

Psalm 59

Prayer during the Day Friday Week 2

Enemies, like wild dogs, are prowling through the city plunged in darkness. The psalmist pleads with YHWH* to rise up and show them that he is the God of Israel, and will not allow Israel's enemies to prevail. The title reads: 'To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam*, when Saul ordered his house to be watched in order to kill him'. The incident is narrated in 1Samuel 19:11ff.

The psalmist is pleading with God to rescue him from his enemies. 'Life' in verse three translates the Hebrew *nepeš*. It is not only his physical life that they are after. They are out to destroy his dreams, his hopes and everything that gives meaning to his life. See the article 'Being' in the Introduction.

He feels that he can call on God for help, as he has not brought on this punishment by his own transgression, sin or guilt. There is an article on each of these in the Introduction.

The God of the starry hosts, the Lord of the cosmos, is the God of Israel and the Lord of history. Surely YHWH will not allow this injustice to prevail!

The first refrain in verse six is repeated in verse fourteen.

Foreign nations think they can do what they like in Jerusalem. They do not know the power of YHWH, the God of Israel!

This second refrain is repeated at the end of the psalm.

¹Rescue me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise up against me.

²Rescue me from those who work evil; from the bloodthirsty save* me.

³They are ruthless; even now they are out to take my life*, stirring up strife against me.

For no transgression* or sin* of mine, YHWH*,

⁴for no guilt* of mine, they hasten and make ready. Rouse yourself to my call, come and see!

⁵You, YHWH God of hosts*, are God of Israel. Awake to punish the nations; spare none of them who treacherously plot evil.

⁶They turn up at dusk, howling like wild dogs and prowling about the city.

⁷There they are snarling, their mouths filled with daggers – for they think 'Who will hear us?'

⁸But you laugh at them, YHWH; you hold the nations in disdain.

⁹O my strength, I watch for you; for you, O God, are my fortress.

¹⁰my God who shows me kindness*.

^{10b}God goes before me and shows me the defeat of my enemies.

¹¹Do not kill them, not if it means that my people will forget them. Use your power to make them totter, and bring them down, YHWH, our shield.

¹²The sin of their mouths is the loquacious nonsense that they utter; let them stay trapped in their insolence by the lies and the curses that they utter.

¹³Annihilate them in your wrath*; annihilate them that they may be no more, and that they may know that God rules in Jacob and to the utmost ends of the earth.

¹⁴*They turn up at dusk, howling like wild dogs and prowling about the city.*

¹⁵They roam about in search of food, and growl if they do not get their fill.

¹⁶But I will sing of your might; In the morning I will acclaim your kindness*. For you have been a fortress for me and a refuge in the day of my distress.

¹⁷*O my strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, my God who shows me kindness*.*

The psalmist does not want the enemies of Israel to be killed quickly. He wants them to fall from power, to suffer humiliation and to have to live through the results of their evil and then to be consumed. This will allow the people of Israel (Jacob) to witness what happens to them and remember God's special care for his people. It will also give time for the nations of the world to see that YHWH is Israel's God.

Verse fourteen repeats verse six.

The 'I' in verse sixteen is emphatic. The enemy are behaving like animals, and they will not prevail against YHWH. The psalmist, on the contrary, is confident in God's protection and when the day dawns after a night of darkness, he will give voice to his praise.

This refrain repeats verses nine and ten with a significant change. In verse nine the psalmist was on the watch for God. Here he sings in praise of God. His trust has brought him peace. He knows that YHWH heeds his plea.