

PSALM 57



GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY A JOYFUL JOURNEY THRU THE PSALMS

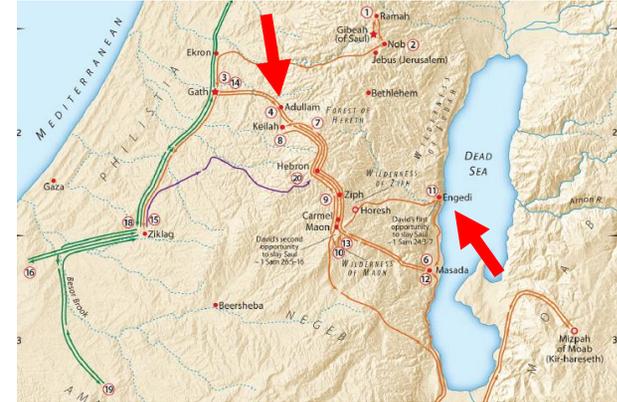
September 19, 2021 PM – “Comfort in the Cave”

I. GENRE: Lament with Strong Confidence

- A. Some would label this as a song of trust of confidence because there are more statements of confidence than of painful pleadings.
- B. The latter half of the psalm is so full of confidence that it almost sounds like a song of thanks.
 - 1. But vv. 7-11 reappear in Ps 108:1-5 which is clearly a song of lament.
 - 2. The reference to giving “thanks” in v. 9 does not seem to envision bringing a thank offering to the Tabernacle but expressing thanks as a testimony to pagans. This fits the international context of 1 Samuel 21-22.
- C. Though the overall mood of the psalm is one of confidence, it is clear that the distress which signaled the prayer has not fully resolved.

II. SETTING

- A. **AUTHOR:** David, part of a collection of his poems from Pss 51-70.
- B. **BACKGROUND:**
 - 1. The header speaks of a time when David fled from Saul to hide in a cave.
 - 2. First Samuel records two times that David hid in caves from Saul: in Adullam around 1017 BC (22:1), & at En Gedi two years later (24:3).
 - 3. One other psalm mentions David’s refuge in a cave (Ps 142) but it is uncertain which of the two historical events it connects to.
- C. **PLACEMENT:**
 - 1. Psalms 56 & 57 share many similarities, being about the same length, born out of similar circumstances, and using similar phrases such as the opening call for help (v. 1) and refrains (56:4, 11; 57:5, 11).



New Moody Bible Atlas

- 2. Pss 57-59 all contain the heading “set to Al-Tashsheth,” (“Do Not Destroy”) which seems to be either a tune name or a style of playing.
- 3. Pss 56-60 all contain the label “A Mikhtam,” a word that seems to mean something like “inscription,” perhaps indicating a prayer letter to God.

III. STRUCTURE: Lament with Confidence (vv. 1-5), Confidence in Crisis (vv. 6-11)

- A. The poem contains a refrain which ends both major sections (vv. 5, 11).
- B. The term “Selah” is used twice (vv. 3b, 6), but in this psalm it does not indicate a major break in the poetry. Each time it is used there is opportunity to reflect on the adversity from which the Lord is bringing deliverance.

IV. NOTES & APPLICATION

- A. **Transition:** The ps moves from mourning to delight, darkness to morning.
- B. **Graphic Imagery.**
 - 1. God is likened to a protective bird (v. 1). Peoples in the ANE often spoke of their gods as hovering birds.



2. Enemies are likened to lions & ferocious predators (v. 4)
3. Plots are likened to traps of nets and pits which backfire (v. 6).
4. Joy in the morning is likened to the music of instruments (v. 8).



- a. David would not have had access to two instruments at first while hiding in the cave.
- b. Perhaps his family or the many malcontents who joined him supplied him with an instrument.

- C. Divine Title:** The name “God Most High” (v. 2) is rarely used in the Psalms. It suggests God’s complete sovereignty over all things. And his sovereign care of his people is compassionate. The final phrase of v. 2 can be rendered, “who settles everything for me.”
- D. Praise with Petition:** David’s refrain that God “be exalted” (vv. 5, 11) is not merely a wish, but a call for God to rise up to put His glory on display.
- E. Repetition:** The psalm uses a fair amount of repetition (vv. 1, 7). These instances suggest both urgency and determination to obtain divine help.
- F. Innermost Being:** David’s call to awaken his own “glory” (v. 8) could be a reference to his inner being.
1. The term “glory” (lit., “heaviness”) is related to a word for “liver,” which is one of the heaviest organs. The reading “liver” may be more appropriate here.
 2. Just as the “heart” is used as a metaphor for the inner being, so also may the liver be used the same way. Cf. Ps 108:1
- G.** Will Varner, “If you do what David did, you will experience peace and victory even in the cave.” What did he do? David’s faith **transformed his cave into a Holy of Holies** (v. 1)! His confidence was not in the rocks but “under Your wings” (Ruth 2:12)”

PSALM 57 <small>© M. Scott Bashford 2020</small>	
HEADINGS	LAMENT WITH CONFIDENCE DAVID SEEKS DIVINE REFUGE IN DISTRESS vv. 1-5
Authorization Consigned to the Tabernacle Choir Director Musical Note <i>Al-Tasheth</i> (lit., “Do Not Destroy”) Song Type <i>Mikhtam</i> (Meditation? Inscription?) Author David Historical Note David’s Refuge from Saul in a Cave	Initial Plea v. 1 Double Call for Help v. 1a Confession of Trust in Divine Coverage vv. 1b Elaborated Confession of Trust vv. 2-3 Resolve to Petition the Most High v. 2 Certainty in God’s Deliverance from Enemies v. 3 <i>Divine Condensation in Deliverance</i> v. 3a SELAH <i>Divine Faithfulness in Deliverance</i> v. 3b Painful Lament: Surrounded by Deceitful, Deadly Enemies v. 4 Hymnic Refrain: Prayer for the Glorious God to Gain Renown v. 5
	CONFIDENCE IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS DAVID ANTICIPATES DIVINE DELIVERANCE vv. 6-11
	Painful Lament: Jeopardized by Deadly Traps v. 6a-c Celebration: Divine Deliverance thru Reflexive Judgment v. 6d SELAH Elaborated Confession of Trust vv. 7-8 Declaration of Confidence v. 7 Determination to Awaken with Praise v. 8 Vow of Thanks vv. 9-10 Promise to Make a Public & Publicized Thank Offering v. 9 Appreciation of God’s Great Faithfulness v. 10 Hymnic Refrain: Prayer for the Glorious God to Gain Renown v. 11
PURPOSE: Seeking refuge in a cave from Saul’s deadly forces; David finds greater refuge in his Most High God whom he confidently calls out for help.	
Type: Lament with Strong Confidence Date: During David’s refuge from Saul in a cave, either at Adullam (1 Sam 22:1, c. 1017 BC) or En Gedi (1 Sam 24:3, c. 1015 BC)	
Author: David	