



Psalm of Kings

Poetic reflections of the kings of Israel and Judah

WH Chong

Author's Preface

This creative response to 1 and 2 Kings is presented as a newly discovered alphabetic acrostic psalm, translated from Hebrew to English. The work is divided into twenty-two stanzas for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The ongoing question of “who will be king” is traced from Solomon’s kingship through to the exile of Israel and Judah. Themes of human and divine kingship, God’s sovereignty and covenant blessing and obedience are explored. The psalmist anticipates a better king who will bring Yahweh’s blessing to the nations. While thematic and stylistic inspiration is drawn primarily from Old Testament wisdom literature (e.g. Psalms, Proverbs, pre-exilic prophecy), non-Semitic meters and structures are occasionally utilised. The psalm also references other writings set during Israel’s monarchy period. “Translator’s notes” are also provided.

Aleph 8

A psalm of praise.¹

All hail our mighty Solomon! Great David's greater Son!

Who sits upon his father's throne, his glorious rule begun!

Alas, poor Adonijah tried to set himself as King

And would have been successful, if Bathsheba did not bring

An apt reminder to her lord: "Did you not swear to crown your son?"

The prophet Nathan said this too. So David, weak in frame, declared:

"As surely as our Yahweh lives, who rescued me from every grief,

I hereby state that Solomon shall rule this Promised Land.

Arise, my son, I am to die. Be strong and show yourself a man.

Obey and love the Great I AM. Don't lust for gold or lust for war.

And you must not take many wives, or else your heart will go astray.

"Remember all Yahweh's commands, and He will keep his promised plan:

A kingdom that will never fail to have our man upon the throne,

so nations of the earth might see the grace of God alone."

Amen! Long live King Solomon! Arise for Yahweh's sake,

Your glorious rule has now begun! May God make your name great!

¹ 1 Kings 1-2.

Beth כ

Of Solomon.²

Blessed is the one who does not walk in counsel of the wicked

But walks with the wise, and asks for wisdom.

By Your great kindness You made this humble servant king.

But I am only young, I do not know my duties well.

Before me are Your chosen seed, too numerous to count.

Because of this, I need a heart to tell from right and wrong.

Better is a discerning heart than long life or wealth for myself.

Both riches and honour I do not seek.

Blessed be Yahweh! Give burnt offerings to Him,

because He gives a discerning heart, just as He promised!

By wisdom a king administers justice,

By insight he restores the son to his mother.

By wisdom a king brings blessing to the nations,

But one who is greedy for gold tears it apart.

“Blessed is the man who always fears Yahweh

But he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.”³

² 1 Kings 3–4.

³ Proverbs 28:14.

Gimel ל

A prayer of Solomon, after he had built the Temple and palace in Jerusalem.⁴

Great God, Your greatness extends over all heaven and earth!

You keep your covenant of love

So I have built this Temple for You

Gold interiors and furnishings to magnify Your beauty

Cedar from floor to ceiling to display Your glory

In cubits sixty long, twenty wide, thirty high, to show Your greatness

Gourds, flowers and garden motifs

A glorious place! God, would You really dwell here?

Can cedar and stone contain all Your greatness?

Glory! Glory! Your glory has filled this Temple!

I return to rest in my own royal palace

In cubits one hundred long, fifty wide, thirty high, to show my greatness.

Great cedar interiors to showcase my greatness

The weight of my gold, my gifts from the nations

Earth and heaven all over extends greatness to me, God. Great.

⁴ 1 Kings 5–10.

Dalet 7

Downfall!⁵ Solomon loved many foreign women!

Defying Yahweh's demand: "Don't intermarry with them."

Dementia-led devotion, displaced to detestable gods!

Downfall! Hadad and Rezon declared war!

Defiant satans⁶ of King Solomon

Damascus, Aram now hostile to Israel!

Downfall! Jeroboam rebelled! Deserted his duty!

Deception! Division! David's descendants, humbled.

Death of Solomon. Darkness. Disbelief.

⁵ 1 Kings 11.

⁶ Hebrew: שטן (adversary). See 1 Kings 11:23.

He 7

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Shoot of Jesse".

How, O LORD?

How will you give us rest from our enemies?

For hostility comes from the south and the north.

Help us! That those you love may be delivered.

How will your kingdom be established forever?

For you tore ten pieces from Solomon's hand.

He now lies in a tomb with his fathers.

How will you bless all the nations on earth?

selah

Waw ו

To the tune of “Game of Thrones”.⁷

Woe to you, Rehoboam, you Kingdom divider!

When you met the elders, what did they first say?

“When answering Israel, speak kindly and humbly.”

Why then did you work to foment this rebellion?

Whipping and threatening, refusing to hear them,

Why torture your kinsmen like Pharaoh once did?

Woe to you, Rehoboam! Since you have sinned,

Watch Jeroboam tear ten tribes from your cloak.

Watch as they fight you with weapons of war.

Will Yahweh keep His Name in the land? He will!

⁷ 1 Kings 12–14.

Woe to you, Jeroboam! The Kingdom divided!

When you met Ahijah, what did he first say?

“Walk in His ways and Yahweh will exalt you.”

Why then did you work to foment this rebellion?

Worship outsourced to fake gods of convenience

Where is your worship⁸ for Yahweh alone?

Woe to you, Jeroboam! Since you have sinned,

Watch as your altars collapse to ground

Watch as Yahweh burns up your household

Will dogs and birds eat from your corpses? They will!

⁸ The meaning of this word is uncertain.

Zayin ז

For the choir director. A lament for Israel.⁹

Zealous LORD! Your anger is aroused,

All ten tribes of Israel abhor You.

Zero faithfulness from all Israel's kings:

Nadab, Baasha and Elah all hate You.

Zimri, Omri, Ahab: none of them good!

All lovers of idols, despisers of You.

Zealous LORD! What will You do?

Will king after king after king reject You?

⁹ 1 Kings 15:25–16:24.

Heth ה

*A psalm of ascent.*¹⁰

Covenant¹¹ **LORD**, cover Judah with Your steadfast love,¹²

Contain Your fierce wrath in keeping with Your Name!

Cursed be Rehoboam who aroused Your fierce anger,

His son King Abijah rejected You too.

Consider though Asa who did right in Your eyes,

Consider Jehoshaphat: a good king as well.

Compassionate LORD, command our wars cease!

Cover our nation with permanent peace!

Covenant LORD, for the sake of Your fame

Cover Mount Zion, the place of Your Name!

Cover our nation for King David's sake,

Cover Judah with Your perfect *Chesedh*!

¹⁰ 1 Kings 14:21–15:24, 22:41–50.

¹¹ As there are no words in Modern English beginning with the same sound as the Hebrew letter Heth, the letters “C” or “H” is used instead. Readers may pronounce each letter as “ch”.

¹² Hebrew: חסד.

Teth ♪

A haiku.

The darkest day dawns

Tyrant Ahab takes the throne

Tell us: who will come?

selah

Yodh ,

Of Elijah.

To His Majesty, The Most Mighty and Illustrious Monarch, Ahab, King of the Israelites.¹³

Your Highness King Ahab — is it not true?

Your evil is greater than all kings before you!

Your wife Jezebel — has she not ensnared you?

You've forced Israel to all follow Baal

Your altars, Asherahs offend Yahweh well

Yet you, Son of Omri, still love to rebel!

Yes I am a prophet, the only one left

Yet Yahweh will guard me, His ravens will feed me.

¹³ 1 Kings 17–18.

Your Majesty - as Yahweh lives, I declare

You will not see dew or rain: not for three years

Yet Yahweh will raise the young boy and his mother

Your desolate fields will be dead like your statues

Your idols will fail you in duel on Carmel

Your four hundred fifty prophets will be slaughtered

Yet Yahweh, the true King, will answer by fire!

Yes - Yahweh is God - there can be no other!

Yours sincerely,

Elijah

Kaph כ

Of Elijah. After he had killed all the prophets of Baal with the sword.¹⁴

Kill me now, O LORD! I have had enough.

My throat is parched, and I am worn out from running.

King Ahab's wife seeks my life,

Fierce enemies pursue me - how long will they triumph?

Know this: I have been zealous for You, LORD,

Yet my people reject Your covenant and refuse Your law.

Have all Israel kissed Baal?

Kind and gracious are You, LORD,

You have sent your angel to restore me - I exalt You!

Keep me in your care, LORD,

You speak not by fire but by gentle whisper.

Know this: I will be zealous for You, LORD,

Though my people reject Your covenant and refuse Your law,

You have kept seven thousand who have not kissed Baal.

¹⁴ 1 Kings 19:1-18.

Lamedh ל

Limericks to and from Ahab.¹⁵

“**Let me**, Ben-Hadad, have your silver

Leave me with each child and their mother

Lest you make a fuss

I’ll pound you to dust

Look at my invincible armour!”

“Listen, Ahab, to the LORD’s prophet

Lead all your young officers forward

Let them start the rush

Ben-Hadad will be crushed

Let the Lord of Hosts not be ignored.”

¹⁵ 1 Kings 19–21.

“Let me, Ben-Hadad, go with mercy

Lives are lost! We have no more army.

I’ll give back your cities

Let you trade with ease

Let me live Ahab: do not kill me!”

“Listen, Ahab, sad and unwell

Let’s make Naboth give up his dell

He’s made such a fuss

Now stone him to dust

Long live Ahab and Jezebel!”

“Listen, King Ahab, lost in evil

Led to sin, you deceived all your people

You’ve aroused Yahweh’s anger

He will bring disaster

Let birds and dogs eat up your people!”

“Let me, King Ahab, go with mercy
Look how I’m humbled before Thee
I plead with my Master
Withhold Your disaster
Let children of mine live beyond me!”

“Let all in the land listen closely
Lest you follow in all my folly
The word of the LORD
Must not be ignored
Learn that His decrees happen surely!”

Mem מ

A maskil. Of the Shunammite woman.¹⁶

May all pay attention to Elisha

Meagre farmboy turned miracle worker

Mouthpiece of Yahweh, whose armies surround him

May all who taunt him¹⁷ be mauled!

May all pay attention to Elisha

Miracle worker amidst death in the land

Made meals for the hungry, restores dead to life

Made way for slaves to be free!

¹⁶ 2 Kings 2–6.

¹⁷ taunt him: literally “uncover his baldness”

May all pay attention to Elisha

Minister to Gentiles, he made lepers clean

Master even over Creation's sway

May all make straight paths for him!

May all pay attention to Elisha

Mother and father he leaves behind

Mature servant leader who mimics his Master

Might he even lay down his life for his friends?

Nun 1

To the tune of “All Nations”.¹⁸

Namaan of Aram, dressed in pomp and glory

A valiant soldier with leprosy

Needed healing desperately

His servant girl nudged him to see Elisha.

Numerous talents and shekels he brought with him

But God’s power can never be bought.

Naaman of Aram, undressed in the Jordan

A humble soldier with leprosy

Naked, he trusted God would heal

Helpless, he looked to Him for grace.

Now he knows there is no one like Yahweh

And God’s power can never be stopped.

¹⁸ 2 Kings 5.

Naked Israel, from you many had leprosy

Yet none were cleansed, only Naaman believed

Naked Israel, if you remain in unbelief

Yahweh will no longer remain with you

No partiality will remain when one day

All nations are healed by God's hand

selah

—

Samekh ט

*A song of lament.*¹⁹

See the downfall of Israel! All God's anointed did evil!

See Jehu's violent crusade, zealous without obedience

See Jehoahaz delivered from Aram

See him and Jehoash's ungrateful rebellion

See Jeroboam II reject You too (if Nineveh repented, why couldn't you?)

See Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem persist in evil

See Pekahiah, Pekah refuse to obey

See King Hoshea offend Salmeser

See Assyria lay siege, see Israel now scattered.

See how each king led his people astray

See stiff-necked Israel refuse to obey

See how the words of the prophets came true!

“Samaria will be overrun, your strongholds plundered

See how a shepherd saves scraps from the lion's mouth?

So shall Israel be.”²⁰

¹⁹ 2 Kings 11–17.

²⁰ Amos 3:11–12.

Ayin ו

A song for children. To the tune "Israel's walls are falling down."

Every king of Israel failed (Israel failed, Israel failed)

Every king of Israel failed

Lost forever

Even kings of Judah failed (Judah failed, Judah failed)

Even kings of Judah failed

Not much better

And one day God's King won't fail (He won't fail, He won't fail)

And this King will come to reign

Reign forever

Pe 5

Of Hosea. During the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel.²¹

“Pay attention, you Israelites! Hear this, you priests!

This judgement is against you

Prostitutes! Like Adam you have broken my covenant

You have been unfaithful to me,” declares the LORD.

“People of God, you whored after other gods!

So I will strip you bare, ruin your vines, expose your nakedness

Punish you for the days you burned incense to the Baals

You have forgotten me,” declares the LORD.

“Prophet, let us return to the LORD

He has injured us, but He will heal us

Preach now His promises to us

As surely as the sun rises, He will appear.”

²¹ Hosea 1–2, 5–6.

“Precious child, in that day

I will make the Valley of Trouble a door of hope.

Precious child, you will sing again

I will say, ‘You are my people’, and you will say, ‘You are my God.’

Precious child, your shame will be covered

I will betroth you to me forever in faithfulness,” declares the LORD.

Tsadhe ז

They²² took over Samaria and lived there

The captive priest taught them how to worship the LORD, yet

They would not listen

They neither worship the LORD nor adhere to His laws

To this day they persist in idolatry

selah

—

²² Translator's note: as there are no words in Modern English beginning with the same sound as the Hebrew letter Tz, the letter "T" is used instead.

Qoph ק

*Of Isaiah.*²³

“Quick! Rescue us, LORD! Our enemy has conquered Israel

Sennacherib now advances against Judah

Quench his arrogance, LORD! Against You he has raised his voice

And lifted his eyes in pride

Quiet the Assyrians! Defend and save this city

For the sake of David Your servant!”

Question not the zeal of the LORD Almighty

Who brings disaster on cities

Question not the zeal of the LORD Almighty

Who defeats the enemy in battle

Question not the zeal of the LORD Almighty

Who ends and extends the life of kings.

²³ 2 Kings 19–21.

Resh 7

Of Josiah. After Huldah prophesied Yahweh's anger against Judah.²⁴

Recognising my inability to do anything without Yahweh's help

Repenting of our disobedience to His Law

Realising His great anger now burns against us

Ready by His grace to keep these resolutions.

Resolved, to do what is right in Yahweh's eyes.

Resolved, to follow completely David's ways, never to turn aside to the right or the left.

Resolved, to be captive to nothing but the words of the Book of the Law.

Resolved, to follow Yahweh and keep His commands with all my heart and soul.

Resolved, to remove all articles of idolatry from Yahweh's temple.

Resolved, to destroy all altars to Asherah, Ashtoreth, Baal, Chemosh and Molek.

Resolved, to demolish even the golden calves at Bethel.

Resolved, to observe the Passover long neglected.

Resolved, to give undivided devotion to Yahweh.

²⁴ 1 Kings 22-23.

Sin / Shin 𐤑

*A lamentation.*²⁵

Surely all this happened because of Jerusalem's sin

Sadistic king Manasseh sacrificed his son

Soaked the city with innocent blood

So Yahweh said of Jerusalem: "I will remove her from My presence."

Sent mighty Babylon to besiege her

Saw fit to thrust her out of His place

Shackled and gouged, the last king sees

Slaughter of his seed, his line snuffed out

Solomon's splendour now scattered abroad

So she went into captivity, away from her land

She who was queen among provinces, now a slave

Surely all this happened because of her sin.

²⁵ 2 Kings 24-25.

Taw ת

To the tune of “The Righteous Branch”.²⁶

There will be a king

Who is righteous in God’s eyes

And bring blessing to the nations

Trust and obey him

There will be a king

Who will set the captives free

He will dwell with us forever

Turn us from our sin

This is what the Sovereign LORD declares:

“Then all the world will know

That I, the LORD, am your Saviour,

your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”²⁷

²⁶ Isaiah 49–53.

²⁷ Isaiah 49:26

There will be a king

Who will be despised and rejected

Surely he bore all our pain

Took up our suffering

This is what the Sovereign LORD declares:

“That all have gone astray

Turning to our own way

and by his wounds we are healed.”²⁸

There will be a king

Who will lay his own life down

Take our sorrows on his crown

Trust that he’s coming

²⁸ Isaiah 53:4–5.