

SHATTERED BY BETRAYAL: RESTORING TRUST IN SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

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Hope is essential for any person, but even more so for those who have experienced abuse hope of restoration, hope of deliverance from confusion, guilt, shame, defilement, and such. The Scriptures are filled with hope, but an abuse survivor needs specific hope, laser-guided truth, that directly addresses the problems she faces, both the problems that came at her from the abuse and the problems that come out of her heart in response to the abuse.¹

One of the most common struggles for abuse survivors is broken trust with those who should be trustworthy, such as a parent, a teacher, a coach, a sibling, and the like. In suffering abuse, whether physical, sexual, or emotional, it is the betrayal of trust that often makes the abuse so destructive in the life of the survivor, since the distrust spills over into other relationships. The individual to whom the weak and helpless looks for care becomes a source of severe pain and suffering. Tragically, the loss of trust often intrudes into the survivor's perception of God. It is such betrayal that hinders the survivor's ability to trust anyone, regardless of the person's trustworthiness.

Many in Scripture suffered betrayal and its effects. David himself was betrayed by some of his closest companions. The counselor who is dealing with survivors of abuse

¹This paper will refer to the survivor in the feminine gender, although the author recognizes that abuse is not limited to females.

can find in David's life patterns that guide him through the growth process toward restoring trust, especially that trust in God that is so essential to the survivor.

Therefore, survivors of abuse will reestablish trust when they follow the biblical pattern of recognizing and expressing their thoughts and feelings of betrayal to God, trusting him for restoration. The purpose of this paper is threefold. The paper will show first how to openly express feelings of betrayal to God and, second, how to use Psalm 35 as a counseling model for rebuilding trust. Third, the paper will demonstrate the Scriptures' all-sufficient character in providing care for those who have suffered trauma.

SETTING OF THE PSALM

Authorship, Occasion, and Genre of the Psalm

Establishing authorship of the psalm is beyond the scope of this paper, but this writer accepts Davidic authorship based on the superscription, the parallel struggles in the psalm with David's life, similarities with Psalm 34 (for example, the Angel of Yahweh in v. 7), and the prevalence of Davidic psalms in Book I.²

Attempts by scholars to identify the specific biblical setting of the psalm have proven inconclusive. Even general assertions attempting to determine the circumstances and conditions behind the psalm are equally varied. Scholars provide two possible historical settings for the psalm. One view is that David wrote the psalm while Saul was pursuing him, because of the parallels between the language here and Psalm 34.³ A

²O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), 61ff.

³Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996) 5:266.

second view assigns the occasion to Absalom's rebellion.⁴ Either occasion fits the details of the psalm adequately. Other suggestions for an occasion range from a broken treaty⁵ to a personal illness⁶ to a temple lawsuit.⁷ Given the disparity of these views and the multiplicity of images and language, it is best for the exegete to avoid dogmatically assigning a specific situation to the psalm. One should also be aware that on occasion the psalmist may have been deliberately vague so that the psalm would fit many occasions for his audience.⁸ Whatever the occasion, the betrayal the psalmist experienced fits the betrayal of trust an abuse survivor suffers.

This psalm is one of fifty-nine laments. This psalm, containing three laments, also includes imprecations toward the psalmist's attackers. One author, however, captures the magnitude of the complaints the psalmist made when he states, "Psalm 35 is a particularly aggressive and defensive complaint of the individual."⁹

ANALYSIS OF THE PSALM

Because the psalmist weaves the laments, petitions, and vows throughout the psalm, this author will approach the passage analytically rather than either a verse-by-verse approach or by strophe. An overview of the strophes, however, reveals that,

⁴H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959) 284.

⁵Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, WBC (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 19:286-7.

⁶Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield JSOT, 1989), 194-5.

⁷W. Graham Scroggie, *Psalms* (London: Pickering, 1948), 1:194.

⁸W. H. Bellinger, *Reading and Studying the Book of Psalms* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990), 45.

⁹Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 153.

although the psalmist's emotions are scattered throughout, he appears to address physical (vv. 1-10), personal (vv. 11-18), and character attacks (vv. 19-28).¹⁰ After the analysis, the author will view the psalm synthetically to draw the three strophes together into a whole.

Recognize the Protector (Address)

When looking for restoration from abuse, the survivor must look to God. Abuse profoundly distorts God's image in victims (thinking, feeling, and choosing), since the abuse cuts to the core of who that person is and almost always results in distorted views of God and others. David, when attacked, turned to God for assistance and relief (vv. 1, 22, 23-24). David's repeated use of the imperative verb in verses 1-4 with the vocative *Yahweh* as the subject and the jussives ("let" or "may") throughout the psalm reflect his need for God. Even when the psalmist felt as though God had delayed in helping him ("how long will you look on" in v. 17), he brought his requests of deliverance to God. Additionally, David realized that God was the only one qualified to meet his needs ("who is just like you?" in v. 10). Because of this truth, the counselee must recognize her need to come to God for comfort, deliverance, and restoration. If the counselee has little or no relationship with God, then the counselor should methodically point her in that direction via the gospel. This dynamic further means that the biblical counselor must reject those

¹⁰ John Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 490.

methods for restoration that are not in keeping with God's, including psychological or integrationist paradigms.¹¹

Since the counselee often feels abandoned by all, even by God, the survivor needs reassurance concerning God's nature. David focused on God's nature through the use of his name and titles.¹² *Yahweh* (God's personal name emphasizing his self-existence, faithfulness, and eternity) occurs eight times in the psalm. The titles *Adonai* (emphasizing God's position as "master") and *Elohim* (emphasizing God's supreme power) occur two times each. The psalmist's use of various names for God, often in compound with one another, indicate his understanding of God's nature and his need to remember that nature. The counselor will need to remind the survivor repeatedly of God's presence and care. His teaching must be biblical and thorough, based upon passages that assure and explain God's care for the individual. He may have the individual memorize and meditate upon key passages that will help remind the counselee of the nature and love of God, starting with helpful truth here in Psalm 35. The counselee may find these verses as she embarks on her own search for promises of deliverance by God through the book of Psalms in other laments.

It is one matter for the survivor to know and understand the nature and abilities of God, but another to actually believe God *can* and *will* act in relation to her. The survivor, therefore, must personally relate to God's abilities. She will not learn to trust again if she does not begin to view herself as the object of God's concern and care. David used the

¹¹Psychology's materialism largely ignores the spiritual side of man while integrationism diminishes the sufficiency of the Scriptures. Current models of trauma most apparently tilt these directions. The popular book, *The Body Keeps the Score*, by Bessel van der Kolk is one such example of the former.

¹²For further discussion on the names and titles of God, see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 47-51.

first-person personal pronoun repeatedly throughout the psalm when beseeching God to act for him (vv. 1–3, 22–24). David’s use of God’s personal name (*Yahweh*) shows that he viewed God in a personal way as one with whom he had a relationship. In addition, this psalm is an individual lament showing that David was anticipating God’s help for him, not just for others—a common doubt in abuse cases. Through David’s example, the counselor needs to remind the survivor often that God’s care is available for her *personally*, demonstrating often how God is working in her to restore her. She especially needs these truths when loneliness and abandonment resurface or when discouragement overwhelms her.

Recount the Abuse (Lament)

Before the Abuse

It is the close relationship the survivor had with the abuser prior to the abuse that incites the feelings of betrayal. One does not feel betrayed by an enemy but rather by a friend. The psalmist first describes his relationship with the words “friend” and “brother” (v. 14). The disjunctive *waw*¹³ and the emphatic pronoun¹⁴ in verse 13 contrast the kindness he showed in this relationship with the misery his attackers showed him. Previously, his relationship with his attackers was a part of his everyday life as the phrase “I went about (daily life)” demonstrates (v. 14). It is this betrayal that the counselor needs to address with the survivor to help her in restoration. Unlike her attacker, the Lord is

¹³Bruce K. Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisebrauns, 1990), 129.

¹⁴Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1991) 5:290.

loving and trustworthy. The counselor will need to establish that not all her relationships have been abusive. She will need to correct her fear of intimacy if she is ever to trust again. This should be a source of hope for the counselee, to realize that she can have healthy relationships based on her growing relationship with the Lord. This fact should also help in showing the counselee that she did not deserve abuse.

Betrayal is further inflamed by the love and sacrifice the survivor displays for the abuser. David depicts his love through sacrificial activities. In verse 13 he lists fasting and prayer on behalf of his attackers. He connects his fasting with “humbled my soul” and with “mourning attire,” showing the humility, sincerity, and love for his attackers. His intercessions on behalf of the abuser were persistent, as David explains in the words, “My prayer upon my bosom kept returning.” Some commentators understand this phrase to mean that his head kept returning to his chest (as in “bowing”) in prayer. Perhaps a better explanation is that the statement represents unanswered prayer rather than his “head” since the “prayer” functions as the subject of the clause.¹⁵ The use of the frequentative imperfect adds emphasis to his sacrifice. Even when the prayer kept returning unanswered, David continued praying. In verse 14, David stresses mourning clothing, noting that he mourns as one mourns for a mother. Here, the counselor can show that genuine love and sacrifice were not what caused the abuse, nor were those acts of love improper. The problem rests in the abuser, not in the actions of the survivor. Furthermore, the counselor can show the survivor that she can show healthy love again in her relationships through biblical restoration. As always, it is important to remind the

¹⁵Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, TOTC (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1973), 143.

counselee that such restoration is based upon the restoration found through Christ in salvation and daily growth.

Usual and customary acts of love were natural for the survivor before the abuse because the survivor trusted the abuser. Herein lies the destructive nature of the betrayal. In verse 15, David notes that “the attackers gathered together against me, and I did not know it.” VanGemeran notes that this clause may indicate either that the psalmist did not know his attackers or that because of the attack, he did not *recognize* them as his former friends.¹⁶ The latter is the better explanation since David is still speaking of the friends of verse 14. The fact that he neither expected the attack nor expected it to come from these individuals indicates his trust in them. His reaction would be a natural response considering he viewed them as brothers and friends. He further states throughout the psalm that they attack him deceptively and without reason (v. 19).

This principle provides one of the goals in the counseling setting. The abuse survivor has difficulty trusting because in the past such vulnerability proved to be disastrous. Here, the counselor can show the survivor that others have had their trust violated and restored; they provide a pattern for her restoration also. With God’s help, her trust can be restored toward those who are trustworthy. Therefore, the counselor can show from this psalm the trust that David regained, having had that trust violated in the past. The problem is not her inability to trust but rather the false assumption that pain comes from trusting others. If the survivor will work toward dealing biblically with the pain of betrayal and abuse, the survivor can see the fear of trusting relationships diminish and trust restored, especially toward God.

¹⁶VanGemeran, 289.

The Abuse

The counselor now must turn the attention of the survivor toward the abuse itself, since the survivor often has unbiblical beliefs about the abuse. Recounting abuse for the sake of recounting accomplishes nothing, but recalling for assessing biblically is profitable, as the survivor learns to think truthfully about the abuse.¹⁷ The survivor must begin to recount the abuse, to face the damage done at the hands of the abuser as she calls for God to restore her and moves toward forgiveness (Matt 18:15–34).¹⁸ David teaches several principles about his abuse that are noteworthy.

Reasons for the Abuse

The abuser will take advantage of the powerlessness of the survivor. Beginning in verse 10, David uses descriptive terms to demonstrate his weakness. He uses the word **עָנִי**, translated “unfortunate,” twice in this verse. This word denotes that “socially he is defenseless and subject to oppression,” a strange assessment given David’s position as monarch.¹⁹ David also uses the word **אַכְזִיזִי** (“needy”), which is used in Scriptures of those

¹⁷For more on this subject, see Steve Viars, *Putting Your Past in Its Place* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2011).

¹⁸In Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving servant, the king took an accounting of what he was owed. Such an accounting is not vindictive (or rooted in bitterness), but rather important for offering forgiveness for those wrongs.

¹⁹Leonard J. Coppes, “עָנִי” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (hereafter *TWOT*), ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:682.

who are unable to protect themselves within society either economically or socially.²⁰ He states that the attackers are stronger than he. In verse 15, David speaks of his “stumbling” (צָלַע). When the psalmist was weak, his attackers struck. The counselor should stress to the survivor that the perpetrator took advantage of her because she was available and weak, not because she encouraged or deserved the abuse.²¹

Because the survivor is weak, the abuser will selfishly take from her without regard for her welfare. Several verses describe this action by the attackers. In verse 10, David describes their attack as “robbing.” The imagery here shows this one can least afford to be robbed (“needy”). The word גָּזַל conveys a “tearing away by force” and includes the use of violence.²²

In verse 12, the psalmist uses the word *evil* or *misery* (רָעָה) to indicate an experience that causes physical and emotional pain.²³ Here, David remarks that his friends repaid him good with evil, a high insult in Jewish culture (cf. Prov 17:13). Furthermore, the word *bereavement* (שָׁכַח) is so extreme that it is used for sorrow associated with the loss of a child in many contexts. Hamilton suggests the reading, “There is a desolation in my soul.”²⁴

²⁰Leonard J. Coppes, “אָכַל,” *TWOT*, 1:5.

²¹Common among an abuse survivor is the belief that she either deserved or invited the abuse. She may base this belief on the accusations of the abuser or others.

²²Elmer B. Smick, “גָּזַל,” *TWOT*, 2:158.

²³G. Herbert Livingston, “רָעָה,” *TWOT*, 2:856.

²⁴Victor P. Hamilton, “שָׁכַח,” *TWOT*, 2:923.

David further shows the selfishness of the attackers in the difficult reading of verse 16, either “Like godless mocking ones (after) a cake” or “Mockers at a feast.” Some scholars believe the word מְעִיֵּג should be translated “to encircle” as mockers.²⁵ The JPS version translates the clause “with impious, mocking grimace” but notes the Hebrew expression is difficult.²⁶ *HALOT* provides little assistance with the word but notes an Arabic cognate reading, “someone who mocks a cripple.”²⁷ The imagery of “gnashing” fits either interpretation, since it is an expression of an angry attack against the victim (cf. Acts 7:54). Here, the counselor can remind the survivor that not only did she not deserve the abuse but also did nothing to *invite* the abuse. It was the selfish desires and hatred of the individual that drove the abuser to commit this act of aggression.

Lest one should say that the abuser did not intend to harm the survivor, the psalmist shows the abuser deliberately chooses to abuse the individual. Verse 4 describes his attackers as ones “plotting evil” against the psalmist. The word for plotting (תָּשַׁב) means to invent or devise a plan against someone.²⁸ David describes the result of the enemies’ scheming in verse 7 in the verbs “have set up secretly” and “have dug.” These are actions of premeditation evidenced by the scheming involved, actions that parallel “grooming” in today’s vernacular. David further confirms premeditation when he notes that his attackers were “planning” deceitful words against him in verse 20 (same word as

²⁵Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I*, AB (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1965), 1:209.

²⁶*Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), in loc.

²⁷Ludwig Koehler, et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 610.

²⁸Leon J. Wood, “תָּשַׁב,” *TWOT*, 1:330.

v. 4); therefore, one cannot excuse the attacker for his actions. He is responsible because of the deliberate choice he made to attack, use, and injure the survivor.

Description of the Abuse

The abuse may take on different forms in the life of the survivor. David experienced physical, verbal, and emotional attacks. The physical attacks are evident beginning in verse 1. David uses the word *fighting* to describe the attacks against him. This word has a martial tone that paints the imagery of physical assault.²⁹ David continues the martial imagery in verses 2–3 with the addition of the “shields” and “spear.” He adds that his attackers are “pursuing” him. This word (יָדָה) is used most often in the context of making war (Joshua) and persecuting an enemy (Psalms). The word has a predatory tone, as one would find in the context of war.³⁰

The actions of the attackers indicate the emotional injury to the psalmist. He mentions in verse 12 that he feels “bereavement to [his] soul.” The phrase explains the depth of emotional pain David feels, even to the remotest parts of his inner man.

David also addresses verbal abuse in several ways. In verse 11 the “ruthless witnesses” kept “asking things which [he does] not know.” Craigie remarks that the “asking” has the tone of an interrogation, a demand, attempting to gain a confession from David of something that he had not done.³¹ David speaks of the “mocking ones” in verse 16. In verse 20 the attackers are not “speaking peace” and they are “planning deceitful

²⁹VanGemenen, 287.

³⁰William White, “יָדָה,” *TWOT*, 2:834.

³¹Craigie, 287.

words.” Verse 21 amplifies this thought when David recites how they “open wide their mouth against me” saying, “our eyes have seen it,” reciting false accusations about the psalmist.

Knowing these forms, the survivor can examine and confront these kinds of abuse in her own life. She may uncover either unbiblical or incorrect thinking from actions she had not previously recognized as abuse. Therefore, the survivor will gain insight from viewing how David dealt with these abusive actions in turning to the Lord for vindication.

As the initial act of abuse progresses into habitual acts, the hopelessness becomes more acute. The abuse, however, continues even when the damage becomes apparent in the life of the survivor without regard for her welfare. David uses several present participles to indicate the continual abuse, such as “striving” and “fighting” (v. 1), “pursuing” (v. 3), “seeking my soul” and “plotting” (v. 4), “robbing” (v. 10), “gnashing” (v. 16), and “hating” (v. 19). Waltke explains that the active participle expresses action that is continual, “prolonged,” and unbroken (in contrast to the imperfect tense).³²

David’s attackers knew the damage as he explains in verse 15. When his attackers “tore” him apart, they continued without ceasing (“do not keep still”). Later the attackers rejoice in the destruction of the psalmist when they exclaim: “Aha our soul’s desire . . . we have swallowed him up” (v. 25). The word בָּלַע (“swallow”) often conveys

³²Waltke, 613.

destruction throughout the OT.³³ The attackers' "soul's desire" points to the fact that they had achieved their goal in destroying the psalmist.³⁴

Because of the duration of the abuse, the counselor will need to address the issue of time with the counselee. Since the survivor has suffered sustained acts of abuse, restoration will not happen quickly. The counselor and the survivor will need to display patience and seek persistent instruction from the Word. Here, the counselor will also find it helpful to remind the counselee that she has survived the acts of abuse, even though they were so destructive. Since she has survived the abuse, she can not only survive the recovery, but can grow spiritually through this time of testing (Jas 1:2–11).

The Response to the Abuse

When the abuse is exposed, the abuser often either blames the survivor for the abuse or denies the abuse occurred. This blame shifting was the point of the ruthless witnesses (v. 11) that David mentions. The interrogation to which David did not know how to respond, was intended to show either that David was at fault or to divert the attention away from the attack.³⁵ Such was the intention in verse 20 ("planning deceitful words"). The false accusers attempted to slander the psalmist with false accusations. Likewise, the survivor must realize that the shroud of secrecy that started with abuse will be difficult to remove. The perpetrator will attempt to blame and shame her into retracting her claims, perhaps even using others whom she thought were allies.

³³Walter C. Kaiser, "עָלָה," *TWOT* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 1:112.

³⁴Leupold, 291.

³⁵Delitzsch, 271.

Furthermore, the survivor needs to look for allies who will also encourage her through her restoration. The psalmist, though initially feeling abandoned, even by God (v. 17), realizes by the end of the psalm that there are those who are supportive of his protection and recovery (v. 27). David describes these genuine allies as ones “who desire the well-being of His servant.”³⁶

After the Abuse

Feelings about Self

David includes laments about his own feelings from the betrayal in the psalm. From them, the survivor can relate not only to the nature of the abuse, but also to how the abuse makes her feel. It is always important to remember that a believer cannot change her emotions, but by adjusting her theology, her emotions will eventually align with truth.³⁷ The feelings of fear, sadness, anger, and betrayal have been or will be addressed throughout the paper. Suffice it to say here that David experiences the full range of these emotions in verses 4–6, 8, 12, 13–17, and 19–21. With each, David recognizes truth about God that alleviates both his flawed thinking and his horrible feelings.

One area of emotion that David exhibits is the utter hopelessness and entrapment he feels. Survivors of abuse will suffer with the hopeless feeling of being trapped first by their attackers, then by their circumstances and fears. David uses the images of hunting to define these feelings. In verse 7 he describes the traps set as a “net” (רֶשֶׁת) and a “pit”

³⁶Delitzsch, 274.

³⁷For more on sanctifying emotions, see Alasdair Groves and Winston Smith, *Untangling Emotions* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019).

(תִּשָּׁח). Hunters used both devices for entrapping animals but here the terms are metaphorical for trapping people covertly.³⁸ In verse 15, David mentions two times that the attackers “gathered together” against him. Between verses 15–17, he paints an image that is predatory in nature with the words “attackers,” “tore” (v. 15), “gnashing with teeth” (v. 16), and “lions” (v. 17). From these words, one envisions the attackers surrounding the psalmist, entrapping him for their attack.

Just as the psalmist found comfort and relief through the expression of his feelings, the abuse survivor can openly share the same feelings with the counselor and ultimately with the Lord. When she does, she and the counselor will be able to deal with faulty feelings and underlying beliefs in a biblical way, learning to trust the Lord’s presence and care in her life once again. She can find comfort through the Lord as she shares those feelings and thoughts with him. David’s focus on God’s nature and work is the antidote to the chronic fear, sadness, shame, anger, and betrayal that she may battle.

Feelings about God

Of all the feelings the survivor faces, one of the most troubling for her will be the feelings that God has abandoned her to her suffering. Survivors will feel as though God is either inattentive or inactive toward their needs. David shares these feelings as well. He expresses them once in a lament (framed as a question) and twice in a petition. In verse 17, he asks *Adonai*, “How long will you look on?” The statement questions God’s *seeming* indifference or passivity to the individual’s suffering.³⁹ Here the psalmist is

³⁸HALOT, s.v. תִּשָּׁח and תִּשָּׁח.

³⁹J. W. Rogerson, J. W. McKay, *Psalms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 164.

lamenting not only the level of suffering in the event, but also the duration.⁴⁰ David uses two statements to express these laments in verse 22. He writes, “Do not keep silent” (חָרַשׁ), an expression that refers to a person who is not hearing and, therefore, is unresponsive.⁴¹ Here, David’s *perception* is that God is non-responsive to his suffering. Likewise, his perception about God being far from him moves him to request a change. While some may question the appropriateness of such a statement, the psalmist is open with God concerning his feelings and thoughts. In expressing what God already knows about the psalmist, the psalmist can deal with his faulty beliefs and feelings God’s way in humble dependence and submission to truth.

The survivor of abuse needs to be equally honest with her feelings of abandonment. As she confesses these feelings, the counselor can remind her of the truth about God and can help her realize the extent and nature of the Lord’s involvement in both her protection and restoration.⁴²

Request Deliverance (Petition)

Having recognized the injury and pain the survivor has experienced, she must advance in her growth process. Without biblical renewal, she will remain in a state of emotional trauma. Therefore, the survivor does not need to be controlled by the pain of the abuse, but rather seek biblical change in her responses to her suffering and in her trust

⁴⁰Broyles, 100.

⁴¹HALOT, s.v. “חָרַשׁ.”

⁴²The author often uses Romans 8:32 to remind the counselee that if God provided the most sacrificial gift for our greatest peril, he would certainly provide what we need for the lesser concerns. Jesus’ active intercessory work for us confirms his constant involvement in our restoration and growth (Heb 4:15).

toward God and others. When David experienced betrayal, he brought the pain to God rather than pretending it did not exist. Of the twenty-eight verses in this psalm, fifteen contain petitions for God to act in his behalf. In these fifteen verses, David uses the imperative eight times and the jussive twenty-one times. Each of these volitional forms requests God to act in a way that would change the circumstances.

More importantly, included in these requests is a desire for God to produce change in David himself. For instance, in verse 3, the psalmist solicits comfort and assurance from God. He desires God to examine him according to his righteousness in verse 24. The juxtaposition of praise with lament at the end of each strophe indicates further that David did not desire to remain in a condition of anger and bitterness, but instead desired to express praise to God. Nowhere is this more evident than in verse 9, where David uses the future imperfect in expressing his determination to praise God. Leupold observes that the psalmist stated his goal unconditionally.⁴³ One should not miss the contrast when David states in verse 12 that his soul was “bereaved,” while in verse 9, “my soul shall shout for joy,” and in verse 10 “all my bones shall [rejoice].” David is looking for profound change to occur not just in his circumstances, but even more in *himself*. Furthermore, David does not rejoice in the downfall of his enemies but in the deliverance that uniquely belongs to Yahweh (“who is like you”). This clause serves as the focal point of the entire psalm, demonstrating the incomparable nature of the God who truly delivers.

As David found hope in God alone, so the counselor should be consistent in reminding the survivor of the hope that rests in God’s deliverance and restoration. She

⁴³Leupold, 287.

should not be content to be dominated by pain, or as some suggest, to simply put it out of her mind. The Psalms demonstrate that we deal with skewed emotions and beliefs with potent theology in our relationship with God. In other words, the goal in the counseling setting should move from pain to praise through genuine restoration. Such a notion will sound insurmountable initially, but when the restoration begins, the counselee will experience relief through restoration for the first time.

The survivor should ask God for direct intervention. The opening verses of the psalm express this truth using imperative verbs. In verse 3 David uses the word קָרָא (“come against”) to appeal for an intentional confrontation between God and his attackers.⁴⁴ Again in verse 17, the psalmist asks God to “rescue my soul from their ruin” using the imperative verb. Later in verse 23, he requests that God would “stir up” and “be active” for justice. Here David was asking God to become actively involved in his plight.⁴⁵

The counselor needs to point the survivor to God as the means of restoration, comfort, and justice. When the survivor asks God for such intervention, she will be expressing verbally the needs she has and demonstrating the trust she needs to rebuild. The counselor may direct her to write out her prayers of intervention so that she may later remind herself of what she has asked God to do and how God has answered. She needs to search the Scriptures for other examples of those who asked God for help and how he

⁴⁴Leonard J. Coppes, “קָרָא,” *TWOT*, 2:811.

⁴⁵Paul R. Gilchrist, “יָקַץ,” *TWOT*, 1:398.

responded. The life of David when fleeing Saul could serve as an example of David's reliance upon God's intervention.

When asking God to intervene, the survivor should leave feelings of vengeance with God. It is here that the exegete is confronted with the difficulty of imprecations. One only needs to peruse the commentaries to find diverging views on how to handle imprecatory prayers. Though the scope of this paper cannot include a thorough discussion, several principles will help resolve this problem.

First, while some may view these prayers as unspiritual, David is, on the contrary, very concerned about God's righteousness.⁴⁶ This fact is evident in this psalm when David asks God to "judge according to [God's] righteousness" (v. 24) and states that his "tongue shall proclaim [God's] righteousness" (v. 28).

Second, the psalmist was expressing his desire for God to deal with the attacker rather than executing vengeance himself. Bellinger correctly notes, "In addition, these psalms are prayers addressed to God, not curses . . . Thus they leave any decision in the matter to God."⁴⁷ Fee adds that the imprecatory psalms "guide or channel our anger *to and through God* verbally, rather than to or at anyone else, verbally or physically."⁴⁸ David's life is a prime example of this principle at work. As often as David expressed anger concerning his domestic enemies, he consistently refused to take matters into his

⁴⁶J. Carl Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (January-March 1981): 41.

⁴⁷W. H. Bellinger, *Reading and Studying the Book of Psalms* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1990), 54.

⁴⁸Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 182.

own hands.⁴⁹ Bringing his desires to God reveals his proclivity to leave the problem with God and wait upon him to act out of his righteousness.

Third, the New Testament, despite its teaching on loving one's enemies, also contains believers' statements concerning judgment. For instance, Paul petitioned the Lord to repay Alexander the coppersmith according to his deeds (2 Tim 4:14). The martyred saints request God's judgment upon their persecutors (Rev 6:9–10). Tribulation saints rejoice at the judgment of Babylon and the great harlot (Rev 19:1–3). There is no incompatibility between forgiveness and wanting God to display his righteous justice. Believers should not overlook sin, but justice must come from God and appropriate judicial authorities, rather than from individual believers.

In summary, Bellinger aptly explains the purpose of the imprecatory prayer this way: “The worshiper does not destroy the enemy, but in a liberating act of faith, places the matter with God.”⁵⁰ Likewise, the purpose for such prayers in the life of the abused is to turn the matter over to God in an act of faith, freeing the soul of the survivor from bitterness and hatred. When asking God to intervene, the survivor should leave feelings of vengeance with God (Rom 12:19).

The most obvious imprecations in this psalm are found in verses 4–6. The first two requests relate to the attitude of the abuser. The psalmist desired to see them “shamed” (בוֹשׁ) and “humiliated” (כָּלַם). These two synonyms are often juxtaposed to

⁴⁹Walter Kaiser, *Toward O.T. Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 294–5.

⁵⁰Bellinger, 54.

stress the guilt associated with wrongdoing.⁵¹ A third term employed in this verse is the word נָסָה, which means “made to draw back.” Wakely comments that in the niphal stem, the word is “often used of faithless conduct, of a treacherous desertion of one to whom a firm commitment had been made.”⁵² This word also involves shame but is used more often in contexts that are hostile.⁵³ Even David’s desire to shame his attackers he left with God to impose.

The latter two requests deal more with protection of the survivor from the attacker. These two requests are parallel in their construction but contrasting in their meaning. In both cases, David requests that the Angel of Yahweh become involved in this judgment. In verse 5, he asks that his attackers “become as chaff before the wind.” The Angel’s role, described in circumstantial clauses,⁵⁴ is to push them on, as if to prevent them from committing the offense again. The image here is one of removal and resulting protection.

On the other hand, verse 6 seems to be an image of helplessness or fear.⁵⁵ Here, the psalmist desires their way to be “dark” and “slippery” (חֲלָקִים) with the Angel of Yahweh pursuing them.⁵⁶ David wished the attackers to feel the same helplessness he felt when attacked, as the Angel pursued them. David expresses in these verses some

⁵¹John N. Oswalt, *TWOT*, 1:98, 1:443.

⁵²Robin Wakely, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 230.

⁵³R. D. Patterson, “נָסָה,” *TWOT*, 2:619.

⁵⁴Delitzsch, 269.

⁵⁵Kidner, 143.

⁵⁶The Angel of Yahweh appears only here and in 34:7 in the Psalms. The reference likely connects events here with the Angel’s important protection and care during the Exodus.

statements that seem rather harsh. He was, however, merely expressing emotions that God already knew he possessed. David reminds the reader that God knows all about the abuse (v. 22) and his feelings (v. 24).

These expressions lead to at least three reasons David gives for turning these feelings over to God. First, God alone can meet the needs of the survivor (v. 10). Second, he alone knows the truth (v. 22). Third, he alone is righteous to judge correctly (v. 24). The psalmist, having realized that only God could deal righteously with his feelings, described those feelings to God in hopeful expectation that God would respond.

As for the survivor, regardless of how shocking her feelings may be, she needs to express them to God, not because God needs information, but because the counselee needs to include God in her life. The depth of her grief necessitates open and frequent expression of her emotions in a biblical way with a goal toward forgiveness of the perpetrator and biblical restoration for herself. The counselor can help her by encouraging her that such feelings are typical for survivors, even if unbiblical at times. As always, repentance and replacement are essential in her restoration (Eph 4:22–24). In encouraging such expression, she is rebuilding the trust she needs in God. She may find that keeping a journal of her feelings will help her as well. As she adds to her journal, she will see the progress that she has made as she depends on God for restoration. Above all, she should not feel ashamed that she battles such feelings. She should, however, view the feelings as an indication of her deep spiritual needs that only the Scriptures and sanctification can address.

In expressing her feelings to God, the survivor should desire appropriate response to the abuse. David, based upon God's law, invokes the principle of *lex talionis* in

requesting justice from God. Contrary to popular opinion, the “eye for eye” principle was not a primitive vindictive postulate but a principle based upon equity. Motyer describes,

The basic principle of OT jurisprudence was absolute equity, enunciated in the striking and memorable form “an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth.” This is often unthinkingly criticized as if it were a license for savagery, but reflection establishes that its intention was to secure as exact an equation as is humanly possible between crime and punishment.⁵⁷

David uses this principle in his language. For instance, he asks God to “strive” with those who were striving with him and to “fight” with those who were fighting against him (v. 1). In verse 7 he describes the “pit” and “net” in which his attackers had attempted to capture him. David turns that upon his attackers in verse 8 in requesting that they be caught in their own devices. In the same verse he requests that they fall into “ruin.” The word הָרָץ (“ruin”) suggests “an irrecoverable state of devastation and destruction” that is characteristic of God’s judgment.⁵⁸ In fact, this word is the same as the modern Hebrew word used for the Holocaust.⁵⁹ One should not view such action as retaliation by the survivor, but just retribution by God for crimes committed by the aggressor.⁶⁰

What kind of actions may be appropriate? David requests both physical and judicial action. The martial images (vv. 1–3) were discussed earlier, but these images do imply physical protection. The judicial images appear in the first and last strophes of the

⁵⁷J.A. Motyer, “Civil Law and Justice in Bible Times,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 265-66.

⁵⁸Rick Brannan, ed., *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020).

⁵⁹Goldingay, 493.

⁶⁰Leupold, 287.

psalm. In verse 1, David uses the word **רָיַב** (“strive”). The AV translates this word as “plead” reflecting the legal sense of the word. *HALOT* concurs with this sense stating that the word is a “legal term” meaning “to dispute, to plead the case of.”⁶¹ In verse 23, David requests that God become active “to [his] justice” and his “legal case.” The latter term is the same word David uses for “strive” in verse 1. The former term, **מִשְׁפָּט**, is the common word for justice or judgment referring to standard functions of government in providing justice for the oppressed.⁶² The synonymous parallelism in this verse helps the exegete understand further the sense of the word *strive*.

The recent nature of the abuse will determine what is the appropriate action for one to take. Likewise, the actions depend upon who the survivor is. Certainly if the survivor is a minor, counselors involved need to report to civil authorities to provide protection for the child and seek appropriate justice.

For adult survivors of abuse, the actions may differ from those listed above. At the least, the abused needs to take appropriate biblical action. These actions include confrontation and forgiveness (Matt 18) of the abuser when possible and appropriate in a way that is safe for both the counselee and counselor. Furthermore, the counselor will need to remind the survivor that although God did not prevent the abuse, he certainly protected her through the abuse; she is a survivor.

Having called for God to act, the survivor herself should lay the blame where it belongs—with the abuser. This action involves exposure of the truth. David exemplifies

⁶¹*HALOT*, 3:1224.

⁶²Robert D. Culver, “**מִשְׁפָּט**,” *TWOT*, 2:948.

this principle when he calls for God to shame the attackers (vv. 4, 26). Both verses use the same expressions to describe the psalmist's request. He uses two Hebrew words in verse 4, while in verse 26 David adds a third. The added word, חָפַר ("disgraced") occurs fourteen times in parallel with בּוֹשָׁ. Wood claims that the former word is an amplification of the latter and that the two words in concert carry the meaning of "disappointment because of unfulfilled expectations."⁶³ The word for "ashamed" (חָפַר), according to Seebass, is used to identify a relationship that is based upon falsehood. He states,

Such a desire, then, is motivated not primarily by revenge, but by the fact that the falsehood with which the worshiper's enemies deal with him, and thus negatively the truth of God, shall be manifest in his enemies. . . . In any case, it seems to me that the interpretation that the worshiper here is demanding revenge is wrong. What he is requesting is a clear revelation of his God.⁶⁴

The psalmist, therefore, is seeking for the truth to be revealed about the attacker's relationship with both him and God. David further desires this shame upon his abusers because they "magnify" themselves against the psalmist. David explains this in verse 26. Because of the attack, David's enemies viewed themselves as proudly victorious.⁶⁵ The psalmist desires that the attackers view their actions with shame rather than with pride. He states this in another way earlier in verse 19: "Do not let them rejoice over me." In verse 27 he states this same concept positively toward his allies. What David desires is that the truth would be known and because of the truth, that his attackers would feel

⁶³Leon J. Wood, "חָפַר," *TWOT*, 1:311.

⁶⁴Horst Seebass, "חָפַר," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, revised edition, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 2:59.

⁶⁵Waltke, 440.

shame rather than pride. He even states that they should “put on shame” like one would wear a garment (v. 26).

The survivor of abuse cannot allow individuals to make excuses for the abuse or the abuser. The truth must be revealed to those involved. This action should eventually include confronting the abuser with the hurt he has caused in some form when appropriate. Revealing the truth may, as needed, include warning others so that they are not injured in the same way. The counselee must be careful that throughout this process her motives are not to injure the perpetrator, but simply to protect others. Furthermore, revealing the truth will help in identifying her allies.

Having assessed the damage through the truth, the survivor needs to work at rebuilding trust in God. She should work at viewing God’s protection and deliverance as sufficient for her needs. The psalmist uses two images in verse 2 to portray God’s sufficient protection. He speaks of God taking hold of the “small shield” and “large shield.” Warriors used the small shield to deflect blows of the sword and the large shield as a protection of the whole body. Delitzsch notes that the “figure is idealized to show absolute protection.”⁶⁶

In verse 3, David calls for God to take the spear and cut off the way of the attackers. The word *javelin* has caused some problems for interpreters. Some have taken this as the Scythian (or Persian) battleaxe (רֶגֶד), to maintain parallelism with the “spear.” Since, however, the battleaxe was unknown in Hebrew usage, the variant reading of “cutting off the way” is preferred by some commentators.⁶⁷ Either way, the line stresses a

⁶⁶Delitzsch, 268.

⁶⁷See Leupold, 291; Delitzsch, 269; and Kidner, 142.

realized protection that prompted the psalmist to request assurance in verse 3b. Of the word “salvation,” Hartley writes, “One who experiences salvation does not need to be tormented by internal anxiety.”⁶⁸ It was David’s realization of God’s ability to protect that brought him comfort to deal with the aftermath of suffering. Wilson explains it well, saying,

In response to the psalmist’s cry, Yahweh runs through the fray, spear and shield in hand, to defend the psalmist’s life. As he does so, Yahweh’s ringing voice is heard above the din of battle, shouting “I am your salvation!” This encourages the beleaguered psalmist to hang on until deliverance arrives.⁶⁹

Therefore, not only should the survivor view God’s protection as sufficient, but she should also seek personal reassurance of God’s protection. Between verses 3 and 10, David changes his wording from a request to an affirmation of who God is. Seeking the personal assurance in verse 3 produced a change in David’s view of God’s protection.

The counselor should encourage the survivor to enumerate her physical, emotional, and spiritual needs to God. As she catalogs her needs, bringing them to God, she will see how God is meeting those needs. Taking note of God’s answers and the way he answers will reinforce the principle of God’s protection in her mind and move her to realize God’s care for her.

Acknowledge Dependence (Confession of Trust)

The survivor has now arrived at the crux of the matter. She has been betrayed and therefore has lost trust in others and in God. She needs to regain trust. Since the survivor

⁶⁸John E. Hartley, “עֲשֵׂה,” *TWOT*, 1:415.

⁶⁹Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 1:579.

has begun to request God's help, she can acknowledge her trust in God, even if her feelings at times conflict. Such acknowledgement should include daily repentance of both thoughts and feelings that deviate from trust in God's presence or care.

David requests assurance of God's deliverance in verse 3, indicating his need for such assurance. By verse 10, David makes a startling confession. He states, "You are one who is rescuing the unfortunate." What prompted the change in David? Among other things we have already observed, in asking God for deliverance, David began to rely upon God for what he needed. That reliance helped David to regain trust in God (cf. with vv. 17 and 22). He uses the active participle to show that this action was one he viewed as durative.⁷⁰ The psalmist begins this confession with a statement followed by a question: "All my bones shall say, '*Yahweh*, who is just like you?'" The expression "bones," is synecdochical, a part used to express the whole. Kidner adds that this expression is emphatically declaring his personal trust in God.⁷¹ The question is a "Hebraic way of confessing with deep conviction that there is no other than *Yahweh* who delivers."⁷² David's feelings of abandonment are replaced with a confident trust that God is going to work in his behalf. Goldingay states it well in saying,

In a sense the psalm thus expresses less-cool faith than many others. Yet it also articulates a particularly consistent expectation that one will be given reason for thanksgiving and testimony, and makes a commitment to offering it. In its own way, Ps. 35 insists on looking in the face two sets of facts, like Ps. 22. It looks in the face the fact of vicious attack and serious danger, and it looks in the face the

⁷⁰Walke, 613.

⁷¹Kidner, 143.

⁷²VanGemeren, 288.

fact that Yhwh is a powerful and delivering God and surely will act to put down attackers.⁷³

Anticipate Deliverance (Vow of Praise)

The confession of trust coupled with the vow of praise establishes the overall theme of trust. The confession is the overt statement of trust, while the praise is the evidence that the individual is anticipating God's response. Therefore, the survivor should anticipate deliverance in her praise.

David expresses his vow of praise at the end of each strophe. The first vow (vv. 9–10) begins with the disjunctive *waw* contrasting the pain of his “soul” in verses 3, 4, and 7 (translated “life”) with praise of his soul in verse 9.⁷⁴ The praise is the result of God's deliverance David requests in verse 8,⁷⁵ even before the deliverance has been accomplished.⁷⁶

The counselor needs to assist the survivor, particularly in the early stages of recovery, in thanking the Lord for his care for her. She may not easily identify occasions that call for praise, even when they exist. The counselor may guide her in identifying areas in which to anticipate God's work of healing. Such activities will help instill hope in the survivor, realizing that God is going to restore her. As she progresses, the

⁷³ John Goldingay, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms 1–41*, ed. Tremper Longman III, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 504.

⁷⁴ Waltke, 129.

⁷⁵ VanGemenen, 287.

⁷⁶ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1965), 79–80.

restoration she experiences should prompt a heart of praise and stimulate both the spiritual and emotional energy toward further spiritual progress and growth.

Not only should the survivor be involved in private praise, but she should also appropriately share her experience of deliverance with others. This act is especially evident in the psalmist's life in verse 18. David speaks of praising in the "great assembly" and among "a mighty group of people." David so anticipates God's deliverance that he looks forward to leading the congregation of God's people in praise for his deliverance. Leupold writes, "David was always a man who thought carefully as to how his own experience might be made profitable for his people."⁷⁷

The survivor of abuse not only will help others in her testimony, but she will also benefit from the support of those individuals. David stresses this principle in verses 27–28. He begins his vow of praise with a petition concerning those who care for his well-being. He desires that they also would be able to rejoice in God's deliverance in his life. Having the support of such individuals causes David to issue his vow in verse 28. Having seen the support of others, David desires to praise God also. Therefore, the abused individual will benefit by talking about her suffering and restoration; she will identify those who support her. She will benefit others who have experienced abuse. Her action, however, is not about seeking sympathy or glorifying herself, but about exalting the Lord's deliverance.

From these principles, one should understand the importance of daily confessing trust and praising God. Not only will the survivor be relying upon God to meet her needs, but she will also be dealing openly with her need of trusting God and anticipating what

⁷⁷Leupold, 289.

God will accomplish in her life in renewing her mind and attitudes. The counselor will need to re-emphasize repeatedly, that, even though God did not prevent the abuse, he was aware of the abuse, limited the abuse, did not approve of the abuse, and desires the restoration and growth of the abuse survivor. The counselor needs to articulate clearly a biblical theology of suffering (perhaps Rom 8 or 1 Peter) to the survivor so that she may gain an understanding of why God allows individuals to suffer. As the survivor works through these issues, she should be able to see progress toward trusting God (and others) and anticipating God's work in praise.

SYNTHESIS OF THE PSALM

There are three strophes in this psalm. The first and third strophes contain strong petitions (six statements each), laments (one and two statements respectively), and two vows of praise. The second strophe contains no petitions, strong lament (seven statements), and one vow of praise. From these facts, the counselor may glean some concluding principles.

The survivor's emotions will often move in cycles. This is most evident when one looks at the three cycles of lament through which David progresses. In each strophe, David issues a lament but ends in praise. Even in the middle strophe with the strongest of laments, David ends in praise. The survivor should be aware that because she has worked through the pain of her suffering, she may experience more bouts with sorrow and pain; but she can and should move back to trust and praise.

Survivors of abuse will experience emotions that vary in type and intensity. There is no set pattern to David's laments or petitions.⁷⁸ As one reads through the psalm, he will sense the greatest urgency concerning protection in the first strophe, while vindication becomes predominant in the second and third strophes. Therefore, the counselee should understand that her emotions will change from time-to-time and that those changes do not indicate a regression but a normal progression towards restoration.

Furthermore, the survivor should understand that throughout her recovery, her prayers may include complaints about her pain, requests concerning her needs, and confession of trust coupled with praise, and yet be biblical prayers. David, both here and on other occasions, includes these elements in his prayers (see also Ps 69 and 109) and remains confident that God is hearing him. If David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) can pray as openly as described in this psalm, so can others who have suffered abuse.

CONCLUSION

The problem of the initial betrayal is only compounded by the continued distrust in relationships. If the survivor of abuse is ever to become a survivor who thrives, she must move beyond the abuse to a position of restored trust in God and others. As she submits to biblical principles, she can pick up the pieces and reassemble them into a life that brings glory to God and help to others. The counselee will become a survivor-thriver by recognizing the protector, recounting the abuse, requesting deliverance and comfort, acknowledging dependence upon God, and anticipating deliverance from Him.

⁷⁸Westermann, 64.

Appendix A
Psalm 35:1–28 Translation

- 1 Of David
Strive Yahweh, with those striving against me;
fight with those who are fighting against me.
- 2 Take hold of [the] small shield and [the] large shield,
and rise up for my help
- 3 and draw [the] spear and close up [the way]
 to come against those who are pursuing me.
Say to my soul, “I [am] your salvation.”
- 4 Let them be ashamed and be humiliated
 who are seeking my soul
let them be made to draw back and be ashamed
 who are plotting evil against me.
- 5 Let them be as chaff before the wind,
 with the Angel of Yahweh pushing [them on].
- 6 Let their way be dark and slippery,
 with the Angel of Yahweh pursuing them.
- 7 Because without cause they have set up secretly for me a net,
[because] without cause they have dug a pit for my life.
- 8 Let ruin come upon him without knowing,
and let the net catch him which he set up secretly
into ruin let him fall into it.
- 9 So my soul shall shout for joy in Yahweh,
it shall rejoice in His deliverance.
- 10 All my bones shall say “Yahweh, who is just like you?”
“You are one who is rescuing the unfortunate from the one [who is] stronger than he,
and the unfortunate and needy from the one who is robbing him.”

SECOND STROPHE

- 11 Ruthless witnesses rise up
things which I do not know they are asking.
- 12 They repay me misery instead of kindness,
[causing] bereavement [or “desolation”] to my soul.
- 13 But me, when they were taken ill, my clothing [was] sackcloth.

I humbled my soul with fasting and my prayer upon my bosom kept returning.

- 14 As a friend,
 as a brother to me,
I went about [daily life] as in mourning for a mother,
 Dressing in mourning attire,
I bowed down.
- 15 But in my stumbling they rejoiced and were gathered together
the attackers gathered together against me, and I did not know;
they tore [me] apart and do not keep still.
- 16 Like godless mocking ones surrounding OR [after a cake],
they are ones gnashing upon me with their teeth.
- 17 Adonai, how long will you look on?
Rescue my soul from their ruin
from lions my only [life].
- 18 I will praise you in the great assembly;
I will praise you among a mighty [group of] people.

THIRD STROPHE

- 19 Do not let them rejoice over me,
 who are my enemies deceptively
[nor] let those who are hating me without cause wink [in maliciousness] their eye.
- 20 Because they are never speaking peace,
and against those who live quietly in the land they are planning deceitful words.
- 21 Then they opened wide their mouth against me;
they said, "Aha, aha, with our eyes we have seen [it]."
- 22 You have seen it, Yahweh;
do not keep silent, Adonai;
do not be far from me.
- 23 Stir up and be active to my justice,
my Elohim and my Adonai, to my legal case.
- 24 Judge me according to your righteousness,
Yahweh my Elohim, and do not let them rejoice over me.
- 25 Do not let them say in their heart, "Aha our soul;"
do not let them say, "We have swallowed him up."
- 26 Let them be ashamed and disgraced all together,
 who rejoice in my hurt;
let them put on shame and be humiliated,
 the ones who exalt themselves against me.
- 27 Let them shout for joy and rejoice
 who take pleasure in my righteousness;
let them say continually, "Let Yahweh be magnified,"

the one who desires the well-being of His servant.

28 And my tongue shall proclaim your righteousness,
all the day your praise.

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