Psalm 60 — From Defeat to Victory

1.0  Introducing Psalm 60

- Psalm 60 is the fifth consecutive Mikhtam by David (see Psalms 56–59).
  - See, also, Psalm 16 where the first Mikhtam appears.
- The purpose of Psalm 60 is to teach or instruct others. Compare 2 Samuel 1:18.
- The historical heading for Psalm 60 refers to the events of 2 Samuel 8:1-14 and 1 Chronicles 18:1-13. It is the longest historical superscription in Psalms.
- Psalm 108:6-13 repeats 60:5-12.

2.0  Reading Psalm 60 (NAU)

60:1  A Mikhtam of David, to teach; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.

O God, You have rejected us.
You have broken us;
You have been angry;
O, restore us.

60:2  You have made the land quake,
You have split it open;
Heal its breaches, for it totters.

60:3  You have made Your people experience hardship;
You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger.

60:4  You have given a banner to those who fear You,
That it may be displayed because of the truth.

60:5  That Your beloved may be delivered,
Save with Your right hand, and answer us!

60:6 **God** has spoken in His holiness:
“I will exult, I will portion out Shechem
and measure out the valley of Succoth.

60:7 “Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine;
Ephraim also is the helmet of My head;
Judah is My scepter.

60:8 “Moab is My washbowl;
Over Edom I shall throw My shoe;
Shout loud, O Philistia, because of Me!”

60:9 Who will bring me into the besieged city?
Who will lead me to Edom?

60:10 Have not You Yourself, O **God**, rejected us?
And will You not go forth with our armies, O **God**?

60:11 O give us help against the adversary,
For deliverance by man is in vain.

60:12 Through **God** we shall do valiantly,
And it is He who will tread down our adversaries.

For the choir director; on a stringed instrument.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 60

3.1 Outline

I. Historical Setting (v. 1a)
II. God Rejected by Defeat (vv. 1b-4)
III. God Reveals by Decree (vv. 5-8)
IV. God Relieves by Deliverance (vv. 9-12)

3.2 Notes

- v. 1 Historical superscription
  - “Joab” is Abishai in 1 Chronicles 18:12 and David in 2 Samuel 8:13.
  - Perhaps the differences reflect the chain of command: David as commander-in-chief, Joab as field commander, and Abishai as a subordinate to Joab.
  - “twelve thousand” is 18,000 in 2 Samuel 8:13 and 1 Chronicles 18:12.
  - Perhaps the variation in the numbers reflects different methods of calculating the casualties at separate levels in the chain of command.
  - Perhaps the differences indicate different engagements within the greater battle or even a series of battles.
  - “Edom” is Aram in 2 Samuel 8:13.
  - Perhaps the difference is due to both Edomites and Arameans being joined in the campaign against David’s forces.
• v. 2 “You have made the land quake”
  ■ David employs the imagery of an earthquake to describe the crushing defeat of Israel.
  ■ See Psalm 18:7.

• v. 3 “wine to drink that makes us stagger”
  ■ This image expresses divine judgment.

• v. 4 “That it may be displayed because of the truth”
  ■ “that they may flee to it from the bow” (ESV) or “a refuge for them out of bow shot” (NAB).
  ■ NIV: “you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow.”
  ■ NAU is preferable (cp. KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, NJPS).

• v. 6 “Shechem . . . the valley of Succoth”
  ■ Shechem represents the territory west of the Jordan River.
  ■ The valley of Succoth represents the territory east of the Jordan.
  ■ These two locations are mentioned in Genesis 33:17-18 as Jacob returns to the land promised to Abraham.
  ■ God indicates that He will fulfill His promise.

• v. 7 “Gilead . . . Manasseh . . . Ephraim . . . Judah”
  ■ Gilead and Manasseh are also east of the Jordan River.
  ■ Ephraim and Judah are the two major tribes west of the Jordan.
  ■ These are representative of all the tribes of Israel.

• v. 7 “helmet . . . scepter”
  ■ Helmet, scepter (or, a commander’s rod), washpot, and sandal could be the equipment of a warrior-king.
  ■ “Judah is My scepter” alludes to the prophecy of Jacob in Genesis 49:10.

• v. 8 “Moab is My washbowl”
  ■ Moab is depicted as a servant bringing a washbasin.
  ■ Washbasins or washpots were used for bathing and for toilet purposes. Such service was menial and humiliating.

• v. 8 “Over Edom I shall throw My shoe”
  ■ Throwing the shoe (or sandal) over Edom could express taking possession of that territory.
    ■ Although Ruth 4:7 appears to be similar, it is distinctly different in both action and purpose.
  ■ It is possible that the reference is to tossing the dirty sandals to servants for cleaning—an another menial and humiliating task. “Over” could be translated “to” or “at.”
• v. 9 “the besieged city”
  ■ Mountains and narrow gorges protected Edom’s cities (similar to the later Nabataean city of Petra).
  ■ By “Who will lead me to Edom?” David implies that the Lord is sovereign over Edom (v. 8). Perhaps He would aid David in the battle against Edom.

4.0 Singing Psalm 60

On a Day of Humiliation for Disappointments in War
(Tune: “Blessed Be the Name” minus the refrain)

1 Lord, hast thou cast the nation off?  2 The terror of one frown of thine
   Must we for ever mourn?                Melts all our strength away;
   Wilt thou indulge immortal wrath?     Like men that totter drunk with wine,
   Shall mercy ne’er return?              We tremble in dismay.

3 Great Britain shakes beneath thy stroke  4 Lift up a banner in the field
   And dreads thy threat’ning hand;        For those that fear thy name;
   O heal the island thou hast broke,     Save thy beloved with thy shield,
   Confirm the wav’ring land.             And put our foes to shame.

5 Go with our armies to the fight,      6 Our troops shall gain a wide renown
   Like a confed’rate God;               By thine assisting hand
   In vain confed’rate powers unite     ’Tis God that treads the mighty down,
   Against thy lifted rod.              And makes the feeble stand.

— Isaac Watts

5.0 Praying Psalm 60

• Lord, restore me to fellowship with You. [v. 1]
• Thank You, O God, for providing for Your people. [vv. 4-5]
• Teach me to trust You, rather than men. [v. 11]
• Lord, thank You for enabling Your people to be victorious. [v. 12]

6.0 Applying Psalm 60

• Only God can give true victory.
• His people must ask Him for that victory.
• God will fulfill His decrees.