

Psalm 3 ¹

"Betrayal"

A Prayer to God During a Crisis of Rebellion and Betrayal Within the Family

A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom ² his son.

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A1 DAVID'S REPORT TO YAHWEH ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CRISIS 3:1-3

B1 The Increase of Enemies 3:1

C1 The Increase of Adversaries: O LORD, how my adversaries have increased!

C2 The Quantity of Adversaries: Many are rising up against me.

B2 The Decline of Confidence 3:2

C1 The Quantity of Opinion: Many are saying of my soul,

C2 The Content of Opinion: "There is no deliverance for him in God." ³
Selah ⁴

¹ Psalm 3. An individual lament psalm (*Ryrie Study Bible*).

² Psa. 3 superscription - Absalom: This is the first of many superscriptions in the Psalms. Some, like this one, give helpful historical background and identify the author or authors. Others give musical instructions. The historical background to Psa. 3 is that David had plural wives. Amnon, one of David's sons, raped Tamar, his half-sister. Absalom, Tamar's full brother, was so enraged that he killed Amnon (2 Sam. 13). Later, Absalom endeavored to overthrow his father's government and nearly succeeded, until he was destroyed in battle by David's general, Joab (2 Sam. 13 - 15). All of this violence was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Nathan against David (2 Sam. 12:10-15), which was God's punishment directed against David for his adultery with Bathsheba and his having Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, murdered (2 Sam. 11). Sins can be forgiven, but some times consequences continue.

³ 3:2 - no deliverance: Absalom's *coup de tat* against his own father (2 Sam. 15 - 17) was initially so successful that many in Israel concluded David was doomed to die with no prospect of Divine deliverance.

⁴ 3:2 - Selah: The following note on *Selah* was written by J. Ronald Blue in his commentary on Habakkuk 3:3 (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*): "What is generally considered another musical notation, *Selah* (Hab. 3:3, 9, 13), probably indicates a pause in the song. (In the NIV "Selah" is in the right-hand marg., whereas in

B3 The Affirmation of Faith in and Dependence upon Yahweh 3:3

- C1 David's Confidence in Yahweh's Protection: But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,
- C2 David's Confidence of Restoration to Office: My glory and the One who lifts my head.

A2 DAVID'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF YAHWEH'S ANSWER TO HIS PRAYER 3:4-6

B1 Yahweh's Response to David's Anguished Cry 3:4

- C1 The Psalmist's Cry: I was crying to the LORD with my voice,
- C2 Yahweh's Answer: And He answered me from His holy mountain.⁵
Selah

B2 The Answer of Peaceful Sleep 3:5

- C1 Peaceful Retirement: I lay down and slept;⁶
- C2 Peaceful Awakening: I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.

B3 The Answer of Release from Fear 3:6

- C1 From the Quantity of People: I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
- C2 From the Confrontation of People: Who have set themselves against me round about.

other versions it is within the verses.) "Selah" is used elsewhere only in the Psalms, where it occurs 71 times. The Hebrew verb from which the term comes means "to exalt, to lift up." It may mean a pause (a) to elevate to a higher key or increase the volume, (b) to reflect on what has been sung and exalt the Lord in praise, or (c) to lift up certain instruments for something like a trumpet fanfare. Whatever its meaning, an obvious break was intended in the middle of Habakkuk 3:3." Whatever its musical meaning, logically, Selah here marks a transition in this psalm. From here on there is no more report of what David's enemies and non-supporters are saying.

⁵ 3:4 - holy mountain: Having fled Jerusalem for safety (2 Sam. 15:14, cf. 17:24), David still acknowledges that Yahweh heard and answered his prayer from the tent of meeting on the temple mount, a synonym for Zion (see note on Zion, Psalm 2:6).

Selah here marks a transition in the psalm. David has prayed, and Yahweh has answered!

⁶ 3:5 - slept: Even though David was running for his life from his own son, Absalom, he was able to sleep peacefully knowing that God was in control. What a remarkable example of faith!

A3 DAVID'S CRY TO YAHWEH FOR COMPLETE DELIVERANCE FROM THE CRISIS 3:7-8

B1 His Appeal to Yahweh for Complete Deliverance Based on Yahweh's Past Record 3:7

C1 The Appeal

D1 Arise, O LORD;

D2 Save me, O my God!

C2 The Motive: Yahweh's Past Actions

D1 For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek;⁷

D2 You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.

B2 His Acknowledgment of Yahweh as the Source of Salvation: Salvation belongs to the LORD; 3:8a

B3 His Request for Blessing upon Israel: Your blessing be upon Your people. Selah ⁸ 3:8b

Expanded Analysis of Psalm 3
Prepared by James T. Bartsch
September, 2006

WordExplain.com
P. O. Box 527
Cottonwood Falls, Kansas 66845
Email Contact: jbartsch@wordexplain.com

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⁷ 3:7 - cheek, teeth: David envisions for Absalom a stunning, but not mortal blow. It is consistent with David's command to his generals to deal gently with Absalom (2 Sam. 18:5).

⁸ 3:8 - Selah: See note on Psalm 3:2. Whatever its meaning in Psalm 3:2,4, it cannot here mean "to elevate to a higher key or increase the volume," for this is the end of the psalm.