

# Psalm 60:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

## Analysis

**Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.** This verse marks a pivotal transition in Psalm 60 from lament over military defeat (v.1-3) to confidence in divine provision for ultimate victory. The historical superscription connects this psalm to David's conflicts with Aram (Syria) and Edom, when Israel faced threats on multiple fronts yet experienced God's deliverance.

"Thou hast given a banner" (natattah nes, נָתַתָּה נֵס) refers to a military standard, ensign, or rallying point. In ancient warfare, banners identified armies, marked positions, and served as rally points during battle chaos. Soldiers looked to the banner to know where to gather, which direction to move, and where their army stood. A raised banner signaled battle readiness; its presence rallied troops for engagement. God giving a banner means He provides a visible rallying point for His people.

"To them that fear thee" (lirei'ekha, לִירְאֵיכָה) identifies the recipients—those who fear, revere, worship God with proper awe and devotion. Not all Israel receives the banner, but specifically those who maintain covenant faithfulness, who fear Yahweh rather than enemy armies. The phrase distinguishes between nominal Israel and faithful remnant who trust God regardless of circumstances.

"That it may be displayed" (lehitnoseis, לְהַתְנוֹסֵס) uses the Hithpolel stem, indicating reflexive action: "to be lifted up as a banner, to be rallied around, to be

displayed prominently." This banner isn't hidden but conspicuously raised, visible to all—both Israelites (for rallying) and enemies (for warning). The banner's purpose is public display, making God's presence and purposes known.

"Because of the truth" (mippenei qoshet, עַפְנֵי קֹשֶׁת) provides the reason for displaying the banner. Qoshet means truth, reliability, what is certain and trustworthy. Some translations read this as "because of the bow" (qeshet), referring to weapons of war. But "truth" fits better contextually—the banner is raised because of God's truthfulness, His reliable promises, His faithfulness to covenant. God's truth demands that His people rally around Him, trusting His promises despite present defeat.

"Selah" (הִלְאָה) signals a pause for meditation. After declaring God has given a banner of truth, worshipers should pause and consider this profound reality: despite military defeat, despite apparent abandonment, God has provided a rallying point—Himself and His truthful promises—around which the faithful gather.

## Historical Context

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The superscription places this psalm during David's wars with Aram-naharaim (Syria), Aram-zobah, and Edom. Second Samuel 8:3-14 and 1 Chronicles 18:3-13 describe these conflicts. David's general Joab defeated Edom in the Valley of Salt, killing 12,000 Edomites (2 Samuel 8:13) or 18,000 (1 Chronicles 18:12, Psalm 60 superscription). Despite ultimate victory, Israel had apparently experienced initial defeat or setback, prompting the lament of verses 1-3.

Military banners were crucial in ancient warfare. Before modern communication technology, armies used visual signals—banners, flags, standards—to coordinate troop movements, identify units, and maintain order during battle chaos. Losing one's banner meant disorientation and defeat; capturing enemy banners signified victory. Isaiah 11:10 prophesies that Messiah will stand 'for an ensign of the people,' becoming a rallying point for nations.

The concept of God providing a banner echoes Exodus 17:15, where after

defeating Amalek, Moses built an altar called 'Jehovah-nissi' (The LORD is my banner). This declared that victory came not through Israel's military might but through God's presence and power. The banner represented God Himself as the focal point, rallying point, and source of victory.

For exilic Israel, this verse provided crucial perspective. Though defeated by Babylon, though Jerusalem lay in ruins and temple destroyed, though God's promises seemed to have failed, the faithful maintained that God had given a banner—His truthful promises—around which to rally. The exile didn't mean God's failure but called for renewed faithfulness to the covenant God who remains true even when His people have been faithless.

In Christian interpretation, Jesus is the banner God raises. He declared: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me' (John 12:32). The cross becomes the banner—paradoxically, what appeared to be utter defeat (Messiah crucified) became the rallying point for all who believe. God's truth is displayed most clearly in the crucified and risen Christ, who is 'the truth' (John 14:6).

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does God provide a 'banner' (rallying point) for His people today, and what does it mean to gather around God's truth when circumstances seem to contradict His promises?
2. Why is the banner given specifically to 'them that fear' God rather than to all people, and how does covenant faithfulness relate to receiving God's provision for victory?
3. What is the relationship between God's 'truth' (faithful promises) and the banner He provides, and how does truth serve as both foundation and rallying point for faith?

4. How can believers 'display' God's banner in ways that both rally fellow believers and witness to watching world?
5. In what ways might military defeat or apparent setback actually be an opportunity for God to provide a banner that demonstrates His truth and faithfulness?

## Interlinear Text

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מִ פָּנָי	לְהַתְנוּס	ס	תְּהִתְנַסֵּס	מִ
Thou hast given	to them that fear	a banner	thee that it may be displayed	because
H5414	H3373	H5251	H5127	H6440
אָתָּה	לִירָא	יְהִי	בְּ	תְּהִתְנַסֵּס
of the truth	Selah			
H7189	H5542			
קְשֻׁתָּה				

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 20:5** (Parallel theme): We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

**Isaiah 11:12** (Parallel theme): And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

**Exodus 17:15** (Parallel theme): And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi:

**Song of Solomon 2:4:** He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

**Isaiah 13:2** (Parallel theme): Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles.

**Isaiah 5:26** (Parallel theme): And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:

**Isaiah 49:22** (Parallel theme): Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

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