**1**If the Lord had not been on our side—
    let Israel say—
**2**if the Lord had not been on our side
    when people attacked us,
**3**they would have swallowed us alive
    when their anger flared against us;
**4**the flood would have engulfed us,
    the torrent would have swept over us,
**5**the raging waters
    would have swept us away.

**6**Praise be to the Lord,
    who has not let us be torn by their teeth.
**7**We have escaped like a bird
    from the fowler’s snare;
the snare has been broken,
    and we have escaped.
**8**Our help is in the name of the Lord,
    the Maker of heaven and earth.

**“Songs of Ascent” (Psalm 120-134).**

This diverse group includes individual and corporate laments, songs of confidence, thanksgiving hymns, a song celebrating Zion, wisdom psalms, a royal psalm, and a psalm for a liturgical occasion. Some traditional Jewish interpreters have suggested that these were the songs sung on the “steps” (as the same word can mean, e.g., Ex. 20:26), either in parts of the temple or up from a spring in Jerusalem; others have taken them as geared toward returning to Jerusalem from exile (cf. Ezra 1:3). Neither of these makes good sense of David’s authorship of Psalms 122; 124; 131; & 134. It is probably enough to take them simply as suited to the “ascent” to Jerusalem for worship (122:4; cf. 1 Kings 12:28; Zech. 14:16), even if they were not originally composed for that purpose.

**Psalm 124**

This is a thanksgiving hymnfor the community, particularly for an occasion in which God’s people have been under threat but have been delivered. It is conceivable that David wrote this psalm in response to some deliverance such as those in 2 Samuel 5:17-25, but the words are quite general, applicable in a wide variety of settings; God’s people have known many occasions on which this psalm provides just the right hymn. The implication of the psalm being a **Song of Ascents** seems to be that the faithful would sing it in connection with their pilgrimage to Jerusalem; the deliverance of the whole people allows them to continue journeying there.