Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs:
The Master Musician’s Melodies

Adult Sunday School
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Psalm 7 — Judge, O LORD

1.0 Introducing Psalm 7

1.1 “A Meditation of David”

• “Meditation” (Shiggaion) might mean “lamentation” or “agitated song.”
  ➢ The root of the word means “stray” or “stagger”—perhaps indicating either a melody that has slurs and trills or a rhythm that is not even.
• See Habakkuk 3:1, “A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth.”

1.2 “concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite”

• One of thirteen psalm headings referring to incidents in David’s life.
• There is no mention of a Benjamite named Cush in the Old Testament history of David.
• 1 Samuel 24:11-17?
• 2 Samuel 16?
• 2 Samuel 18:21-33?

1.3 “which he sang”

• Indicates that David composed this psalm and performed it.
• Therefore, “of David” is confirmed to be an indication of authorship.
2.0 Reading Psalm 7

A Meditation of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite.

7:1 O LORD my God, in You I put my trust;
    Save me from all those who persecute me;
    And deliver me,

7:2 Lest they tear me like a lion,
    Rending me in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

7:3 O LORD my God, if I have done this:
    If there is iniquity in my hands,

7:4 If I have repaid evil to him who was at peace with me,
    Or have plundered my enemy without cause,

7:5 Let the enemy pursue me and overtake me;
    Yes, let him trample my life to the earth,
    And lay my honor in the dust.  

7:6 Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;
    Lift Yourself up because of the rage of my enemies;
    Rise up for me to the judgment You have commanded!

7:7 So the congregation of the peoples shall surround You;
    For their sakes, therefore, return on high.

7:8 The LORD shall judge the peoples;
    Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
    And according to my integrity within me.

7:9 Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,
    But establish the just;
    For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.

7:10 My defense is of God,
    Who saves the upright in heart.

7:11 God is a just judge,
    And God is angry with the wicked every day.

7:12 If he does not turn back,
    He will sharpen His sword;
    He bends His bow and makes it ready.

7:13 He also prepares for Himself instruments of death;
    He makes His arrows into fiery shafts.

7:14 Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity;
    Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood.

7:15 He made a pit and dug it out,
    And has fallen into the ditch which he made.
7:16 His trouble shall return upon his own head,  
And his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown.

7:17 I will praise the LORD according to [His righteousness]  
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

To the Chief Musician. On the instrument of Gath.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 7

3.1 Outline

I. Superscription – Literary and Historical
II. Prayer for Refuge (vv. 1-2)
III. Protestation of Innocence (vv. 3-5)
IV. Prayer for Justice (vv. 6-13)
   A. Act Now (vv. 6-8)
   B. Act in My Defense (vv. 9-10)
   C. Act with Deadly Force (vv. 11-13)
V. Proclamation of Retribution (vv. 14-16)
VI. Praise for God’s Righteousness (v. 17)
VII. Subscription – Musical

3.2 Notes

• v. 1 “I put my trust”
  ■ “Trust” means to flee to in order to take refuge or shelter (cf. 2:12; 5:11).
    ➢ A problem is identified: Enemies (vv. 1-9).
    ➢ A complaint is filed: “Rise up against the rage of my enemies” (vv. 6, 14-16).
    ➢ A declaration of trust in God is confessed (vv. 1, 9-11).
    ➢ A petition is prayed: “Save and deliver me from all who pursue me” (vv. 1-9).
    ➢ A solution is specified: refuge in the Lord and personal integrity (vv. 1-2, 8, 10-13).
    ➢ A vow to praise God is declared: “I will give thanks to the LORD” (v. 17).

  ■ The psalmist appears to be genuinely innocent.

• v. 2 “tear me like a lion … Rending me in pieces”
  ■ In Hebrew poetic literature enemies are often depicted mauling their victims like a lion.
• vv. 3-5 Protestation of Innocence
  ■ The psalmist proclaims an oath of innocence by proposing those deeds which he has not done and supporting the punishment that should come upon him if he had been guilty.
  ■ Cf. 1 Kings 8:31-32; Job 31.

• v. 5 “me … my life … my honor”
  ■ David makes a threefold emphatic reference to himself.
  ■ “Me” is literally “my soul.”
  ■ “My honor” (or, “my glory”) probably is the equivalent of the preceding two words.

• v. 6 “Arise, O L ORD”
  ■ The same basic prayer was given at the time the ark of the covenant was sent forth with the Israelite army in war (Numbers 10:35).
  ■ The threefold reference to the L ORD’s initiation of action is emphatic.

• v. 7 “return on high”
  ■ Compare with the second prayer regarding the ark of the covenant in Numbers 10:36.

• vv. 8-11, 17 “my righteousness … the just … the righteous God … a just judge … His righteousness”
  ■ All of these are from the same Hebrew word (cf. Melchizedek).
  ■ The focus of the core of the psalm is on the concept of righteousness.

• v. 10 “defense”
  ■ Literally, “shield” (the small round shield used in close combat).
  ■ See Psalm 3:3.

• v. 14 “the wicked brings forth iniquity … conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood”
  ■ Evil doers are depicted as pregnant with evil.

• v. 16 Chiasm emphasizing retribution:
  a  shall return
     b  His trouble
     c  upon his own head
     c´ on his own crown
     b´ And his violent
  a´ dealing shall come down.
See, also, Proverbs 26:27 and Ecclesiastes 10:9-10 on the recompense that stems from the evildoer’s own deeds.

• “Learn from this Psalm
  ■ that God’s people are often sorely slandered;
  ■ that false accusation is very hard to bear;
  ■ that in such event it is best to go to God about it;
  ■ that He assuredly will judge the wicked and vindicate the righteous sooner or later;
  ■ that the law of retribution works with exactness (15, 16);
  ■ and that in spite of trouble we should sing (17).”
    — W. Graham Scroggie, The Psalms, 72

• “It was precisely because psalmists had to take evil seriously in their personal experience and in the world at large that they had to take God seriously.” (Robert Davidson, The Vitality of Worship, 35)

4.0 Singing Psalm 7 (to the tune of “Immortal, Invisible”)

Jehovah, my God, on Thy help I depend;  
From all that pursue me O save and defend;  
Lest they like a lion should rend me at will:  
While no one is near me their raging to still.

When wronged without cause I have kindness returned;  
But if I my neighbor maltreated and spurned,  
My soul let the enemy seize for his prey,  
My life and mine honor in dust let him lay.

O Lord, in Thy wrath stay the rage of my foes;  
Awake, and Thy judgment ordained interpose.  
Let peoples surround Thee and wait at Thy feet,  
While o’er them for judgment Thou takest Thy seat.

All nations of men shall be judged by the Lord;  
To me, O Jehovah, just judgment accord,  
As faithful and righteous in life I have been,  
And ever integrity cherished within.

Establish the righteous, let evil depart,  
For God, Who is just, tries the thoughts of the heart.
In God for defense I have placed all my trust;  
The upright He saves and He judges the just.

The Lord with the wicked is wroth every day,  
And if they repent not is ready to slay;  
By manifold ruin for others prepared  
They surely at last shall themselves be ensnared.

Because He is righteous His praise will I sing,  
Thanksgiving and honor to Him will I bring,  
Will sing to the Lord on Whose grace I rely,  
Extolling the Name of Jehovah Most High.

Words: Unknown  
Music: John Roberts, 1839

5.0 Praying Psalm 7

- The basis of prayer: our righteousness or God’s righteousness?

  ➢ Prayers like Psalm 7 “are not intended to be a litany of self-righteousness before God. The psalms know that there is no autonomous independent righteousness on the basis of which human beings can deal with God (130:3; 143:2). … They are the expression of a good conscience before hostility and opposition.” (James L. Mays, Psalms, Interpretation, 63-64)

- “Let us thank with this psalm “the Lord for his justice,” by putting the emphasis on his justice which is all too often not ours.” (Stanley L. Jaki, Praying the Psalms, 45)

- Lord, save me from those who would persecute me. [v. 1]
- Father, examine my life and help me to live with integrity. [v. 8]
- O God, deal with the wicked according to Your righteousness. [v. 9]

6.0 Applying Psalm 7

- When we are slandered, it is best to let God take care of the matter.
- The Lord knows the motives of both the just and the unjust.
- No matter what we face in the way of persecution, we ought to continue to sing praise to God.