

Written as David was fleeing for his life when Absalom attempted to steal the kingdom from him, this psalm of David expresses the confidence that David had in the LORD in spite of the dangers he faced. He understood that the LORD could protect him from his enemies, no matter how strong and numerous they were.

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

1 LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

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**“A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son”** – This line is the title for the psalm and it tells us the author of the psalm (David) and the occasion for his writing it. The occasion is when David had to flee for his life from Jerusalem because of the coup that his son Absalom had executed to take the kingdom from his father (2 Sam. 15:10-14).

**“LORD, how are they increased that trouble [distress] me! many are they that rise up against me”** – This verse is an example of a feature of Hebrew poetry when the psalmist says basically the same thing twice in a row, but in a different way. Here, David is declaring the fact that the danger to him has greatly increased due to the number of enemies that have risen up against him and now sought to harm him. At this time Absalom has betrayed his father and a significant portion of Israel now favored Absalom over David. This was one of the most dangerous times in David’s life and he is pointing out the severity of the situation.

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2 Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.

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**“Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God”** – David’s enemies believed that David had no hope of returning as king and that it was only a matter of time before he was captured and executed. They believed that the fact that he had to flee Jerusalem was evidence that God had forsaken him. They thought that David’s past sins had caught up with him and now God was judging him. Some may even have believed that God was unable to return David to the throne considering the odds against it happening.

**“Selah”** – Since the translators did not know the meaning of the word, they gave us the Hebrew word without translation. Because we don’t know the meaning of the word “Selah” we must speculate on the psalmist’s original intent. Some commentators suggest the word was a musical instruction to the singer of the psalm. Others believe it indicates a dramatic pause intended to give the listener the opportunity to think and reflect on what has just been said. The word may merely indicate a division in the psalm, since many psalms can be divided into sections where the psalmist transitions in stages from the desperation of his circumstances to the joy of trusting in God.

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3 But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

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**“But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me”** – Unlike those who believe that the LORD would not help David, David looks to the LORD for a defense from his enemies. He does not depend on physical weapons or other human means of protection, as should all who put their trust in God (**Prov. 30:5** *“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him”*).

**“my glory [honor; dignity; abundance]”** – The Hebrew word translated “glory” can refer to honor and grandeur or it can refer to the abundance of riches or power. It comes from another Hebrew word that means “to be or to make heavy” implying significance. In scripture it is most often used in reference to God. David was forced to flee Jerusalem in shame and with little more than the clothes on his back. However, David understood that his significance and honor came from the LORD, Who would also provide for all his needs.

**“and the lifter up of mine head”** – Instead of having his head downcast in discouragement because of his current situation, David knew that the LORD would cause him to “lift up” his head in an expression of joy and encouragement. The LORD would lift him up out of obscurity and irrelevance and give him significance once again.

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4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

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**“I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill”** – This “holy hill” refers to Mt. Zion where the ark of the LORD resided. The OT describes the mercy seat as being on top of the ark between the two cherubim with their wings outstretched over the mercy seat. The LORD dwelt over the mercy seat and was where the LORD would speak to Moses (**Ex. 25:22** *“And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel”*). David seems to be emphasizing the LORD’s responsiveness to his cry for help, because when he prayed to the LORD for help, the LORD heard him from where He resided above the ark on “His holy hill.”

**“Selah”** – Perhaps the psalmist wants us to think about the goodness of God, in being our protector, encourager and a responder to our pleas for help.

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5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

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We are most vulnerable when we are asleep since this is when the enemy can sneak in and capture or kill us in our sleep. However, David is confident enough even in his dire circumstances to lay down at night to sleep. When he awoke the next morning he knew it was because he was “sustained” (supported; upheld) by the LORD. David is not depending on the servants and soldiers that are with him to protect him at night when he can’t keep watch to protect himself. He knows that it is ultimately the LORD Who protects Him.

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6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.

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David understands that an army numbering in the tens of thousands would greatly outnumber the human defenders he still had after fleeing from Absalom. In human terms they would quickly and easily overwhelm David's men and kill him. However, David understands that it is the LORD, Who cannot be outnumbered or overwhelmed, that is his defense. He did not have to fear no matter how many enemies have surrounded him with the intent to kill him because the LORD would protect him. **Prov. 29:25** *"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe."*

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7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

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**"Arise [rise up; stand up], O LORD; save [deliver; rescue] me, O my God"** – David asks the LORD to "arise" (to stand up and act in his behalf) and rescue him from his enemies. In the first half of the line, David address God as "LORD," which is God's name that He revealed to Moses ("I AM" or Yahweh/Jehovah in Ex. 3:14). In the second half he refers to the LORD as "my God," the only God that David serves.

**"for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone"** – David remembers that the LORD had always protected him from his enemies in the past. These enemies who had sought to harm David eventually suffered more harm than they inflicted because the LORD stepped in and fought for David. David uses the figurative description of the LORD striking his enemies on the side of the face where the cheek bone is.

**"thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly"** – It was no mere "slap in the face" that they suffered. The LORD's defense of David inflicted an injury upon his enemies that was like having their teeth knocked out and/or broken. Their attempt to harm David caused them to receive significant harm to themselves because of the intervention of the LORD. David is asking the LORD to intervene and defend him against his current enemies in the same way He has done so in the past.

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8 Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

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**"Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD"** – The word "belongeth" is in italics in the KJV, indicating that this word is not in the original Hebrew but was supplied by the translators. It could just as easily been translated as "Salvation is of the LORD." David apparently intends to convey the idea that if he is rescued from his enemies it will be because the LORD chose to do so. He knew that his salvation had come from the LORD in the past and it would have to come from the LORD in the future. Thus his salvation would not come from armies of men or the blessings of other gods. The LORD is in the business of saving His people because He is a gracious and loving God.

**"thy blessing is upon thy people"** – The LORD's desire is not only to save His people but also to bless them because they are His. **Matt 7:9-11** *"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"*

**"Selah"** – If the meaning of "Selah" is to "think about this," then David is asking us to pause and reflect on the goodness of God and how He desires to save and bless His people. How gracious and merciful God is and how unworthy and undeserving we are!