

**PSALM 37 | Alphabet of Wisdom**

Of David.

1 Don't get upset (חרה) because of evildoers. Be not envious of wrongdoers! 2 For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.<sup>1</sup>

3 Trust (בטה) in Yahweh and do good. Dwell in the land and shepherd (רעה) faithfulness/steadfastness/trustworthiness/honesty (אמונה). 4 Delight yourself/take pleasure (ענג) in Yahweh, and he will give you the desires (משאלה) of your heart.<sup>2</sup>

5 Commit your way to Yahweh. Trust in him, and he will act. 6 He will bring forth your righteousness (צדק) as the light, and your justice (משפט) as the noonday.<sup>3</sup>

7 Be still before Yahweh and wait patiently for him. Don't excite yourself (חרה) over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil projects/plans/schemes/plots (מזמה)!<sup>4</sup>

8 Refrain from anger and forsake wrath! Don't excite yourself (חרה). It tends only to evil (רעה). 9 For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for/hope in (קוה) Yahweh shall inherit the land/earth (ארץ).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Ps 90:5-6** 5 You sweep them away as with a flood. They are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning. 6 In the morning it flourishes and is renewed. In the evening it fades and withers. **Pr 23:17** 17 Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of Yahweh all the day. **Pr 24:19-20** 19 Don't excite yourself (חרה) because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, 20 for the evil man has no future. The lamp of the wicked will be put out.

<sup>2</sup> **Lev 26:5** 5 Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely. **Ps 62:8** 8 Trust in him at all times, O people. Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us. Selah **Pr 2:21** 21 For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it.... **Pr 3:5-6** 5 Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. **Is 26:4** 4 Trust in Yahweh forever, for Lord Yahweh is an everlasting rock. **Mt 6:33** 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **Php 4:4** 4 Rejoice in the Lord [Jesus] always. Again I will say, rejoice.

<sup>3</sup> **Job 11:17** 17 And your life will be brighter than the noonday. Its darkness will be like the morning. **Ps 55:22** 22 Cast your burden on Yahweh, and he will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous to be moved. **Pr 16:3** 3 Commit your work to Yahweh, and your plans will be established. **Mic 7:9** 9 I will bear the indignation of Yahweh because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light. I shall look upon his vindication. **1 Pe 5:7** 7 ...Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

<sup>4</sup> **Ps 62:1** 1 For God alone my soul waits in silence. From him comes my salvation. **Is 30:15** 15 For thus said Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest you shall be saved. In quietness and in trust shall be your strength. **Jer 12:1** 1 Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you. Yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive? **La 3:26** 26 It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of Yahweh.

<sup>5</sup> **Ps 25:13** 13 His soul shall abide in well-being, and his seed shall inherit the land. **Pr 2:21** 21 For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it.... **Is 57:13** 13 When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you! The wind will carry them all off, a breath will take them away. But he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain. **Is 60:21** 21 Your people shall all be righteous. They shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified.

10 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more. Though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. 11 But the bowed/humble (עָנָו) shall inherit the land/earth and delight themselves in abundant peace/shalom (שְׁלוֹמִים).<sup>6</sup>

12 The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, 13 but Yahweh laughs (שָׂחַק) at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming.<sup>7</sup>

14 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright. 15 Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.<sup>8</sup>

16 Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but Yahweh upholds the righteous.<sup>9</sup>

18 Yahweh knows (יָדַעַ) the days of the blameless, and their inheritance (נַחֲלָה)<sup>10</sup> will remain forever. 19 They are not put to shame in evil times (בְּיַמֵּי רָעָה). In the days of famine they have abundance.<sup>11</sup>

20 But the wicked will perish. The enemies of Yahweh are like the glory of the pastures. They vanish—like smoke they vanish away.<sup>12</sup>

21 The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives. 22 For those blessed (בָּרַךְ) by Yahweh shall inherit the land, but those cursed (קָלַל) by him shall be cut off.

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<sup>6</sup> **Ps 119:165** 165 Great peace have those who love your law. Nothing can make them stumble. **Is 32:17** 17 And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. **Mt 5:5** 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>7</sup> **Ps 2:4** 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. **Ps 31:13** 13 For I hear the whispering of many— terror on every side!— as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. **Ps 35:16** 16 ...Like profane mockers at a feast, they gnash at me with their teeth.

<sup>8</sup> **1 Sa 2:4** 4 The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.

<sup>9</sup> **Ps 10:15** 15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer. Call his wickedness to account till you find none. **Pr 15:16** 16 Better is a little with the fear of Yahweh than great treasure and trouble with it. **Pr 16:8** 8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice. **Eze 30:22** 22 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt and will break his arms, both the strong arm and the one that was broken, and I will make the sword fall from his hand. **1 Ti 6:6** 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain....

<sup>10</sup> “[I]nalienable, hereditary property, in the case of conquest, hereditary division of the property between an individual or the family as their share of the booty, consisting of lands...” (*HALOT*, 687).

<sup>11</sup> **Ps 1:6** 6 ...For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. **Ps 33:19** 19 ... That he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. **Job 5:20** 20 In famine he will redeem you from death, and in war from the power of the sword.

<sup>12</sup> **Ps 68:2** 2 As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away. As wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God! **Hos 13:3** 3 Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window. **Jas 1:11** 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

23 The steps of a man are established by Yahweh, when he delights in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for Yahweh upholds his hand.<sup>13</sup>

25 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. 26 He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing (בְּרָכָה).<sup>14</sup>

27 Turn away from evil and do good. So shall you dwell forever. 28 For Yahweh loves (אהב) justice (מִשְׁפָּט). He will not abandon/leave behind/give up (עֲזַב) his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. 29 The righteous shall inherit the land/earth (אֶרֶץ) and dwell upon it forever.<sup>15</sup>

30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom (חֵכְמָה), and his tongue speaks justice (מִשְׁפָּט). 31 The Torah/instruction (תּוֹרָה) of his God is in his heart/inner self (לֵב). His steps do not slip.<sup>16</sup>

32 The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. 33 Yahweh will not abandon (רָשַׁע) him to his power or let him be condemned (עֲזַב) when he is brought to trial.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> **Ps 25:12** 12 Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. **Ps 40:2** 2 He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. **Pr 24:16** 16 for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity. **Mic 7:8** 8 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy. When I fall, I shall rise. When I sit in darkness, Yahweh will be a light to me. **2 Co 4:9** 9 ...Persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed....

<sup>14</sup> **Dt 15:8-10** 8 ...But you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. 9 Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, The seventh year, the year of release is near, and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to Yahweh against you, and you be guilty of sin. 10 You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this Yahweh your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. **Ps 112:5** 5 It is well with the man who deals generously and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice. **Ps 112:9** 9 He has distributed freely. He has given to the poor. His righteousness endures forever. His horn is exalted in honour. **Mt 5:42** 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. **Lk 6:35** 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

<sup>15</sup> **Ps 102:28** 28 The children of your servants shall dwell secure. Their offspring shall be established before you. **Ps 34:14** 14 Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. **Ps 16:10** 10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. **Ps 21:10** 10 You will destroy their descendants from the earth, and their offspring from among the children of man. **Pr 2:22** 22 ...But the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

<sup>16</sup> **Dt 6:6** 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. **Ps 40:8** 8 I delight to do your desire, O my God. Your Torah is within my heart. **Ps 73:2** 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. **Ps 119:11** 11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. **Is 51:7** 7 Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law. Fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. **Jer 31:33** 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Yahweh. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Ro 7:22** 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being....

<sup>17</sup> **Ps 10:8** 8 He sits in ambush in the villages. In hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless. **Ps 109:31** 31 For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from those who condemn his soul to death. **2 Pe 2:9** 9 ...Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment....

34 Wait for/hope in (קוה) Yahweh and keep his way (דָּרָךְ), and he will exalt you to take possession of (ירש) the land/earth (אֶרֶץ). You will look on when the wicked are cut off.<sup>18</sup>

35 I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree. 36 But he passed away, and behold, he was no more. Though I sought him, he could not be found.<sup>19</sup>

37 Mark the blameless/guiltless/upright (תָּם) and behold the upright (יָשָׁר), for there is a future (אֲחֵרִית) for the man of shalom (שְׁלוֹם). 38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed/exterminated (שָׁמַד). The future (אֲחֵרִית) of the wicked shall be cut off.<sup>20</sup>

39 The salvation/help/deliverance/victory (תְּשׁוּעָה) of the righteous (צַדִּיק) is from Yahweh. He is their mountain stronghold/refuge/fortress (מְצוּדָה) in the time of trouble/need/distress/anxiety (צָרָה). 40 Yahweh helps them and delivers them. He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> **Ps 27:14** 14 Wait for Yahweh. Be strong, and let your heart take courage. Wait for Yahweh! **Ps 52:5** 5 But God will break you down forever. He will snatch and tear you from your tent. He will uproot you from the land of the living. **Ps 91:8** 8 You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.

<sup>19</sup> **Ps 52:8** 8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. **Job 20:5** 5 ...That the exulting of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment?

<sup>20</sup> **Job 18:17** 17 His memory perishes from the earth, and he has no name in the street. **Ps 52:5** 5 But God will break you down forever. He will snatch and tear you from your tent. He will uproot you from the land of the living. **Ps 73:17** 17 ...Until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I discerned their end. **Ps 104:35** 35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more! **Ps 119:165** 165 Great peace have those who love your Torah. Nothing can make them stumble. **Pr 2:22** 22 ...But the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it. **Is 57:2** 2 ...He enters into peace. They rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness.

<sup>21</sup> **1 Ch 5:20** 20 And when they prevailed over them, the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried out to God in the battle, and he granted their urgent plea because they trusted in him. **Ps 3:8** 8 Salvation belongs to Yahweh. Your blessing be on your people! Selah **Ps 9:9** 9 Yahweh is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. **Ps 11:1** 1 In Yahweh I take refuge. **Is 31:5** 5 Like birds hovering, so Yahweh of hosts will protect Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it. He will spare and rescue it. **Da 3:17** 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. **Da 3:28** 28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. **Da 6:23** 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. **Ac 12:11** 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, Now I am sure that Yahweh has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.

## Commentary

### 1. Overview.

- a. Big question: Why should the righteous trust in God rather than worrying about the wicked and their schemes?
  - (1) “But still the problem remains: why should morality be adopted, when it is self-evident that wicked persons seem to get along fine in this world? It is not enough, if education is to be profound, simply to answer the question *why* with ‘God says so!’<sup>22</sup>
- b. Big idea: The reason the righteous are to trust God and not get upset about the wicked and their schemes is because the future of the righteous is eternal life in God’s kingdom while the future of the wicked is nothingness.
- c. Characteristics.
  - (1) This is an acrostic psalm. Every other verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet (cf. Ps 119). It has a pedagogical purpose.
  - (2) This is the most proverb-like of all the psalms. It could be found in the book of Proverbs. Perhaps these words were communicated directly from David to Solomon.
  - (3) It abounds in contrasts between the righteous and wicked.
    - (a) “In the Qumran commentary on the psalm, its words were taken to refer to the Elect Community, the Teacher of Righteousness, the Prince of Wickedness, and the eventual apocalyptic destruction of evildoers.”<sup>23</sup>
  - (4) David’s personal history illustrates this psalm.
  - (5) This is a helpful psalm to meditated on when we are discouraged about the success of the wicked.
  - (6) Ps 37 advances the thought of Ps 36. The evildoers of Ps 36:12 are the evildoers of Ps 37:1.<sup>24</sup>
  - (7) Ps 49 and 73 have a similar theme.

### 2. Alef (Ps 37:1-2).

- a. **Ps 37:1-2** Of David. 1 Don’t excite yourself (חרה) because of evildoers. Be not envious of wrongdoers! 2 For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.
- b. The responsibility of the righteous is not to lose their poise at the wicked or their success (v. 1).
  - (1) **Pr 23:17** 17 Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of Yahweh all the day.
- c. The reason the righteous are not to lose their poise is because the wicked will soon be gone (vv. 1-2).
  - (1) **Ps 90:5-6** 5 You sweep them away as with a flood. They are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning. 6 In the morning it flourishes and is renewed. In the evening it fades and withers.

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<sup>22</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 299.

<sup>23</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 300.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Constable, “Notes on Psalms,” 172.



- (2) **Pr 24:19-20** 19 Don't excite yourself (חרה) because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, 20 for the evil man has no future. The lamp of the wicked will be put out.
- (3) Though the wicked prosper all their live, their success is temporary in view of eternity.

### 3. Bet (Ps 37:3-4).

- a. **Ps 37:3-4** 3 Trust (בטח) in Yahweh and do good. Dwell in the land and shepherd (רעה) faithfulness/steadfastness/trustworthiness/honesty (אמונה). 4 Delight yourself/take pleasure (ענג) in Yahweh, and he will give you the desires (משאלה) of your heart.
- b. The responsibility of the righteous is to trust in God, do what is right, dwell in the land, and feed faithfulness (v. 3).
  - (1) **Ps 62:8** 8 Trust in him at all times, O people. Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us. Selah
  - (2) **Pr 3:5-6** 5 Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
  - (3) **Php 4:4** 4 Rejoice in the Lord [Jesus] always. Again I will say, rejoice.
  - (4) We must continue to trust in God and do what is right. Instead of losing our poise, we are to trust.
- c. God's promise to the righteous is that he will give them the (righteous) desires of their hearts (v. 4).
  - (1) **Pr 2:21** 21 For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it....
  - (2) What are the righteous desire of our hearts?
  - (3) If God is our heart's delight, then God we shall have.

### 4. Gimel (Ps 37:5-6).

- a. **Ps 37:5-6** 5 Commit your way to Yahweh. Trust in him, and he will act. 6 He will bring forth your righteousness (קדש) as the light, and your justice (משפט) as the noonday.
- b. The responsibility of the righteous is to commit his/her way to God (v. 5).
  - (1) **Ps 55:22** 22 Cast your burden on Yahweh, and he will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous to be moved.
  - (2) **Pr 16:3** 3 Commit your work to Yahweh, and your plans will be established.
  - (3) **1 Pe 5:7** 7 ...Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.
- c. God's promise to the righteous is that he will publicly vindicate them and execute justice for them (v. 6).
  - (1) **Mic 7:9** 9 I will bear the indignation of Yahweh because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light. I shall look upon his vindication.
  - (2) "The acts of commitment and trust function like a trigger, releasing God's capacity to act."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 297.

(3) Setbacks are temporary, like clouds obscuring the sun, but eventually God will move the clouds so the true light will appear.<sup>26</sup>

### 5. Dalet (Ps 37:7).

- a. **Ps 37:7** 7 Be still before Yahweh and wait patiently for him. Don't excite yourself (חרה) over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil projects/plans/schemes/plots (מְזִמָּה)!
- b. The responsibility of the righteous when the wicked seem to be prospering in their wicked schemes is to be still and wait (v. 7).
  - (1) **Ps 62:1** 1 For God alone my soul waits in silence. From him comes my salvation.
  - (2) **Is 30:15** 15 For thus said Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest you shall be saved. In quietness and in trust shall be your strength.
  - (3) **La 3:26** 26 It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of Yahweh.
  - (4) "An obsession with enemies and rivals cannot be simply switched off, but it can be ousted by a new focus of attention.... It includes a deliberate redirection of one's emotions (4a, take delight; cf. Paul and Silas in prison, singing as well as praying), and an entrusting of one's career (your way, 5) and reputation (your vindication, 6) to Him."<sup>27</sup>
  - (5) Unless we learn to wait silently before God, we will never experience the peace he desires us to have. Instead of instant vindication, we must learn to wait patiently for God's appropriate time.

### 6. He (Ps 37:8-9).

- a. **Ps 37:8-9** 8 Refrain from anger and forsake wrath! Don't get upset (חרה). It tends only to evil (רעע). 9 For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for/hope in (קוה) Yahweh shall inherit the land/earth (אָרֶץ).
- b. The reason the righteous are not to lose their poise is because the wicked will be cut off and the righteous will inherit the earth (vv. 8-9).
  - (1) **Pr 2:21** 21 For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it....
  - (2) **Is 57:13** 13 When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you! The wind will carry them all off, a breath will take them away. But he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain.

### 7. Waw (Ps 37:10-11).

- a. **Ps 37:10-11** 10 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more. Though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. 11 But the bowed/humble (עָנָו) shall inherit the land/earth and delight themselves in abundant peace/shalom (שְׁלוֹמִים).
- b. The ultimate destiny of the wicked is nothingness (v. 10).
- c. The ultimate destiny of the humble is joy and abundant peace (v. 11).
  - (1) **Ps 119:165** 165 Great peace have those who love your law. Nothing can make them stumble.

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<sup>26</sup> Id.

<sup>27</sup> Derek Kidner, 149.

- (2) **Is 32:17** 17 And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.
- (3) **Mt 5:5** 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- (4) The world craves abundant peace, but without God.

#### 8. Zayin (Ps 37:12-13).

- a. **Ps 37:12-13** 12 The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, 13 but Yahweh laughs (קִיחַק) at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming.
- b. The reason God laughs at the wicked and their plots against the righteous is because judgment day is coming (vv. 12-13).
  - (1) **Ps 2:4** 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision.
  - (2) We must have a larger perspective. The power of the wicked is limited in time.

#### 9. Chet (Ps 37:14-15).

- a. **Ps 37:14-15** 14 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright. 15 Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.
- b. The result of the wicked's attempt to destroy the righteous will be that the wicked destroy themselves (vv. 14-15).
  - (1) This is the "boomerang" principle.

#### 10. Tet (Ps 37:16-17).

- a. **Ps 37:16-17** 16 Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but Yahweh supports/sustains/helps (תַּמֵּךְ) the righteous.
- b. The reason it is better to be righteous and poor rather than wicked and rich is because God breaks the wicked but sustains the righteous (vv. 16-17).
  - (1) **Pr 15:16** 16 Better is a little with the fear of Yahweh than great treasure and trouble with it.
  - (2) **Pr 16:8** 8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice.
  - (3) **1 Ti 6:6** 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain....
  - (4) **Ps 10:15** 15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer. Call his wickedness to account till you find none.
  - (5) "The criticism is aimed not at wealth as such, nor does it imply that poverty is a lofty estate. The contrast is between the *righteous* and the *wicked*, yet it is an error easily committed by the righteous who are poor to think that wealth would improve their lives. The error required correction in the minds of the young, lest the pursuit of wealth for its own sake detract from the goal of righteous living."<sup>28</sup>

#### 11. Yod (Ps 37:18-19).

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<sup>28</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 298.



- a. **Ps 37:18-19** 18 Yahweh knows (יָדַע) the days of the blameless, and their inheritance (נַחֲלָה)<sup>29</sup> will remain forever. 19 They are not put to shame in evil times (בְּיַעַת רָעָה). In the days of famine they have abundance.<sup>30</sup>
- b. The result of the personal relationship the righteous have with God is that they have an eternal possession and present protection and provision (vv. 18-19).
  - (1) As believers we are the special objects of God's careful attention. Each day of our lives is known to God and comes within his protective care.
  - (2) God always provides in times of famine (see 1 Ki 17:1-16).

## 12. Kaf (Ps 37:20).

- a. **Ps 37:20** 20 But the wicked will perish. The enemies of Yahweh are like the glory of the pastures. They vanish—like smoke they vanish away.<sup>31</sup>
- b. The ultimate end of the wicked is nothingness (v. 20).

## 13. Lamed (Ps 37:21-22).

- a. **Ps 37:21-22** 21 The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives. 22 For those blessed (בָּרַךְ) by Yahweh shall inherit the land, but those cursed (קָלַל) by him shall be cut off.
- b. Differing characteristics of the wicked and righteous are that the wicked takes while the righteous gives (v. 21).
- c. Differing destinies of those whom God blesses and curses are that the blessed inherit the land but the cursed are cut off (v. 22).

## 14. Mem (Ps 37:23-24).

- a. **Ps 37:23-24** 23 The steps of a man are established by Yahweh, when he delights in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for Yahweh supports his hand.<sup>32</sup>
- b. A reassuring promise for those who delight in God's way is that God will establish their steps and supports their hand when they begin to fall (vv. 23-24).
  - (1) We may stumble, but we will never fall. We may get knocked down, but we get right on up and keep moving.

## 15. Nun (Ps 37:25-26).

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<sup>29</sup> “[I]nalienable, hereditary property, in the case of conquest, hereditary division of the property between an individual or the family as their share of the booty, consisting of lands...” (*HALOT*, 687).

<sup>30</sup> **Ps 1:6** 6 ...For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. **Ps 33:19** 19 ... That he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. **Job 5:20** 20 In famine he will redeem you from death, and in war from the power of the sword.

<sup>31</sup> **Ps 68:2** 2 As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away. As wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God! **Hos 13:3** 3 Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window. **Jas 1:11** 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

<sup>32</sup> **Ps 25:12** 12 Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. **Ps 40:2** 2 He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. **Pr 24:16** 16 for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity. **Mic 7:8** 8 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy. When I fall, I shall rise. When I sit in darkness, Yahweh will be a light to me. **2 Co 4:9** 9 ...Persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed....

- a. **Ps 37:25-26** 25 I [David] have been young and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous abandoned (עזב) or his children begging for bread. 26 He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing (בְּרָכָה).
- b. The reality for the righteous who lend generously is that they and their children will never be abandoned and will continue to be a blessing to others (vv. 25-26).
  - (1) **Ps 112:5** 5 It is well with the man who deals generously and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice.
  - (2) **Mt 5:42** 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.
  - (3) **Lk 6:35** 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.
  - (4) "...[T]he benefits of old age are offered to the young students, who simply have not lived long enough in this world to know the truth of this bit of instruction."<sup>33</sup>

#### 16. Samech/Ayin (Ps 37:27-29).

- a. **Ps 37:27-29** 27 Turn away from evil and do good. So shall you dwell forever. 28 For Yahweh loves (אהב) justice (מִשְׁפָּט). He will not abandon (עזב) his saints (חסידים). They are preserved forever/totally, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. 29 The righteous shall inherit the land/earth (אָרֶץ) and dwell upon it forever.
- b. The sure reward for turning away from evil and doing good is eternal life in God's kingdom (vv. 27-29).
  - (1) **Ps 102:28** 28 The children of your servants shall dwell secure. Their offspring shall be established before you.

#### 17. Pe (Ps 37:30-31).

- a. **Ps 37:30-31** 30 The mouth of the righteous mutters (הגה) wisdom (חֵכְמָה) [while meditating], and his tongue speaks justice (מִשְׁפָּט). 31 The Torah/instruction (תּוֹרָה) of his God is in his heart/mind/inner self (לֵב). His steps do not slip.
- b. A chief characteristic of the righteous is that he meditates on and speaks from God's word (vv. 30-31).
  - (1) **Dt 6:6** 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.
  - (2) **Ps 40:8** 8 I delight to do your desire, O my God. Your Torah is within my heart.
  - (3) **Ps 49:3** 3 My mouth shall speak wisdom. The meditation of my heart shall be understanding.
  - (4) **Ps 119:11** 11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.
  - (5) **Pr 10:31** 31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off.
  - (6) **Jer 31:33** 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Yahweh. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>33</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 298.

- (7) **Lk 6:45** 45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.
- c. A result of the righteous man's meditating and speaking from God's word is that he doesn't make major mistakes (v. 31).
- (1) When God's word resides in our hearts, stability characterises our lives.

### 18. Tsadik (Ps 37:32-33).

- a. **Ps 37:32-33** 32 The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. 33 Yahweh will not abandon (רָשַׁע) him to his power or let him be condemned (עֹצֵב) when he is brought to trial.
- b. The desire of the wicked is to condemn the righteous and put them to death (vv. 32-33).
- (1) **Ps 10:8** 8 He sits in ambush in the villages. In hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless.
- (2) **Pr 1:11** 11 ...Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason....
- (3) The wicked constantly watch for opportunities to harm the righteous.
- (4) See Mt 26-27 and Jn 18-19.
- c. A promise for the righteous is that God will not abandon them when they are brought to trial by the wicked (vv. 33).
- (1) **Ps 109:31** 31 For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from those who condemn his soul to death.
- (2) **2 Pe 2:9** 9 ...Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment....

### 19. Qof (Ps 37:34).

- a. **Ps 37:34** 34 Wait for/hope in (קוּה) Yahweh and keep his way (דִּרְךָ), and he will exalt you to take possession of (יִרְשׁ) the land/earth (אֶרֶץ). You will look on when the wicked are cut off.
- b. The reward for those who wait for God and keep his way will be exaltation, possession, and vindication (v. 34)
- (1) **Ps 27:14** 14 Wait for Yahweh. Be strong, and let your heart take courage. Wait for Yahweh!
- (2) **Ps 91:8** 8 You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.

### 20. Resh (Ps 37:35-36).

- a. **Ps 37:35-36** 35 I [David] have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree. 36 But he passed away, and behold, he was no more. Though I sought him, he could not be found.
- b. The end destiny of the wicked who appear to prosper today will be nothingness (vv. 35-36).
- (1) David spoke this proverb from experience.
- (2) "In this proverb, a metaphor from Ps 1:3 is developed in reverse. The righteous, in Ps 1, are like a tree planted by water that flourishes and grows. Here, the wicked

flourish at first ‘like a luxuriant native tree’; the teacher, portraying himself as a country hiker, sees the tree one day, but it is gone the next, for it has no deep roots, no constant supply of water, and hence no resilience and staying power.”<sup>34</sup>

## 21. Shin (Ps 37:37-38).

- a. **Ps 37:37-38** 37 Observe (שמר) the blameless/guiltless/upright (תם) and behold the upright (ישר), for there is a future (אֶתְרִית) for the man of shalom (שָׁלוֹם). 38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed/extermiated (שמד). The future (אֶתְרִית) of the wicked shall be cut off.
- b. The reason we should take special notice of the righteous is because only they have a future (vv. 37-38).
  - (1) **Ps 119:165** 165 Great peace have those who love your Torah. Nothing can make them stumble.
  - (2) **Pr 23:18** 18 Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.
- c. The differing destinies of the righteous and wicked are that the righteous have a future, but the wicked do not (vv. 37-38).
  - (1) **Ps 73:17** 17 ...Until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I discerned their end.
  - (2) **Ps 104:35** 35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more!
  - (3) **Pr 2:22** 22 ...But the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

## 22. Tav (Ps 37:39-40).

- a. **Ps 37:39-40** 39 The salvation/help/deliverance/victory (תְּשׁוּעָה) of the righteous (צַדִּיק) is from Yahweh. He is their mountain stronghold/refuge/fortress (מְעוֹז) in the time of trouble/need/distress/anxiety (צָרָה). 40 Yahweh helps them and delivers them. He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.
- b. The role of God in the lives of the righteous who take refuge in him is to be their saviour, helper, and deliverer (vv. 39-40).
  - (1) **Ps 9:9** 9 Yahweh is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.
  - (2) **Da 3:28** 28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.
  - (3) **Da 6:23** 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.
  - (4) **Ac 12:11** 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, Now I am sure that Yahweh has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.

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<sup>34</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 299.

### 23. Application.

- a. We must not lose our poise when it appears the wicked are winning.
- b. We are to trust God with our future, our family, and our finances.
  - (1) “In the short run, the wicked seem to prosper, whereas the righteous very often seem to suffer at their hands. But it is the longer run that counts, and in the long run the only true satisfaction is to be found in the righteousness which is the hallmark of the one who lives in relationship with the living God.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 299-300.