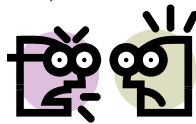


# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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## Psalm 64 — Slings and Arrows of Slander

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 64

- Psalm 64 is “part of the larger complex of Psalms 56–68, in which God’s mighty acts demonstrate his power over *all* the earth so that an increasingly expansive group joins in praising him.”—Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume I*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 898.
  - ✓ Note the use of “whole earth” in 66:1, 4, 8; 67:3-5; 68.
  - ✓ All nations praise God’s works in 67:3-4, 7.
- In Psalms 60–67 the dominant name for God is *Elohim*. The covenant name for God (*Yahweh/Jehovah*) occurs only one time (64:10). Such consistency for such a number of psalms is unique in the second book of the Psalter (Psalms 42–83). Compare 3 occurrences of *Yahweh* in Psalm 59, five occurrences in both Psalm 68 and Psalm 69, and five in Psalms 70–71 together. This emphasis on “God” (*Elohim*) is in keeping with the universal (rather than Israelite) theme of these psalms.
- Accepting the psalm heading as authentic, the most likely setting for Psalm 64 is the conspiracy and rebellion of David’s son Absalom (2 Samuel 15–18).
- Psalms 63 and 64 both conclude with rejoicing.

### 2.0 Reading Psalm 64 (NAU)

**64:1** A Psalm of David.

Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;  
Preserve my life from dread of the enemy.

**64:2** Hide me            from the secret counsel of evildoers,  
                                  From the tumult of those who do iniquity,

**64:3** Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword.  
They aimed bitter speech as their arrow,

**64:4** To shoot from concealment at the blameless;

Suddenly they shoot at him, and do not fear.

**64:5** They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose;  
They talk of laying snares secretly;  
They say, “Who can see them?”

**64:6** They devise injustices, *saying*,  
“We are ready with a well-conceived plot”;  
**For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep.**

**64:7** But God will shoot at them with an arrow;  
Suddenly they will be wounded.

**64:8** So they will make him stumble;  
Their own tongue is against them;  
All who see them will shake the head.

**64:9** Then all men will fear,  
And they will declare the work of God,  
And will consider what He has done.

**64:10** The righteous man will be glad in the LORD and will take refuge in Him;  
And all the upright in heart will glory.

For the choir director.

### 3.0 Understanding Psalm 64

#### 3.1 Outline

- I. David’s Petition (vv. 1-4)
- II. David’s Persecutors (vv. 5-6)
- III. David’s Protector (vv. 7-9)
- IV. David’s Praise (v. 10)



#### 3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “my complaint”
  - “Lament” would be a more proper translation of “complaint.”
  - The term can refer to emotional speech or whispered speech.
  - It is used in wisdom literature and in contexts describing desperation.
    - ✓ See Job 7:13; 9:27; 10:1.
- **v. 3** “sharpened their tongue like a sword”
  - Attacks against David consisted of verbal abuse and conspiracies.
    - ✓ “[I]t is Absalom and Ahithophel plotting behind David’s back, not Ziba flattering and Shimei cursing him to his face, who are reflected in Psalm 64.”—Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 1–72*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 225.
  - David’s enemies launch their words like “arrows.”
  - Compare Psalm 55:21.

- **v. 3** “They aimed ... their arrow”
  - Literally, “they tread their arrow” or “string (their bows) for arrows.”
  - Compare Psalms 7:12; 11:2; and 37:14.
- **v. 4** “shoot .. fear”
  - Hebrew roots with similar sounds (assonance or alliteration) tie this psalm together in a flowing word play. (See the boxed words in the translation.)



v. 4: “shoot” ( <i>yrh</i> )	v. 4: “fear” ( <i>yr’</i> )	v. 5: “see” ( <i>yir’eh</i> )
v. 7: “shoot” ( <i>yrh</i> )	v. 8: “see” ( <i>r’h</i> )	v. 9: “fear” ( <i>yr’</i> )

- **vv. 4, 7** “Suddenly”
  - “Suddenly” acts as an inclusio that brackets verses 4-7.
  - This contrasts 2 surprise attacks: the 1st conducted by the wicked against the righteous, the 2nd conducted by God against the wicked.
  - See 1 Thessalonians 5:3.
- **v. 4** “the blameless”
  - The psalmist speaks of himself as “innocent.”
  - Interestingly, the psalmist’s enemies use the same root word with the meaning “perfected” when they declare, “We are ready with a well-conceived plot” (v. 6; or, “We have perfected a well-conceived plot”).
- **v. 5** “an evil purpose”
  - Literally, “an evil word.”
  - This is a match for “bitter speech” (literally, “bitter word”) in verse 3.
- **v. 6** “**For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep**”
  - This half of verse 6c “seems to be the pivotal statement of the psalm and is an exclamatory reflection on the depth of human nature which fosters such behavior as that described” in verses 3-6b. “The ability of the human mind to shrewdly connive and conspire in demonic ways against the blameless requires a depth of understanding which strains the human capacity for comprehension.”—Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51 – 100*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), 134.
  - See Jeremiah 17:9.
- **vv. 7-9** Sequential Actions
  - A series of unusual (for Hebrew poetry) verb forms in these three verses expresses a sequence of events:
    1. “God will shoot” (v. 7): Evil men, who shoot at the righteous (v. 4), will be shot by God.
    2. “So they will make him stumble” (v. 8): Literally, “So they will make it to stumble against him their tongue” (“it” referring to the tongue = “So they will make their tongue stumble against

themselves”). The tongue employed as sharpened swords against the righteous will turn against themselves.

3. “Then all men will fear” (v. 9a): Seeing the boomerang effect of evil deeds in the destruction of the wicked, all men will comprehend the divine act of retribution and fear God.
4. “And they will declare” (v. 9b): Fear will produce a confession or declaration of divine deeds.

- **v. 10 “LORD”**
  - This is the first occurrence of the covenant name of God since 59:8 and it will not occur again until Psalm 68.
  - See “Introducing Psalm 64” above.

#### 4.0 Singing Psalm 64

**Tune: “Blessed Be the Name” (without refrain)**

Hear, Lord, the voice of my complaint, Preserve my life from fear; Hide me from plotting enemies And evil, crowding near. The workers of iniquity, Their deadly shafts prepare; They aim at me their treach’rous words; O save me from their snare.	The wicked in their base designs Grow arrogant and bold; Conspiring secretly, they think That God will not behold; They search out more iniquity, Their thoughts and plans are deep, But God will smite, for He is near His saints to guard and keep.
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The wicked, by their sins o’ercome,  
Shall soon be brought to shame;  
The hand of God shall yet appear,  
And all shall fear His Name.  
The just shall triumph in the Lord,  
Their trust shall be secure,  
And endless glory then shall crown  
The upright and the pure.

— Author unknown

#### 5.0 Praying Psalm 64

- Lord, protect me from hidden harm. [v. 2]
- Teach me to use my words for good rather than evil. [v. 3]
- Remind me that You see everything, God. [v. 5]
- Father, help me to rejoice and praise You always. [v. 10]



#### 6.0 Applying Psalm 64

- With our words we must praise God, rather than harm others.
- Wicked men will be wounded by their own words, slain by their own swords.
- God turns our pain into praise.