

Psalm 7

Prayer during the Day Monday Week 1

This is a prayer of one who is innocent and is being unjustly accused. He is appealing to the highest court – that of God, confident that God, his only chance of justice, will vindicate him and see that his accusers do not escape the consequences of their behaviour. Once we realise that God is love, and so does not control our response, we see that the problem is one of faith. Injustice may well triumph (in the short term) if people choose not to welcome and respond to grace. The title to the psalm reads: ‘A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to YHWH concerning Cush, a Benjaminite’. This is perhaps a reference to the news brought by Cush to David that David’s son, Absalom, was dead (see 2Samuel 18:21-32). ‘Shiggaion’ may refer to the rhythm of the music.

This is a cry for help, and also a confession of faith in God as saviour and a cry of trust. His description of his enemies reminds us of the following:

Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler
over a poor people.

– Proverbs 28:15

Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls
around, looking for someone to devour.

– 1Peter 5:8

‘Me’ in verse two translates Hebrew *nepeï*. See the article ‘Being’ in the Introduction. More than his physical being is under attack.

This is an oath formula. The psalmist is swearing that he is innocent even of doing anything against those who are taking him to court. Compare Job:

If I have rejoiced at the ruin of those who hated me, or
exulted when evil overtook them ... I have not let my
mouth sin by asking for their lives with a curse

– Job 31:29-30

Of the innocent Jesus, Peter says:

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he
suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to
the one who judges justly.

– 1Peter 2:23

It is hard when we are unjustly accused. However, since we are rarely entirely innocent, it is even harder when there are some grounds for the accusation but the accusation is exaggerated, taken out of context, and no opportunity is offered for forgiveness and reconciliation.

**¹YHWH* my God, in you
I take refuge; save* me
from all my pursuers.
Rescue me,
²or they will tear me* to
pieces like a lion; and
drag me off with no one
to rescue me.**

**³YHWH my God, if I
have done this, if there is
crime on my hands,
⁴if I have repaid with
harm one who has come
to me in peace* or taken
advantage of one who
has attacked me without
cause,
⁵then let the enemy pursue
and overtake me,
let them trample my life
to the ground, and lay
my entrails in the dust.**

[Selah*]

God is judge

**⁶Rise up, YHWH,
in your anger*; stir
yourself against the
fury of my enemies;
awake, O my God,
and pronounce in my
favour in the judg-
ment to which I am
summoned.**

**⁷An assembly of na-
tions gathers around
you; take your seat
above them on high –**

**⁸YHWH is judge of the
nations –**

**Give judgment in
my favour, YHWH,
in accordance with
justice*, for I am in-
nocent.**

**⁹Put an end to the evil
of the wicked. Defend
the just*, you who test
hearts* and feelings*,
O just* God.**

God is a judge, but not like a human judge, who imposes a punishment dictated by the law. God is a judge in that God sees and declares things as they really are. Moreover, as the psalmist declares in verses seven and eight, YHWH's jurisdiction is universal. Compare the following:

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?

– Genesis 18:25

There is no god besides you whose care is for all people,
to whom you should prove that you have not judged un-
justly.

– Wisdom 12:13

YHWH sits enthroned forever,
issuing judgment from his throne ...
He judges the world with justice;
with fairness he judges the nations.

– Psalm 9:7-8; see also Psalm 98:9

Compare also the following from the New Testament:

All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will
separate people one from another.

– Matthew 25:32

The psalmist insists on his innocence.

Pass judgment on me, YHWH,
for I have lived an honest lie,
trusting in YHWH without wavering.
Test me, YHWH, put me to the proof;
probe my feelings and my heart.
For your kindness is before my eyes,
and I walk in your faithfulness.

– Psalm 26:1-3

Because I have kept the ways of YHWH,
and have not repudiated my God. ...
Therefore YHWH has recompensed me for being just
for keeping my actions pure in his sight.

– Psalm 18:21, 24

The psalmist is calling on the just judge to oppose the evil being perpetrated by his false accusers.

You, YHWH of hosts, who judge righteously,
who try the heart and the mind,
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.

– Jeremiah 11:20 (see also Revelation 2:23)

On 'feelings' (literally 'kidneys') see the article 'Heart-kidneys' in the Introduction.

God's judgment is always just:

I YHWH test the heart and search the feelings,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

– Jeremiah 17:10

All deeds are right in the sight of the doer,
but YHWH weighs the heart.

– Proverbs 21:2

The psalmist is confident that he will not have to wait for justice, since God is constant in condemning injustice.

This psalmist is still hoping that his accusers will change their mind. The evil effects of sin are projected onto God by the psalmist as though they came from God as punishment. See the article 'Anger of God' in the Introduction.

Verses fourteen to sixteen make it clear that the psalmist recognises that we bring punishment upon ourselves by what we do. The fury that comes upon us is 'of God' in the sense that it happens because we have defied God and broken communion with the source of life and happiness. We find this recognition also in the following:

They conceive mischief and bring forth evil and their heart prepares deceit.

– Job 15:35

You conceive chaff, you bring forth stubble; your breath is a fire that will consume you.

– Isaiah 33:11

James has the same teaching:

When [evil] desire has conceived, it is sin that it bears,
and when sin has reached full term,
it gives birth to death.

– James 1:15

Confident in God's justice, the psalmist gives thanks and praise.

¹⁰My shield is a God who saves* the upright* of heart*.

¹¹God pronounces a judgment* that is just*, God, who gives a verdict of condemnation every day.

¹²If they do not change their ways, God will whet his sword;

he will bend his bow, straight to the target;

¹³he is preparing for them his deadly weapons, arrows barbed with fire.

¹⁴Look at them! They conceive evil, are pregnant with malice, and give birth to lies.

¹⁵They made a pit, dug it deep, and fell into the hole they made.

¹⁶Their wicked deeds recoil upon themselves, and their cruel blows fall on their own heads.

¹⁷I will celebrate the justice* of YHWH, and sing out in praise the name YHWH, the Most High.