

Psalm 58

David's Prayer for Vengeance Upon Evil Rulers

For the choir director; *set to* Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David.

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A 1 THE CHARGE AGAINST WICKED RULERS 58:1-2

B 1 Rhetorically Queried Ethics 58:1

C 1 Speakers of That Which is Right? {1} Do you indeed speak righteousness,
O gods? ¹

C 2 Uprightly Judging? Do you judge ² uprightly, O sons of men?

B 2 Actual Indictable Evil 58:2

C 1 Intrinsic, Deliberate Unrighteousness: {2} No, in heart you work
unrighteousness;

C 2 Premeditated Violence: On earth you weigh out the violence of your
hands.

A 2 THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WICKED 58:3-5

B 1 Their Genetic Predisposition to Evil 58:3

C 1 Inherited Estrangement from God: {3} The wicked are estranged from the
womb;

C 2 Congenital Liars: These who speak lies go astray from birth.

¹ 58:1 - gods: The Hebrew radical *aleph-lamed-mem* is vowel-pointed in the Masoretic Text (MT) as the word silence. This meaning, virtually all scholars agree, makes no sense. So they emend (alter) the word to read *elohim* (literally, gods). I take the more conservative approach and leave the MT as it stands. The sense then, is this: "Do you indeed speak righteousness in (the) silence (of your hearts)? Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men?" The true answer is exactly the opposite (v. 2): "No, in heart you work unrighteousness"

² 58:1 - judge: This word is the key that David had in mind unscrupulous rulers. Kings in David's day also were judges.

B 2 Their Serpentine Behavior 58:4-5

- C 1 Their Venomous Effect: {4} They have venom like the venom of a serpent; 58:4a
- C 2 Their Sinister Pursuit of Evil 58:4b-5
 - D 1 Like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear,³ 58:4b
 - D 2 {5} So that it does not hear the voice of charmers, 58:5a
 - D 3 Or a skillful caster of spells. 58:5b

A 3 THE PRAYER TO GOD TO DESTROY THE WICKED 58:6-9

B 1 The Request to God to De-Fang Them 58:6

- C 1 Pain and Injured Nutrition: {6} O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth;
- C 2 Deprivation of Power: Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD.

B 2 The Request to God to Neutralize Them 58:7-9

- C 1 As Disappearing Water: {7} Let them flow away like water that runs off; 58:7a
- C 2 As Misguided Arrows: When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts. 58:7b
- C 3 As a Trail-less Snail: {8} Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along, 58:8a
- C 4 As an Unmentioned Miscarriage: Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun. 58:8b
- C 5 As Wind-blown Fuel for a Fire 58:9
 - D 1 Untimely: {9} Before your pots can feel the fire of thorns
 - D 2 Disappearance: He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.

³ 58:4b - like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear: The evil are like a cobra who, its charmer thinks, has been charmed and will cooperate with him. Instead, the cobra willfully disregards the charming and sinks its venomous fangs into the snake charmer's hand! So are the wicked, who relentlessly pursue evil.

A 4 THE REACTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS 58:10-11

B 1 The Rejoicing of the Righteous 58:10

- C 1 Rejoicing at God's Vengeance: *{10}* The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance;
- C 2 Triumphant in Poetic Justice: He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

B 2 The Conclusion of the Righteous 58:11

- C 1 God Rewards the Righteous! *{11}* And men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous;
- C 2 God is the Ultimately Fair Judge! Surely there is a God who judges on earth!"

EXPANDED ANALYSIS OF PSALM 58

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