

PSALM 7

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 7

*Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord,
concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite*

The name of this psalm, “Shiggaion”, either respects the music or the matter of the psalm. Some take it to be the name of the musical instrument to which the psalm was set ^{f109}: so Habakkuk’s prayer is said to be “upon shigionoth”; which is the same word with this, only of the plural number, (^{<388>}Habakkuk 3:1). Others say it was the first word of a song, to the tune of which this was sung ^{f110}. And others understand it of a certain kind of a song ^{f111}: and the Targum renders it, “the interpretation of the ode of David”; which Ainsworth renders, “David’s interpretation of the law”; leading **atyrwa** instead of **atydwa**, as does also the king of Spain’s Bible. And certain it is that it is the name of a song; since it follows, “which he sang unto the Lord”; in his presence, before him, and to the glory of his name. But the question is, of what sort it is? and why it should be so called? since its root **hgç** signifies “to err” or “wander”: it is more generally rendered, “an erratic” or “wandering ode”; a song or psalm, which consisted of various kind of metre: it was sung with various notes, and all kind of music, which made it very pleasant. Hence some render it, “David’s delight”, as R. Obadiah Gaon; and the verb from whence it is derived is translated “ravished” in (^{<3159>}Proverbs 5:19,20); and Ben Melech says, the word signifies **twhr [w hj mç**, “joy and pleasure”; and Aben Ezra observes that some interpret it **gwn [t**, “delight”. But others are of opinion that this word regards the subject matter of the psalm, and may be rendered, “David’s ignorance” or “error”; his sin of ignorance; and respects his mistaken conduct with regard to his enemies, particularly Saul, in making imprecations upon them, (^{<3160>}Psalm 6:10); in cursing them, and especially King Saul; when a king is not to be cursed, (^{<2100>}Ecclesiastes 10:20); and in cutting off the skirt of his garment, for which his heart smote him, (^{<3240>}1 Samuel 24:4,5). Some render it, “the care of David”, as Cocceius; which he wrote in deep meditation, when he had forgot himself, and was as it were in an ecstasy; setting forth “the sum of his cares”, as

Ainsworth expresses it, when he was harassed and greatly afflicted by his enemies. The occasion of it is, “the words of Cush the Benjamite”; which some understand of Shimei the Benjamite, who came out and cursed David as he went along, when he fled from Absalom, (~~1045~~1 Samuel 16:5-11). Theodoret thinks Hushai is meant, who persuaded Absalom not to follow the counsel of Ahithophel; on which account David penned this psalm. Others interpret it of one of Saul’s courtiers, who was of the tribe of Benjamin, and whose name was Cush^{f112}; and which is very likely, since it is evident that some of Saul’s courtiers accused David to him, and charged him with seeking his harm, not only to take away his crown and kingdom, but his life, (~~1029~~1 Samuel 24:9 26:19). Though the generality of the Jewish writers^{f113} interpret it of Saul himself, who is called Cush, in allusion to his father’s name Kish, who was a man of Benjamin, (~~900~~1 Samuel 9:1); or else because Cush signifies “an Ethiopian”, to which he may be compared, as the children of Israel in (~~3007~~Amos 9:7). For as the Ethiopian is various in his skin, so was Saul in his actions, as Jarchi observes; or rather because, as Kimchi and Ben Melech express it, as the Ethiopian does not change his skin, (~~2433~~Jeremiah 13:23); so Saul did not change his hatred to David. Though the same writers observe, that he may be called so by the rule of contraries, because he was a very goodly and beautiful man; the words referred to are supposed to be those in (~~1027~~1 Samuel 22:7,8).

Ver. 1. *O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust*, etc.] The psalmist expresses his interest in God as his covenant God, and his trust and confidence in him; and with these he sets out as the stay of his soul, and his bulwark against the fears of his enemies; and he does not say that he had trusted in God, or would for the future trust in him; but that he did trust in him, and continued to do so. And God is to be trusted in at all times; in times of affliction, temptation, and desertion; and these the psalmist premises to his petition, which follows, as an encouragement to him to hope for success, since God was his God, and none that ever trusted in him were confounded;

save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me; persecution is no new thing to the people of God; David had his persecutors, and many of them; the Church, in Jeremiah’s time, had hers; the saints, in the times of the apostles, and in all ages since, have had theirs. Every one that will live godly in Christ Jesus must expect persecution in one shape or another; and there is none can save and deliver from it but God, and he can and will in his own time, (~~4010~~2 Corinthians 1:10). David was sensible of this, and

therefore applies to him, and him only; and not to an arm of flesh, to his friends, or to neighbouring princes and powers.

Ver. 2. *Lest he tear my soul like a lion*, etc.] That is, one of his persecutors, the chief of them; it may be Saul, whom the psalmist compares to a lion for his majesty and greatness, the lion being the king among beasts; and for his authority, power, and might, and for his wrath and cruelty, which he feared; and which, should it be exerted on him, would tear his soul, or himself, in pieces; would rend his soul from his body, and dispatch his life; (see ²⁰⁹¹²Proverbs 19:12). So the Apostle Paul calls the Roman governor, before whom he was, and from whose hands he was delivered, a lion, for his power and fierceness, (⁵⁰⁴¹⁷2 Timothy 4:17). And so our adversary the devil, the chief of all persecutors, and who instigates others against the saints, is by Peter said to go about like a roaring lion, (⁴⁰⁸⁸1 Peter 5:8);

rending [it] in pieces, as the lion does his prey when hungry. So Homer ^{f114} compares Polyphemus to a mountain lion, which devours and leaves nothing, neither the intestines, nor flesh, nor bones; and represents ^{f115} it first taking hold of the creature with its strong teeth, and breaking its neck, and drawing out its blood and all its inwards; (see ²³⁸¹³Isaiah 38:13);

while [there is] none to deliver; no saviour, no deliverer: for if God does not save and deliver his people out of the hands of their persecutors, none can; especially out of the hands of such an one as is here described tearing and rending in pieces. As there is no God besides the Lord, there is no saviour besides him: there is no temporal nor spiritual saviour but he: salvation is not to be expected from any other; and were it not for him, saints must fall a prey to their enemies.

Ver. 3. *O Lord my God, if I have done this.*] The crime which Saul and his courtiers charged him with, and which was made so public that every body knew it; and therefore it was needless particularly to mention it; namely, that he lay in wait for Saul, and sought his life to take it away, (⁹²¹⁹1 Samuel 24:9). The Targum interprets it of this psalm, paraphrasing it, “if I have made this song with an evil intention”; to give an ill character of any, and lead them with false charges;

if there be iniquity in my hands; not that he was without sin, he had it in his heart; nor that he lived without the actual commission of sin: but his sense is, that there was no iniquity, as not in his heart, purpose, and design,

so not in his hand, nor attempted by him, of the kind he was accused of, (^{<0241>}1 Samuel 24:11). Otherwise, we often hear him complaining of the depravity of his nature, and acknowledging his sins and transgressions, (^{<0315>}Psalm 32:5 38:3,4 51:1-5).

Ver. 4. *If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me*, etc.] That is, when Saul was at peace with him; when he lived at his court, and ate at his table his meaning is, that he did not conspire against him, nor form schemes to deprive him of his crown nor of his life: or, as it may be rendered, “if I have rewarded to him that rewarded me evil” ^{f116}; that is, as Jarchi explains it, if I rewarded him as he rewarded me, evil for evil. This David did not; and it is eminently true of Christ his antitype, (^{<0123>}1 Peter 2:23); and in it he ought to be imitated by every believer, (^{<0217>}Romans 12:17);

yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy; meaning Saul, who persecuted David without any just reason, and whom David delivered without any obligation to do it; not for any benefit and kindness he had received from him; for the phrase “without cause” may be read in connection either with the word “delivered” ^{f117}; for the deliverance was wrought without any cause or merit on Saul’s part, or profit to David; or with the word “enemy”, for Saul was David’s enemy without any just cause on David’s part: and the deliverance referred to was when he cut off Saul’s skirt, in the cave at Engedi, and spared his life; and when he took away his spear from him, as he was sleeping in the trench, and did not destroy him, nor suffer those that would to do it, (^{<0244>}1 Samuel 24:4,5,7,10,17 26:8,11). The words may be rendered, “only I stripped him” ^{f118}. The sense is, that he cut off the skirt of his coat, and took away his spear, and so in part stripped him both of his clothes and armour, at two different times; not to do him any hurt, but to let him know, as Jarchi observes, that he was delivered into his hands, and he could have slain him, but did not. The same Jewish writer interprets the word used “of stripping of garments”; and Aben Ezra observes, from R. Moses, that the “vau”, rendered “yea”, signifies “only”, as in (^{<0420>}Genesis 42:10).

Ver. 5. *Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take [it]*, etc.] That is, if the above things he was charged with could be proved against him; then he was content that Saul his enemy should pursue after him, and apprehend him, and bring him to justice, by taking away his life from him;

yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth; with the utmost indignation and contempt, without showing any mercy; as the lion treads down his prey, and tears it to pieces, (^{<3168>}Micah 5:8); or as the potter treads his clay under foot, (^{<3425>}Isaiah 41:25);

and lay mine honour in the dust; meaning either his life and soul, as before; denominating himself from his better part, and which he elsewhere calls his glory, (^{<1969>}Psalm 16:9 30:12 57:8); (see ^{<4405>}Genesis 49:6); or else his body, as R. Judah Ben Balaam, who is blamed for it by Jarchi; or rather his fame, credit, and reputation, that he had gained, both by his courage and valour in the field, and by his wise and prudent behaviour at court, (^{<1987>}1 Samuel 18:7,16). Should he appear to be guilty of the crimes he was accused of, he is willing to have his glorious name buried in the dust of oblivion, and his memory perish for ever. The words are to be considered as a strong assertion of his innocence, in an appeal to God, the searcher of hearts, and the trier of the reins of men; and as imprecating on himself the worst of evils, should it not appear; (see ^{<8321>}Job 31:21,22).

Selah; Aben Ezra renders “selah”, “in truth”, “let it be so”; and the Targum renders it, as usual, “for ever”; (see Gill on ^{<4982>}Psalm 3:2”).

Ver. 6. *Arise, O Lord, in thine anger*, etc.] This and the following phrase do not suppose local motion in God, to whom it cannot belong, being infinite and immense, but are spoken of him after the manner of men, who seems sometimes as though he had laid himself down, and was unconcerned about and took no notice of human affairs, of the insults of the wicked and the oppressions of the righteous; wherefore the psalmist beseeches him to “arise”, which he may be said to do when he comes forth in his power in the defence of his people, and against their enemies; (see ^{<1915>}Psalm 12:5 ^{<3321>}Isaiah 26:21); and he also prays him to arise in anger, to show himself displeased, and give some tokens of his resentment, by letting his enemies feel the lighting down of his arm with the indignation of his anger;

lift up thyself, because of the rage of mine enemies; ascend the throne of judgment, and there sit judging right; show thyself to be the Judge of the earth, high and lifted up; let it appear that thou art above all mine enemies, higher and more powerful than they; stop their rage, break the force of their fury, lift up a standard against them, who, like mighty flood, threaten to bear all before them: or “lift up thyself in rage”, or “fierce wrath,

because of”, or “against mine enemies”^{f119}: and so the sense is the same as before; and this way go many of the Jewish interpreters^{f120};

and awake for me [to] the judgment [that] thou hast commanded; not that sleep falls upon God, for the keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; nor does it fall on any but corporeal beings, not upon angels, nor the souls of men, much less on God; but he sometimes in his providence seems to lie dormant and inactive, as if he disregarded what is done in this world; and therefore his people address him as if he was asleep, and call upon him to arise to their help and assistance; (see ^{<0423>}Psalm 44:23,26); and so David here, “awake for me”, that is, hasten to come to me and help me; suggesting that he was in great distress and danger, by reason of his enemies, should he delay coming to him. By “judgment” is either meant the vengeance which God had ordered him to execute upon his enemies, as Jarchi interprets it, and therefore he entreats him to arise and put him in a capacity of doing it; or else his innocence, and the vindication of it, which God had promised him, and then the petition is much the same with (^{<0078>}Psalm 7:8). But the generality of Jewish^{f121} writers understand it of the kingdom which God had appointed for him, and for which he was anointed by Samuel; and who had told Saul that God had found a man after his own heart, whom he had “commanded” to be captain over his people, (^{<0314>}1 Samuel 13:14); wherefore the psalmist prays that God would hasten the fulfilment of his purpose and promise, and set him on the throne, that so he might administer justice and judgment to the people.

Ver. 7. *So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about*, etc.] By “the congregation of the people” are meant the nation of the Jews, the twelve tribes of Israel, called an assembly of people, and a company of nations, (^{<0128>}Genesis 28:3 35:11); and this is to be understood not of their gathering together in an hostile manner about David to take him, which might be interpreted compassing God himself about, David being as dear to him as the apple of his eye, which is the sense of several Jewish commentators^{f122}; but rather of their encompassing and surrounding the altar of God with songs of deliverance, upon David’s being rid of his enemies and advanced to the throne of the kingdom; (see ^{<0316>}Psalm 26:6,7); unless it should have regard to the pure worship of God by David, which was greatly neglected in Saul’s time; and then the sense is, that the psalmist prays that he might be established in his kingdom, as God had appointed and commanded, when he would fetch up the ark of God, and encourage the worship of God, and rectify all disorders in it; that so the

several tribes might come up to Jerusalem and encompass the ark, the symbol of the divine Presence, and worship in his holy mountain;

for their sakes therefore return thou on high; take, the throne of justice, high and lifted up, vindicate the cause of the oppressed, deliver me from all my troubles, put me into the peaceable possession of my kingdom; if not for my, sake, yet for the sake of thy church and people, and for the sake of thy worship and thy glory; the Targum paraphrases it, “return thou to the house of thy Shechinah”.

Ver. 8. *The Lord shall judge the people*, etc.] The inhabitants of the world in general; for God is the Judge of all the earth, and he judges the world in righteousness daily, and ministers judgment in uprightness, though it is not always manifest; or his own people in particular, whose cause he pleads, whose injuries and wrongs he avenges, whose persons he protects and defends; this the psalmist expresses with confidence, and therefore, suitable to his character as a Judge, he entreats him as follows:

judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness; he speaks not of his justification before God, in whose sight he well knew no flesh living could be justified by their own righteousness, (^{<HEB>}Psalm 143:2); nor of the righteousness of his person, either imputed or inherent; but of the righteousness of his cause, (^{<HEB>}Psalm 35:27); not of his righteousness Godward, for he knew that he was a sinner with respect to him; but of his righteousness towards Saul, against whom he had not sinned, but had acted towards him in the most righteous and faithful manner, (^{<HEB>}1 Samuel 24:11); and therefore desired to be judged, and was content to stand or fall according to his conduct and behaviour towards him;

and according to mine integrity [that is] in me; who had always acted the sincere and upright part towards Saul, though he had pursued him with so much fury and violence; the psalmist’s prayer was heard and answered, (^{<HEB>}Psalm 18:20,24).

Ver. 9. *Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end*, etc.] Which will not be till the measure of it is fully up, and that will not be till the wicked are no more; for, as long as they are in the world they will be committing wickedness, and like the troubled sea continually cast up the mire and dirt of sin; and they will remain to the end of the world, till the new Jerusalem church state shall take place, when all the Lord’s people will be righteous, and there will not be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord

of hosts, nor a pricking brier or grieving thorn in all the land; for, in the new earth will no sinner be, but righteous persons only; and for this state the psalmist may be thought to pray; however by this petition and the following he expresses his hatred of sin and love of righteousness: some choose to render the words ^{f123}, “let wickedness now consume the wicked”; as in the issue it will, unless the grace of God takes place; some sins consume the bodies, others the estates of wicked men, and some both; and all are the means of destroying both body and soul in hell, if grace prevent not; this may be considered as a declaration of what will be, being a prophetic petition ^{f124};

but establish the just; or righteous one; meaning himself, and every other who is made righteous, not by his own righteousness, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him; and who needs not to have his righteousness established, which is in itself stable, firm, and sure, and cannot be more so; it is an everlasting one, and cannot be abolished, but abides for ever, and will answer for him in a time to come; but his faith to be established more and more in its exercise on this righteousness: nor do the persons of the just need establishing, or can they be more stable than they are, as considered in Christ, as they are the objects of God’s everlasting love, secured in the covenant of grace, and built on Christ the foundation; but the graces of faith, hope, and love, need daily establishing on their proper object, they being weak, fickle, and inconstant in their acts; and the saints need more and more establishing in the doctrines of the Gospel, and in their adherence to the cause of God and Christ and true religion; and it is God’s work to establish them, to whom the psalmist applies; (see ^{<1050>}1 Peter 5:10);

for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins; he is righteous himself in his nature, and in all his works, and he knows who are righteous and who are wicked; he knows the hearts, thoughts, affections, and inward principles of all men, and the springs of all their actions; he looks not at outward appearances, but at the heart; and as he can distinguish between the one and the other, he is capable of punishing the wicked and of confirming the righteous, consistent with the truth of his perfections.

Ver. 10. *My defence [is] of God*, etc.] Or “my shield [is] in” or “of God” ^{f125}; God was his shield, his protector and defender; (see ^{<1088>}Psalm 3:3); or “my shield [is] with God”; that is, Christ, who was the shield his faith made use of against every spiritual enemy, was with God; he was with him as the

Word and Son of God from all eternity, and as the living Redeemer of his people before his incarnation; and he is now with him as their intercessor and advocate, who pleads in defence of them, and opposes himself, his blood and righteousness, to all the charges and accusations of Satan;

which saveth the upright in heart: who have the truth of grace in them, wisdom in the hidden part; who are sincere in their affections, purposes, and designs, in their faith, hope, and love; and act from real principles of truth and love, in the integrity of their souls; for these light and gladness are sown, to them grace and glory are given, and no good thing is withheld from them; they are saved by God from sin, Satan, the world, death, and hell, and every enemy, with a spiritual and everlasting salvation.

Ver. 11. *God judgeth the righteous,* etc.] Not all that are thought to be righteous, or think themselves to be so, are such; nor is any man naturally righteous, or of himself, nor by virtue of his obedience to the law of works; but such only are righteous who are made so by the obedience of Christ; these God governs and protects, avenges their injuries and defends their persons; some render the words, “God is a righteous Judge”^{f126}; he is so now in the administrations of his government of the universe, and he will be so hereafter in the general judgment of the world;

and God is angry [with the wicked] every day; wicked men are daily sinning, and God is always the same in his nature, and has the same aversion to sin continually; and though he is not always making men examples of his wrath, yet his wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men; and there are frequent stances of it; and when he is silent he is still angry, and in his own time will stir up all his wrath, and rebuke in his hot displeasure.

Ver. 12. *If he turn not,* etc.] Not God, but the enemy, or the wicked man, spoken of (^{<4906>}Psalm 7:5,9,11); if he turn not from his wicked course of life, to the Lord to live to him, and according to his will; unless he is converted and repents of his sin, and there is a change wrought in him, in his heart and life; the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, “if ye turn not”, or “are not converted”, an apostrophe to the wicked;

he will whet his sword: God is a man of war, and he is sometimes represented as accoutred with military weapons; (see ^{<2897>}Isaiah 59:17,18); and among the rest with the sword of judgment, which he may be said to

whet, when he prepares sharp and sore judgments for his enemies, (^{<270>}Isaiah 27:1 ^{<634>}Deuteronomy 32:41);

he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; drawn his bow of vengeance, and put it on the full stretch, and made it ready with the arrows of his wrath, levelled against the wicked, with whom he is angry; which is expressive of their speedy and inevitable ruin, in case of impenitence; (see ^{<280>}Lamentations 2:4 3:12,13); or “trod his bow”, as is the usual phrase elsewhere; (see ^{<910>}Psalm 11:2 ^{<280>}Lamentations 2:4 3:12); which was done by the feet, and was necessary when the bow was a strong one, as Jarchi on (^{<910>}Psalm 11:2); observes; and so the Arabs, as Suidas ^{f127} relates, using arrows the length of a man, put their feet on the string of the bow instead of their hands.

Ver. 13. *He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death*, etc.] The weapons of his indignation, (^{<280>}Isaiah 13:5); which, will issue both in the first and second death, corporeal and eternal; the instruments of the former are diseases of various kinds, and judgments, as famine, pestilence, etc. and of the latter not only the law is an instrument of it, that being the letter which kills, and is the ministration of condemnation and death, but even the Gospel itself to wicked men is the savour of death unto death; and devils will be the executioners of it;

he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors: the word for persecutors signifies “hot” or “burning” ^{f128}, and designs such persons who burn in malice and wrath, In rage and fury, against the saints, and hotly pursue after them, as Laban did after Jacob, (^{<136>}Genesis 31:36); for these more especially God has determined in his eternal purposes and decrees, and for these he has provided in his quiver, arrows of wrath and vengeance, fiery ones; and against these will he bring them forth, direct them, and shoot them at them, (^{<667>}Psalm 64:7). Some ^{f129} understand all this not of God, but of the wicked man, and read “if he turn not”, but, on the contrary, instead of that, “will whet his sword, bend his bow”, etc. against the righteous; yet he shall be disappointed, he shall not accomplish his designs, as appears by the following verses; these phrases are used of wicked men, (^{<910>}Psalm 11:2 37:14,15 64:2-4), but the former sense seems best.

Ver. 14. *Behold, he travaileth with iniquity*, etc.] Is full of it, and big with it, as a woman with child, and eagerly desires to bring it forth, and is in pain till he commits it;

and hath conceived mischief; that which is injurious to God and the perfections of his nature, a transgression of his law, and an affront to his justice and holiness, is doing wrong to fellow creatures, and harm to themselves, either to their name and credit, or to their substance and estates, or to their bodies and souls, and it may be to them all; and yet this they conceive, they devise it in their hearts, and form schemes how to bring it to pass, and which they do with great freedom, deliberation, and pleasure;

and brought forth falsehood; or “vanity”^{f130}, or a vain thing, as the same word is rendered in (⁴⁸⁵⁵Job 15:35); no fruit at all, but wind, or stubble, (²³⁶⁷Isaiah 26:17 33:11); that which deceives does not answer the expectation, but the contrary to it; the sense is, that wicked men having devised mischievous things against the saints, they are big with expectations of success, and strive to bring their purposes to bear, but are miserably disappointed, for it all ends in vanity and vexation of spirit to themselves.

Ver. 15. *He made a pit and digged it*, etc.] That is, he digged a pit, and made it very large and capacious, to answer his purposes;

and is fallen into the ditch [which] he made; so it is said of the Heathen, (⁴⁹⁹⁵Psalms 9:15); and is exemplified in the case of Haman, who was hanged upon the gallows he had built for Mordecai. Kimchi explains this of Saul’s falling upon his own sword, and dying by it, which he drew against David; phrase is proverbial, (¹⁸²⁷Proverbs 26:27 ²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 10:8); the sense of this and the above figurative expressions is literally and properly given in (⁴⁹⁷⁶Psalms 7:16).

Ver. 16. *His mischief shall return upon his own head*, etc.] That which he conceived and devised in his mind, and attempted to bring upon others, shall fall upon himself, as a just judgment from heaven upon him;

and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate; referring to the violence with which Saul pursued David, which would be requited to him, and of which he prophesied, (¹²⁵⁰1 Samuel 26:10).

Ver. 17. *I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness*, etc.] Or on account of it, as it was displayed in vindicating the innocent, and punishing the wicked; so Pharaoh having ordered male infants of the Hebrews to be drowned, and he himself and his host in righteous judgment being drowned

in the Red sea; Moses and the children of Israel sung a song, as the psalmist here;

and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high; whose name is Jehovah, and is the most High over all the earth; and who had now, according to the psalmist's request, (^{<9006>}Psalm 7:6,7); arose and lifted up himself, and returned on high, and had shown himself to be above all David's enemies, and had sat on the throne judging right.