

# 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

1 מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

בְּבֹרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲבִשָׁלוֹם 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*

topical *rebi'a*

*silluq* = end of v. 2

*'oleh-weyored*

2 יְהוָה מֶה־רַבּוֹ צָרִי

רַבִּים קָמִים עָלַי:

3 רַבִּים אֲמָרִים לִנְפֹשִׁי

אֵין יִשׁוּעָתָה לִּי בָאֱלֹהִים סֵלָה:

*silluq* = end of v. 3

# Psalm 3:2–3

Vocative of address:  
“Yahweh, . . .”

Interrogative: “how”

Verb clause: “my enemies  
have multiplied!”

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

Noun clause:  
“There is no  
salvation for him”

סָלָה:

Dialog box

Hebrew Whiteboard

2 יְהוָה מַה־רַּבּוֹ צָרִי  
רְבִים קָמִים

עָלַי:

3 רְבִים אֹמְרִים  
לְנַפְשִׁי

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

Adverbial phrases

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# Psalm 3:2–3

Triple repetition of root רבב

Repetition of assonance  
with vowels

Double repetition of  
participial verb clauses

*Selah* as  
stanza  
divider

סֵלָה:

אֵין יִשׁוּעָתָה  
לִּי

בְּאֱלֹהִים

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

2 יְהוָה מִה־רַבּוֹ צָרִי  
רַבִּים קָמִים  
עָלַי:  
3 רַבִּים אֹמְרִים  
לִנְפֹשִׁי

*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

<b>Psalm 3</b>	<b>Situation</b>	<b>2 Samuel</b>
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 בְּעֵדִי

כְּבוֹלִי וּמִרְיָם רֹאשִׁי:

5 קוֹלִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֶקְרָא

וַיַּעַנֵּנִי מִהֵרָ קוֹלִשׁוֹ 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  
2<sup>nd</sup> half of verse

4 וְאַתָּה יְהוָה (1) מִגֵּן  
בְּעֵדִי

(2) כְּבוֹדִי

(3) וּמִיָּרִים רֹאשִׁי:

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”

סָלָה:

*Waw*-consecutive  
sequential to  
previous verb:  
“then He  
answered me”

מִהֵר קָדְשׁוֹ

Adverbial  
prepositional phrase

קוֹלִי

אֶל־יְהוָה

אָקְרָא

בִּיַּעֲנֵנִי

5



# Psalm 3:5

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

סֵלָה:

A קוֹלִי 5  
אֶל-יְהוָה  
B אֶקְרָא  
B' וַיַּעַנֵּנִי  
A' מִבֶּהָר 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  
to YHWH,

A

I called out

Then He answered me

B

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-אֵירָא מִרְבָּבוֹת עִם

*silluq* = end of v. 7

אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שָׁתוּ עָלַי:

*topical rebi'a*



# Psalm 3:6–7

Adjust to display  
grammatical and  
parallel relationships.

Emphatic personal pronoun  
+ Qal perf 1cs

6 אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי  
וְאִישָׁנָה  
הַקִּיצוֹתִי

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

Hiphil perf 1cs (קִיץ)

כִּי יִהְיֶה יִסְמְכֵנִי:

Causal clause

7 לֹא-אֵירָא

Negative + Qal imperf 1cs

מִרְבֹּבוֹת עָם

Relative clause

אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב נִשְׁתּוֹ

Adverbial  
prepositional phrase

עָלַי:

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”

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

Perfect, past time, “I  
awoke”

Imperfect, present time,  
“YHWH supports me”

אֶלֶּם 6  
לֹא־יִרְאֶה

יִשְׁנָה  
וְיִצְוֶה

כִּי יִהְיֶה יִסְמְכֵנִי:

7  
לֹא־אֵירָא

מִרְבָּבוֹת עִמָּי

אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב נִשְׁתּוֹ

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.

8 קוֹמָה יְהוָה |

*rebi'a*

הוֹשִׁיעָנִי אֱלֹהִי

*'athnach*

כִּי־הִכִּיתָ אֶת־כָּל־אֹיְבֵי לִחִי

*silluq* = end of v. 8

שִׁנִּי רַשָּׁעִים שִׁבְרָתָ:

*'athnach*

9 לִיהְוָה הִישׁוּעָה

*silluq* = end of v. 9

עַל־עַמֶּךָ בִּרְכִיתָ סֵלָה:

# Psalm 3:8

Parallel imperatives + vocatives

Adjust to display  
grammatical and  
parallel relationships.

Particle +  
context  
indicates  
perfect of  
confidence:  
“You will  
strike”

לְחִי  
שְׁנִי

Direct object accusative

אֶת-כָּל-אַיְבֵי

Adverbial accusative:  
“on the jaw”

רָשָׁעִים

Parallel perfect of confidence:  
“You will shatter”

שִׁבְרָתִי:

8 קוֹמָה יְהוָה  
הוֹשִׁיעַנִי אֱלֹהִי  
כִּי-הִכִּיתָ

Emphatic

כִּי =  
“Surely”



# Psalm 3:9

Adjust to display  
grammatical and  
parallel relationships.

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

9  
לִיהוָה  
↓  
הַיְשׁוּעָה

*Selah* marking end of poem.

סֵלָה:

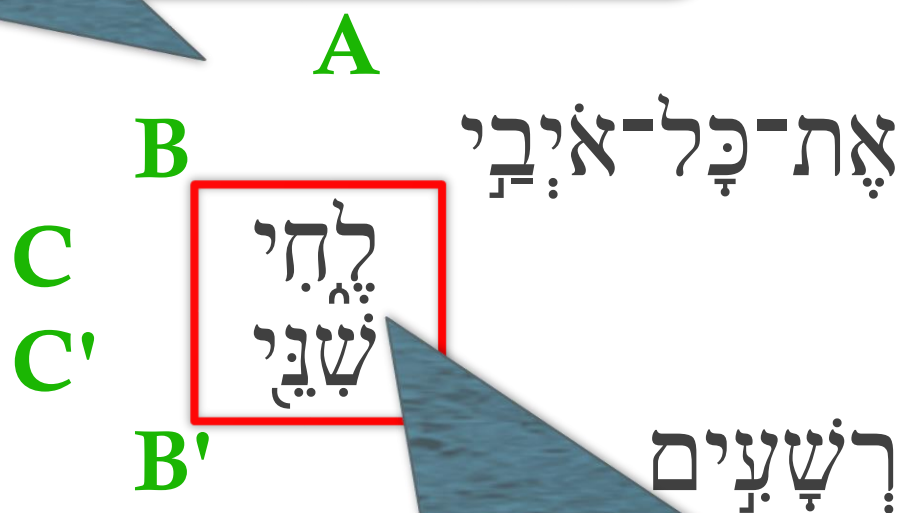
עַל-עַמֶּךָ  
↓  
בְּרַכְיֶךָ

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 אֱלֹהִי  
כִי-הִכִּיתָ

Piel here is pluralative: “break into pieces” = “shatter.”

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

שִׁבְרָתִי:

# 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 עֵי.

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.

לְמִנְצָח בְּגִיטָּוֹת

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 (קוֹם) 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.