

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-בְּאֶפְסֹתַי תּוֹכִיחֵנִי

silluq = end of v. 2

וְאֶל-בִּתְּחִלָּתְךָ 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 יָכַח, 2nd
Piel יָסַר) 2ms
w/1cs pron. suff.;
w/adverb. prep.
phrases of manner.

Vocative of address.

יְהוָה 2

אֵל-בְּאִפְנֵי תוֹכִיחֵנִי

וְאֵל-בְּחִמּוֹתַי 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 קִיְנוּנִי יְהוָה

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

כִּי אֶמְלֵל אֲנִי

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

רָפְאֵנִי יְהוָה

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

כִּי נִבְהָלוּ 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)

וְנִפְּשִׁי 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 (נבא)** 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 **רַבְּמָאֵל** (“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 בְּפִשִּׁי

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי

silluq = end of v. 5

לְמַעַן חֲסִדֶּךָ:

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.

זְכִּירָהּ

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 זְכוֹרָה 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.

7 יִגְעַתִּי |

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

בְּאִנְקָתִי

Hiphil imperf. 1cs (שָׁחָה); continuous.

אֲשַׁחָה

בְּכָל-לַיְלָה

Adverbial prep. phrase, temporal.

מִטָּתִי

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

בְּדִמְעוֹתַי

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 (עֲשִׂשֶׁה and עֲתַקֶּה) 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: בְּכָל-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.**

Psalm 6:9

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

9 סֹוֹרוּ מִמְּנִי

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

כָּל-פְּעָלֵי אֲוֹן

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

כִּי-שָׁמַע יְהוָה

קוֹל בְּכִי:

silluq = end of v. 9

Psalm 6:9

Adjust to display grammatical and parallel relationships.

Qal imperat. mp (< סוּר). 


9 סוּרוּ

Adverbial prep. phrase, ablative/separative; + 1cs pron. suff. 

מִמֶּנִּי 

Construct phrase; vocative of address. 

כָּל-פְּעָלֵי אֲנִי

Causal clause with Qal perf. (past or present characteristic) 3ms and subject. 

כִּי-שָׁמַע יְהוָה

קוֹל בְּכִי:

Construct phrase; direct object. 

Psalm 6:10

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

10 שְׁמַע יְהוָה

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

תְּחַנְּנֵנִי

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

יְהוָה

silluq = end of v. 10

תְּפַלְּלֵנִי יְקָח:

Psalm 6:10

Adjust to display grammatical and parallel relationships.

Qal perf. (past or present characteristic) 3ms and subject.

A שָׁמַע יְהוָה 10

Subject; emphatic word order.

B תְּחַנְּנֵנִי

Direct object. + 1cs pron. suff.

C יְהוָה

Chiasm.

Direct object. + 1cs pron. suff.; emphatic word order.

B' תִּפְלֵנִי

Qal imperf. 3ms (< לקח); same verb use as first verb in verse.

A' יִקַּח:

Psalm 6:11

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

mehuppak legarmeh = tertiary disjunctive

יִבְשׁוּ 11

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

וַיִּבְהֹלוּ מְאֹד

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

כָּל-אֵיבֵי

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

יָשָׁבוּ

יִבְשׁוּ רַגְעַ:

silluq = end of v. 11

Psalm 6:11

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Qal imperf. 3mp (< בּוֹשׁ); future culminative.

יִבְשׁוּ | 11

Niphal imperf. 3mp (< בִּהַל); future culm.

וַיִּבְהֲלוּ

Adverb.

מְאֹד

Construct phrase + 1cs pron.
suff.; vocative of address.

כָּל-אֵיכָּה

Qal imperf. 3mp (< שׁוּב); future culm.

יִשְׁבוּ

Qal imperf. 3mp (< בּוֹשׁ); future culm.

יִבְשׁוּ

Noun, adverbial accusative.

רִגְעַ:

Psalm 6:9–11 — Translation

- 9** Depart from me, all *you* doers of iniquity,
Because YHWH hears the sound of my
weeping.
- 10** YHWH hears my plea;
YHWH accepts my prayer.
- 11** All my enemies will be ashamed and very
horrified;
They will turn back—will be abruptly
ashamed.

Psalm 6:9–11 — Translation

9 Depart from me, **all you doers of iniquity**,
Because **YHWH hears** the sound of my
weeping.

10 **YHWH hears** my plea;
YHWH accepts my prayer.

11 **All my enemies will be ashamed**
and very horrified;
They will turn back—
will be abruptly ashamed.

1st, 3rd, and 4th
verbs—assonance

Psalm 6:9–11 — Observations

- An imperative masculine plural begins v. 9, indicating a change marking a new stanza in the psalm.
- The command is a warning to leave David be.
- David addresses the “doers of iniquity”—those whom he identifies as his “foes” (v. 8) and “enemies” (v. 11)—a triplet of references.
- The causal clause brings YHWH back into the picture following his absence in vv. 6–8; yet another triplet in vv. 9–11.

Psalm 6:9–11 — Observations

- The double occurrence of שָׁמַע יְהוָה (vv. 9, 10) presents an ambiguous timing for the perfect verbs—either present perfect (“has heard”) or present characteristic (“hears”).
 - Such ambiguity requires the reader (and David’s enemies) to think.
 - The perfect expresses a simple statement of fact in either tense.

Psalm 6:9–11 — Observations

- **YHWH’s hearing/acceptance of David’s prayer provides another triplet.**
- **Yet another triplet appears in the three descriptions of David’s prayer: “sound of my crying,” “my plea,” and “my prayer.”**
- **Triplets are an expansion of the normal double reference in usual parallelism—making the point more clearly and fully—a form of emphasis.**

Psalm 6:9–11 — Observations

- The end of v. 10 (יְהוָה תִּפְּלֵתִי יְקַח) uses emphatic word order by fronting the subject and the direct object ahead of the verb.
- The imperfect verb allows the same range of timing as the two perfects of שָׁמַע and also explains how He hears: He “accepts”—implying a positive answer.
 - The imperfect adds the sense of progressive action, whether incipient (“has accepted”), culminative (“*finally* has accepted”), continuous (“is accepting”), or characteristic (“accepts”).

Psalm 6:9–11 — Observations

- A chiasm occurs as the internal structure of v. 10, adding to the emphasis on “YHWH”:

A **YHWH hears**
 B **my plea;**
 C **YHWH**
 B' **my prayer**
A' **accepts** .

- Just as the poem opened with a focus on YHWH, so it ends—the psalm is theocentric—focus on God is the chief weapon against depression.

Psalm 6:9–11 — Observations

- In v. 11 David voices confidence in what YHWH will eventually do to his enemies.
- David uses four imperfects arranged in pairs, with the 1st and 4th verbs being identical:
“they **will be ashamed** and **very horrified**”
“they **will turn back**— **will be abruptly ashamed**”
- The 2nd verb appears for the third time in the psalm (see vv. 3, 4)—another triplet; also an inclusio and expressing equivalent retribution (their horror for his horror).

Psalm 6:9–11 — Observations

- The 1st, 3rd, and 4th verbs exhibit consonantal assonance (same 4 consonants—the middle verb transposes middle 2 consonants):

יִבְּשׁוּ -- יִשְׁבוּ -- יִבְּשׁוּ

- Assonance links these 3 verbs together so that “turn back”/“be ashamed” speak of the same event—David’s enemies will be shamed by failure to be victorious in their attacks on him.
- Assonance also makes for an emphatic closing to the psalm.

Psalm 6:9–11 — Observations

- The final verse could also be understood as a chiasm:

יִבְּשׁוּ וַיִּבְהֲלוּ מְאֹד A
כָּל-אֲיָרֵי B
יָשֻׁבוּ יִבְּשׁוּ רְגַע: A'

1. Climactic stanza expressing confidence (Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 183).
2. Merism referring to totality (ibid., 184).
3. Word play (assonance) indicating a dramatic reversal (ibid., 246).

Psalm 6 — Structure

- **Changes to observe for structure:**
 - **Vocatives: “YHWH” (vv. 2–5) and “all doers of iniquity” (vv. 9–10)**
 - **Particles (independent deictic or emphatic ׀, v. 6)**
 - **Changes in person and number of verbs (vv. 2–5, 7, 9)**
 - **Triplets (vv. 3, 5, 7, 9–10)**
 - **Closely parallel lines distinct from others in the psalm (vv. 2, 8, 11)**
 - **Chiasm (vv. 10, 11)**

Psalm 6 — Structure

Literary superscription (v. 1 [6:1b])

I. Prayer of a Penitent Man (vv. 2–4)

II. Plea of a Needy Man (vv. 5–8)

A. YHWH's Unfailing Love (vv. 5–6)

B. Psalmist's Failing Life (vv. 7–8)

III. Proclamation of an Accepted Man (vv. 9–11)

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **v. 2:** Immediately David sets the theocentric focus of this psalm with the very first word addressing YHWH by name.
- **v. 2:** David's prayer for YHWH not to discipline him in anger implies that David had sinned and brought upon himself part of his current suffering.
- **v. 2:** David suffered from some physical ailment and needed God's gracious healing.

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **vv. 3–4:** 3 triplets (references to David in 1cs; description of his condition; references to YHWH) occur in these verses as well as the first 2 of 3 uses of בהל in the psalm (see v. 11).
- **vv. 3–4:** David is exceedingly horrified by his situation and heavily dependent upon YHWH, as expressed in his closing cry in this first stanza: “But as for You, O YHWH: How long?”
- **v. 5:** Now David urgently pleads for deliverance by means of 3 imperatives—another triplet.

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **v. 5:** Deliverance will result from YHWH's steadfast covenant love.
- **v. 6:** David believes his situation could result in his death, so he appeals to YHWH with the argument that he would be unable to praise Him and serve Him on earth.
- **v. 6:** This verse is unusual in both structure and content—enhancing the urgency of David's need for deliverance.

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **vv. 7–8:** The second section of the middle stanza (vv. 5–8) focuses on David’s failing health and the severity of his depression.
- **vv. 7–8:** 9 uses of 1cs make the personal nature of David’s experience undeniable—as difficult as it may be to conceive, this national hero and king suffers depression.
- **v. 7:** Two triplets occur in this tricolon: 3 1cs verbs and 3 אֶל -prepositional phrases—to open this section.

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **v. 7:** Assonance together with the focus on tears and the drenching of his bed, create an emotional climax at this point in the psalm.
- **v. 8:** The first of 3 references (another triplet) to David's enemies reveals that powerful men within the kingdom oppose their king.
- **vv. 9–11:** The urgency of 3 imperatives addressed to YHWH in v. 5 now turns to a single imperative addressed to David's enemies to open this final stanza.

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **vv. 9–11**: Triplets, chiasms, and assonance create a climax with which to conclude the psalm in a linguistically and literarily emphatic declaration of confidence.
- **v. 9**: David addresses his adversaries directly and tells them to depart, go away, cease and desist; his depression has given way to boldness.
- **vv. 9**: The reason for David's boldness arises from YHWH hearing his weeping.

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **v. 9:** David's depression lifted with the knowledge that YHWH cares enough for him to hear his uncontrollable weeping.
- **v. 10:** Not only does YHWH hear David's weeping, He hears his plea for grace.
 - The noun **חַנּוּן** comes from the root **חנן**, which is the same as for the verb at the start of v. 3 (**חַנּוּן**, “be gracious to me”).
 - David is aware of YHWH's grace (unmerited favor) to him, despite his sin.

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **v. 10:** Then, in a third declaration of YHWH hearing him, David recognizes that YHWH “accepts” his prayer.
- **v. 10:** Knowing that his prayer is accepted comes with the realization that he himself is accepted—he has worth before YHWH.
- **v. 10:** David uses a chiasm to focus on YHWH—he must concentrate on Him alone: “YHWH hears!” YHWH cares! YHWH is gracious and merciful! YHWH rescues from depression and from enemies!

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **v. 11:** Then the psalm closes with an amazing turn about—from depression to triumph; from hopelessness to confidence.
- **v. 11:** David's use of assonance and word play emphasizes the assurance he has gained concerning his enemies—they will be put to shame.
- **v. 11:** His own great horror (vv. 3–4) will characterize his enemies—an equivalent penalty in just retribution.

Psalm 6 — Summary

- **v. 11**: An inclusio brackets this final stanza by beginning with “Depart” (“Turn aside”; סוּרוּ) and ending with “they will turn back” (יָשׁוּבוּ)—verbs falling into the same semantic range.
- **v. 11**: The final word of the psalm (רָגַע, “abruptly,” “suddenly,” “in a moment”) contrasts with “all night long” (v. 7)—the long night of depression will suddenly change to a time of triumph.

Psalm 6 — Implications

- **Note the implications from this psalm for those who suffer from depression:**
 - **Depression sometimes comes due to guilt from sin (v. 2).**
 - **Depression sometimes arises from illness or results in physical illness (v. 3).**
 - **Fear often accompanies depression (v. 4a).**
 - **Depression makes the suffering seem interminable and God's response seems to never come (v. 4b).**

Psalm 6 — Implications

- **Note the implications from this psalm for those who suffer from depression:**
 - **Healing from depression must be accompanied by prayer (v. 5).**
 - **Healing from depression comes when we acknowledge that God's love is steadfast and loyal (v. 5b).**
 - **Thoughts of death can occur in depression (v. 6).**
 - **Exhaustion and uncontrollable weeping can accompany depression (v. 7).**

Psalm 6 — Implications

- **Note the implications from this psalm for those who suffer from depression:**
 - **Depression brings unbearable sorrow and ages a person (v. 8)—things that appear in the countenance (face and eyes).**
 - **Recovery from depression includes the realization that God hears your uncontrollable weeping (v. 9)—He cares.**
 - **Realizing God cares gives boldness to directly confront enemies (v. 9).**

Psalm 6 — Implications

- **Note the implications from this psalm for those who suffer from depression:**
 - **The knowledge that God accepts you (despite your sin and your depression) increases the healing (v. 10).**
 - **Healing from depression requires focusing more on God than on the problems (v. 10).**
 - **The outcome of the spiritual healing from depression consists of confidence and a trust that God will bring justice (v. 11).**

Psalm 6 — Preaching

- **We ought to pray for God’s mercy and grace in times of need.**
- **Only God can ultimately heal from all of life’s troubles and tears—from depression itself.**
- **By knowing God more intimately and more fully we gain the necessary weapons to combat depression and fear.**