



## The Songs of Ascent: God's Roadtrip Playlist Lesson 1 - Psalm 120

“Does anyone need the restroom?!”

*Before we get going with this lesson...*

... any comments or questions from last week?

... did you do the homework?

### **TURNING THE CAR ON.**

What song would you put in the first spot on your personal roadtrip playlist?

**Let's have a volunteer read Psalm 120. (NIV translation printed on the next page.)**

As you listen, think about the following things.

- What parallelism do you note? Of what type(s)?
- Are you using a different Bible translation? Do you note any differences?
- What names or concepts are mentioned with which you're unfamiliar?

<p>1 I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me.</p> <p>2 Save me, LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.</p> <p>3 What will he do to you, and what more besides, you deceitful tongue?</p> <p>4 He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows, with burning coals of the broom bush.</p> <p>5 Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek, that I live among the tents of Kedar!</p> <p>6 Too long have I lived among those who hate peace.</p> <p>7 I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.</p>	
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Who is speaking? (Also: How many people are speaking?)

The psalmist promises that God will punish deceitful people with “warrior’s arrows” and “coals of the broom bush.” “The broom tree is a desert tree/shrub. Its hard wood, especially its roots, produces long-lasting charcoal.”<sup>1</sup>

The punishment for the “lying tongue” fits the crime. **See Jeremiah 9:8 and James 3:6** to see what God says about the damage that a lying tongue causes.

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<sup>1</sup> John Brug. *A Commentary on Psalms 73-150*.

Meshek (Meshech<sup>2</sup>) is in modern-day Turkey. Kedar is in Arabia; modern-day Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Sinai peninsula of Egypt.

- Meshek appears often in \_\_\_\_\_; otherwise, this psalm is the only time it's mentioned outside of genealogies. \_\_\_\_\_ is thus our best resource to figure out what exactly "Meshek" would have symbolized for this anonymous Israelite exile.
- Kedar appears often in Isaiah, but also in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Meshek	Kedar
<p>1 Chronicles 1:5 The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, <b>Meshek</b> and Tiras.</p>	<p>Genesis 25:13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, <b>Kedar</b>, Adbeel, Mibsam.</p>
<p>Ezekiel 27:13 "Greece, Tubal and <b>Meshek</b> did business with you; they traded human beings and articles of bronze for your wares."</p>	<p>Song of Solomon 1:5 Dark am I, yet lovely, daughters of Jerusalem, dark like the <b>tents of Kedar</b>, like the tent curtains of Solomon.</p>
<p>Ezekiel 32:26-28 "<b>Meshek</b> and Tubal are there, with all their hordes around their graves. All of them are uncircumcised, killed by the sword because they spread their terror in the land of the living. 27 But they do not lie with the fallen warriors of old, who went down to the realm of the dead with their weapons of war—their swords placed under their heads and their shields resting on their bones—though these warriors also had terrorized the land of the living. 28 You too, Pharaoh, will be broken and will lie among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword."</p>	<p>Isaiah 21:16-17 This is what the Lord says to me: "Within one year, as a servant bound by contract would count it, all the splendor of <b>Kedar</b> will come to an end. 17 The survivors of the archers, the warriors of <b>Kedar</b>, will be few."</p>
<p>Ezekiel 38:1-3 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of <b>Meshek</b> and Tubal; prophesy against him 3 and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of <b>Meshek</b> and Tubal.'"</p>	<p>Isaiah 60:1, 3, 7 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. 3 Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. 7 All <b>Kedar's</b> flocks will be gathered to you; they will be accepted as offerings on my altar, and I will adorn my glorious temple."</p> <p>Ezekiel 27:21 "Arabia and all the princes of <b>Kedar</b> were your customers; they did business with you in lambs, rams and goats."</p>

<sup>2</sup> Many older translations, and a few newer ones, use the traditional spelling *Meshech*. Newer translations tend to replace the *-ch* consonant digraph with a simple *-k*. Both attempt to produce the sound of the Hebrew letter *HET*, which has no direct English equivalent.

Looking at these passages, Meshek and Kedar both symbolize \_\_\_\_\_.  
However, Meshek is \_\_\_\_\_. Kedar is \_\_\_\_\_.

The phrase “I am for peace” (verse 7) is in Hebrew literally “I am peace.” The peace we have through our Savior Jesus defines us. It gives us \_\_\_\_\_. **Read Ephesians 2:13-19.**

Eugene Peterson, in his book *Practice Resurrection*, tells the following story.

I have a photograph on my desk; an aerial view of a cookie-cutter suburban subdivision, every house neatly fenced, with an identical swimming pool. It comes from a time when I was organizing a church in a Baltimore suburb.

I realized early on that everyone in this cookie-cutter subdivision was a stranger to his or her neighbors. My anticipation was that getting these people into worship would be difficult, but that community would arise naturally. This was not the case. It was not long before I had people worshipping God on Sunday mornings. But getting them interested in one another was another thing entirely. They didn't want neighbors. They wanted to be self-sufficient, independent.

Some months later, I was invited to a “community association” meeting where the residents of this new subdivision hoped to discuss the “kind of community” we intended to be. It was the most contentious gathering of people I have ever attended. After half an hour I realized, “These people don't *like* one another.” They didn't know one another, but what they didn't know, they didn't like. When someone spoke, there was an immediate challenge or refutation.

That was when the phrase arrived out of my memory: “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” The person praying Psalm 120 was committed to a way of peace, God's peace, but he feels hostility all around him. At that neighborhood meeting, I found myself surrounded by “Meshech and Kedar;” men and women whose vocabulary consisted primarily of rude hostilities, war talk.<sup>3</sup>

How have you seen these dynamics play out in your own interactions in/with the world?

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<sup>3</sup> Eugene Peterson. *Practice Resurrection*. Pages 134-136. Edited for the purposes of this study.

## Homework!

This week, pay attention to the ways of the world around you as you “sojourn in Meshek and Kedar.” Notice the petty quarrels and grievances that poison relationships in the world. Watch out for the ways that your sinful nature tempts you to do the same.

As you do so, think about your two “road trips.”

- How does looking forward to church each week help you respond to the pettiness and lack of peace in the world?
- How does looking forward to heaven help you respond to these things?

## Closing Prayer.

Jesus, you have told me that in your Father’s house you are preparing a place for me. I long to join you there. Until then, strengthen me for life in this unbelieving world. Increase my eagerness to worship you. By your Spirit, give me peace when this world hurts and confounds me. Renew that peace daily, that those who still belong to this confused and angry world might see your light shine through me. Amen.