

1. INTRODUCTION:

- a. The background for Psalm 7 can be found in the story in 2 Samuel 15:1-16:14, though the conflict continues through Samuel 21:14. Please take the time to read this story before you engage the poetry David penned in response.
- b. The main conflict is the deliberate betrayal of David by his eldest son Absalom who was supported by a number of David's closest friends and advisors, people David loved and relied upon. To anyone who has experienced it, they know the pain of betrayal is horrible. The thought that someone you love could turn their back upon you and denounce you is *relational brutality* of the first order.
- c. In response to this betrayal, David is faced with an extremely difficult decision – to face the challenge directly and see hundreds if not thousands of people suffer and die, or back away. It is a no-win scenario. As David flees his son, he demonstrates humility and dependence upon God that is commendable. David places his future into God's hands rather than confront it openly which would have certainly resulted in a civil war.
- d. David retreats into the desert wasteland where you can easily imagine David as he's settling into his desert hideout reflecting upon the events listed in 2 Samuel 15:1-16:14, and then writing this Psalm. The Psalm itself is unique as it includes five major themes that will be looked at next.
- e. The translation from the Hebrew is by Professor Brian Morgan. Though edited, much of the exegesis is from Zondervan's NIV Expository Bible Commentary while much of the discussion of word translations are from Zondervan's New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words.
- f. Please read the Introduction to the Psalms to better understand many of the poetic concepts. Here is a quick link to this resource - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/1-biblical-literacy/Bible%20Survey%20-%2015.4-0%20-%20Introduction%20to%20Psalms.pdf>

2. STRUCTURE AND EXEGESIS:

a. Strophe 1 – Prayer for Refuge (7:1-2)

i. Text:

- Vs 1: O LORD my God, in You I have taken refuge;
Save me from all who pursue me, and deliver me
- Vs 2 Or he will tear me like a lion,
Dragging me away, while there is none to deliver.

ii. Exegesis:

Vs 1-2 The first phrase ("O LORD my God") expresses the confidence that the heavenly Father cares for His people on earth. When LORD is presented all in capital letters in Scripture, it indicates a translation of YHWH [YAHWEH] the personal name for God. "I have taken refuge in you" amplifies the closeness of the psalmist's relationship with God. In the deepest need, the anguished soul cries out to the Father, confident that only the Lord can deliver him from those who pursue him (cf. 1Samuel 23:28; 24:14; 25:29; 26:18). David reveals in this poetic imagery that he

feels as if he is being mauled by a lion and torn to pieces. His predicament reveals the tension between knowing that he is innocent (vv.3-5) and experiencing the apparent judgment of God. David knows that God is the Supreme Leader, and all answer to Him.

b. Strophe 2 – Oath of Innocence (7:3-5)

i. Text:

Vs 3: O LORD my God, if I have done this,
If there is injustice on my hands,
Vs 4: If I have rewarded evil to my friend,
or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary,
Vs 5: Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it;
And let him trample my life down to the ground
And lay my glory in the dust.

Selah

- ii. Exegesis: Vs 3-4** The psalmist appeals again to his heavenly Father using the same words as in v.1. The repetition of "if" (three times in Hebrew) together with his readiness to suffer for any wrong he may have done shows that he is confused. He is astonished that the Lord permits him to be treated as an evildoer. He swears in the presence of God that he is innocent, though he knows that he is not perfect!
Vs 5 David argues that he has not knowingly done anything to friend or foe to deserve this treatment! If he were a man of treachery, he would gladly submit to God's judgment and permit his enemy to trample him to death. He willingly suffers the curses of the Covenant, knowing that the wicked do not deserve "life" and "glory" as do those who obey God and are blessed with the Covenant promises.

c. Strophe 3 Part 1 – God's Righteous Judgment Part 1 (7:6-8a)

i. Text – the Call to Act:

Vs 6: Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;
Lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries,
And arouse Yourself for me; [As only] You have appointed judgment.
Vs 7: Let the assembly of the peoples encompass you.
And over them return from on high;
Vs8a: The LORD judges the peoples;

ii. Exegesis:

Vs 6 The psalmist appeals to YHWH a third time and puts forth request after request as he pours out his heart before the Lord. He calls on God to act *now* in judgment and in wrath. He appeals to God's sense of justice and integrity (v.8). David clearly believes that when God is provoked, His "justice" will be done. Hence, the repetitive prayer requesting the Lord to act: "Arise" ... "Arouse" [rise up]... "Awake."
Vs 7-8a When the Lord comes in His indignation, the nations can no longer escape their due penalty. David appeals to God who calls all humanity into account because

He rules over them. David has searched his heart to see whether he has been disloyal to God or to any human being. He believes he is innocent and therefore trusts God's discerning judgment.

d. Strophe 4 - God's Righteous Judgment Part 2 (7:8b-9)

i. Text – My Request:

Vs 8b: [Vindicate] me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
And my integrity that is in me.

Vs 9: O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, But establish the righteous;
For God alone searches [and tries] the minds and hearts,
To bring to an end the violence of the wicked, And make the righteous secure.

ii. Exegesis:

Vs 8b-9 In the depth of his heart, David knows that while he is not sinless, he is a man of "integrity". Because of the gravity of his suffering and his seeming alienation from God, only God can graciously renew their relationship. The affirmation of God as "Righteous Judge" and as the One who "searches" humanity's mind and heart, there is no cause for the righteous to be afraid. The innocent have God as their Defense when they have taken "refuge" in His Grace. Their faults are not hidden from His sight because God tests "minds and hearts," meaning a person's innermost being. The righteous depend on the gracious relationship initiated and confirmed by God. David expects that God "expresses His wrath" against those who have been tested and are found wanting.

e. Strophe 5 – God's Righteous Judgment Part 3 (10-11)

i. Text – My Defense:

Vs 10: My shield is God Most High,
Who saves the upright in heart.

Vs 11: God is a righteous judge,
And a God who expresses his indignation [wrath] every day.

ii. Exegesis:

Vs 10-11 God is the "Righteous Judge" who protects the godly with His saving shield, for they are "the upright in heart." By comparison, God judges the wicked [evil] in His wrath. The "upright" are those who are full of integrity; in their loyalty to God they can ask Him to judge them and search their hearts. But before the judgment occurs, the Lord takes the judgment seat and gathers the nations around him to make His decree (vv.7-8a).

- 1 Righteousness of Humanity:** The underlying idea of righteousness is one of conformity to a known standard or norm. People are righteous when their personal and interpersonal behavior accords with an established moral or ethical norm. In the Old Testament, there is only one standard by which righteousness can be measured, meaning the revealed Will of God

particularly as it is expressed in the Law. Thus, the Old Testament does not deal primarily with abstract or absolute righteousness. When a person is said to be "righteous," no suggestion of sinlessness is implied. Instead, the statement implies that a person's actions are in harmony with one's obligations in his or her relationship with God.

- 2** Righteousness of God: Scripture often speaks of God as righteous. He is the "righteous God" (Psalm 4:1; 7:9; Isaiah 45:21). His acts are "always righteous" (Jeremiah 12:1; cf. Judges 5:11; Psalm 71:24) because all God does is consistently in harmony with His character. As He is the moral judge of the universe, the very character of God is the ultimate standard of righteousness.
- 3** Anger and Fierce Anger [Wrath]: This is one of the least understood concepts in Scripture. Anger is often viewed as a "negative emotion." Christians often identify anger as sin and feel a sense of guilt when they become angry. Yet the Bible presents God as sometimes angry, especially when it speaks of His wrath or fierce anger kindled against those who have harmed His people or broken His covenant. Anger is both a physical and emotional reaction usually expressed in the context of being wronged or deliberately harmed.
 - a. Anger is fundamentally relational: we become angry when something is said or done that seems to violate expected norms within a relationship.
 - b. Anger is expressed: it overflows not only in emotional expressions seen on one's face or in one's stance but also in actions. The words for anger do not tell us whether anger is right or wrong, nor do they explain the anger of God. They simply tell us that anger exists. Anger is a potential emotional response in any relationship, whether it is a relationship between human beings or between God and some person.
 - c. Anger can be expressed righteously or sinfully: In Psalm 4:4, believers are told, "In your anger do not sin." Both the Old Testament and New Testament make a distinction between righteous anger and sinful anger, as well as between right and wrong reactions to righteous anger. For instance, Potiphar, not realizing that his wife was lying, felt justifiable anger when she claimed that Joseph had attempted to rape her. Rather than taking personal revenge, the angry Egyptian reacted correctly by imprisoning Joseph (Genesis 39:19-20). The anger of Simeon and Levi when their sister was raped (Genesis 34) was justifiable. But their wrathful action, in tricking and murdering all the men in the rapist's city, is sternly condemned: "They have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their "anger so fierce" and their "fury" so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel" (Genesis 49:6-7). Even justifiable anger does not justify any sinful actions that the anger may stimulate.

f. Strophe 6 - God's Righteous Judgment Part 4 (12-13)

i. Text – My Weapon:

Vs 12: If a man does not repent, He will sharpen his sword;
He has bent His bow and made it ready.

Vs 13: He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons;
He makes His arrows fiery shafts.

ii. Exegesis:

Vs 12-13 David's conviction is that God will judge evil, grows as he portrays the Lord as a righteous "warrior" with weapons of war [sword, bow, and arrows]. This is a poetic literary device, not a literal implication that God needs physical weapons in His defense of His people. What it does imply is that God has the means and the resources to act on behalf of the righteous. The visual reference presented here as "fiery shafts" are of arrows dipped in a flammable material such as oil or pitch and set aflame before being shot. If the wicked do not repent, their judgment is sure. The sharp sword, deadly weapons, and flaming arrows are metaphors of his inescapable judgment. God is *preparing* Himself for judgment at His appointed time.

g. Strophe 7 - Judgment of the Guilty (7:14-16)

i. Text:

Vs 14: Behold, he who travails with wickedness
And conceives mischief, brings forth falsehood.

Vs 15: He has dug a pit and hollowed it out
And has fallen into the hole he has made.

Vs 16: His mischief will return upon his own head,
And his violence will descend upon his own head.

ii. Exegesis:

Vs 14-16 Evil is metaphorically portrayed in these verses in the language of conception and birth. The wicked are people who are filled with evil, as a pregnant woman about to give birth. Once wickedness is born, it grows into "trouble" and "violence" (cf. Mark 7:21-22; James 1:14-15). The certainty of judgment (vv.12-13) and the prevalence of evil find their point of contact in the doctrine of the retribution of evil (cf. Proverbs 26:27; Matthew 26:52).

- 1** Wickedness in the Old Testament: The Hebrew word most commonly translated "wickedness" is *rasa`*. The masculine noun occurs over 250 times in the Old Testament and is found in tandem with the entire Hebrew vocabulary of sin. Wicked acts violate God's standards for life with other people and thus stand in sharp contrast to the standard of God's divine character. But wickedness is not committed against God (as, for instance, is iniquity). Wickedness is sin against others and one's community. Wicked acts are criminal in character, violating the rights of individuals and threatening the pattern of reciprocity that holds any community together. Dishonesty, violence, oppression, extortion, fraud, and other sins are the delight of the

wicked who themselves are presented as proud and vicious. Wickedness, then, looks at those persons and their acts that damage other persons and thus twist the pattern of society away from righteousness.

- 2 Wickedness in the New Testament: Several different Greek words are translated "wicked" and "wickedness" in the NIV, while the NASB tends to rely on two Greek roots to express this idea. Both versions translate *poneria* and *poneros* as "wicked." The concept is a strong one, focusing on actions that are dangerous because they are destructive to others. These Greek words are found most often in the Gospels (Matthew 12:39, 45; 13:49; 16:4; 18:32; Luke 6:35; 11:26, 29, 39; 19:22; Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:8, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:2; 2 John 11). *Adikia* and *adikos* are also translated "wicked" and "wickedness" in both versions. The words indicate the idea of committing an deliberate injustice. They are found in several New Testament passages (Acts 1:18; 24:15; Romans 1:18; 6:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Timothy 2:19; 2 Peter 2:15). Other words are translated "wicked" in the NIV New Testament. One of them is *anomia*, which indicates one's contempt for the law by deliberately acting contrary to it. This word occurs fifteen times in the New Testament (Matthew 7:23; 13:41; 23:28; 24:12; Romans 4:7; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; Titus 2:14; Hebrew 1:9; 8:12; 10:17; 1 John 3:4); its related word *anomos* occurs ten times (Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37; Acts 2:23; 1 Corinthians 9:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 1:9; 2 Peter 2:8).

h. Strophe 8 - Praise of God's Righteousness (7:17)

i. Text:

Vs 17: I will give thanks to the LORD because of His righteousness
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

ii. Exegesis:

Vs 17 The righteous of humanity rejoice in the righteousness of God. His righteous judgment affects both the wicked and the righteous. The wicked fall, whereas the righteous experience deliverance in God's acts of judgment. The attribute of God's "righteousness" is what He does or will do on behalf of His own people. God is presented as a victorious God who triumphs over evil and will avenge His children. Despair is thus transformed into hope, and hope is expressed in the singing of praise to the Lord.

The "name" of the God of Israel is YAHWEH ("the LORD"). He alone is "God Most High." "Most High" is an epithet of deity and first occurs in the interaction between Melchizedek and Abraham, where it refers to God as the "Creator of heaven and earth" (cross reference Genesis 14:18-20, 22). Here the "Most High" describes the universal rule of God, to whom His subjects sing praise (cf. 9:2; 50:14; 92:16). The hope of the godly is in the final removal of evil. Therefore, their praise must include affirmations of God's righteousness present through the ages, and prophetically the

ultimate victory of our Lord Jesus in His life, death on the cross, resurrection, and gift of the Spirit as His caretaker until the end of days.