

Hebrew Whiteboard

Biblical Hebrew and the Psalms

Psalm 6

Objectives

- 1. Identify verse structure by means of major disjunctive accents.**
- 2. Display verse structure by means of logical line diagramming.**
- 3. Interpret verse structure.**
- 4. Identify grammatical elements and poetic devices.**
- 5. Interpret poetic device function(s).**
- 6. Identify the psalm's structure.**

Psalm 6:1-2

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

silluq = end of v. 1

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: 1

disjunctive *rebia'*

יְהוָה 2

'atnach = primary disjunctive accent in this verse

אֶל-בְּאֶפְסַי תוֹכִיחֵנִי

silluq = end of v. 2

וְאֶל-בֵּיתְךָ תִּסְרְנֵי:

Psalm 6:1–2

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Psalm 6 superscription:
literary identification +
authorship; see Ps 3:1 slide.

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: 1

Parallel jussive
negative imperf
(1st: Hiphil יִכַּח, 2nd
Piel יִסַּר) 2ms
w/1cs pron. suff.;
w/adverb. prep.
phrases of manner.

Vocative of address.

יְהוָה 2

אֵל- בְּאַפִּיךָ תוֹכִיחֵנִי

וְאֵל- בְּחַמְתְּךָ תִּסְרֵנִי:

Psalm 6:3

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

tsinnor = secondary disjunctive

'oleh-veyored = primary disjunctive (spread across two words—predicate adjective + pronominal subject)

'atnach = secondary disjunctive in this verse

silluq = end of v. 3

3 תִּגְּבִי יְהוָה

כִּי אֶמְלֵל אֲנִי

רַפְּאֵנִי יְהוָה

כִּי נִבְהָלוּ עַצְמִי:

Psalm 6:3

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Qal imperative ms (I הִנֵּן) +
1cs pron. suff. + vocative.

3 קִיְנֵנִי יְהוָה

Causal noun clause w/ predicate
adjective + 1cs personal pronoun.

כִּי אֶמְלֵל אֲנִי

Qal imperative ms (I רַפֵּא) +
1cs pron. suff. + vocative.

רַפֵּאֲנִי יְהוָה

Causal clause w/Niphal perf
3cp (בהל) + noun subject (mp
+ 1cs pron. suff.).

כִּי נִבְהַלּוּ עַצְמִי:

Psalm 6:4

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

rebia' = secondary disjunctive

silluq = end of v. 4

4 וְנִפְשִׁי נִבְהַלָּה מְאֹד

וְאַתָּה יְהוָה

עַד-מָתִי:

Psalm 6:4

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Disjunctive clause: *waw* +
noun w/1cs pron. suff. +
Niphal perf 3fs (בהל)

וּנְפִשִׁי נִבְהַלָּה 4

Adverb modifying verb.

מֵאֵד

Adversative conjunction + 2ms personal
pronoun + vocative of address.

וְאַתָּה יְהוָה!

Interrogative compound
particle of time.

עַד-מִתְּיָי:

Psalm 6:1–4 — Translation

- 1** A psalm by David.
- 2** O YHWH, do not discipline me in Your anger;
And do not chastise me in Your fury.
- 3** Be gracious to me, O YHWH, because I am frail;
Heal me, O YHWH, because my bones are horrified—
- 4** Even my soul is very horrified!
But as for You, O YHWH: How long?

Psalm 6:1–4 — Translation

1 A psalm by David.

2 **O YHWH**,
do not **discipline** me
in Your **anger**;
And do not **chastise** me
in Your **fury**.

3 **Be gracious** to me, **O YHWH**,
because **I** am **frail**;
Heal me, **O YHWH**,
because **my bones** are **horrified**—

4 Even **my soul** is **very horrified**!
But as for You, **O YHWH**:
How long?

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- Verse 1 contains the psalm superscription (see slides on Pss 3:1, 10; 4:1, 10; 5:1, 14) and identifies David as the author of Ps 6.
- Verse 2 commences the psalm proper.
- The psalm opens with
 - a quadruple vocative of address to YHWH,
 - two verses of synonymous parallelisms of two lines each (vv. 2–3), and
 - an emphatic explanatory clause in v. 4 to expand upon v. 3b.

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- **Two negative jussive clauses parallel each other in v. 2.**
 - **Both commence with the subjective negative typical with jussives: לֹא.**
 - **Both place the adverbial prepositional phrase before the verb for emphasis.**
 - **Both use a jussive imperfect 2ms with 1cs pronominal suffix as object.**
- **The emphatic prepositional phrases use two synonyms for “anger”/“wrath”/“fury.”**

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- The 2ms pronominal suffixes on the two words for “anger” have YHWH as antecedent—David addresses Him with his requests.
- The 1cs suffixes on the two verbs have David as their antecedent—he is the object of both verbs.
- The first verb is Hiphil imperf 2ms from כָּחַ = “chasten” (or “punish”) and God is always the subject; the verb does not occur in Qal, so the Hiphil is not causative.

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- The second verb is Piel imperf 2ms from יָסַר = “chastise”/“rebuke”/“teach”; probably iterative here: “do not keep on chastising me.”
- These two verb roots occur together in a number of wisdom contexts: Job 5:17; Prov 3:12[Eng. 11]; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5.
- Identical to Ps 38:2 except first prepositional phrase is אֲרִיבָהּ (different word for “anger”).
- David must have sinned and requests that God not chastise him in anger—indicating a fairly serious sin.

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- **Like v. 2, v. 3 also displays two parallel lines:**
 - **Both begin with an imperative with 1cs pronominal suffix as object.**
 - **Both place the vocative “YHWH” next.**
 - **Both continue with a causal clause expressing David’s reason for each strong request.**
 - **They differ with regard to the grammatical structure for each causal clause.**

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- In v. 3 the vocative “YHWH” recedes to focus more on David’s positive requests.
- As in v. 2, v. 3’s 1cs pronominal suffixes take David as the antecedent.
- “Be gracious to me” (הַיְיָ, Qal imperat. ms, הַיְיָ) represents a stronger mood than v. 2’s jussives; David expresses a strong request (and desire) for God’s unmerited favor (grace).

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- David’s reason for his request for grace is due to his state of frail condition (אָמַלְלָהּ, a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible)—expressed by means of a noun clause:
 - Predicate adjective ms followed by 1cs personal pronoun as subject—normal word order for this type of clause.
 - An indefinite predicate indicates that the clause describes/classifies the subject: “I am frail.”

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- The second imperative (רַפְּאֵנִי, Qal ms, רפא), “heal me,” refers to physical healing or restoration—implying disease as part of God’s chastening of David, or some need for physical or spiritual restoration.
- The causal clause in this case consists of a verbal clause with a Niphal perfect 3cp (בהל) with “my bones” (עַצְמוֹתַי) as the subject (parallel to אֲנִי, “I,” in the previous causal clause).

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- The verb **גִּבְּהָלוּ**.
 - No Qal exists, so Niphal represents the simple stem.
 - The perfect here indicates a real state looked at as a whole (completely)—something ongoing, not completed.
 - The root means “be horrified/alarmed” by something unexpected, threatened, or disastrous (see Martens, “גִּבְּהָל,” in *TWOT*, 92).
 - “My bones” as subject implies either a very deep or a very personal horror/alarm.

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- **Poetic hinge:** begins v. 4 inverting the last two words in v. 3:

נְבִיאִי נְבִיאִי
וְנַפְשִׁי וְנַפְשִׁי

- **Anadiplosis:** ends v. 3 and begins v. 4 with the same concept (**personal reference to David**).
- **Same verb root (נבּהל) and stem (Niphal) also occur—emphasizing David’s deep horror or alarm.**

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- The conjunction beginning v. 4 indicates a disjunctive clause (*waw* + non-verb) providing explanation for previous causal clause.
- The first word of v. 4 is the third term referring to David personally: “I” (אָנִי), “my bones” (עֲצָמוֹתַי), and “my soul/life” (נַפְשִׁי).
- Sometimes נַפְשִׁי = אָנִי (“I”), so could be translated: “I am very horrified/alarmed.”
- Repetition: the root בָּהַל occurs 3x in this psalm (vv. 3, 4, and 11).

Psalm 6:1–4 — Observations

- The adverb **רַבְּמָאֵד** (“very”) continues and preserves the intensity expressed by grammar and vocabulary in these early verses of Ps 6.
- The second half of v. 4 returns to YHWH as the topic in dramatic fashion:
 - Disjunctive clause = contrast: “but”
 - 2ms personal pronoun = “as for You”
 - Emphatic exclamatory interrogative = “How long?”
 - Aposiopesis: unfinished thought—expressing extreme emotion and frustration.

Psalm 6:5

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

5 שׁוֹבָה יְהוָה

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

חֲלָצָה בְּפִשִׁי

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי

silluq = end of v. 5

לְמַעַן חֲסִדְךָ:

Psalm 6:5

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Qal imperative ms (שוב) with
paragogic ה + vocative of address.

5 שׁוּבָה יְהוָה

Piel imperative ms (הלץ) with
paragogic ה + direct obj. with 1cs
pron. suff.

חֲלֹצָה נַפְשִׁי

Hiphil imperative ms (ישע)
with 1cs pron. suff. object

הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי

Adverbial prep. phrase, causal
+ noun w/2ms pron. suff.

לְמַעַן חֲסִינָה:

Psalm 6:6

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

silluq = end of v. 6

6 כִּי אֵין בַּמַּיִת זְכָרָךְ

בְּשֵׂאוֹל

מִי יוֹדֵה-לָךְ:

Psalm 6:6

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Adverbial causal clause with
negative of existence.

6 כִּי אֵין

Adverbial prep. phrase,
location + subj. w/2ms
pron. suff.

זְכֹרָהּ

בַּמִּוֹת

Adverbial prep. phrase, location.

בְּנִשְׁאוֹל

מִי יוֹדֶה-לָּךְ:

Interrogative +
Hiphil imperf. 3ms
(יִדַּע) + prep.
w/2ms pron. suff.

Psalm 6:5–6 — Translation

- 5** Return, O YHWH,
Rescue me;
Deliver me,
on account of Your loyal love—
- 6** There is not in death remembrance of
You;
In Sheol who will thank You?

Psalm 6:5–6 — Translation

5 Return, O **YHWH**,

Rescue me;

Lit., “my soul”

Deliver me,

on account of **Your** loyal love—

6 There is not **in death** remembrance

of **You**;

In Sheol who will thank **You**?

Psalm 6:5–6 — Observations

- Three imperatives highlight v. 5.
 - Paragogic ך occurs on the first two, indicating
 - a more honorific address to God *and/or*
 - a sense of urgency *and/or*
 - ballast for poetic lines (4 / 4 / 4).
 - 3 different stems: Qal, Piel, and Hiphil.
 - Piel of הלץ has specialized meaning: “rescue.”
 - Hiphil of שׁע׳ is due to lack of Qal in that root.

Psalm 6:5–6 — Observations

- “My soul” (נַפְשִׁי, v. 5b) most likely = “me” or “my life” (see use in v. 4).
- Four syllables for הוֹ-שִׁי-עַ-נִּי might be reason for paragogic ה on first two imperatives.
- Triplet of imperatives conveys the psalmist’s emphatic request.
- Causal לְמַעַן = “on account of”—establishes God’s loyalty as foundational to His response to David’s urgent prayer.

Psalm 6:5–6 — Observations

- The כִּי-clause commencing v. 6 appears causal, but could be either emphatic or deictic (I chose the latter).
 - It follows v. 5’s causal clause (לְמַעַן).
 - Adverbially modifies הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי (“deliver me”).
- “Not-in-death-remembrance-of-You” rather than simply “there is no remembrance of You in death,” because
 - *munachs* tie אֵין בַּמָּוֶת זְכוֹרָךְ together and
 - word order emphasizes “in death” (בַּמָּוֶת).

Psalm 6:5–6 — Observations

- “Remembrance” (זָכַר) does not refer to inner memory per se, but to invoking God or mentioning Him in a liturgical setting, or even repentance (as in Ps 22:28[Eng. 27])—see Bowling, “זָכַר,” in *TWOT*, 241–43.
- In v. 6b another locative adverbial phrase is emphatic in word order: בְּשֵׂאוֹל (“in Sheol”) parallel to “in death.”

Psalm 6:5–6 — Observations

- Sheol refers to the place where departed spirits reside (I disagree with R. Laird Harris, “שְׁאוֹל,” in *TWOT*, 892–93); see Gerleman, “שְׁאוֹל,” in *TLOT*, 3:1279–82.
- “Who will thank You?” = rhetorical question with understood negative answer: no one praises God in Sheol; best understood as a reference to the ungodly dead—those who cannot repent (“remembrance”) after leaving this life.

Psalm 6:7

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

rebia' = secondary disjunctive

7 יִגְעַתִּיו בְּאַנְחֹתַי

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

אֲשַׁחֲהָ בְּכָל-לַיְלָה

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

מִטָּתִי

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

בְּדַמְעֹתַי

silluq = end of v. 7

עַרְשֵׁי אֲמֹסָה:

Psalm 6:7

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Qal perf. 1cs; characteristic present.

יָגַעְתִּי | 7

Adverbial prep. phrase, instrument;
+ 1cs pron. suff.

בְּאֲנָחְתִּי

אֲשַׁחֲהָ

Hiphil imperf. 1cs (שָׁחָה); continuous.

בְּכָל-לַיְלָה

Adverbial prep. phrase, temporal.

מִטָּתִּי

Adverbial prep. phrase,
instrument; + 1cs pron. suff.

בְּדַמְעֹתַי

Nouns, dir. obj. + 1cs pron.
suff.

עַרְשֵׁי

אֲמַסָּה:

Hiphil imperf. 1cs (מָסָה); continuous.

Psalm 6:8

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

8 עֲשֵׂה מִכַּעַם עֵינָי

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

עֲתֻקָּה

silluq = end of v. 8

בְּכָל-צֹרְרָי:

Psalm 6:8

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Qal perf. 3fs (עשׂה);
present perfect.

עֲשֵׂה 8

Adverbial prep. phrase, reason/cause.

מִכֵּעַם

Noun, subject +
1cs pron. suff.

עֵינַי

Qal perf. 3fs (עָתָה); present perfect.

עָתָה

Adverbial prep. phrase,
reason/cause; + 1cs pron. suff.

בְּכָל-צוּרַי:

Psalm 6:7–8 — Translation

7 I grow weary with my groaning;
I flood my bed all night long;
With my tears I drench my couch.

8 My eye has become clouded because of
sorrow—
Has grown old because of all my foes.

Psalm 6:7–8 — Translation

7 **I** grow weary
with **my** groaning;
I flood **my** bed
all night long;
With **my** tears
I drench **my** couch.

Tricolon with
1cs emphasis.

Adverbial phrase
modifies following verb.

8 **My** eye
has become clouded
because of sorrow—
has grown old
because of all **my** foes.

Psalm 6:7–8 — Observations

- **Three lines (tricolon) comprise v. 7; expressing a climax (David’s severe depression).**
- **The perfect verb (יָגַעְתִּי) expresses the reality of David’s state viewed as a whole: “I grow weary”—or, “I am exhausted.”**
- **This verb is the first of 9 occurrences of 1cs in vv. 7–8, comprising a focus on David’s personal situation.**

Psalm 6:7–8 — Observations

- The first of 3 uses of ׀-preposition phrases comes in v. 7a, representing the instrument or means of David’s growing weary: “with groaning.”
- Verse 7b continues with an imperfect verb (אֲשַׁקֵּה) expressing either continual or frequentative action.
- A second ׀-preposition phrase presents a temporal adverb, “all night long.”

Psalm 6:7–8 — Observations

- “My bed” (מִטָּה < מִטָּתִּי) as direct object, follows the adverbial phrase in normal word order.
- Verse 7c displays a different order than vv. 7a and 7b by fronting the לְ-*preposition phrase*.
- Emphasis characterizes v. 7c:
 - Direct object (עַרְשִׁי, “my couch”) as well as the adverbial prepositional phrase come before the verb.
 - Reference to “tears” heightens the emotion.
 - Repetition of two synonyms for “bed/couch.”
 - Climactic function of the tricolon.

Psalm 6:7–8 — Observations

- **7 uses of 1cs (3 verbs + 4 pronominal suffixes) make a very personal, climactic complaint by David.**
 - **An argument could be made for v. 5 being the climactic tricolon with David’s plea for deliverance.**
 - **Vv. 5 and 7 may also use the tricolon to introduce a new stanza of the poem.**
- **“Tears” heightens the emotional content and anticipates “eye” in v. 8.**

Psalm 6:7–8 — Observations

- The two imperfects (אֲשַׁקֶּה and אֲמַסֶּה) present assonance to unify the tricolon and provide an esthetic element.
- Both imperfects are Hiphil, focusing on causation; the imperfects both present continual or frequentative action.
- Verse 8 continues the stanza with another pair of verbs (עֲשֵׂה־נֶפֶשׁ and עֲתִקֶה) displaying assonance with the same effects.

Psalm 6:7–8 — Observations

- The two perfects depict present perfects to highlight a resultant condition or state.
- Both are followed by causal prepositional phrases modifying their respective verbs adverbially.
- The middle word (עֵינַי, “my eye”) of the verse is subject for both verbs and acts as a hinge.
 - Note: בְּכֹל-צֹרְרָי actually acts as one word due to *maqqeph*; GKC, 63 (§16a).

Psalm 6:7–8 — Observations

- The phrase כָּל-צֹרְרֵי appears as the first of three totality phrases describing the ungodly (see v. 9, כָּל-פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן, and v. 11, כָּל-אֹיְבֵי).
- The phrase thus anticipates the final stanza and creates a chiastic arrangement of the three, highlighting the middle phrase:
 - a “my foes”
 - b “workers of iniquity”
 - a' “my enemies”

Psalm 6:7–8 — Observations

- **By describing his “eye” as “clouded” and “grown old,” David provides a classic description of how people look who are ill, exhausted, depressed, and reduced to frequent weeping.**
 - **We refer to red eyes, dark circles under the eyes, and puffiness around the eyes.**
 - **Such a situation certainly affects the eyes and ages a person’s countenance.**