

What does the Old Testament say about persecution? – Psalm 7



The Old Testament records the story of the people of Israel, which was often marked by persecution. For example, the book of Exodus describes how the Israelites were made slaves in Egypt, until Moses helped to lead them to freedom. In slavery, they had been abused and devalued as people. The story of how God had rescued them from slavery brought hope in the challenging times that the Israelites lived in.

The book of Psalms is a collection of hymns and prayers about people's experiences of God and life. Psalm 7, on the opposite page, has persecution as its theme. The writer, who is speaking to God, seems to have suffered persecution, and he makes his emotions and strong reactions to it clear.

Where in the Psalm are the writer's strong emotions evident? Which emotions does he have?

What does he compare the people who are persecuting him to? (Look for a simile)

Is there anywhere where the writer exaggerates?

Where does he give God human characteristics?

Where, do you think, is he at his most honest?

What can we tell about the writer from the Psalm?

Psalms often use imaginary language to express strong emotions. If you had to choose one picture to illustrate this Psalm, what would you choose?

Write a tweet of 280 characters to highlight its key ideas about persecution.

A pursuer is someone who is chasing you

A foe is an enemy

The assembly of the peoples describes all of humankind being gathered around God.

Righteousness is being free from guilt or sin and leading a life which is pleasing to God.

We are probably supposed to think that God's indignation (anger) is against the people who are persecuting the author.

God is described as sharpening a sword and preparing to shoot arrows from a bow.

O LORD my God, in you I take refuge; save me from my **pursuers**, and deliver me, or like a lion they will tear me apart; they will drag me away, with no one to rescue.

O LORD my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, if I have repaid my ally with harm or plundered my **foe** without cause, then let the enemy pursue and overtake me, trample my life to the ground, and lay my soul in the dust.

Rise up, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies; awake, O my God; you have appointed a judgement. Let the **assembly of the peoples be gathered around you**, and over it take your seat on high. The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my **righteousness** and according to the integrity that is in me.

O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous, you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God. God is my shield, who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, and a God who has **indignation** every day.

If one does not repent, **God will whet his sword; he has bent and strung his bow; he has prepared his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts.**

Psalm 7 verses 1-13 (NRSV)

Draw lines to match up these themes with the part(s) of the Psalm where they appear.

A cry for safety

Wanting the persecutors to change their ways

A call for justice

A claim of innocence

A call for revenge

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