

Hebrew Whiteboard

Biblical Hebrew and the Psalms

Psalm 3

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 poetic devices.**
- 5. Interpret poetic device function(s).**
- 6. Identify the psalm's structure.**

Psalm 3:1

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

'athnach

topical *rebi'a*

silluq = end of v. 1

מִזְמֹר לְדָוִד 1

בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲבֹשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ:

v. 1: Psalm heading (literary and historical)—see also Ps 18:1 and 2 Sam 22:1.

Psalm 3:1

Adjust to display grammatical and parallel relationships.

Adverbial prepositional phrase
(authorial לְ) modifying
understood verb: “A psalm
written by David”—cp. Isa 38:9
and Hab 3:1

1 מִזְמֹר

לְדָוִד

בְּבָרְחוֹ

Apposition

מִפְּנֵי אֲבִשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ

Adverbial prepositional
phrase modifying
infinitive: “from
Absalom his son”

Temporal adverbial
infinitive construct:
“when he was fleeing”

Psalm 3:2–3

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

'athnach

2 יְהוָה מִה־רַבּוֹ צָרִי

topical *rebi'a*

רַבִּים קָמִים עָלַי:

silluq = end of v. 2

'oleh-weyored

3 רַבִּים אֲמָרִים לְנַפְשִׁי

אֵין יִשׁוּעָתָה לִּי בְּאֱלֹהִים סָלָה:

silluq = end of v. 3

Psalm 3:2–3

Vocative of address:
“Yahweh, . . .”

Interrogative: “how”

Verb clause: “my enemies
have multiplied!”

2 יְהוָה מַה־רַּבּוּ צָרָי
רַבִּים קָמִים

Verb clause with
participle: “Many are
standing against me!”

עָלַי:
3 רַבִּים אֹמְרִים
לְנַפְשִׁי

Noun clause:
“There is no
salvation for him”

אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה
לּוֹ

Verb clause with
participle: “Many are
saying to me”

בְּאֱלֹהִים
סָלָה:

Dialog box

Adverbial phrases

Psalm 3:2–3

Poetic focus is on the multitudes of the psalmist's enemies.

Triple repetition of root רבב

Triple repetition of root רבב

Repetition of assonance with vowels

Repetition of assonance with vowels

Double repetition of participial verb clauses

Double repetition of participial verb clauses

Selah as stanza divider

Selah as stanza divider

סֵלָה:

אֵין יִשׁוּעָתָה
לִּי
בְּאֱלֹהִים

2 יְהוָה מִה־רַבּוֹ צָרִי
רַבִּים קָמִים
עָלַי:
3 רַבִּים אֲמָרִים
לְנַפְשִׁי

Nephesh is a way of saying "me" or "myself."

Psalm 3:1–3 — Translation

- 1** A psalm *written* by David
When he was fleeing from Absalom
his son.
- 2** YHWH, how my enemies have
multiplied!
Many are standing against me!
- 3** Many are saying to me,
“There is no salvation for him with
God!” Selah

Psalm 3:1–3 — Translation

Psalm superscription

1 A psalm *written* by David
When he was fleeing from Absalom
his son.

2 YHWH, how **my enemies have**
multiplied!

Many are standing against me!

3 **Many are saying** to me,
“There is no salvation for him with
God!”

Selah

Psalm 3:1–3 — Observations

- **Psalm superscriptions are authorial, literary, and historical. See Hab 3:1; Ps 18:1 // 2 Sam 22:1; Isa 38:9.**
- **The historical setting can be identified in 2 Sam 15–19.**

Psalm 3 — Observations

Psalm 3	Situation	2 Samuel
v. 2	David's enemies increased	15:12
v. 3	David to be forsaken by God	16:7–8
v. 4	David's head, covered on the Mt. of Olives, will be raised by God	15:30
v. 6	Danger and confidence at night	17:1, 16
v. 7	David heavily outnumbered	15:13; 17:1,11
v. 9	Victory eventually comes	19:1–2

Psalm 3:1–3 — Observations

- **David addresses a prayer to Yahweh by means of the vocative of address in v. 2.**
- **He emphatically draws Yahweh's attention to the peril he faces from overwhelming numbers (vv. 2–3).**
- **David's enemies characteristically stand and speak against him (characteristic present participles).**

Psalm 3:1–3 — Observations

- The phrase “with God” (v. 3) can also be translated as “in God.” In other words, God will not save David from his perilous circumstances. This is his enemies’ opinion.
- “Selah” (v. 3) causes the readers and hearers to pause and think about the statement made by David’s enemies.

Psalm 3:4–5

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

'athnach

topical *rebi'a*

silluq = end of v. 4

'athnach

silluq = end of v. 5

4 וְאַתָּה יְהוָה מִגֵּן בְּעַדִּי

כְּבוֹלֵי וּמַרְיָם רֵאשִׁי:

5 קוֹלֵי אֵל-יְהוָה אֶקְרָא

וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִהָר קוֹדֵשׁוֹ סֵלָה:

Selah appears to act again as a stanza divider.

Psalm 3:4

Adjust to display grammatical and parallel relationships.

Emphatic personal pronoun

Identifying noun clause with vocative of address and predicate complement

Triple predicate complements; “*You, YHWH, are*” is understood in 2nd half of verse

4 וְאַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה (1) מִגֵּן
בְּעַדִּי

כְּבוֹדִי (2)

וּמִיָּרִים רֵאשִׁי: (3)

Adverbial prepositional phrase modifying understood verb “*are*”

Psalm 3:5

Adjust to display grammatical and parallel relationships.

Instrumental adverbial accusative: "with my voice"

Adverbial indirect object: "to YHWH"

Context identifies imperfect verb as past tense: "I called" or "I was calling"

5
קוּלִי
אֶל-יְהוָה
אֶקְרָא
וַיַּעֲנֵנִי

סָלָה:

Waw-consecutive sequential to previous verb: "then He answered me"

מִהָר קָדְשׁוֹ

Adverbial prepositional phrase

Psalm 3:5

Chiastic arrangement of prepositional phrases with focus on the verbs as central elements.

סֵלָה:

A קוּלִי 5
 אֶל-יְהוָה
B אֶקְרָא
B' וַיַּעֲנֵנִי
A' מִמֶּה קָדְשׁוֹ

Psalm 3:4–5 — Translation

4 But You, YHWH, are a shield around
me—

My glory and the lifter of my head.

5 I called out with my voice to YHWH,
Then He answered me from His holy
mountain. Selah

Psalm 3:4–5 — Translation

Arranged to display
relationships

4 But You, YHWH, are

(1) **a shield** around me—

(2) **My glory** and

(3) **the lifter of my head.**

5

with my voice

A

to YHWH,

I called out

B

Then He answered me

B'

from His holy mountain. **A'**

Selah

Psalm 3:4–5 — Observations

- **With the emphatic personal pronoun David turns his attention from his enemies to Yahweh and what He does for him (v. 4).**
- **By context, the statement contrasts (“But”) David’s enemies with his God—the God with whom the enemies have said that there is no salvation for David.**

Psalm 3:4–5 — Observations

- The word for “shield” (מָגֵן, *māgēn*, v. 4) refers to a normal battle shield carried on the arm of a swordsman.
- The shield depicts Yahweh as David’s Protector.
- “My glory” depicts Yahweh as the source of David’s victories and the object of David’s praise.
- “The lifter of my head” depicts Yahweh as David’s Encourager.

Psalm 3:4–5 — Observations

- The *wayyiqtol* verb in v. 5 is normally a narrative form. By its use, David testifies that Yahweh had answered his prayer already.
- The chiasm focuses on the prayer and its answer.
- The prayer was vocalized, not silent: “with my voice.”

Psalm 3:4–5 — Observations

- **“His holy mountain” (v. 5) either refers to heaven or to the Tabernacle’s setting in Jerusalem.**

Psalm 3:6–7

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

rebi'a

6 אֲנִי שְׁכַבְתִּי

'oleh-veyored

וְאִישָׁנָה

'athnach

הַקִּיצוֹתִי

silluq = end of v. 6

כִּי יִהְיֶה יִסְמְכֵנִי:

'athnach

7 לֹא-אֵרָא מִרְבָּבוֹת עִם

silluq = end of v. 7

אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׂתוֹ עָלָי:

topical *rebi'a*

Psalm 3:6–7

Adjust to display grammatical and parallel relationships.

Emphatic personal pronoun + Qal perf 1cs

אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי 6

Waw-consecutive Qal imperf 1cs (ישן) with paragogic ה

וְאֵי שָׁנָה
הֶקִּיצוּתִי

Hiphil perf 1cs (קיץ)

כִּי יִהְיֶה יִסְמְכֵנִי:

Causal clause

לֹא-אֵירָא 7

Negative + Qal imperf 1cs

מִרְבָּבוֹת עִם

Relative clause

אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׁתוֹ

Adverbial prepositional phrase

עָלָי:

Adverbial prepositional phrase: “from ten thousands of people”

Psalm 3:6–7

Imperfect, future time,
“I will not fear”

Perfect, past time, “I laid down”

אֶבְרָא לֹא יִירָא 6

Waw-consecutive imperfect,
past time, “then I slept”

וַיִּשְׁנָה
וַיִּצְוֹתֵי

Perfect, past time, “I
awoke”

כִּי יִהְיֶה יְסַמְּכֵנִי:

לֹא-אֵירָא 7

Imperfect, present time,
“YHWH supports me”

מִרְבָּבוֹת עִמָּךְ

אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב נְשִׂיתוּ

עָלַי:

Perfect, present time (שִׁית), “who
set themselves around me”

Psalm 3:6–7 — Translation

- 6** As for me, I laid down,
Then I slept;
I awoke, because YHWH supports me.
- 7** I will not fear ten thousands of people
Who set themselves all around against
me.

Psalm 3:6–7 — Translation

Emphatic personal pronoun

6 **As for me,** I laid down,

Then I slept; *Sequential wayyiqtol*

I awoke, because YHWH supports me.

7 I will not fear ten thousands of people
Who set themselves **all** around against
me.

Rewording plus added word to provide smooth English translation of “who around set themselves against me.”

Psalm 3:6–7 — Observations

- **Emphatic personal pronoun (v. 6a) sets a contrast with the “You” of v. 4 and with the “many” of vv. 2–3. The character (v. 4) and action of Yahweh (v. 5) provide the basis for David’s ability to sleep without fear.**
- **David “awoke” (v. 6b), because his enemies did not slay him in his sleep.**

Psalm 3:6–7 — Observations

- Word order in causal (וְ) clauses is flexible, but the context indicates some emphasis upon “YHWH” (v. 6b).
- The use of the objective negative (v. 7) removes David’s statement from the realm of the subjunctive (“I might not fear”) to the clear indicative (“I will not fear”).

Psalm 3:6–7 — Observations

- Specifying “people” eliminates a fear of circumstances—David had many personal enemies (cf. vv. 2–3).
- The relative clause defines the “people” as enemies, because they are arrayed “against” him.
- For emphasis, the word order places “around” ahead of the verb it modifies adverbially—David’s enemies are all around him.

Psalm 3:8–9

'azla legarmeh (one of the mildest of disjunctive accents)

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

קוֹמָה יְהוָה 8

rebi'a

הוֹשִׁיעַנִי אֱלֹהֵי

'athnach

כִּי־הִכִּיתָ אֶת־כָּל־אֹיְבֵי לְהִי

silluq = end of v. 8

שִׁנִּי רַשָׁעִים שְׁבָרָתָ:

'athnach

לִיהְתָּה הִישׁוּעָה 9

silluq = end of v. 9

עַל־עַמֶּךָ בְּרַכִּיתָּ סֵלָה:

Psalm 3:8

Parallel imperatives + vocatives

Adjust to display grammatical and parallel relationships.

Particle + context indicates perfect of confidence: "You will strike"

8 קוֹמָה הוֹשִׁיעַנִי אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה
כִּי-הִכִּיתָ

אֶת-כָּל-אֵיבֵי

לְחֵי שִׁנָּי

Adverbial accusative: "on the jaw"

Emphatic כִּי = "Surely"

Direct object accusative

רָשָׁעִים

Parallel perfect of confidence: "You will shatter"

שִׁבְרָתָּ:

Psalm 3:9

Adjust to display grammatical and parallel relationships.

Lamed of reference or possession:
“Salvation belongs to YHWH.”

לִיהוָּה 9
↓
הַיְשׁוּעָה

Selah marking end of poem.

סֵלָה:

עַל-עַמֶּךָ ↓
בְּרַכְּתֶךָ

Adverbial prepositional phrase modifying understood verb in noun clause gapped from previous line: “Your blessing *belongs* upon Your people.”

Psalm 3:8

Chiasm with center elements focusing on personal damage to David's enemies preventing their animal like attacks on him.

8 קוֹמָה יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעַנִי אֱלֹהֵי כִי-הִכִּיתָ

A
B
C
C'
B'
אֶת-כָּל-אֹיְבֵי
לְהִי
שִׁנָּי
רָשָׁעִים

Piel here is pluralative: "break into pieces" = "shatter."

שִׁבְרָתָ:

"Jaw" rather than "cheek" when animals or animal metaphor (cf. Isa 30:28).

Psalm 3:8–9 — Translation

8 Stand up, YHWH!
Save me, my God!
Surely, You will strike all my enemies
on the jaw,
The teeth of the wicked You will
shatter.

9 Salvation belongs to YHWH.
May Your blessing be upon Your
people.

Selah

Psalm 3:8–9 — Translation

Emphatic imperative expressing urgency.

8 **Stand up**, YHWH!

Save me, my God!

A **Surely**, You will strike

B all my enemies

Emphatic ׀.

C

C'

on the jaw,
The teeth of

B' the wicked

A' You will shatter.

9 Salvation belongs to YHWH.

Your blessing *belongs* upon Your people.

Selah

Psalm 3:8–9 — Observations

- **Emphatic paragogic *he* (best taken as conveying a sense of urgency) on the initial imperative: “Stand up” (v. 8).**
- **Perhaps the initial imperative echoes the marching cry of Israel in the wilderness when they moved the Tabernacle (Num 10:35).**
- **Yahweh identified as David’s God (“my God”—cf. v. 3).**

Psalm 3:8–9 — Observations

- **Emphatic clausal particle (“surely” or “indeed”) reveals David’s confidence in his God (v. 8b).**
- **The chiasm’s focus on “jaw” and “teeth” implies that David’s enemies act like ravening wild animals. When God strikes them, they will be made harmless—they can no longer bite.**
- **David’s enemies are wicked people.**

Psalm 3:8–9 — Observations

- **Fronting the prepositional phrases as the predicate complements in the definite noun clause emphasizes Yahweh and His people (v. 9).**
- **The definite article on “salvation” in the Hebrew indicates the salvation only Yahweh can bring (v. 9a).**
- **As salvation belongs to Yahweh, so the blessing arising from that salvation belongs to His people (v. 9b).**

Psalm 3:10

Following pattern of Hab 3:19,
the musical subscription
numbered as next verse.

Taken from Ps 4:1 to restore
proper division of headings.
Ps 4:1a is musical, while 4:1b
is authorial. See Habakkuk
3:1, 19; Isa 38:9, 20 (v. 20
might be a purposeful
Isaianic expansion of the
normal musical subscription);
Ezek 19:14 (musical
subscription). Note Ps 18's
addition (subscription to Ps
17) to 2 Sam 22:1.

לְמִנְצָה בְּגִיזוֹת

Ancient near eastern
literature outside the
OT provides evidence
of same pattern of
superscriptions and
subscriptions on
hymns and songs. See
COS, 1:540–43.

Psalm 3 — Structure

- The use of “Selah” contributes to the identification of the poem’s structure, but it is not as important as the changes in subjects from “many” to “You” to “I.”
- The structure is more complex than the structures of Psalms 1 and 2.
- Repetition of prayer, praise, and confidence identifies the themes.

Psalm 3 — Structure

* Selah

Superscription (v. 1)

A1 David's Peril: "Many" Adversaries (vv. 2–3) *

B1 Yahweh's Protection (v. 4)

A2 David's Petition (v. 5a)

B2 Yahweh's Response (v. 5b) *

C1 David's Confidence (vv. 6–7)

A3 David's Prayer (v. 8a)

C2 David's Confidence & Praise (vv. 8b–9) *

Subscription (v. 10)

Psalm 3 — Summary

v. 1: The psalm superscription identifies the author as David and the setting as when he fled from his son Absalom.

v. 1: The Hebrew text identifies the superscription as part of the psalm by numbering it as the first verse.

v. 1: The psalm expresses David's confidence in Yahweh. He prays for deliverance from his enemies.

Psalm 3 — Summary

v. 2: David addresses Yahweh immediately—this is a prayer.

v. 2: David expresses the concern he has for how many enemies he faces. Those enemies are standing (קום) against him—a key word in this psalm.

v. 3: The third use of “many” (רַב, 2x in v. 2) highlights the topic of vv. 2–3 as well as David’s stressful situation.

Psalm 3 — Summary

v. 3: By citing his enemies claim, David stresses his need for deliverance (יְשׁוּעָה) from God.

v. 3: “Selah” closes this first section, not just as a stanza marker, but as a means of highlighting the key words “salvation” and “God” (see vv. 8 and 9).

v. 4: The 2ms personal pronoun and implied contrast highlights Yahweh.

Psalm 3 — Summary

v. 4: The threefold description of Yahweh emphasizes His role as David's protector.

v. 4: Yahweh provides protection in hand-to-hand combat as a “shield.”

v. 4: Yahweh receives David's praise—in Him is David's boast.

v. 4: Yahweh encourages David, lifting his head to show care, recognition, and relief (compare with 2 Sam 15:30).

Psalm 3 — Summary

v. 5: David audibly called out to Yahweh in the time of his need.

v. 5: Yahweh answered David from where He sits enthroned in the Tabernacle in Jerusalem. David has been driven out of Jerusalem, but Yahweh remains unmoved.

v. 5: The second “Selah” highlights Yahweh’s answering David’s petition.

Psalm 3 — Summary

v. 6a: David's emphatic 1st person pronoun signals a change in the subject—it had been the “many” (vv. 2–3), then Yahweh (vv. 4–5), and now David (vv. 6–7).

v. 6a: For the second time (see v. 5) David uses the *wayyiqtol* to indicate a past result from his own past action.

v. 6b: Yahweh proved faithful—He protected David as he slept.

Psalm 3 — Summary

v. 7: David declares his confidence and lack of fear, even though he might be surrounded by ten thousands of personal enemies.

v. 8a: Using the same verb that described his adversaries (v. 2, “standing,” קום). David calls on Yahweh to “Stand up.”

v. 8a: David calls upon his “God” to “save” him—using same title and root (שׁע) as in v. 3. This inclusio rounds out the poem.

Psalm 3 — Summary

v. 8b: The chiasm highlights the personal retribution due David's enemies. Striking the jaw and shattering teeth defangs these savage beasts (implied metaphor).

v. 8b: The parallel between “my enemies” and “the wicked” identifies their character.

v. 9: “Salvation” is the same noun used in v. 3, adding to the inclusio bracketing the poem.

Psalm 3 — Summary

v. 9: The psalm's final verse focuses on the salvation/deliverance that will be a blessing for Yahweh's people—not just David.

v. 9: The final (third) “Selah” closes the poem and highlights the same concepts as it did in v. 3.

v. 10: David intended that this psalm be sung in Tabernacle and Temple worship (cf. 1 Chron 16).

Psalm 3 — Preaching

- **When faced with distressing circumstances we must learn to pray and trust God.**
- **We should record answers to prayer, so that we might be more aware that God indeed answers our prayers.**
- **Since God doesn't always remove adversity immediately, we need to trust Him and wait, even sleep—without fear.**