

# PSALMS

## Chapter 7

O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers and deliver me, <sup>2</sup>lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it in pieces, with none to deliver. <sup>3</sup>O LORD my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, <sup>4</sup>if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause, <sup>5</sup>let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it, and let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah* <sup>6</sup>Arise, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies; awake for me; you have appointed a judgment. <sup>7</sup>Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you; over it return on high. <sup>8</sup>The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me. <sup>9</sup>Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may you establish the righteous— you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God! <sup>10</sup>My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart. <sup>11</sup>God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day. <sup>12</sup>If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; <sup>13</sup>he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts. <sup>14</sup>Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. <sup>15</sup>He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. <sup>16</sup>His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends. <sup>17</sup>I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.

**7 title** *shiggaion*. Probably a literary or musical term). The word occurs only here (but see its plural in Hab 3:1). (CSB)

*Shiggaion*. Rare Hbr word, possibly a liturgical device. Some scholars argue that it borrows from an ancient Assyrian (or Akkadian) word that means “to complain” or “to lament.” *Cush, a Benjaminite*. Since Cush was from the tribe of Benjamin, he was almost certainly an ally of David’s enemy Saul. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, pursuers are like lions; vv 3–5, vow of innocence; vv 6–7, appointed judgment; vv 8–11, shield of the righteous; vv 12–16, punish the unrepentant; v 17, vow to thank and praise. (TLSB)

Although Psalm 7 is not a morning or evening prayer like the psalms which precede it, it is very similar to them in theme. Like the preceding psalms it is a plea for delivery from afflictions imposed by David’s enemies. (PBC)

**7:1–2** Initial summation of David’s appeal. (CSB)

**7:1** *O Lord my God* – David know that if God does not rescue him, no one can, so he begins the brief appeal with clear affirmation of his faith, stating that the Lord is his God in whom he has taken refuge. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*Refuge* – The figure of taking refuge (an implied comparison with the idea of seeking shelter) is common in the psalms; it means he has put his trust in the Lord for protection and safety. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*Save me* – His request is straightforward: “save me” (s.v. Ps. 3:2). The verb may be translated “save me” or “deliver me”; it can refer to a number of things, including here deliverance from people to pursue him. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*Deliver me* – (s.v. Ps. 22:20) it may have the connotation of being snatched or plucked from danger. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**7:2** *tear my soul apart* – As a shepherd, David was certainly familiar with the destruction a lion could cause as it picked apart a carcass. (TLSB)

Perhaps indicating that one of his enemies is prominent, or perhaps indicating that the many are represented as the enemy. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*like a lion*. As a young shepherd, David had been attacked by lions (see 1Sa 17:34–35). But it is also a convention in the Psalms to liken the attack of enemies to that of ferocious animals, especially the lion (see 10:9; 17:12; 22:12–13, 16, 20–21; 35:17; 57:4; 58:6; 124:6). (CSB)

**7:3–5** David pleads his own innocence; he has given his enemy no cause to attack him. (CSB)

**7:3** *this* – Charges brought against David in v 4. (TLSB)

In view of his prayer for vindication, these lines must be taken as a solemn assertion of his innocence. He is saying that he has not done these things and will willing to stake his life on it. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**7:4** *repaid my friend with evil*. The charge that he is denying is clarified in this verse. His enemy has apparently brought a slanderous charge that he had “repaid evil” (s.v. Ps. 10:15) to one who was at peace with him (s.v. Ps. 38:3). Not only does his oath continue in this verse in protest to the charge, but he interrupts the flow with a point to the contrary – in fact, “I delivered him who is my adversary without cause.” (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

When David asks for God’s help on the grounds that he is innocent and righteous, he is not declaring that he is without sin or that he has no guilt before God. He is simply defending himself against the false charges of the Benjamites. David has not harmed Saul’s family. On the contrary, he has passed up more than one chance to kill Saul, He has praised the men who buried Saul and Jonathan. He has punished the murderers of Saul’s son Ishbosheth. He has befriended Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth. (PBC)

**7:5** *my glory* – This is a way of referring to the core of one’s being (see 16:9; 30:12; 57:8; 108:1. The one he publicly praises as his trustworthy deliverer and defender). (CSB)

*In the dust* – The petitioner is so sure of his innocence that he puts it in an oath, that if he is guilty of the charge his enemies should kill him; but in saying this he clearly knows that he is innocent and has no intention of seeing them victorious over him. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

SELAH – Hebrew; untranslatable. Mainly in the first two books of Psalms. Probably refers to the accompaniment of the harps during the psalm. (TLSB p. 993)

This often occurs in the middle of a psalm and which apparently signals an interlude. “The Sela indicates that one must be still and quickly think through the words of the psalm; for they demand

a quiet and restful soul, which can grasp and hold to that which the Holy Spirit there presents and offers” (Luther). (Psalms – The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer p. 23)

Selah may be a musical notation. It could also be a point where a pause is desirable for the singer or reader of the psalm in order that the statement last made or the thought as a whole just developed may be reflected upon before the next turn of the thought appears. (Leupold)

**7:6–9** An appeal to the Judge of all the earth to execute his judgment over all peoples, and particularly to adjudicate David’s cause. (CSB)

**7:6** The psalmist puts forth request after request as he points out his heart before the Lord. Out the turmoil of his heart and the conviction of his innocence he calls on God to act now in judgment and in wrath. The purpose of the preceding section has been not only to vent his own feelings of frustration and express his indignation at the injustice done but also to move God to have compassion on his child. (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Psalms)

*Arise ... rise up.* Hebrew idiom frequently prefaces an imperative calling for immediate action with the call to arise. (CSB)

*anger.* God’s anger is always an expression of his righteousness. (CSB)

*Awake.* The Lord does not sleep (see 121:4) while evil triumphs and the oppressed cry to him in vain (as they do to Baal; see 1Ki 18:27). But the psalmists’ language of urgent prayer vividly expresses their anguished impatience with God’s inaction in the face of their great need (see 80:2; see also 78:65; Isa 51:9). (CSB)

Hyperbole, for the Lord does not sleep (cf 121:4), emphasizing David’s feelings and dire situation. (TLSB)

**7:7** *assembly of the peoples* – Not just David’s enemies, but also God’s enemies. (TLSB)

**7:8** *judges* – Statement of fact: God judges all people. The penalty may be immediate or delayed, but it is certain (cf v 11). David asks that he not be treated by an unfair standard. He is confident about God’s gracious outpouring and crediting of righteousness upon those who repent (cf vv 10–11). “When David boasts in other places about his righteousness, he speaks about his own cause against the persecutors of God’s Word. He does not speak of his personal purity” (Ap V 205). May we, too, be so confident in the blessings of repentance credited to us by God through faith. (TLSB)

**7:9** *righteous.* Very often the “righteousness” of God in the Psalms (and frequently elsewhere in the OT) refers to the faithfulness with which he acts. This faithfulness is in full accordance with his commitments (both expressed and implied) to his people and with his status as the divine King—to whom the powerless may look for protection, the oppressed for redress and the needy for help. (CSB)

*test* – Examine or search. (TLSB)

*minds and hearts.* Lit. “hearts and kidneys.” The Israelites used the words as virtual synonyms (but “heart” most often) to refer to man’s innermost center of conscious life. To “search mind and heart” was a conventional expression for God’s examination of man’s hidden character and motives (see Jer 11:20; 17:10; 20:12). (CSB)

*the righteous.* One of several terms in the OT for God's people; it presents them as justified or declared righteous and hence living rightly. In every human relationship they faithfully fulfill the obligations that the relationship entails, remembering that power and authority (of whatever sort: domestic, social, political, economic, religious, intellectual) are to be used to bless, not to exploit. (CSB)

**7:10–13** David's confidence that his prayer will be heard – A common feature in the prayers of the Psalter is a concluding expression of confidence that the prayer will be or has been heard). (CSB)

**7:10** *shield.* That one's king is his shield (protector) was a common concept in ancient Israel. That the Lord is the shield of his people is frequently asserted or claimed. (CSB)

*heart.* In Biblical language the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action—"the wellspring of life." (CSB)

**7:11** *righteous judge* – Judge who deliberates fairly and without error on the basis of the law. (TLSB)

*every day.* God's judgments are not all kept in store for some future day. (CSB)

*feels indignation* – Is moved to righteous anger. (TLSB)

**7:12** *does not repent* – We often fail to realize how perilous the position of the impenitent really is. (Leupold)

God's Word turns our thoughts back to Him. The first step in repentance is acknowledging the truth of what God has told us about ourselves: we are conceived and born sinful creatures in dire need of God's mercy. (TLSB)

**7:13** *deadly weapons* – Flaming arrows; God shoots lightning. (TLSB)

A fuller description of God as a divine warrior is found in Psalm 98. His lightnings are the flaming arrows (cf. 18:14). The reference is to arrows dipped in flammable material such as oil or pitch and set aflame before being shot. The sharp sword, deadly weapons, and flaming arrows are metaphors for inescapable judgments. (The Expositors Bible Commentary – Psalms)

**7:14–16** David comforts himself with the common wisdom that under God's rule "crime does not pay." (CSB)

**7:14** *Evil* – Chemnitz: "The corrupt inclination of our nature which produces evil desires, even if the intention has not been made" (*LTh* 2:429). (TLSB)

*pregnant with mischief* – Lies are premeditated and nurtured by the wicked. (TLSB)

**7:15** *pit...falling into it* – Vividly portrays with a comparison to digging a pit: he dug a pit and scooped it out, but has fallen into the pit that he prepares as a trap for the righteous – perhaps falling into it while preparing it as the imperfect tense might suggest (see Ps. 9:15; 35:8; 57:6 and Prov. 26:27). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**7:16** *mischief returns upon his own head* – The retribution from God, for his trouble and violence will come down on his head (see 1 Sam. 25:39; see another example how the gallows that Ahaman had built for Mordecai in the Book of Esther became his place of execution). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**7:17** A vow to praise. Many prayers in the Psalter include such vows in anticipation of the expected answer to prayer. They reflect Israel’s religious consciousness that praise must follow deliverance as surely as prayer springs from need—if God is to be truly honored. Such praise was usually offered with thank offerings and involved celebrating God’s saving act in the presence of those assembled at the temple (see 50:14–15, 23). The praise of God in the Psalter is rarely a private matter between the psalmist and the Lord. It is usually a public (at the temple) celebration of God’s holy virtues or of his saving acts or gracious bestowal of blessings. In his praise the psalmist proclaims to the assembled throng God’s glorious attributes or his righteous (see, e.g., 22:22–31; 56:12–13; 61:8; 65:1; 69:30–33). To this is usually added a call to praise, summoning all who hear to take up the praise—to acknowledge and joyfully celebrate God’s glory, his goodness and all his righteous acts. This aspect of praise in the Psalms has rightly been called the OT anticipation of NT evangelism.]. (CSB)

*name of the LORD* – The name of the Lord is the manifestation of his character. It has no separate existence apart from the Lord, but is synonymous with the Lord himself in his gracious manifestation and accessibility to his people. Hence the Jerusalem temple is the earthly residence of his name among his people (see 74:7; Dt 12:5, 11; 2Sa 7:13), and his people can pray to him by calling on his name (see 79:6; 80:18; 99:6; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17). The name of the Lord protects (see 20:1; Pr 18:10); the Lord saves by his name (see 54:1); and his saving acts testify that his name is near (see 52:9). Accordingly, the godly “trust in” his name (20:7; 33:21), hope in his name (see 52:9), “sing praise” to his name (7:17; 9:2; 18:49) and “rejoice in” his name (89:16). Both the “love” and the “fear” that belong alone to God are similarly directed toward his name (love: 69:36; 119:132; fear: 61:5; 86:11; 102:15). (CSB)

*Most High*. The titles “most high,” “lord of heaven” and “creator of earth” were frequently applied to the chief Canaanite deity in ancient times. Terminology and location (Jerusalem was in central Canaan) thus indicate that Melchizedek was probably a Canaanite king-priest. But Abram, by identifying Melchizedek’s “God Most High” with “the LORD” bore testimony to the one true God, whom Melchizedek had come to know. (CSB)

**Ps 7** David, confident of his righteousness, petitions the Lord to judge him and his enemies justly. He repeatedly asserts that the righteousness of God’s justice must destroy unrepentant sinners, and he compares God’s wrath to that of a soldier preparing to meet his foe. What a startling image for those who refuse to repent of their sins! Yet the Lord also offers salvation through Christ Jesus. • O God, readily forgive and turn away Your righteous indignation from me. Put a new song on my lips—“praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.” Amen. (TLSB)