
God can hold.

To You I speak my truth
and deprive Hypocrisy
of its prey.

Alive and flawed, I sing for joy.

⁹⁷ Karen Dabaghian, *A Travelogue of the Interior*, 265-66

My Morning Psalm

Give Me An Authentic Voice

A Royal Petition for Vindication by Salvation from Death⁹⁸
Psalm 6

<p>1 מִזְמֹרֶת לְדָוִד :</p> <p>2 יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ תַּעֲנִיבָנוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי בְּחִימָתְךָ תִּנְפְּרִיבָנוּ :</p> <p>3 חָנָنִי יְהֹוָה כִּי אָמַלֵּל אָנִי רְפָאָנִי יְהֹוָה כִּי נְבָהָלָן עָצָמי :</p> <p>4 גַּנְפֵּשִׁי נְבָהָלָה מְאָד וְאָתָה יְהֹוָה עֲדָמָתִי :</p> <p>5 שׁוֹבֵת יְהֹוָה חַלְצָתָה נְפָשִׁי הַשְׁיִיצֵנִי לְמַעַן חַסְכָּךְ :</p> <p>6 כִּי אֵין בְּמִתָּה וְכָרְךָ בְּשָׁאָלָן מֵי יָזְרָה-לְךָ :</p> <p>7 יְגַעַּתִּי בְּאַנְחָתִי אֲשַׁתָּה בְּכָל-לִילָה מִטְתָּה בְּדַמְעָתִי עַרְשִׁי אַמְסָה :</p> <p>8 עַשְׂשָׂה מִכְעָס עַנְנִי עַתְקָה בְּכָל-צָוָרָה :</p> <p>9 סֻוּרוּ מִמֵּנִי בְּלַפְעָלִי אָנוּ כִּירְשַׁמְעַת יְהֹוָה קָול בְּכִי :</p> <p>10 שְׁמַע יְהֹוָה תְּחִנְתִּי יְהֹוָה תְּפִלְתִּי יְקַח :</p> <p>11 יְבַשֵּׂוּ וְיִבְהָלְוּ מְאָד בְּלַאֲבוֹי יְשַׁבּוּ יְבַשְׂוּ רְגֻע :</p>	<p><i>A psalm of David.</i></p> <p>1 <i>I AM, stop in your anger rebuking me;</i> <i>and stop in your wrath disciplining me.</i></p> <p>2 <i>Be gracious to me, I AM, for I am fainting away;</i> <i>heal me, I AM, for my bones tremble in fright;</i></p> <p>3 <i>and my soul is exceedingly dismayed.</i> <i>And as for you, I AM, how long?</i></p> <p>4 <i>Turn, I AM; deliver me;</i> <i>Rescue me for the sake of your unfailing love.</i></p> <p>5 <i>For none proclaim your name in the land of the dead.</i> [lit. there is no remembrance of you in death] <i>Who gives praise to you in the Grave?</i></p> <p>6 <i>I am worn out from my sobbing;</i> <i>I cause my bed every night to float.</i> <i>I dissolve my couch with my tears.</i></p> <p>7 <i>My eyes waste away from vexation;</i> <i>They fail because of all my foes.</i></p> <p>8 <i>Get away from me, all you who do evil,</i> <i>for I AM has heard my weeping.</i></p> <p>9 <i>I AM has heard my petition;</i> <i>I AM accepts my prayer.</i></p> <p>10 <i>All my enemies will be ashamed and exceedingly dismayed;</i> <i>they will turn and suddenly be put to shame.</i></p>
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⁹⁸ Translation by Bruce K. Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Lament*, 51.

Entering into the King's Suffering and Faith

The Literary Context⁹⁹

Psalm 6, like Psalms 3–5, is another royal petition asking *I AM* to rescue his king, giving courage to the faithful. Like Psalms 3–5 the king, to whom *I AM* had a promised the ends of the earth (Ps 2:7–9), pours out his lament; this time for a sickness so severe and so long-continued that he totters on the brink of the grave. He intuits by faith that his providential sickness is the rod in God’s hand to correct him: “the golden rod that enriches us by its blows.”¹⁰⁰ His enemies interpret it as God’s curse that validates their rejection of him as *I AM*’s chosen king. Psalm 38 echoes and clarifies this psalm. God’s anointed, though in extreme physical and mental anguish, overcomes his malicious enemies through God-given defiant faith.

The editors of the Psalter used the thread of an alternating pattern of morning psalms (Psalms 3 and 5) and night psalms (Psalms 4 and 6) to bind these royal laments and petitions together. The night psalms escalate from a prayer before lying down to sleep (Ps 4:8) to his doleful appeals every night (Ps 6:7).¹⁰¹ Moreover, in them, the king’s enemies escalate from highborn poltroons who are losing confidence in him, but have not yet rejected him, to evildoers who celebrate his imminent death. Psalms 3–5 assume or assert David’s innocence; Psalm 6 implies his guilt.

Rhetoric and Structure

I. Petitions and Lament	1–5
A. Introductory petitions and lament	1–3
1. Petitions	
a. To cease discipline	1
b. For grace and healing	2a
2. Reason for petition: lament	2b–3
B. Petitions for salvation	4–5
1. Petitions for salvation	4
2. Reason for petition: praise	5
II. Lament and Confession of trust	6–10
A. Lament	6–7
1. Extreme sorrow	6
2. Vexation caused by enemy	7
B. Confidence	8–10
1. Address to enemies: Depart; <i>I AM</i> hears lament	8–9
a. <i>I AM</i> hears weeping	8
b. <i>I AM</i> accepts prayer	9
2. Enemies will be dismayed	10

⁹⁹ Literary Context and Rhetoric taken from Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Lament*, 52–54.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Spurgeon’s Great Commentary on Psalms*, An updated edition in today’s language, updated by Roy H. Clarke (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 31.

¹⁰¹ Psalm 6 is used at Compline on Monday perhaps because of “night” in verse 7.

I. Meditation #1: Acknowledging that God disciplines those he loves

- A. "When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men" (2 Sam 7:14; Heb 12:7-12). Do you acknowledge his discipline?
- B. "*How long,*" implies that God's discipline has *limits*: "...but my steadfast love will not depart from him." (2 Sam 7:15)

II. Meditation #2: Truths to stir God to save

- A. *Enough is enough!* The discipline has gone beyond its desired end. The blows of God's chastening rod have gone on so long and been so severe that the king has lost his ability to rule (vv. 2-3).
- B. *God's glory:* God displays his glory by his grace and unfailing love to his covenant partner by rescuing his chosen king from the grave and receiving public praise. David appeals to God's covenant name "*I AM*" 8 times in the psalm.
- C. *God's compassion and vindication over his enemies:* God takes note of every detail of his son's unspeakable grief resulting, not from the initial discipline, but from the malicious abuse heaped upon him from his enemies, who taunt him that he is under God's curse, justifying their reason to reject him as king.
- D. He prays publicly and passionately, for it is unthinkable to him that "*I AM*"...
 - ❖ would not show compassion;
 - ❖ would not extend his sublime glories to his chosen king;
 - ❖ would not save him, obscuring his glory;
 - ❖ would be implacable to his tears;
 - ❖ would vindicate evil doers in their rejection of God's king; and would cast a mill-stone around the necks of his trusting people
- E. Do you plead your case for deliverance to God with spiritual fervency and rational arguments?

III. Meditation #3: Confidence of being heard!

- A. *Confidence born:* As death takes God's anointed king into its decisive grip and he gives voice to pain, his heart grasps the eternal verity: God hears and accepts his prayer.
- B. *Confidence applied:* Revitalized, he routs by faith the horde of assailants taunting him: "Get away from me," he shouts, while assuring the faithful that the routed evildoers will be put to shame.
- C. Have you experienced such confidence before circumstances changed?

Entering into Jesus' Suffering and Faith

Therefore...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. (Heb 12:1-4)

My Psalm 6

A Master at Work upon his Masterwork

A Master at work on his masterwork
servant swooning face down in grief
upon the anvil of God's fiery hot chastening rod,
submitting until there is nothing left to give,
every ounce of strength drained dry,
his brain naught, his body shot,

silent and powerless to carry out his holy orders...

until the onslaught of terrorizing taunts
attack the foundation stone of the Master's holy love
infuse the servant with fiery fervency
to plead his case for an act of grace

and reverse the fortunes of the poor and powerful

In a mere 78* words arranged
in 4 perfectly balanced and symmetrical strophes

24 words

15 words

15 words

24 words

and his covenant name "I AM" laced (8 times) throughout
our poet architects a ziggurat for the dying
a Jacob's ladder with solid steps to ascend
out the clutches of the ghoulish grave

unto solid ground where no request or tear is forgotten

Apparently the poem can be no less beautiful than the poet,
both are masterworks by a master worker,
but I wonder...

did the poem shape the poet too?
rabbi morganescu

*78 is the numerical value of YHWH 26×3 , the number of perfection.

A Prayer When I'm at my End

Give Me An Authentic Voice

A Cry for Cosmic Justice

Psalm 7

<p>1 שְׁגַגּוֹן לְדָנוֹר אֲשֶׁר־שָׁר לִיהוָה עַל־דָּבָרִי־כּוֹשׁ בֶּן־יְמִינִי :</p> <p>2 יְהוָה אֱלֹהִי בָּהּ חָסָיתִי הַוְשִׁיעֵנִי מִכָּל־דָּרְפִּי וְהַצִּילֵנִי :</p> <p>3 פָּנִימִלְךָ כְּאֶרְזִים נְפָשִׁי פְּרָקָן וְאַזְן מְצִיל :</p> <p>4 יְהוָה אֱלֹהִי אִם־עֲשִׂיתִי גַּזָּה אִם־יִשְׁעַל בְּכָפִי :</p> <p>5 אִם־גָּמְלָתִי שׁוֹלְמִי רָע וְאַחֲלָצָה צָוָרְתִּי רִיקָּם :</p> <p>6 יְרַדֵּף אֹזֵיב נְפָשִׁי וְרַגְגָּג וַיַּרְמַס לְאָרֶץ חַי וּבָבוֹדֵי לְעַפְרָה יַשְׁקֵן סָלה :</p> <p>7 קָוָמָה יְהוָה בְּאָפָּךְ הַנְּשָׁא בְּעַבְרוֹת צָוָרָי וְעִירָה אֶלְיִי מִשְׁפָט צְנִיחָה :</p> <p>8 וְעַתָּה לְאַמִּים תִּסְׁבֹּבָה וְעַלְיָה לְמִרְוּם שׁוּבָה :</p> <p>9 יְהוָה יְדַזֵּן עַמִּים</p>	<p>A <i>shiggaion</i> by David, which he sang to <i>I AM</i> concerning the accusations of Cush, a Benjaminite.</p> <p>1 “I AM” my God, I seek refuge in you; save me from all who pursue me, and rescue me,</p> <p>2 lest he tear me apart like a lion snatching me away with no one to rescue me.</p> <p>3 “I AM” my God, if I have done this: If there is guilt on my hands;</p> <p>4 if I have repaid my ally with evil; and rescued his foe without cause,</p> <p>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. <i>Selah</i></p> <p>6 Arise, “I AM,” in your anger; lift yourself up against the rage of my enemies. Awake, my God; decree justice.</p> <p>7 Let the assembled peoples gather around you, and return on high over them.</p> <p>8a Let “I AM” judge the peoples.</p>
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shiggaion - if it is related to the root *shaga* it may indicate a particular type of psalm with a sporadic rhythm or frenzied cadence. Or it could be related to the Akkadian *schigu*, a term to denote a psalm of lamentation, characterized by “wandering” thought and language. Such psalms were normally employed by the king.

<p style="text-align: right;">שְׁפִטָּנִי יְהֹוָה כִּצְדָּקָה וַכְּחַמֵּן עַלִּי :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">יְגַמֵּר נָא רַע רְשָׁעִים וַתְּכַוֵּן צְדִיק וּבְתֻנָּה לְבָזָת וּכְלָזֶות :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">אֲלֹהִים צְדִיק :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">מְגַנֵּן עַל־אֲלֹהִים מֹשִׁיעַ יְשִׁירִילָב :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">אֲלֹהִים שׂוֹפֵט צְדִיק וְאֶל זָעַם בְּכָל־יּוֹם :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">אַמְלָא יְשֻׁב חַרְבוֹ יְלַטְוֹש קָשְׁטוֹ דָּרָךְ וַיְכֹונֵן :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">וְלוֹ הַכִּין כְּלִימֹות חַשְׁיוֹ לְדָלְקִים יְפַעֵל :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">הַנֶּה יְחַבֵּל־אוֹן</p> <p style="text-align: right;">וְהַרָּה עַמְלָה וַיְלַד שָׁקָר :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">בּוֹרֶה כָּרָה וַיְחַפְּרָה וַיִּפְלֶל בְּשַׁחַת יְפַעֵל :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">יְשֻׁב עַמְלוֹ בְּרָאָשׁוֹ וְעַל קְרָקָדוֹ חַמְסָוִירָד :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">אָזְהָה יְהֹוָה כִּצְדָּקָנוּ וְאָזְמָרָה שְׁמֵיְהֹוָה עַלְיוֹן :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">לְמִנְגָּח עַל־תְּגִתָּה 8:1a</p>	<p>8b Vindicate me, "I AM," according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>10 God takes it upon himself to be my shield, the one who saves the upright of heart.</p> <p>11 God is a righteous judge, a God who is indignant every day.</p> <p>12 If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow.</p> <p>13 And he will prepare his deadly weapons; he will make ready his flaming arrows.</p> <p>14 Observe: whoever is pregnant with evil conceives malice and gives birth to deception.</p> <p>15 Whoever digs a pit and hews it out falls into the trap they have made.</p> <p>16 The trouble he causes recoils on his head; and on his own skull his violence descends.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>8:1a To the director of music. Upon the gittith.</p>
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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 please 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.

I. Meditation #1: Defense against the accusation of treason (vv. 1-5)

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's 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. Meditation #2: Plea to "I AM," the righteous Judge to convene court (vv. 6-9a)

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. (v. 9b)

III. Meditation #3: 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. Meditation #4: 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."

Guilty, Psalm 7¹⁰²

In Psalm 7 David posits the possibility that persecution is a direct result of his sin, but then he emphatically rejects this as the case, deciding instead that his enemies are unjust in their assault and that God will vindicate him.

It only took one reading of this psalm for me to conclude that I was fully unlike David; whereas he was innocent, I was guilty through and through. God unflinchingly directs my attention to the breadth and depth of so many ways I fall short of His standard every day; my sin is ever before me. But God is also more than willing to painstakingly unmake me, beginning ever again to create in me a pure heart. It is the greatest hope of my life.

Guilty

(Psalm 7)

If I have done this
If I have taken what is not mine
If I have spoken what should be left unsaid
or been silent when words were required

If I have played the part
If I have played pretend
If I have dug my own well
or forced new wine into old wineskins

If I have whitewashed my own tomb
If I have forgiven my own sin
If I have been deaf to Nathan and Shimei
or the donkey, even

Then Hound of Heaven
Rend me limb from limb
Tear flesh from bone
Leave no sinew or tendon whole

Trample my life to the ground and
make me sleep in the dust.
Then, *El 'Elyon*, from the dust I will
sing praise, finally, with a pure heart.

¹⁰² Karen Dabaghian, unpublished poem.

Guilty, My Psalm 7

Give Me An Authentic Voice

The Glory of Man

Psalm 8*

<p>1 מָזְמוֹר לְדוֹד:</p> <p>2 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ</p> <p>מֶה־אָקִיר שְׁמֵך בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ</p> <p>אֲשֶׁר תָּגַת הָזֶד עַל־הַשָּׁמִים:</p> <p>3 מִפְיַח עֲוָלָלִים וְוִינְקִים יִסְדַּק עֹז לְמַעַן צוֹרָגִיד</p> <p>לְהַשְׁבִּית אֹוֵב וּמַתְנָקָם:</p> <p>4 כִּי־אָרָאָה שְׁמֵיך מַעַשֵּׂי אַצְבָּעָתִיך</p> <p>יְרֵחׇ וּכֹכְבִּים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹן נָתָה:</p> <p>5 מֶה־אָנוֹשׁ כִּי־תַּזְכִּירָנוּ וּבְנֵאָדָם כִּי תַּפְקִדָּנוּ:</p> <p>6 וְתַּחֲסִרְהוּ מַעַט מְאֻלָּהִים וְכָבוֹד וְהַדָּר תַּעֲטִירָהוּ:</p> <p>7 תַּמְשִׁילָהו בְּמַעַשֵּׂי יְדֵיך כָּל שְׁקָה תַּחֲתֵרְגָּלוּ:</p> <p>8 צְנַח וְאַלְפִים כָּלָם וְגַם בְּהַמּוֹת שְׁדֵי:</p> <p>9 צְפֹר שְׁמִים וְדָגִים הַיִם עַבְר אָרְחוֹת יָמִים:</p> <p>יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ 10 מֶה־אָקִיר שְׁמֵך בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:</p> <p>לְלִמְנָאת עַל־מִזְבֵּחַ 9:1</p>	<p>A psalm by David.</p> <p>1 "I AM," our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!</p> <p>You who have set your glory upon the heavens. [janus]</p> <p>2 From the mouth of children and infants, you have laid the foundation of a strong bulwark in order [to eliminate] your foes to eliminate the enemy and the avenger.</p> <p>3 When I consider your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,</p> <p>4 what is a mere mortal that you are mindful of him, a common human being that you care for him?</p> <p>5 And so you have made him lack a trifle from the heavenly beings and you crown him with glory and honor.</p> <p>6 You cause him to rule over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet,</p> <p>7 all flocks and herds, and even the wild animals;</p> <p>8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, the one that swims the paths of the seas.</p> <p>9 "I AM," our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!</p> <p>9.0 For the director of music. To the tune of "The Death of the Son."</p>
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* Translation and observations taken from Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 254-75.

The Message of Psalm 8

"Psalm 8 is a magnificent hymn of praise to God as Creator of the cosmos and as Ruler of history by paradoxically celebrating the grandeur of humankind. Irenaeus put it succinctly: "The glory of God is man fully alive." Amandus Polanus, sixteenth-century Basel professor and Reformer, stated the complementary truth: "the glory of man is the living God." The mortal fully alive is childlike, not a tyrant. I AM's name becomes majestic in all the earth by his using mere mortals as his vice-gerents to establish his rule over all the earth. The inclusio, "*I AM, our I AM, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*" sets the psalm's boundaries and sounds its theme, while the rest of the psalm develops that theme by pointing to the grandeur of humankind, who by their dependence upon God fulfill their mandate to rule over all the earth."

I. Meditation #1: Splendor in heavens and "infants" defeat God's foes (vv. 1-2)

- A. God sets his splendor in the heavens (Isa 40:26)

While the heavens are singing God's glory we are confronted with the rising discord of powerful foes and avengers, who devour the weak on earth. The juxtaposition of these two brings to light the unexpected and mysterious way that God makes his rule majestic on earth.

- B. God uses the prayer of the meek to destroy enemies – "children and infants," occurs in contexts of destruction and horror, when helpless offspring of a people are threatened with annihilation by a ruthless foe.

II. Meditation #2: The glory of God stooping to help man (vv. 3-4)

- A. Meditation of heaven (Ps 19:2) – we stand in awe of the immensity of God's handiwork, yet the ease that he established the stars, "*the work of his fingers.*"
- B. Meditation of man – Who am I? "*Care for him*" - means "to visit" in the sense to take careful notice of one's situation and to act appropriately, sometimes "to come to the aid of."

III. Meditation #3: The glory of man as the crown of creation (vv. 5-8)

- A. Mortals crowned with splendor: mans lacks only a little, "just a bit," from the exalted status of the heavenly court.
- B. Mortals commissioned to rule *all* the earth: Whereas God has inscribed his own splendor on the celestial bodies, he gives his image honor in his own right by empowering him to rule over all things.
- C. No creatures left out of his rule: both domestic and wild animals created on the sixth day and the birds and the fish created on the fifth day.

IV. Meditation #4: The theme reiterated (v. 9)

- A. The single sentence explodes as an exclamation of surprise over the discovery of God's name in all the earth.
- B. *majestic* ('*addir*) – denotes someone or something that commands respect through the excellence of *power*. It is used of the 'mighty' Reed Sea when it engulfed the Egyptian army, of the Lord's dominion over the stormy seas (Ps 93:3-4), and of his right hand when he shattered Pharaoh's picked troops (Exod 15:6). It speaks of God's willingness to be seen publicly.

I AM AN IRONY

JIM FOSTER

I am an irony
I am an ordeal,
weak as water
strong as steel.

Battered and beaten
flat and cold,
glistening and glowing
round and gold.

I am a river
I am rust,
wet as wine
dry as dust.

I am a bore
I am a thrill,
easy to empty
hard to fill.

Hunted and hounded
pushed and shoved
admired and honored
blessed and beloved.

I am a saint
I am a sinner,
crawling the race
chasing the winner.

I am a tortoise
I am a hare
I am common
I am rare.

Lacking and leaking
spilt and spent,
brimming and bursting
gathered and sent.

I am alone
I am together
embracing the future
in spite of the weather.

I am an irony
I am an ordeal,
weak as water
strong as steel.

Besought and beset
round and about,
calm and collected
within and without.

I am a metaphor
I am a poem,
walking on words
heading for home.



Marc Chagall – Solitude 1933