

Notes on the Psalter, #1

Introduction

I hesitate to offer the following reflections on the psalms for the simple reason that an abundance of commentaries already exists which cover the full spectrum ranging from scholarly insights to devotional meditations. Nevertheless, the desire to set down these notes arose from the fact that such commentaries left me with a vague though persistent sense of incompleteness, a feeling applicable even to documents from the patristic and medieval periods. Despite the beauty and inspiration of these texts which form an integral part of the Christian heritage, they somehow seem to have missed the essence of the Psalms. Finally it dawned on me that part of this deficiency lay in the Vulgate or Latin tradition inherited by the Church; more precisely, it centers around a negligence of the original Hebrew text with its rich association of words. While the historical reasons for this are complex and interesting in their own right, it is not my intent to discuss them here, simply to mention the background which has provided impetus for these **Notes**. Commentaries do exist which point out the associations words in the Hebrew language, but their detailed explanation often comes across as too burdensome and complicated for application to a person's moral and spiritual life.

While St. Jerome's Latin translation from the Hebrew is part and parcel of a venerable tradition, it tended to become the only accepted translation in Western Christendom. Even the venerable Septuagint on which the Greek or Orthodox tradition rests lacks that *elan vital* present in the Hebrew Psalter. The forms of biblical interpretation which arose from Jerome's translation, as well as the Septuagint, reflect a view of life at variance with the Semitic background of the Old Testament. As it stands today, literature on the psalms may be divided between scholarly commentaries (which can focus upon the original Hebrew text) and devotional reflections, a broad category under which I hesitatingly situate documents from the patristic tradition. Furthermore, those texts handed down by Church Fathers often dealt with treatises either explaining certain mysteries of the Christian faith or defending it against one heresy or another. Often I wondered what it would have been like if a Church Father had used the Hebrew Bible as a means of perceiving the mystery of Jesus Christ present in it, especially the Psalms.

In addition to these considerations, a salient feature of the **Notes** in contrast to other literature on the psalms lies in the fact that it originates from a monastic context, that is, from a milieu where the Psalter enjoys preeminence as expressed through the Divine Office. According to the monastic tradition to which I belong—the Cistercians of the Strict Observance or Trappists—our daily schedule begins at 3 am and ends at 8 pm. Thus monastic life is a continual exposure to the psalms with the occupational hazard of familiarity, a danger which can preclude deeper appreciation of their meaning. This personal familiarity with the psalms made me apprehensive about setting down these reflections. On the other hand, I continue to find deep satisfaction in pondering one word or verse of the Psalter during the time after the Office of Vigils, that special early morning period which is appropriate for such an exercise.

It may be helpful for the reader to keep in mind that a monk lives in a vastly different world; he has the opportunity for extended periods of leisure when the mind and spirit are free to ponder the mysteries of faith at a level often unavailable to persons involved with material concerns. Although I had realized this upon entering the monastery some thirty years ago, the gulf between monasticism and society in general has broadened ever further. In brief, one characteristic is that life has sped up and become more frantic, a fact which makes us monks appreciate our *leisure* time or *otium* more fully.

Another feature of this world apart is that monks are constantly "being read at." By this I mean we are exposed to Scripture and related literature from the predawn hours to evening, a genuine novelty in a culture which has become isolated from its religious roots. Such an atmosphere makes it conducive for a word or verse from Scripture to come upon a monk in sudden, unexpected ways. On top of this, it is not uncommon to hear a monk jokingly quote a scriptural passage during the course of a day in reference to one concrete situation or another. The repetition of these hymns—often from memory—become interiorized; attention is thus automatically shifted from their pronunciation to their mysterious Source located in deep interior silence. Most monks would agree that this alteration between exterior pronunciation and interior attention is a

common feature of what it's like to either recite or sing the Psalter on a daily basis.

As with my **Notes on the Song of Songs** elsewhere on this Home Page, I offer the following remarks not only from the monastic perspective but from a familiarity with the original Hebrew text. Such notes are not scholarly per se; they are reflections on how a particular verse happened to strike me, often during the Divine Office and at significant liturgical feasts, and I offer them for what they are worth. I am also aware that the reader may find the insertion of (transliterated) Hebrew words burdensome, yet this is essential to my approach. Furthermore, I am fully aware that these reflections—while based upon the Hebrew text—are not to be taken according to the literal or scholarly sense but according to the spirit of *lectio divina*, that slow attentive reading of the sacred text with an end to incorporate the text into one's life.¹

Please note that these notes do not cover each verse of each Psalm, nor do they consider the inscriptions or titles which frequently include musical directions or provide a historical context. I generally tend to overlook some verses which deal with cursing or are complaints about one form of oppression or the other, not because I find them offensive but prefer to focus on more meaningful verses of the Psalter. At other times, I list the contents of such verses in order to situate them in a broader context. However, they do make for great reading in the original Hebrew and reflect the intense feelings of the author. Comments tend to be longer towards the beginning of this text because I wanted to discuss the Hebrew words used; since many of these same words are found later in the Psalter, I tend not to comment upon them but refer the reader to earlier instances where they had been discussed.

In a nutshell, the following reflections are not meant to be read straight through; perhaps they can be taken as reference points for a person doing *lectio divina*. The main emphasis is upon the association of meaning not only with regard to psalm verses but in the larger context of the Old and New Testaments.

The English version of the Bible used is the **Revised Standard Edition**; for the sake of consistency, I also follow the numbering of the psalms according to this version throughout these **Notes**. The Hebrew text of the Psalter comes from **Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia** (Stuttgart, 1969). Those verse on which I comment are designated by bold script; for the most part, words which I define and which are not included in scriptural citations per se are in italics. I have also not commented on the inscriptions or headings to many of the Psalms.

*N.B.: I will make parts of this text available in sections, that is, posting sections every so often until I have finished commenting upon the entire Psalter. Also, because the text continues to grow, I am dividing it into sections designated by roman numerals. For example, this section is **Notes on the Psalms I**.*

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Psalm One

Vs. 1: Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers. The Psalter begins on a negative note, that is, it stress what blessedness is *not*,

¹From time to time I offer reflections based on the **Septuagint** or Greek text which may supplement the verse or psalm under consideration.

namely, it is not an association with wicked persons. A more abridged way of putting this is it is not *walking, standing* nor *sitting* with them. *Blessed* is the very first word, and according to good scriptural and patristic tradition, the first word sets the tone for the entire document. This key word is 'ashry; it is closely associated with two other words in vs. 1, *the man* (ha'ysh) and *which* ('asher). 'Ashry derives from the Hebrew verbal root 'ashar whose fundamental meaning is *straightness* which makes sense in the direction-towards-which the psalmist defines blessedness. Note that the relative pronoun, 'asher is derived from this root, signifying a transitional state; it is associated with *man*, 'ysh. Thus blessedness is an integral component of our human constitution.

In light of these observations, we may say that to be 'ashry implies being in a state of transition, of moving forward, of not standing still. Such blessedness is like that relative pronoun, 'asher, signifying continuous alteration. Immediate there comes to mind the Beatitudes, for example, Mt 5.3-11, where we may substitute 'ashry for the more prosaic Greek makarios. The characteristics which Jesus mentions fit in well with this "transitional" nature of 'ashry: poor, mourn, meek, righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, those who are persecuted. While essential for Christian living, it is also liberating to realize the transitional or provisional nature of the virtues.

Vs. 2: But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. Such *law* or torah is defined by avoiding the three groups of wicked, sinners and scoffers of vs. 1. We may transfer the forward motion of 'ashry to this *delight* or chaphats which implies a *bending* towards the object of one's desire. Delight and torah are integrally united, and the words of Isaiah apply to this *man* or 'ysh who so inclines himself to the Law: "but you shall be called My *delight* is in her (chephtsy-bah)...for the Lord *delights* in you (chaphets bak)" [62.4].

Furthermore, this 'ysh *meditates* on the torah, hagah, literally, *to murmur*, as in Jos 1.8: "This book of the law...torah...shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall *meditate* on it day and night." This verse is similar to the Psalm's mention of "day and night." Such murmuring seems to have an affinity with that realm of our awareness, always present, which gives rise to thoughts and dreams. We catch a glimpse of it when falling asleep, that is, when our minds *murmur* over the day's events, a process which apparently carries over into dreams. Contrast this Psalm's use of hagah with one found in Ps 2.1: "Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples *plot* in vain?"

Vs. 3: He is like a tree planted by streams of water which gives it fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Note this situation of being planted, that is, its permanency, next to streams which by their very nature are in movement. Such *streams* or palgy connote the idea of *dividing*, of making their way through a given area whose task with respect to this tree is that it may have "fruit in its season." Note the Septuagint use for *season*, kairos, which connotes a specific time. Compare this verse with Rev 22.1: "Then he showed me the *river* of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb." Later in vs. 5 it reads, "And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light." I.e., this river does away with the need to "meditate on his law day and night," the previous verse, for such day and night pertains to the temporal realm.

In all that he does, he prospers. Such *prospering* is akin to the putting forth of fruit. The righteous person's activity flows from that meditating on the *Law* or Torah. Keep in mind the image mentioned above of the stationary tree by flowing streams; the notion is that such doing takes place in a stable location and is more akin to the putting forth of fruit, a stationary act. All this is in contrast to the wicked who "are like chaff which the wind drives away" [vs. 4] or those who attempt to force, as it were, the ripening of fruit outside the correct *season* or kairos.

Vs. 5: Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. Such *standing* or qum implies the inverse of that "tree planted by streams of water," for qum is more suggestive of rising which in the context of this Psalm pertains to something planted. Perhaps the root of such *wicked* persons lies in the fact that they do not remain stationary as mentioned just above.

Vs. 6: For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. This *way* or *derek* is upward or the direction in which the fruit of the righteous reaches. The growth of such fruit depends upon the Lord's *knowing* and is in stark contrast to the "downward" *derek* of the wicked. Thus Psalm One concludes with a fuller understanding of that *blessedness* or 'ashry, awareness of being known by God.

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Psalm Two

Vs. 1: Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? Such scheming is associated with the kings and rulers of the next verse plotting against the Lord. Note that this is the only occurrence of *ragash*, *to conspire*, in the Bible with the exception of the Chaldean verb in Dan 6.6[7], 11[12]. The *vain* or *ryq* things on which nations plot is reminiscent of that vanity described by Ecclesiastes whose first chapter recounts the restlessness and monotony inherent in nature, an image applicable to this verses's conspiring and plotting. In Ecclesiastes, *vanity* is *havel*, a verb associated with breathing, whereas the Psalm's *ryq* means something empty, for example, an empty container. The image conveyed is one of rattling, of clatter. For the verbal root to *plot*, *hagah*, cf. Psalm One.

Vs. 2: The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his anointed, saying. It is not difficult to identify the *anointed* or *meshych* with Jesus Christ and apply it to his enemies. Note the two objects of their assault, *Lord* and *anointed* as indicated by the preposition *hal*, *on*, which suggests an elevated place from which the enemies look *down* upon the object of their contempt. Such is the illusory vantage point common to any conspiratorial activity which further suggests the participants gathered in a circle. The next verse, 3, contains the content of the counsel of the kings and rulers, "Let us burst their bonds asunder and cast their cords from us." The plural *they* implies the Lord and his anointed, applicable to the hostile religious rulers who confronted Jesus Christ, *the Meshych*.

Vs. 4: He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. Here God is viewed in a lofty position, one that is opposite to the supposed elevation of the kings and rulers of vs. 2. This sitting implies permanence of which the "tree planted by streams of water" is an image [Ps 1.3]; these streams emanate from God's sitting. This *laughter*, *sachaq*, is almost always contemptuous, a view God can easily afford in distinction to that furtive counsel of the previous verse. *Derision* or *lahag* means to speak in a foreign (barbarous) tongue. It is reminiscent of the tower of Babel [Gn 11.1-9] where God confounded the tongues of the human race which had been one until then. Thus God mimics the counsel of the wicked, addressing them, as it were, in a foreign tongue or by means of useless, mocking terms together with "his wrath, and terrify them in his fury" [vs. 5].

Vs. 6: I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. An allusion to King David. *Nasak* for *to set* more specifically refers to making a libation, anointing of a king or even more specifically, a drink offering. An example of its negative sense: "My graven image and my *molten image* commanded them" [Is 48.5]. This case referred to as a *holy hill* is one of several in the Bible, the other famous one being Mount Sinai.

Vs. 7: I will tell of the decree of the Lord. Such *telling* is more akin to inscribing, the essence of *saphar* which also suggests inscribing of numerals or the making of a list. *Decree* or *qoch* refers to the establishment of a decree, of making it firm.

You are my son, today I have begotten you. This verse has been applied to God the Father's relationship with his Son, Jesus Christ, for example, Acts 13.33. Such *begetting* or *yalad* obviously applies to giving birth, of coming into existence, which occurs within the tumultuous context of Psalm 2. It is akin to God addressing his prophets, for example, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel at the beginning of their careers.

The Hebrew word *order* here is interesting: "I today have begotten you." *Today* or *hayom* occurs between the first person singular of God and his act of begetting. I.e., *today* is between God's being and his doing. Note that the person God addresses is certainly an adult, so that the begetting God imparts is in relationship with the rebellious forces described in this psalm.

Vs. 8: Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. As noted already, so many verses of the Psalms may be applied to Jesus Christ, a fact which is usually obvious; here *nations* and *ends of the earth* has been applied to the spread of the Gospel: “and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” [Acts 1.8]. *End* is not so much a geographical place but those peoples furthest away from Jerusalem, the beginning or center of evangelization.

In vs. 8 God continues his request to the King of Israel, reminiscent of King Solomon’s petition for something more durable than earthly possessions: “Because you have asked this [wisdom]...Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind” [1 Kg 3.11-12].

Vss. 11-12: Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling kiss his feet², lest he be angry, and you perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. We often encounter *fear* in the Bible, *yare’*, the various forms of which can be confused with the equally various forms of the verb *to see*, *ra’ah*. These parallels suggest a certain interchange between the two different concepts; to fear anything or anyone obviously implies clear awareness of the object...of seeing.

“With *trembling*,” *gylu*, from the verb *gyl* whose basic idea is *to go in a circle* and can also mean *to exult* as in Sg 1.4: “We will be *glad* and rejoice.”

With regards to the unclear words *kiss his feet*, *nashqu-bar*, *bar* has sometimes been taken as *son* as if to do the king’s son homage.

Psalm 2 concludes with an instance of ‘ashry, *blessed*, the first word of Psalm One, but here it applies to *chus*, *to take refuge*, as in Is 30.2: “But he who *takes refuge* in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain.” Such mountain is Zion of vs. 6 above.

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Psalm Three

Vs. 2: Many are saying of me, there is no help for him in God. *Selah*. The inscription to this psalm notes that it pertains to King David when he fled from his son Absalom. Those “rising against me” of vs. 1 are the *many* of this verse. In verse 2 we encounter the first of 134 refers to the Hebrew verbal root *yashah* from which the proper name *Jesus* is derived³. As the document to which I refer in the last footnote demonstrates, the remarkable number of time the verb *yashah* and its derivatives occurs points to an essential element to the Psalter and of Christ’s relationship to it. To say that “there is no *Jesus* in God” is the equivalent of denying his essence.

The Hebrew *Selah* represents a *pause*, possibly of a liturgical nature; refer to **On the Inscriptions of the Psalms** by Gregory of Nyssa (on the Gregory of Nyssa Home Page hyperlinked with this Home Page) who examines the mystical significance of this term. The fundamental meaning of *selah* is *rest, silence*.

My glory, and the lifter of my head.” This verse has a definite military air which continues the same theme of the previous psalm.

I cry aloud to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy hill. Selah. This verse implies the psalmist being surrounded by foes and in the vicinity of *his holy hill*, Zion. However, such proximity is not necessarily physical. Since Mt. Zion is “in the far north,” it can be viewed from the directions of south, east and west.

²The Hebrew here is uncertain.

³I made a list of these 134 references elsewhere on this Home Page: *A List of Verbs from the Psalter Containing the Hebrew Verbal Root Yashah*.

Here is the third of four references to *selah*; we would expect the psalmist to *pause*...to have a *selah*...in this situation.

Vs. 5: I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the Lord sustains me. Quite an abrupt change from the dangerous situation of the last few verses, but such is the power of God's *answering* or *hanah* of vs. 4. The psalmist first says that he *lies down*, that is, he makes a defiant gesture before his foes who are drawn up in battle array. The duration of how long he sleeps is not clear, presumably during the night, a favorite time for the enemy to make an assault. We find an instance of the verb *yaqats*, *to awake*, in Gen 28.16: "Then Jacob *awoke* from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.'" As for the verb *to sustain*, *samak*, it implies a leaning upon, as if the Lord were leaning on the psalmist.

Vs. 7: Arise, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God! Another instance of the verb *yashah*, *to save* or to be "*Jesus-ed*." Note the connection of *arise* (*quomah*) with YHWH and *yahsah* with 'elohim.

Vs. 8: Deliverance belongs to the Lord; your blessing be upon your people! Selah. The first part of this verse is "*Jesus* (*hayeshuhah*) belongs to the Lord." Note the use of prepositions: "*to* YHWH is deliverance" and "*on* your people blessing." I.e., such "to-ness" which is proper to God is transferred to "on-ness" with regard to the people.

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Psalm Four

Vs. 1: Answer me when I call, O God of my right! You have given me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer. Such *answering* or *hanah* has multiple meanings: *to sing*, *to testify*, *to signify*, *to be afflicted*. Here there is a close connection between answering and the psalmist's *calling*, *qara'*. He perceives God associated with *righteousness*, *tsadaqah*, and desires this attribute to be transferred to himself. Note that the Hebrew text first has the psalmist calling followed by a desire for God to answer. *Giving room* or *rachav* is the direct result of *hanah*; the former is below and the latter comes from above. For a parallel to this *rachav*, cf. Eph 3.18: "That you may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the *breadth* and *length* and *height* and *depth* [of Christ]." These four quadrants of the earth correspond to the four elements of the same earth.

Vs. 3: But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him. This *setting apart* or *palah* of the *godly* or *chasad* is putting such a person in the four boundaries of that breadth, length, height and depth from Eph 3.18 just above. Within this sacred space, reminiscent of the garden of Eden, indeed "the Lord hears when I call to him" as opposed to the hiding by the man and woman (cf. Gen 3.8).

Vs. 4: Be angry, but sin not; commune with your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah. *Ragaz* for *to be angry* fundamentally means *to tremble*, *to quake*. This verse is interesting because there is a tendency to associate anger with sin. The psalmist suggests that the act of being angry is no problem, more clearly, with regard to the energy released; in fact, he encourages such *ragaz*. Sin enters when thoughts take hold instead of allowing them to pass. The *communing* is the simple verb 'amar, *to speak*. It takes place within the *heart*, *lev*, more precisely, *in* (b-) the heart and *on* (hal) a bed. Contrast this verse with Ps 36.4: "He plots mischief while on his *bed*." A more accurate association of Ps 4's use of "bed" is Sg 3.1: "By night on my *bed* I sought him."

The bride's seeking or *baqash* (whose primary sense is touching) is more akin to vs. 4's meaning. *And be silent*, *domu*, from the verb *damah* whose other meaning is *to be like*; compare with Ps 48.9: "We have *thought* on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple." Here such *thinking*, *damah*, implies becoming like God's temple, reminiscent of recovering our divinized human nature: "Let us make man in our image, after our *likeness*," *demuth* [Gen 1.26]. With these insights in mind, it is no small wonder that vs. 4 concludes with *Selah* which is now endowed with a fuller meaning.

Vs. 6: There are many who say, “O that we might see some good! Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O Lord!” Those making this exclamation realize that *good* and the Lord are equivalent. They simply do not want his face but the *light*, the ‘or, of his countenance. Note the command, *lift*, from the unused root nasas. Compare with Is 5.26: “He will raise a *signal* for a nation afar off, and whistle for it from the ends of the earth; and lo, swiftly, speedily it comes!” Thus we may correspond ‘or with this nas.

Vs. 8: In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Such are the results of *light*, ‘or, from God’s countenance mentioned above. Here we have the first instance in the Psalter of shalom, the celebrated word for *peace*. Note its association with *lying down* and *sleeping*, the former naturally taking place first. Such shalom is a signal or nas where here is a warning as in Sg 3.5: “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awaken love until it please.” Such gazelles and hinds act as a nas for the daughters.

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Psalm Five

Vs. 1: Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my groaning. The Hebrew literally follows the meaning of giving *ear* to the psalmist’s *words* or that which he physically utters and which anyone nearby can hear. On the other hand, his groaning is not audible to listeners because it is interior.

Give heed derives from byn, *to understand, to distinguish*; the preposition “between” is also derived from it. Byn, a commonly used word; it has the sense of understanding in that one gets *in between* a matter to grasp its implications. In vs. 1, God is bidden to do this concerning the psalmist’s *groaning*, hagah, which implies a type of murmuring or growling.

Vs. 3: O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch. The verbal root for *morning* is baqar which means *to cleave, to open, to inspect diligently*. From it comes the noun *bull* or *cow*; supposedly this noun derives from the fact that such an animal *cleaves open* the ground with its hooves. Note that the psalmist uses baqar twice, first when God hears his voice and secondly the time when he makes a sacrifice and keeps watch. This notion of keeping watch, of tsaphah, is important in the Psalter. Here the verb means *to shine* much like a beacon: “Therefore he [Laban] named it Galeed, and the pillar *Mitzpah*⁴, for he said, “The Lord *watch* between you and me, when we are absent one from the other” [Gen 31.48-9].

The psalmist *prepares* a sacrifice, harak, or sets it in order, not necessarily performs the sacrifice itself. This is reminiscent of Elijah at Mt. Carmel when he contested the pagan priests. Elijah prepared his sacrifice by drenching the altar with water after which fire came down from heaven to consume it along with the pagan priests (cf. 1 Kg 18.30-40). The next few verses of Psalm 5 may apply to this situation.

Vs. 7: But I through the abundance of your steadfast love will enter your house, I will worship toward your holy temple in fear of you. *Love* or chesed is a word with a rich tradition and meaning. In brief, chesed embraces all our emotions and affections. The New Testament equivalent is agape; the *house* belonging to God is the common word, byth. The psalmist’s admittance is more specific in the second half of this verse, *holy temple*, hykal-qadesh, where he worships in fear. Thus he has two sentiments, love and fear, the former being a preparatory stage for the latter. Note that this verse does not mention entry into the temple, rather, the psalmist’s worship or shachah (implies bowing) is *towards* (‘el) this sacred area.

Vs. 8: Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me. This request for being led in *righteousness*, tsedaqah, implies straightness. As noted regarding vs. 7, the psalmist worships towards the temple, not in it; vs. 8 continues this direction-towards-which by a request to be led *in* tsedaqah as protection against enemies. Cf. Is 26.7: “The way of the *righteous* is level; you make

⁴Mitzpah: Watch post, from tsaphah.

smooth the path of the *righteous*.” Here *making smooth* or *palas* implies weighing; *path* or *mahgal* is from the verbal root, *to roll*. Thus between vs. 8 and the Isaiah verse the request for being led involves several actions.

Make your way straight before me. Such a *way* or *derek* is road without bends or dips; it makes sense in connection with the desire of protection from enemies in vs. 8, that is, a straight path eliminates the threat of potential ambush.

Vs. 11: But let all who take refuge in you rejoice, let them ever sing for joy; and defend them, that those who love your name may exult in you. Vss. 9-10 describe the impiety of the enemies from which the psalmist requests protection. Note their implied hiddenness implying a sense of ambush as mentioned just above: *open sepulcher, let them fall, cast them out*.

Chasah for *to take refuge* also means *to trust* as in 2 Sam 22.3: “My God, my rock, in whom I *trust*.” Note “*in you*,” *vak*, or a being-in God, a fact which results in rejoicing (*ranan* implies vibration) as well as singing.

“And defend them,” *sakak*, whose verbal root means *to weave* in the sense of making a cover for protection: “And you shall put it (tabernacle) in the ark of the testimony, and you shall *screen* the ark with the veil” [Ex 40.3]. This *veil* or *paroketh* is the source of protection implied in vs. 11.

That those who love your name may exult in you. Another indication of place-whereeness, “*in you*,” *veka*, on the part of those who *love* God, ‘*ahavah*, a common word implying desire in the sense of breathing after something.

Vs. 12: For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover him with favor as with a shield. *Shield* derives from *tsanan*, *to be sharp*, from which also comes *thorn*. Implied here is despite God’s protection, the psalmist is endowed with a certain offensive character with regard to enemies. Such *favor* or *ratsah* primarily means *to delight* as in Is 42.1: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul *delights*.” Such favor is bestowed upon the psalmist by *covering* him, *hatar*, which also means *to crown*.

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Psalm Six

Vs. 2: Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled. Verses one and two are earnest requests to God to take it easy on the psalmist who is suffering from an unknown affliction. Such *languishing* or ‘*amal* suggests a drooping or hanging down of one’s head as in Is 24.4: “The earth mourns and withers, the world *languishes* and withers; the heavens *languish* together with the earth.”

After a request for God’s *chanaan*, *graciousness*, the psalmist beseeches him for *healing*, *raphah*, whose fundamental meaning is *to droop, to cast down*. I.e., this common word for healing intimates that a physical cure comes about from the relaxation of tension which can also be mental in origin.

The reason for such *raphah* is that the psalmist’s “bones are troubled.” I.e., his entire frame *trembles*, *bahal*: “When I think of it I am dismayed, and *shuddering* seizes my flesh” [Job 21.6]. Vs. 3 takes us this theme of *bahal* as applied to the *soul*, *nephesh*, but such soul trembles even more than the psalmist’s bones, *me’od, excessively*.

Vs. 4: Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love. This *turning* or *shuv* implies a previous state of affairs which the psalmist wishes to restore and applies it to his soul which he wishes God to *save* or *chalats* whose verbal root with its two-fold meaning of *to draw out* as well as *to be ready* is the immediate result of divine *shuv*. Thus *chalats* involves both a withdrawal and a providing or preparation for battle.

“Deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love:” another instance of yashah or wishing to be “Jesus-ed,” only here in connection with divine chesed, *mercy*.

Vs. 5: For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who can give you praise? To *remember* anyone or an event is fundamental to ancient cultures because memory of things was virtually the only means of preserving achievements of the past. Thus death and its forgetfulness of God was considered the supreme form of oblivion. To *remember* or zakar also means *male* because it was through a man that the *memory* of one’s family and past were handed down to future generations. Note the irony in the context where King Saul (Sha’ul) *asks* (for this is the meaning of his name) a sorceress to summon the spirit of Samuel who, in turn, says that Saul will join him on the morrow in the realm of the dead. Although Sheol or She’ol is not explicitly mentioned here [cf. 1 Sam 28.8-19], *Saul’s asking* for Samuel results in his imminent departure for *She’ol*. This place is abhorred primarily because no one can give *praise* to God, implying that such praise is the essential meaning of life.

Vs. 9: The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord accepts my prayer. The last few verses described the psalmist’s sadness over being afflicted by his enemies. In this verse as well as the last, he takes a positive note by saying that God has responded...heard...his cries for help. The next verse says that such enemies “shall *turn back* and be *put to shame*.” Here is a play on words, yashuvu and yevshu. *In a moment* or ragah, whose verbal root means *to terrify, to tremble*.

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Psalm Seven

Vs. 1: O Lord my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me. Another psalm entreating God for help against enemies. This theme which frequently occurs in the Psalter naturally leads to a desire for protection, of being concealed or hid from such foes. The amount of words referring to such hiding is quite remarkable for a relatively small document as the Psalter. Psalm 7 begins this theme immediately, “in you do I *take refuge*,” chasah, a word examined in Ps 5.11. It’s immediately followed by a desire to be “Jesus-ed” from foes, yashah. Such *saving* is the primary function of the person of Jesus Christ; from there comes higher revelation such as his relationship to the Father and Holy Spirit.

Vs. 6: Arise, O Lord, in your anger, lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies; awake, O my God; you have appointed a judgment. The verses preceding this one deal with the psalmist’s protestation of innocence. Note in vs. 6 two upwards gestures which he wishes God to take, *arise* or qum and *lift up* or nase’; both are in a negative sense, that is, against hostile forces. These two requests are followed by a third, *awake* or hur which has three other meanings, *to blind, to be hot* and *to be naked*. Perhaps all three may be applied to vs. 6, for God can *blind, be hot* against the psalmist’s foes and make them *naked*. This judgment by God is in the past tense; the Hebrew has tsawah, *to order* in the sense of issuing a command. It’s as though God arises, lifts himself up and awakes to an event which has already taken place.

Vs. 7: Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you; and over it take your seat on high. This assembly or hadath derives from the verbal root yahad, *to define, to appoint*, so we may apply it to a specific group of peoples (le’om) is a generic term for races as opposed to the nation of Israel: “Listen to me, O coastlands, and hearken, you *peoples* from afar” [Is 49.1].

Be gathered about you. The verbal root here is savav, *to go around*, implying that such le’om will gather about God in a *circle*.

And over it take your seat on high. It is as though God were situated in the middle of this circle (savav’s root) composed of all peoples yet has his “seat on high.” This verb, shuv, means *to return*. Such returning may imply God’s sovereignty over all peoples, not just Israel, which traces its roots to the garden of Eden. In vs. 7 God *returns* to this sovereignty, rather, it was always present but now the peoples realize this

lordship: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [Mt 28.19].

Vs. 8: The Lord judges the peoples; judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me. The first use of *to judge* is *dyn*, applied to *peoples*, whereas the second one is *shaphat*, applied to the psalmist. The former implies bringing into subjection, of contention, and the latter implies the juridical aspect of such judging. Note that *shaphat* is in relation to the psalmist’s righteousness and integrity, *tsadaqah* and *tom*. This second term has moral overtones: “Jacob was an *upright* man, dwelling in tents” [Gen 25.27]. Furthermore, *tom* signifies completeness, wholeness; note that such *tom* “is *in* (*hal*, more specifically, ‘on’) me.” It is as though God’s “*hal-ness*” of vs. 7 (‘*over* it take your seat on high’) were transferred directly to the psalmist and existed independently of him who is situated beneath, as it were.

Vs. 9: O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous, you who try the minds and hearts, righteous God. The verbal root *gamar*, *to perfect*, occurs only several times in the Bible, all in the Psalter (12.1, 57.2, 77.8, 138.8). Although the psalmist wishes evil to be destroyed, not those who do it, the sense of *gamar* implies their conversion. In the same breath he wishes the righteous to be established or *kun* as in Prov 3.19: “The Lord by wisdom *founded* the earth; by understanding he established the heavens.”

You who try the minds and hearts, righteous God. Such *trying* or *bachan* implies a searching as well as watching. This activity applies to *mind* (*kelyaoth*) and *heart* (*lev*). The word for *mind* here more accurately refers to the kidneys, considered the seat of desires and affections, not our capacity for rational thinking alone. Compare with “But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, who tries the *heart* and the *mind*” [Jer 11.20]. Note the further association with *righteousness*, *tsadaqah*.

Vs. 10: My shield is with God who saves the upright in heart. *Shield* or *magen* implies a smaller type than the *tsanan* of Ps 5.12. Note that the *magen* is *on* (*hal*) God. Another instance of “Jesus,” whose verbal root is *to save*.

Vs. 14: Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and brings forth lies. This verse along with 12 and 13 reveal the antithesis of *tsadaqah*. *To conceive*, *chaval*, implies a binding or withering. Such a wicked person (the text lacks “wicked”) begets...we might say *twists*...evil or ‘ewen, more precisely, *vanity* or *emptiness*. This notion of braiding something which does not exist is vivid in Hebrew.

And brings forth lies. The noun here is *sheqer* which also means something *vain*. The next two verses continue this theme of vigorous activity by a wicked person in the context of digging a pit.

Vs. 17: I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High. This verse concludes with the theme of *tsadaqah* which runs all through Psalm 7. The Hebrew literally reads “*according to* (ke-) his righteousness,” that is, thanksgiving assumes the same measure as divine *tsadaqah*. On the other hand, the psalmist associates the *singing* of praise with God’s name; *zamar* fundamental meaning (hardly used) is *to prune* but strongly implies *to dance*.

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Psalm Eight

Vs. 1: O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You whose glory above the heavens is chanted. Note emphasis on God’s *name*, his *shem*, “in all the earth.” This divine name is *majestic*, ‘*adar*, which means *to swell* and aptly applies to being *in* the earth or hidden within it much as a fetus in a womb. To become aware of God’s presence in creation we are required to assume the attention a woman about to give birth has towards her unborn child.

You whose glory above the heavens is chanted. Note the contrast here. God’s name is present “in all the earth” whereas his “glory is above the heavens.” Furthermore, only in the heavens is his glory *chanted*,

natan, a common word meaning *to give, to appoint*. Here is another use of hal as *upon* (heavens).

Vs. 2: by the mouth of babes and infants, you have founded a bulwark because of your foes to still the enemy and the avenger. An obvious continuation of vs. 1. The psalmist associates God's lofty *glory*, hod. For hod as *beauty*, cf. Hos 14.6: "His [Israel] shoots shall spread out; his *beauty* shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon." Such an association of heaven with *babes* (hol'lym) or infants is reminiscent of Mt 19.14: "Let the *children* come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of *heaven*." And, "I thank you, Father, Lord of *heaven* and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to *babes*" [Mt 11.25].

You have founded a bulwark because of your foes. The Hebrew reads, "for the same of our enemies you have *caused to cease* the enemy," the verb being shavath. This word is the root for Sabbath, day of rest; the psalmist implies that the babes and infants who praise God's glory are instrumental in effecting such Sabbath rest.

Vs. 3: When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have established. It's *your* heavens and *your* work (i.e., God's). The verb for *to see* is the simple ra'ah. "Your heavens" (shameyka) bears a phonetic correspondence to *your name* of vs. 2 (shimka).

The work of your fingers. *Fingers* or 'etsbah derives from the verbal root tsavah, *to dip*. The use of *fingers* with regard to the creation of heavenly luminaries suggests skilled manipulation. Following the lead of Genesis, the psalmist mentioned the *moon* (yareach) and *stars* (kokavym) but not the sun. These two luminaries suggest that the psalmist is praising the glory of the night sky; furthermore, they are *established* or made firm even though the psalmist was aware that such heavenly bodies moved. Note that the alternate meaning for yareach is *month*, the Hebrews having a lunar calendar which is perhaps why the sun is not mentioned in this Psalm. Kokav or *star* comes from the root, *to roll into a ball*. Perhaps the psalmist had in mind the promise made to Abraham: "I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the *stars* of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore" [Gen 22.17].

The following charming words may apply to this verse: "The *stars* shined in their watches and rejoiced; when he calls them they say 'Here we are,' and so with cheerfulness they showed light for him who made them" [Baruch 3.34, LXX].

Vs.4: What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Cf. Ps 144.3: "O Lord, what is man that you regard him, or the son of man that you think of him?" The verb for *mindful* here is zakar as noted with regard to Ps 6.5, and that for *care* is paqad; compare with *regard*, yadad and *care*, chashav, four words in two verses, each with different meanings. The psalmist expresses wonder over a human being before God whose mindfulness *begets...zakar* (for that is its fundamental meaning)...man or sustains both him and his descendants.

Vs. 4 has for *man* 'enush which refers to the human race, and for *son of man* it reads ben-'adam, referring to a particular man. Ps 144 reads the opposite: *man* as 'adam and *son of man* as ben-'enush. The verb paqad connotes the sense of visiting, of coming and of remaining for a particular purpose (sometimes as for punishing); from it is derived *commandment*, *visitation*. Paqad also intimates the abiding of God within temporal duration in the sense of kairos, the New Testament word for *event*, *occasion*.

Vs. 5: Yet you have made him little less than God, and crowned him with glory and honor. The "positive" side of our (divinized humanity) in distinction to the previous verse, tracing its origin to our being made in God's image and likeness, Gen 1.26. The verb chasar for *made less* implies a cutting short. This chasar is a genuine proximity to God yet distinction from him, a fact reenforced by the preposition min prefixed to *God*, me'elohym, i.e., "*from* God."

And crown him with glory and honor. That is, with kavod and hadar; former term implies a certain *heaviness*, a weightiness as though a part of God had "dropped" from him through the force of gravity. "And

while my *glory* passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen” [Ex 33.22-3]. The latter term, hadar, comes from the verbal root *to swell* and implies a decoration or ornament. Both the bestowal of kavod and hadar are from God’s act of *crowning*; hatar (which rhymes with hadar), as in Ps 5.12 above: “You *cover him* with favor as with a shield.”

Vs. 6: You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet. Reference to *hands* implies skilled craftsmanship: “I am the Lord who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth” [Is 44.24]. It should be noted that in the Genesis narrative of creation, there is no mention of hands.

Put all things under his feet. Implied here is that a person is exalted, perhaps on a throne, for kings were accustomed to put their *feet* (regel) over conquered foes. In the following, it applies to subjection of the Promised Land: “Every place that the sole of your *foot* will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses” [Jos 1.3]. As this verse notes, Moses did not enter the land but “I have let you see it with your *eyes*” [Dt 34.4], that is, vision for Moses was sufficient after which he could die. Such vision is a type of divine subjection: “And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud *looked down* upon the host of the Egyptians and discomfited the host of the Egyptians” [Ex 14.24].

Vs. 9: O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! This verse is the same as the first as an expression of wonder. Vss. 7-8 mention various animals put under man’s subjection: sheep, oxen, beasts of the field, birds of the air, fish of the sea. Note conjunction of vs. 6’s *dominion*, mashal, with regard to such animals as in Gen 1.26: “And let them have *dominion* (yarad) over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” Yarad has a definite sense of subjection, of an inferior to a superior; mashal implies more a sense of rule; this same verbal root means *to make like, resemble*, implying that the superior endows the inferior with a certain *resemblance* of his lordship.

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Psalm Nine

Vs. 1: I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. The sentiment of thanksgiving is expressed before *telling* God’s deeds or saphar which implies inscribing as well as uttering (cf. Ps 138.1). Implied here are the saving acts by God throughout Israel’s history, although it can also apply to deliverance from the psalmist’s enemies, vss. 3, 5-6.

Vs. 2: I will be glad and exult in you. I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. Two actions taking place *in* (b-) God, *glad* and *exult*. Samach is the common word for the former; halats is used for the latter which is not used that much in the Bible. Only by being *in* God the can psalmist *sing praise* (zamar) to God’s name; cf. Ps 7.17 for this word. Note the sequence: first the psalmist expresses joy “*in you*,” after which he sings praise to God’s *name*, his shem, which may be taken as being external to the primary “in-ness.” I.e., God’s shem is not his being but outside it, as it were, as Ps 8.1 relates, “Your name *in* all the earth.” From the vantage point of “in you,” the psalmist can externally contemplate the divine shem. Note that he calls God *Most High*, helyon, which in fact is a name.

Vs. 4: For you have maintained my just cause; you have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment. This statement is expressed after the enemies in vs. 3 have been confounded. The Hebrew literally reads, “You have made my judgment and have judged me.” This *sitting*, yashav, on a throne is in the past tense; one gets the idea that judgment has passed, and that the psalmist is *relating* (saphar above) what had transpired. The same notion of past events is related in the next two verses with respect to the psalmist’s foes.

Vs. 7: But the Lord sits enthroned forever, he has established his throne for judgment. Yet another reference to divine judgment, only here God is enthroned *forever*, that is, transcending past and future. The

psalmist says that such an abiding presence of God's *throne*, *kise'*, is for issuing justice, thereby implying a continuous act of judging. Such royal imagery coupled with judgment suggests Rev 4.2: At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a *throne* stood in heaven, with one seated on the *throne!*" This "being in the *Spirit*, *Pneuma*, may apply to the person uttering the words of Psalm 9.

Vs. 9: The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Such a *stronghold* or *misgav* used twice here suggests something on high as from its verbal root, *sagav*: "He [righteous person] will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the *fortresses* of rocks; his bread will be given him, his water will be sure" [Is 33.16]. This verse is reminiscent of the close of Revelation [22.17], "And let him who is thirsty come, let him (i.e., the *oppressed*, *dakah* or better, *crushed*) who desires take the water of life without price" which is located in the *misgav* or heavenly Jerusalem.

A stronghold in times of trouble. These words imply that the *oppressed* go there only during times of stress. The LXX has *eukairos* for *times*, another reference to an event. Note prefix *eu-* implying something beneficial not so much with regard to difficulty but with regard to God as *misgav*.

Vs. 10: And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you. Persons knowing God's name seem distinct from the *oppressed* of vs. 9, yet we may assume they take refuge in the *stronghold*. In the verse under consideration, *knowing* (*yadah* with its essential sense of giving birth) equals *trusting*, *batach*.

For you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you. *Seeking* implies a risk in that the object sought may not be found. The common word for this verb is *darash*, a *treading down* or vigorous inquiry with back and forth movement. In this context, *darash* is bound up with *hazav*, *to forsake*, suggesting a sense of letting go or loosening of bands. Thus a *bond* exists between God and the seeker.

Vs. 11: Sing praises to the Lord who dwells in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds! Note the physical location of God, Zion, hinting at the Temple. Although God is located here, his activity extends beyond this holy precinct, "*among* the peoples," literally *in* (b-). Thus divine being resides in Zion, whereas divine activity applies to the Gentiles. This verse may apply to the beginning of Christianity at Jerusalem, and the act of "telling" is "in his own native language" [Acts 2.8].

Vs. 12: For he who avenges blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted. Such avenging or *darash* is a *seeking* (cf. vs. 10 above) and is suggestive of Cain and Abel: "The voice of your brother's *blood* is crying to me from the ground" [Gen 4.10]. The "cry of the afflicted" may apply to God's mercy on Cain: "If anyone slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord put a mark on Cain lest any who came upon him should kill him" [Gen 4.15]. Such a *mark* or 'oth (alternate meaning is *sign*) is unclear, but it was a sign for other to stay clear.

Vs. 13: Be gracious to me, O Lord! Behold what I suffer from those who hate me, O you who lift me up from the gates of death. A play on words: *Be gracious* (*channeny*) and *suffer* (*hanyey*), as though divine *chesed* or *mercy* were naturally drawn to human affliction; such graciousness or *channan* is the chief characteristic of God.

O you who lift me up from the gates of death. The persons expressing *hate* or *misn'y* would like to see it be brought to completion by sending the psalmist to "the gates of death." Cf. Jon 2.2: "I called to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol [i.e., 'gates of death'] I cried, and you heard my voice." Contrast these gates or *shahar* with those associated with Wisdom: "On the top of the walls she cries out; at the entrance of the city *gates* she speaks" [Prov 1.21]. Her location by the *shahar* are mentioned several times implying that wisdom is found in such areas of transition, that is, between the domestication and safety of the city and the wilderness outside it.

Vs. 14: That I may recount all your praises, that in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in your deliverance. This verse brings full round the significance of *gates* discussed just above. *Saphar* (cf. as

telling and as *inscribing* above) here is related to divine praises, *tehilath*. Note the location of such praises, “*in the gates*,” *besaharey*, the place-where being *in*, b-. The “*daughter of Zion*” may thus be equated with the (female) person of wisdom, *chakmah*.

I may rejoice in your deliverance. Again, place-where is “*in the gates*,” not only is *chakmah* here but “*Jesus*” in the sense of *beyshuhathek*, “*in your deliverance*.” Thus we have three “*ins*”: *wisdom, daughter of Zion, deliverance*.

Vs. 16: The Lord has made himself known, he has executed judgment; the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. Higgsaion. Selah. Such revelation on God’s part comes after vs. 15 where the nations fell into a pit and were caught in a net of their own making. With the notion of gate in mind as already pointed out, such peoples lie outside Zion or Jerusalem: “But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are *written* [cf. *saphar* above] in the Lamb’s book of life” [Rev. 21.27]. Note the passive tense, *has made himself known*, *nodah*, an indirect way of self-revelation. Its connection with *judgment*, *mishpat*, is a clue in that virtually the only way to get the attention of someone insensitive to things divine is by judging their condition. The negative result of such *mishpat* is that “the wicked are *snared* (*noqesh*) in the work of their own hands.” Such is the general theme of the Book of Revelation, the making known of God.

Higgsaion. The meaning is unclear, but it seems to have something to do with the sound of a harp when *struck*, *hagah*. Cf. Ps 5.1: “Give heed to my *groaning*.” After Higgsaion we have another *selah* or “contemplative pause” to consider what has taken place thus far in the psalm.

Vs. 18: For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever. Contrast this mindfulness on God’s part with the previous verse where the “wicked shall depart to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.” In ancient cultures, to *forget* (*shakach*) someone is the worst fate that could befall a person, for the human memory was one of the most important vehicles for preserving a culture’s past. The *needy* or ‘*evyon* are objects of divine mindfulness; to pay attention to such unfortunates is a revolutionary statement indeed because they had not access to the culture’s limited written records. They relied more on the *memory* of past deeds, personal ancestry, etc.

And the hope of the poor shall not perish forever. Note the difference between ‘*evyon* and the well known term for *poor*, *haniwym* (cf. Ps 40.18, combination of both words with respect to the psalmist, “I am *poor* and *needy*.”). The former term seems to imply deprivation and the latter, affliction more from a source exterior to oneself.

Vs. 18 uses two words for indefinite extension, *netsach* for *always* and *lahad* for *forever*. The former implies a sense of perfection, of completeness; the latter being composed of l- and had. Had, from the root *hadah*, *to pass over*; implies constant moving within space and time.

Vs. 20: Put them in fear, O Lord! Let the nations know that they are but men! Selah. In vs. 19 the psalmist wishes such *nations*, *goyim*, to undergo judgment, that is, all those peoples not belonging to Israel. This obviously sounds exclusive, given the wide variety of *goyim* throughout the word, but it is a starting point for divine revelation just as the Gospel’s preaching had a starting point in Jerusalem. Note the connection between *fear* (*morah*) and knowledge of *mortality* (‘*enush*), the latter term being a collective one for all humanity. This verse closes on a positive note with regard to *goyim*; the psalmist wishes them no harm but to acknowledge the fact of their being ‘*enush*. Psalm 9 closes with another *Selah*, an invitation to consider what vs. 20 has summed up.

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Psalm Ten

Vs. 1: Why do you stand afar off, O Lord? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Here the

psalmist mentions spacial separation between him and God when under affliction, a theme running throughout this psalm. The Hebrew is vivid, tahamad *berachaq*, with the suffix b-, *in afar off*. Implied is that sentiments of joy and gladness are not articulated in terms of distance. As opposed to temporal limitations, the span exists with regard to moral behavior (rather, lack of it) as informed by divine reality. Perhaps the most well known example of this *separation*, rachaq, is in Psalm 22 as in vs. 11, words often attributed to Jesus Christ when he was on the cross: “Be not *far from* me, for trouble is near and there is none to help.” Note that in Ps 10 the psalmist asks questions as to divine rachaq; no answers are given.

Vs. 12: Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. Vss. 2-11 form an extended lament about the wicked’s deceit. It should be noted that one of the most common words for *wicked* in the Psalter is rashah whose verbal root (aptly applied) means to make a *tumult* or *noise*. The desire for God *to arise*, qum, is appropriate in this sense in that he stands above or apart from such pandemonium. Noise is a common attribute of Satan, of his restlessness, and the following description is appropriate: “The Lord said to Satan, ‘From where have you come?’ ‘From *going to and fro* on the earth, and from walking up and down on it” [Job 1.7]. The verb here is shut which means *to whip*; also means *to row* in that such agitated actions produce much noise.

Lift up your hand. Singular, yadeka, not plural, an action taking place after the Lord is bidden to arise. The important role of memory (as spoken of above, Ps 9.18) may thus be associated with this hand, symbolic of divine activity. The hand’s primary function is to save the *poor* or haniwym as well as to rebuke enemies: “You stretch out your *hand* against the wrath of my enemies” [Ps 138.7].

Vs. 14: You see, yes, you note trouble and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; the hapless commits himself to you; you have been the helper of the fatherless. This verse is in response to the arrogant statement of the *wicked* or rashah (note singular, not plural) vs. 13, “You will not call to *account*” or darash, *to seek*.

You see...you note. Two words pertaining to sight, ra’ah and navat; former is the common word for *to see*, and the latter has more a sense of *to behold* or to consider carefully. An example of navat: “*Look* [Abraham] toward heaven, and number the stars if you are able to number them” [Gen 15.5].

Navat as applied to *trouble* and *vexation* is not a passive regard of something unjust, for immediately the verse continues, “that you may take it into your hands,” i.e., that God may take action. Cf. Ex 22.21: “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

The hapless commits himself to you; you have been the helper of the fatherless. This is one of three references to chalach (fundamental meaning, *to be burned*) *hapless*, the other two being in vss. 8 and 10; no other uses are found elsewhere. Such a chalach is the primary agent (that is, not God) for committing, hazav, or *abandoning* himself to God. *Fatherless* is from the root yatom, to be solitary in the sense of being alone. To be without a father is a cruel blow to someone in a patriarchal society.

Vs. 15: Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; seek out his wickedness until you do not find any. Reference to *arm* or zeroah is symbolic of strength, and to *break* it or shavar is similar to destroying a large force or army: “But rebels and sinners *shall be destroyed* together, and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed” [Is 1.28]. Note dominance of the “sh” and “r” sounds in this verse which connote roughness or violence: shavar (*break*), zeroah (*arm*), rashah (*wicked*), rah (*evildoer*), tiderosh (*seek out*), rishhu (*wickedness*).

Until you do not find any. That is, any malevolence, not to bring actual destruction upon the person doing it.

Vs. 16: The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land. Implied here is that God has been ruling while evil was being done, and that he remains unaffected by it. Such rule is over the entire earth; the nations which perish from *his* (note possessive) *land* or ‘eretz suggests the physical territory

of Israel. Although they may perish, this verse leaves open the possibility that such *nations* or goym, largely responsible for Israel's afflictions, will live elsewhere.

Vs. 17: O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear. A close association of *desire* (ta'wath) and *meek* (haniwym). Such ta'wath does not have to be intelligible, for example, "Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard; therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman" [1 Sam 1.13]. This *speaking in her heart* or medabereth hal-libah reads "on her heart."

You will strengthen their heart. Such *strengthening* or taken implies a *making level*, a notion which can fit in with the *hal-libah* just mentioned. Another meaning is *to measure* as in Is 40.12: "Who has *measured* heaven with a span?"

You will incline your ear. Such *inclining* or qashav connotes a sense of *sharpening* and thus of close attention with regard to hearing: "Making your ear *attentive* to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding" [Prov 2.2].

Vs. 18: To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more. The words *man who is of the earth* come from a divine perspective which perceives human mortality. Such *terror* or harats suggests a trembling as in Is 2.19: "And men shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the *terror* of the Lord." Such doing of *justice* or shaphat implies divine care for these two classes of people. As noted above with regard to vs. 14 and the same word yatom, *fatherless*, being without a father in a patriarchal society is difficult.

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Psalm Eleven

Vs.1: In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to me, "Flee like a bird to the mountains?" The notion of hiding (and related concepts is perhaps) is one of least appreciated yet most frequent theme in the Old Testament, and the word chasah is just one example, this being among twenty-three examples in the Psalter alone. The fundamental meaning of chasah is *to cover* in the sense of *to veil*: "The nave he [Solomon] lined with cypress, and *covered* it with fine gold, and made palms and chains on it" [2 Ch 3.5]. As applied to God, namely, the divine name of YHWH, it is a bold statement, especially since such chasah is *in* (b-) YHWH and can be taken as the psalmist disappearing within the divine name.

Due to this divine hiding, the psalmist can boldly say to his adversaries, "Flee like a bird to the mountains" or more accurately, "*your mountains.*" Such *fleeing* or nod implies *lamenting*, that is, the expression of sorrow as when going into exile.

Vs. 4: The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids test, the children of men. The previous two verses describe the *wicked*, harshamym, shooting arrows and destroying foundations. Therefore the confidence expressed in vs. 4 makes more sense. In vss. 2-3 we have violent energy in contrast to the serenity of vs. 4.

The Lord is in his holy temple. Although God is infinite, he has a special presence in the Jerusalem *temple* or heykal. This term pertains to the building in general; devyvr which can translate as *oracle* is the very center of the heykal as the verbal root davar, *to speak*, reveals. Once a year the high priest was permitted to enter the devyr (also, holy of holies). Cf. Ps 28.2 for the only reference to devyr in the Psalter. Although YHWH is *in* the heykal, he has a fuller presence within this holy of holies.

The Lord's throne is in heaven. Such is the place-where of God's *throne*, kise'. Although God may sit upon this kise' located in *heaven*, bashamym, he uses the devyr *to speak*. Thus a vertical movement exists between the throne and holy of holies which translates into a horizontal movement between the holy of holies

and those assembled in the temple. In light of this, consider Christ's words, "Destroy this *temple*, and in three days I will raise it up" [Jn 2.19]. I.e., destroy this devyr, this place of *speaking*, and I the *Word* or Logos will restore this same place of speaking.

His eyes behold, his eyelids test, the children of men. Such *beholding* or chazah is a word frequently used by the prophets to describe divine visions. Since God is in (the vertical) heaven, his chazah is directed downward, whereas the prophets' chazah was directed upwards. Note the distinction between eyes and eyelids; the latter are commonly associated with blinking or rapid movement. Applying this to God, we may say that it is designed to check...to *test* (bachan, implies a sense of *watching*)...the sons of men, beny 'adam, this second word suggesting mortality ('adam, *soil*).

Vs. 7: For the Lord is righteous, he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face. In vss. 5 and 6 the Lord "tests the righteous and the wicked" equally, it seems. The result of such *testing* or bachan in the sense of *watching* (as in vs. 4 with regard to *eyelids*) is to bring the *righteous*, the tsadyq (singular), into accord with the vertical-horizontal movement mentioned in conjunction with the temple.

For the Lord is righteous, he loves righteous deeds. Note the alliance between God being tsadyq and human action as tsadaqoth, *righteous deeds*, a fact which concurs with the activity effected by a person being in the temple.

The upright shall behold his face. Contrast this with Ex 33.11: "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses *face to face*, as a man speaks to his friend." Such *speaking* or davar is reminiscent of that speaking within the devyr, the holy of holies, prefigured by Moses' conversation with God in the *tent*, 'ohel (vs. 8). Note that Joshua...Jesus..."did not depart from the tent" (vs. 11); parallel this verse with Lk 2.46: "After three days they found him (Joshua/Jesus) in the *temple*, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions."

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Psalm Twelve

Vs. 1: Help, Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly; for the faithful have vanished from among the sons of men. This psalm begins with the cry, hushyhah, "Jesus," almost like the Jesus Prayer of Orthodoxy, and we may take it to read "Jesus, Lord!" Chased is an apt term for *godly*, one who has been so "Jesus-ed." The Hebrew verbal root for to be no longer here is gamar (cf. Ps 7.9) which fundamentally means *to be perfect, complete*. Perhaps a secondary reading of vs. 1 is that a person so Jesus-ed has become gamar, made perfect, a fact which the psalmist laments.

For the faithful have vanished from among the sons of men. The person who is chased is similarly among the 'emunym, *faithful*, but these persons have *vanished* or pasas which implies *ceasing*; cf. a cognate, 'ephes, *end, extremity*. I.e., such 'emunym have departed to the opposite end of moral-religious scale: "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" [Gen 6.7-8]. Noah was such a chased who escaped calamity in the ark. Note the parallel: *man* and "from the face of the *ground*," 'adam and 'adamah; parallel with "from among the sons of *men*," 'adam of vs. 1.

Vs. 2: Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. After some remarks above concerning davar, *to speak*, we see its negative application here. The word for *lies* is shawe' which also means *vanity* or something empty, so the sense here is that people are more or less prattling on about useless things as opposed to actually plotting evil.

With flattering lips and a double heart they speak. The notion lying behind *flattering*, chalaq, is that of *smoothness* as well as a *portion* of something. Thus anyone who engages in chalaq *portions out* falsehood. The phrase belev walev for *double heart* is interesting in that the literal reading is "in heart and heart," by

repeating the noun there comes this notion of doubling which connotes deceit.

Vs. 5: “Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the Lord. “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.” Two types of people special to God, the *poor* or haniwym and the *needy* or ‘evyon which implies a sense of being distressed. At first glance it is difficult to see how the poor can be *despoiled* or shod simply because they lack possessions. However, those wishing to despoil them are aware of some relationship with God they have, the real object of hatred. The needy emit a heartfelt *groan* or ‘anaq; the actual reason for this is not stated, but we might associate it with the plight of the haniwym.

“I will now arise,” says the Lord. God had to wait for the poor and needy to get into this desperate situation, fact he must have seen beforehand. It is reminiscent of Ex 3.7: “I have seen the *affliction* of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings.” Note the play on words as well as the verbal root to haniwym: *affliction of my people*, hny hamy.

I will place him in the safety for which he longs. In light of the paragraph just above, we may posit the first person as representing Israel as a nation longing for redemption from the oppression in Egypt. This safety in nothing else than being placed “*in Jesus*,” beyeshah, the object of Israel’s *longing*, puach, with the implication of breathing. For an example of puach, cf. Song 2.17 & 4.6: “Until the day *breaks*.”

Vs. 6: The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. The Hebrew for *promises* is ‘imaroht, from the root ‘amar, *to speak*, as though divine promises are equivalent to God’s speaking, his Logos or *Word*, Jesus Christ; note the repetition of this word as if to emphasize the validity of such divine promises.

Such ‘imaroht have three qualities: 1) *pure* or tahor which connotes a sense of brightness, a word frequently used with regard to *pure gold* in the tabernacle’s construction (Exodus 25-37). However, in this Psalm’s verse the divine ‘imaroht are 2) “*silver refined in a furnace on the ground*,” a corrupt section of the text to the end of the verse, yet means something like “*purged in a crucible* (haly).” Finally or 3), the ‘imaroht has been “*purified seven times*,” the number seven coming from the verbal root shavah, *to swear* (an oath). One of the most famous examples of seven is in Jos 6 where this number occurs repeatedly with regard to the fall of Jericho.

Vs. 7: Protect us, O Lord, guard us ever from this generation. The request for such *protection*, shamar, makes better sense in conjunction with the previous verse where refined silver must be kept this way, that is, free from tarnish or “*from this generation where the verb natsar is used, mostly with the sense of watching*.”

Use of *forever*, leholam, suggests that the generation from which the psalmist requests divine help can continue indefinitely which is possibly why Psalm 12 ends with the wicked “*prowling on every side*.”

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Psalm Thirteen

Vs. 1: How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? A brief psalm full of questions. The words *how long* or had-‘anah coupled with the sacred divine name of YHWH are direct in their simplicity, for God lacks duration. This statement carries over into the next two questions: *forgetfulness* or shakach as connected with God and as noted with Ps 10.18 is the worst fate that can happen, for such disregard is equivalent to non-existence, especially since it is *forever*, netsach which connotes brightness or splendor.

How long will you hide your face from me? Another instance of had-‘anah or anxiety arising with respect to temporal duration; satar is the common verb used for *to hide*; used with reference to the divine face, there is intimated a sense that such hiding will not last forever, for one can hide just as easily as reveal. I.e., there is not real finality to the situation.

Vs. 3: Consider and answer me, O Lord, my God; lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. This verse follows on the heels of the previous one where the psalmist continues with had-'anah (bearing of pain and the enemy exulting). Navat is the word for *to consider* which implies more regarding or looking. The vantage point for such navat is, of course, from above in heaven, so we have here a vertical type of considering. This fits in well with the verb *to answer*, hanah, which indicates singing, a *lifting-up* of the voice in line, as it were, with the vertical navat.

Lighten my eyes. More precisely, let my eyes *see* or become aware of the vertical relationship God has with humanity. Note the similarity between *my eyes*, henyny, and *answer me*, haneny, indicating a harmony between vision and voice.

Lest I sleep the sleep of death. Better, "least I sleep death," where both realities are closely identified. Thus the *considering* and *answering* of God prevent both sleep and more importantly, death itself.

Vs. 5: But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. Vs. 4 develops the "lest-ness" (pen-) pertaining to sleep and death with "*lest my enemy say*," "*lest my foes rejoice*." This divine *steadfast love* is chesed.

My heart shall rejoice in your salvation. Another mention of "Jesus" as *my salvation*, beyeshuhateka. The verb *to rejoice* is gyl which basically implies going in a circle or a circular dance serves to give form to such rejoicing which takes place in "Jesus" as in "We have waited for him; let us be glad and *rejoice* in his *salvation*" [Is 25.9]. Such gyl movement revolves around salvation which is the center point of this activity.

Vs. 6: I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me.⁵ Such *singing* or shyr ties in well with the circular gyl movement of rejoicing in vs. 5, for singing and dancing go hand in hand, especially in a liturgical context. The reason for such rejoicing is God's graciousness to the psalmist, gamal haly, "dealt bountifully *on* me." This verb is neutral in that it can pertain to the bestowal of good or evil. Note the preposition, haly, "*on* me," a specific way of bestowing from *above* (hal) in accord with the vertical motion mentioned earlier.

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Psalm Fourteen

Vs. 1: The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none that does good. The word for *fool*, naval, implies something withered or faded, thereby suggesting that such a person is in the process of decay and eventual death: "The grass *withers*, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever" [Is 40.7]. Nabal is also a proper noun, the husband of Abigail: "Let not my lord regard this ill-natured fellow, *Nabal*; for as his name is, so is he; *Nabal* is his name, and *folly* is with him" [1 Sam 25.25]. This with him is a expressive way of saying that the person of Nabal is identified with the essence of naval; both are one and the same.

To say something *in one's heart*, belibu, is to really mean it although such an utterance may be not be articulated. Thus when it comes to "There is no God," such a person is truly naval, that is, denying ultimate reality and apply the essence of naval, of *decay*, to what can never experience decay.

Such *corrupt* persons and *abominable deeds* are reminiscent of the inhabitants of Sodom (cf. Gen 19.4-11).

"There is none that does good." The word here ("There is not"), 'eyn, signifies complete negativity, lack of substance, as with the "*There is no* ('eyn) God" just above. Such 'eyn is transferred from a naval's

⁵The critical text of the Psalter which I am using lacks vs.6; it is incorporated into previous verse.

perception of God into his behavior or deeds, hoseh-tov.

Vs. 2: The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God. In vs. 11 alluded to Sodom; this verse may apply to it, for example, "Then the Lord said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me; and if not, I will know'" [Gen 18.20-1]. Note that this singular person (the Lord) is addressing Abraham; it takes place within the context of the three men who visited him.

The Lord looks down from heaven. Such a downward *look*, shaqaph, contrasts with the "outcry which has come to me," that is, a vertical ascent. We see this verb in reference to the three men who visited Abraham: "Then the men set out from there, and they *looked toward* Sodom" [Gen 18.19]. Note that shaqaph here is a horizontal regard; nevertheless, it signifies incorporation of shaqaph's inherent vertical regard onto the horizontal plane. The fundamental meaning of shaqaph is *to lay upon, lay over* (as with planks). Cf. Ex 14.24 which has a meaning applicable to God's regard for Sodom: "And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud *looked down* upon the host of the Egyptians, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians."

To see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God. Such is the object of divine shaqaph: sakal or *to act wisely* and darash or *to seek*. Sakal implies a *being* wise which here translates into doing; it lacks an object, further indication of its ontological nature. The meaning of sakal is *to behold, to be successful*, thereby combining doing and acting in one operation: "And David *had success* in all his undertakings, for the Lord was with him" [1 Sam 18.14]. Here the reason for David's sakal is the of God's presence (NB: sakal is opposite to naval above). The very fact of being sakal automatically leads to the darash of God, and the fact of darash-ing after God leads to being sakal.

Vs. 5: There they shall be in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous. Verses 3 and 4 reveal the failure of not being aware of God's shaqaph, namely, of being naval: gone astray, corrupt, does no good, no knowledge, eat up my people, do not call upon God.

There they shall be in great terror. The "*there-ness*," sham, is unspecified, does not have a location. Such sham where *terror* or pachad in the sense of *trembling* is experienced may be the wicked depicted in vss. 3-4. Evil does have a locale in that it busily focuses upon its expression as opposed to the broadness of the divinity. An example of pachad with a different focus: "Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall *thrill* and rejoice" [Is 60.5].

For God is with the generation of the righteous. The Is 60.5 reference is representative of this group endowed with the positive nature of pachad, that is *trembling* with joy. Note the Hebrew, "*with the generation*," in or b-, indicating thorough presence. Since ancient peoples were concerned with continuity of their past into the future, mention of *generation* or dod united with God's "in-ness" is crucial for propagation of *justice*, tsadaqah, which has rules quite different from natural generation.

Vs. 6: You would confound the plans of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge. We normally do not consider the *poor*, haniwym, to have *plans*, hatsoth, which is better rendered *counsel*. The negative side of hetsah (singular) is interesting where it can refer to an object of worship: "Yes, the thing [calf of Beht-aven] shall be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king. Ephraim shall be put to shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his *idol*" [Hos 10.6]. The wicked of Psalm 14 desire to *confound* or bosh, more precisely, *shame* such unfortunates but the result is "The nations shall see and *be ashamed* of all their might" [Mic 7.16]. The obvious reason for their bosh is that "the Lord is his refuge," singular, but can apply to the nation of Israel as a whole. Such *refuge*, chasah (cf. Ps 11.1), implies *hiding* by the poor man, not necessarily in the physical sense but in YHWH. This involves a loss of self-awareness, something the poor man already has, making it is relatively easy to hide in the Lord which the wicked cannot do because of their heightened self-awareness.

Vs. 7: O that deliverance for Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, Israel shall be glad. Another rendition, "Who will give Jesus?" or in light of Is

6.8, "Here I am! Send me." The answer lies in *deliverance*, yeshuah in the person of Jesus. Note the close identity between "Jesus" and Israel which may read, "Who will give from Zion *deliverance Israel?*" I.e., no distinction as through a preposition between the two proper nouns.

When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people. The same Hebrew word applies to both *restore* and *fortune*, shuv, in the sense of returning. "From the fruit of his words a man is satisfied with good, and the work of a man's hand *comes back* to him" [Prov 12.14]. This yearning for better times is not specified, but we may take it to an eventual return to Paradise.

Jacob shall rejoice, Israel shall be glad. Two names for one person: "Then [man who wrestled] he said, 'Your name shall no more be called *Jacob*, but *Israel*, for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed'" [Gen 32.28]. Note the association of Jacob with *gyl*, *to rejoice*, in the sense of doing a round dance as noted with regard to Ps 13.6. Such *gyl* has a certain kinship with Jacob's wrestling: "And Jacob was left alone; and a man *wrestled* with him until the breaking of the day" [Gen 32.24]. The verb here is 'avaq, *to raise the dust*.

As for Israel, the new name bestowed upon Jacob by this anonymous wrestler, it came about during the night in a mysterious encounter. The newly named Jacob asked this man's name but did not answer except with a blessing. It is interesting to note that he named the site of this encounter Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved" [vs. 30]. Thus vision of God is associated with Israel after the manner of Moses on Mt. Sinai.

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Psalm Fifteen

Vs. 1: O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? The two questions with respect to *tent* and *holy hill* pertain to those persons who are morally upright and live in accord with the divine Torah. Note the distinction: *tent* or 'ohel refers to the temple itself which was retained this image from the nomadic times of Israel's past. I.e., a tent symbolizes transitoriness or being in a constant process of moving from place to place. Perhaps too the psalmist has in mind Joshua...Jesus...who "did not depart from the *tent*" [Ex 33.11]. The desire to abide in this 'ohel may be found in Heb 11 which names heroes of faith which are marked by a sense of exile, of temporary abiding on earth. The word for *sojourn* of vs. 1 is gur, which intimates tarrying, of delaying along with a sense of not belonging. When applied to the temple/tent, clearly this provisional nature of a place of worship is intimated.

Who shall dwell on your holy hill? Such *dwelling*, shakan, suggests an abiding or more permanent residence not within the sacred 'ohel itself but on God's *holy hill*, behar qadsheka. Note the preposition b-, *in*, as though such a dweller were permeating this hill. The hill gives more latitude, as it were, for continued living, yet is still marked off by sacredness, whereas the tent is more specific; although a person may enter it, one cannot permanently abide there.

Vs. 2: He who walks blamelessly and does what is right, and speaks truth from his heart. Three "active" features: *walking* or holek, *doing* or pahal and *speaking* or davar, all of which balance the (stationary) presence implied in vs. 1 as well as flow from it. Because such activity drives from the tent and holy hill, we can suspect that it pertains to areas other than them, i.e., in the so called "profane" territory in the literal sense of pro (*before*) fanus (*temple*)...before or outside the temple.

Vs. 5: He who does these things shall never be moved⁶. Verses 3-5 (first part) digress on the qualities of a person about whom the psalmist questioned in vs. 1: does not slander, does no evil, does not reproach, despises a reprobate, honors those who fear God, does not change, does not loan with interest and does not take bribes. These qualities may be tied in with the Ten Commandments; both sets are negative in that they

6I include here just the second part of this verse.

offer prohibitions or exhortations to refrain from evil behavior.

These dispositions result in not being *moved*, *mot*, similar in sound to *mut*, *blemish*. We may assume that such stability pertains to the tent and holy hill.

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Psalm Sixteen

Vs. 1: Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." The taking of refuge makes sense in light of the previous Psalm (tent and holy hill) where the psalmist instinctively goes. Note that the psalmist first *hides*, *chasah*, *vak*, *in you*, which at first glance would seem to effect his preservation or *shamar* by God; i.e., we have here another example of being *in* (b-) the divinity.

I have no good apart from you. The Hebrew meaning is obscure here; it can read "My good, none above you." Perhaps *my good* or *tovaty* may be an exclamation of joy at being *in* (b-) God beyond which nothing else exists for the psalmist. The *none above you* or *bal-haleyka* can suggest that such in-ness is the furthest limit one can aspire in that it transcends any concept of limit.

Vs. 2: As for the saints in the land, they are the noble in whom is all my delight. These *saints* or *qedoshym* are characterized by being *holy*, *qadash*, set apart by reason of their being *clean*. The psalmist is quick to mention them after vs. 1 when he requests refuge in God. Compare the two "ins:" *in you*, *bak*, with *in the land*, *be'aerets*. The notion of *land*, *'erets*, is important in that it represents a geographical separation of Israel from the nations, a special area which facilitates the growth of holiness or being *qedoshym*.

They are the noble in whom is all my delight. Another example of "in," *in whom* or *vam* which refers to the *qedoshym* who are also *'adyrey*, *noble*, the verbal root of which is *'adar* which implies broadness, spaciousness (cf. Ps 8.1). It is as though such *'adyrey* were present in the land and caused it to swell as yeast present in dough: "The kingdom of heaven is like *leaven* which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until it was all leavened" [Mt 13.33]. Just as such "nobles" are "*in the land*," so is the psalmist's *delight* or *chaphats* *in* them, *vam*. Such *chaphats* is equivalent to the swelling or expanding nature just mentioned. The verbal root of this word implies a bending towards the object of one's desire which here becomes a presence-*in*, *vam*.

Vs. 4: Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their libations of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.⁷ There is a close association between "another god" and *multiply*, *rirbu*, in that a god implies a multitude of other similar idols, the result of human fantasy. The very act of choosing such a god compounds the false nature of such a deity.

The words "choose another god" in Hebrew read more like "they hurry after another," the object of such haste being unspecified. Even if such "another" were a god, this verse associates it with *sorrows*, from the verbal root *hatsav*, implying heavy physical labor. For a reference as applied to God, cf. Is 63.10: "But they rebelled and *grieved* his holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy and himself fought against them." Note that *hatsav* is the root for *idol*: "On that day I will cut off the names of the *idols* from the land so that they shall be remembered no more" [Zech 13.2].

Their libations of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips. Obvious reference to pagan sacrifice, reminiscent to early Christians forced to worship Roman deities. Note the contrast as well as the play on words: *pour out* (*nasak*) and *take upon* (*nasa'*). It seems that as soon as such *libations* or *niskeyhem* (from the same root, *nasak*) are poured out, they automatically are taken up or placed on the lips of the person performing this deed. I.e., both actions for a unity. The psalmist recognizes this two-fold unity and

⁷As the RSV notes, the first part of this verse is not clear.

declines to participate in it preferring instead “if you confess with your *lips* that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” [Rom 10.8]. Here an utterance in conjunction with Jesus Christ—an statement outwards—requires no external sacrificial oblation.

Finally, note the plurality of names with the plurality of gods and libations; such plurality suggests confusion of languages as in Gen 11.7: “Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”

Vs. 5: The Lord is my chose portion and my cup; you hold my lot. Two parts which have the air of sacrifice, portion and cup, a case of hendiadys. “Chosen portion” can be rendered, *smooth portion*, menath-chelqy, the second term whose verbal root essentially means smoothness as opposed to “You who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the *cup of his wrath*” [Is 51.17]. I.e., the chelqy of vs. 5 goes down easily, without effort. Note, too, that the root chalaq can mean flattery which is a form of smooth talking as in Prov 6.24: “to preserve you from the evil woman, from the *smooth* tongue of the adventuress.”

The *cup* or kus again has sacrificial overtones; contrast its benefits with the “libations of blood” of the previous verse which are associated with pagan deities.

You hold my lot. *Lot* or goral literally means a small stone and often has a negative meaning, for example, in the sense of enemies dividing up Israel’s inheritance after a battle. Note that the psalmist has YHWH *holding* this goral; besides meaning that God possesses the psalmist’s fate, it can imply something like holding a lot prior to casting it to see its results. With this sense in mind, the outcome can be positive or negative, however, vs. 5 points to the *anticipation* of God casting the lot, not its actual result.

Vs. 6: The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage. Here we have the result of YHWH’s casting or throwing of the psalmist’s goral. The image here as well as in vs. 5 is reminiscent of Jesus’ crucifixion when the soldiers cast lots for his tunic which St. John puts in light of Ps 22.18: “They divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast *lots* (goral).” Note the use of *lines*, chavalym, from the verbal root chaval, *to twist*, which implies a coming to birth through pangs. Cf. Jos 2.15 for a reference to chavalym as *cords*: “Then she [Rahab] let them down by a *rope* through the window, for her house was built into the city wall.” Compare this rope with vs. 18, “When we come into the land, you shall bind this *scarlet cord* (chut hashany) in the window through which you let us down.”

Thus for the psalmist chaval implies a binding or securing *in pleasant places*, banhimym; note the indefinite multiplicity of such places, from the root naham which implies beauty: “How fair and *pleasant* you are, O loved one, delectable maiden [lit., ‘in delights,’ Sg 7.6].

Yes, I have a goodly heritage. Such *heritage*, nachal, (also means *river* and *valley*) refers not so much as to the “pleasant places” which are in the present but to the indeterminate future. A reference to nachal: “For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and *streams* in the desert” [Is 35.6]. With the alternate implication of water in mind, the heritage or nachal which the psalmist receives from God suggests that his future possession is bound up with water which is vital in desert areas. Such nachal is *goodly*, shapharah, whose root shaphar which implies a sort of brightness.

Vs. 7: I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. The notion of *blessing*, barak, indicates thanksgiving or acknowledgment that the psalmist has received *counsel* from the Lord, yahats, implying a sense of command, direction; this in turn can mean inspiration which here comes from God. Such yahats involves a response for future action.

In the night also my heart instructs me. The first part of vs. 7 alludes to daytime although it is not specified; only indirectly can this be inferred by mention of *night*, leyloth, where here is in the plural. Thus leyloth can mean night in the sense of a series, a duration (as in the various watches of night) or a succession of nights over an indefinite period of time. “Upon my bed by *night* I sought him whom my soul loves” [Sg 1.3]. The image of night plays an important role with regard to the transmission of divine revelation or a divine

event, for example, the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea. To elevate this time into a season in the sense of *leyloth* is to make it a permanent part of one's life.

A better word for heart is *kidneys*, *kilyoth*, representative of one's inner most self and is the seat of desires and affections: "But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, who tries the *heart* and the mind" [Jer 11.20]. To associate such *kilyoth* with the secrecy and mysterious character of night is ideal to be *instructed*, *yasar*, which implies more a sense of chastisement as instruction in right conduct.

Vs. 8: I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Such is the result of *yasar* during the *leyloth* mentioned above. The *keeping* of the Lord or *shawah* is a making equal or similar; second meaning of this verb is *to fear*. "To whom then will you compare me, that I *should be like him*" [Is 40.25]? The notion of resemblance is suggestive of a person being made in God's eikon, *image*. Note that such *shawah* is *constant*, *tameyd*, almost in the sense of an ontological identification of the psalmist with God. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two realities is maintained: *before me*, *lenegdy*, signifying place-in-front-of or not identical with. This word is prefixed by the letter l-, literally, *to*; translation would be *to before me*. This implies Moses' words, "I pray you, show me your glory" [Ex 33.18], not your face which would be identical with God's own self.

Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. In many cultures the right has always been symbolic of good as opposed to the left hand. The word for *right hand* is *yamyn*; note that God is at the psalmist's *yamyn*, not the other way around. This word is also used for *south*, for when one's right hand is towards this direction, the face is towards the east or sunrise. With this in mind Ex 33.18 quoted in the paragraph above can be understood in terms of Moses having God situated at the south while Moses' face is towards the east, sunrise. This position results in constancy, in not being *moved*, *mut*; use of the future tense suggests continuance of that *keeping* or *shawah* already discussed.

Vs. 9: Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure. Two aspects of the psalmist's condition which rejoice, *heart* (*lev*) and *soul* (*kavod*). The latter more accurately means liver which was considered the *heaviest* of the internal organs, *kavod* being the verbal root with this meaning. "My *heart* is poured out on the ground" [Lam 2.11], more specifically, that which is most interior is made exterior as a result of sadness. This *rejoicing* or *gyl* comes from the verbal root suggestive of a *round dance*.

My body also dwells secure. The safety of the entire body rests upon the *lev* and *kavod* finding joy in God. The verbal root for *body*, *basar*, means *to bring good tidings*: "Get up on a high mountain, O Zion, herald of *good tidings*; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of *good tidings*" [Is 40.9]. The association of these two words is suggestive of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ...his assuming of a human body...with the Good News of the Gospel. The words "dwells secure" literally read "dwells to trust" or the constant abiding or *shakan* in the direction *towards* (l-) this trust, *labetach*.

Vs. 10: For you did not give me up to Sheol or let your godly one see the Pit. *Give up* or *hazav* connotes the finality of abandonment, an apt verb with regards to Sheol, the abode of the dead which the psalmist's *soul* or *naphash* escapes. This verse is quoted in Acts 2.27 by Peter on the day of Pentecost.

The psalmist identifies himself with being a *godly one* or *chasyd*, from the root *chasad* or one who is the object of God's tender love. The *pit* or *shachat* implies corruption: "But you have held back my life from the *pit* of destruction" [Is 38.17]. This text literally reads, "But you have *in love* to my soul," *chashaq* rhyming with *shachat* or *pit*. "To see" this pit is equivalent to actual presence in it.

Vs. 11: You show me the path of life; in your presence there is fulness of joy, in your right hand are pleasures for evermore. Because Sheol infers a downward direction, the *path* or *'orach* leads in the opposite or upward direction. Consider this verse in light of two ascensions, that of Enoch and Elijah: "Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him" [Gen 5.24]. Note the words *he was not*, *'eynenu*, signifying a thorough "noughting" or disappearance from the earthly sphere. The second ascension reads, "And as they [Elijah and Elisha] still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" [2 Kg 2.11]. This latter example is an upward movement effected

indirectly by God through the medium of a chariot of horses; the former is by God himself.

The 'orach or *path* is a more poetic word as compared with the more prosaic *derek*. Here its "upward" direction as noted in the last paragraph is associated with *life*, *chayeym*. It is God who shows this 'orach to the psalmist, more accurately, *causes to make known*, the verbal root being *yadah*. I.e., we have here an indirect discovery on part of the psalmist of the path, not a clear manifestation.

In your presence there is fulness of joy. The Hebrew verb is *savah*, *to fill*, which bears resemblance to another verb, *shavah*, *to swear an oath* and from which is derived the number *seven*. Note that *joy*, *samach*, is in the plural, *simachoth*, implying an indeterminate number. 'eth-paneyka, *before you* or in your presence, face, source of joys.

In your right hand are pleasures for evermore. Such *pleasures* or *nehimoth*, from *naham*, derive from the right hand as in vs. 8, "because he is at my *right hand*." The word *forever*, *netsach*, derives from *natsach*, *splendor, glory*.

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Psalm Seventeen

Vs. 1: Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit! The object of hearing is the psalmist's *just cause* or *tsedeq*, more specifically, *righteousness*. This verse is reminiscent of a defendant pleading in a court of law. Note only does he bid God to hear but *to attend*, *qashav*, a verb first encountered (with its connotation of sharpness) in Ps 10.17 above. The object here is the psalmist's *cry* or *rinah*, from the verbal root *ranan* which he hopes to be heard. It is more like a shout with the notion of *singing* implied. By reason of its direct appeal, *ranan* frequently occurs in the psalter. Also note that Isaiah often uses this word, one example being Is 55.12: "For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into *singing*."

Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit! The third request...demand...with the dominant theme of hearing, this example having the verb 'azan which primarily connotes sharpness and from which is also derived the word *ear*; compare with *qashav* as sharpness just before it. This final request of hearing is directed not so much to the Lord in the immediate sense but attention to the psalmist's *prayer*, *tephilah*, which commonly denotes supplication. With this in mind, he quickly adds that he has no *deceit* or *mirmah* which can be mistakenly perceived as genuine vocal prayer: "And there was no *deceit* in his mouth" [Is 53.9]. This latter example has *deceit* placed in the mouth as opposed to on the lips; presumably *deceit* in the mouth is a more pervasive form of cunning.

Vs. 2: From you let my vindication come! Let your eyes see the right! The *vindication* or *mishpat* is a judgment which the psalmist confidently expects from God due to his being *righteous*, *tsedeq*. Its source is from God, generally speaking, in contrast to the more specific request with regard to the *right*, *meyrsharym*, plural form of *yashar* which implies things being made *straight* or following a determined course of movement or communication. Here the divine eyes are bidden to be directed. "Behold, your *eyes* are doves" [Sg 1.15]. The verb for this divine *seeing* is *chazah* which implies a steady gaze or beholding.

Vs. 3: If you try my heart, if you visit me by night, if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me; my mouth does not transgress. Four challenges, as it were, to God, for him to *try* (heart), *visit* (night), *test* (me) and *find* (no wickedness), all of which are related to the psalmist's inherent *righteousness*, *tsedeq*, of vs. 1.

The first challenge is *to try* or *bachan* as well as to keep watch which also implies a sense of making a choice: "But you shall seek the place which the Lord your God will *choose* out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there" [Dt 12.5]. In this passage there is a choosing on God's part of a special place, hidden from the people, and a seeking after it. Thus the *bachan* directed towards the psalmist, more specifically, his *heart* or *lev*, his innermost being, may be taken as a type of foreknowledge in the sense of Ps

139 which contains many references to divine probing of the human condition.

The second challenge is for God *to visit* or paqad, which generally means to set anyone over anything or to put in charge. Another example of this visiting may be found in Gen 21:1: “the Lord *visited* Sarah,” that is, in the sense of making her pregnant, as in Lk 1.26-7: “The angel Gabriel was sent from God...to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph.”

Note the time of this paqad, *by night*, reminiscent of God coming to the Israelites on the threshold of their departure from Egypt: “It was a *night* of watching by the Lord, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same *night* is a *night* of watching kept to the Lord by all the people of Israel throughout their generations” [Ex 12.42]. I.e., this decisive event in Israel’s history took place during the mysterious obscurity of darkness.

The third challenge is for God *to test* the psalmist, tsaraph, in the sense of refining or purifying gold: “This God—his ways are perfect; the promise of the Lord *proves* true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him” [2 Sam 22.31]. Bound up with this imagery is the notion of fire.

The fourth and final challenge is that God will not find any wickedness in him, for such *evil* or zimah has been purged through the tsaraph action just mentioned. Zimah has the alternate (negative) meaning of *counsel*: “He who *plans* to do evil will be called a mischief maker” [Prov 24.8].

My mouth does not transgress. The mouth is designated as the source of evil; *transgress* or havar fundamentally means a crossing over, that is, an intrusion into a place where one is not allowed to go.

Vs. 4: With regard to the works of men, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. God’s *word*, davar, is singular with respect to the plurality of *works*, ḥephuloth; note the letter l (“to.” but here in the sense of “concerning”) which is prefixed as well as the letter b prefixed to davar (“in”). The first part of this verse, “with regard to the works of men,” has a sense of detached observation about it, for the psalmist has undergone the process of try, visit, test and find of the previous verse. I.e., his has been set free to objectively consider evil manifest in other persons, more precisely, their *works*, pehuloth, which connotes something fabricated or devised.

God’s davar is the guiding principle for the psalmist...a *word* in contrast to a deed, yet the preposition b signifies a *being-in* this davar, the true vantage point to observe *works*. Davar’s association with *lips* intimates the active, vivifying activity of divine speech which is singular, not plural. “In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God” [Jn 1.1].

I have avoided the ways of the violent. The verb *avoid* or shamar fundamentally means a keeping or observation which here applies to *ways of the violent*, i.e., their *paths* or ‘orach as in the sense of Prov 2.15: “Men whose *paths* are crooked and who are devious in their ways.” The image of ‘orach by use of the plural corresponds to the plurality of *works* as noted with regard to this same verse. Parats as the verbal root for *violent* intensifies this plurality further; it means a breaking asunder or dispersion.

Vs. 5: My steps have held fast to your paths, my feet have not slipped. The psalmist’s *steps* are reminiscent of Ps 1.1, “*Blessed* is the man *who* walks not in the counsel of the wicked,” which began this document; refer to it for the importance of ‘ashar especially as the first word which begins the Psalter and sets the theme for all 150 psalms. These *steps* or increments of *blessedness*, as it were, are here objectified in the poetic sense as having a life almost independent from the psalmist. They are in contrast to the plural ‘orach belonging to evildoers in the last verse; the (plural) word used for *paths* is mahegalah, from the verbal root hagah which means *to roll*, thus implying a road used for wheeled transport on which the psalmist has his *steps* advance. You might say that such steps assume the form of wheels which makes for easier travel. The prefix b (*in*) to mahegalah suggests the image of walking in rutted paths.

My feet have not slipped. Mut or *to slip* is to be taken in the more fundamental sense of (not) moved from a given position or determined path. A *foot* or paham comes from the verbal root meaning *to strike*;

such forward movement may thus represent determination.

Vs. 6: I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me, hear my words. Note the present tense of *calling* (qarah) and the future of will *answer*, hanah; the psalmist expresses certainty that God will hanah which also denotes a sense of *hearing*.

Incline your ear to me, hear my words. This comes after the confidence expressed by qarah; the act of responding or hanah implies more a vocal utterance, whereas an *inclining* (natah) of the ear connotes listening, a fact which does not guarantee response in accord with the psalmist's wishes. *My words*, 'imraty, indicate that the calling of this verse is external as opposed to a quiet or mental appeal.

Vs. 7: Wondrously show your steadfast love, O savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. The desire to *wondrously show*, haphleh, is a verb in itself which expresses awe as well as boldness, because such *steadfast love* or chesed is part of God's very nature. Indeed, such pele' or *wonder* and chesed go hand in hand. Furthermore, chesed is identified with God as *savior*, mosheyha; this word may be viewed in light of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, embodiment of divine chesed. God as mosheyha is further identified with persons *seeking refuge*, chusyem, from the verbal root chasah whose alternate meaning is *to trust*: "and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to *take refuge*" [Rt 2.12].

The *adversaries* or mimitqommym more specifically means those *rising up* (qum) against persons seeking refuge. The latter are situated, as it were, midway between the "downward" manifestation of divine chesed and the "upward" rising of adversaries, the perfect situation for manifestation of God as mosheyha, savior. Such midway point is where we may visualize *at your right hand*, beymeyneka, literally, "*in* (b-) your right hand." "The Lord says to my lord, 'Sit at my *right hand*" [Ps 110.1].

Vs. 8: Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings. Another request for *protection*, the verb being shamar as in vs. 5 above. The analogy which the psalmist uses is *apple*, more precisely, *pupil* or 'eyshon which literally means *little man*, for objects are reflected in miniature within the eye's pupil. Taking this further, we may say that such 'eyshon can represent our being made in God's *image*, his eikon.

Hide me in the shadow of your wings. Satar or *to hide* in the sense of Is 49.2: "in the shadow of his hand he *hid* me," *shadow* and *hand* (i.e., its *shadow*) being similar. Kanaph or *wing* also connotes hiding; can also apply to the shirt of a mantle. For a classic example of kanaph: "Above him stood the seraphim; each had six *wings*: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew" [Is 6.2]; compare a similar vision, Ezekiel, chapter one. Also, the psalmist may have in mind Ex 19.4: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' *wings* and brought you to myself." I.e., the Exodus from Egypt is a type of *winged* flight.

Vs. 13: Arise, O Lord! Confront them, overthrow them! Deliver my life from the wicked by the sword. Vss. 10-12 show the function of the divine wings as protection against the wicked with the following characteristics: 1) who despoil me, 2) who surround me, 3) close their hearts to pity, 4) speak arrogantly, 5) track me down, 6) surround me, 7) set their eyes to cast me to the ground, 8) like a lion, 9) like a young lion. In sum, all nine attributes resemble a beast (lion) stalking its prey; God's wings not only shelter the psalmist but lift him up in flight over such treachery. Perhaps that is why the opening words of vs. 13 read, *Arise*, qumah, that is, arise with me in your wings.

Confront them, overthrow them! The verb qadmah for *confront* sounds like qumah; by its very nature, God's rising effects this encounter from which verbal root (qadam) is derived the *east*, direction from which the sun rises. The second command to God by the psalmist is for him *to overthrow* the beast-like enemies depicted in vss. 10-12; verbal root here is karah which means *to bend* (the knee); applied to vs. 13 the imagery is that of God as victor who makes his enemies bend in subjection before him.

Deliver my life from the wicked by the sword. *Life* or *nepshesh* also means *soul*, so the request for deliverance involves more than one for physical safety. *Palat* for *deliver* implies a slipping, that is, a stealthy escape. The means is a divine *sword* or *cherev* which signifies a form of destruction by making something *dry*. “All girt with *swords* and expert in war, each with his *sword* at his thigh against alarms by night” [Sg 3.8].

Vs. 14: From men by your hand, O Lord, from men whose portion in life is of the world. May their belly be filled with what you have stored up for them; may their children have more than enough; may they leave something over to their babes. This verse is a continuation of the sentence begun in vs. 10 with the psalmist’s request *to be delivered*, *palat*. The word for *man* here is *mat* whose verbal root means *to die*, a term which fits in well with the type of persons described in this verse. The literal reading here is “from men your hand” which can infer their being an instrument (*hand*) of God.

Mat is repeated (*mimty*m) and used in conjunction with *portion*, *chalaq*, with the fundamental meaning of *smoothness*: “The craftsman encourages the goldsmith, and he who *smooths* with the hammer him who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, ‘It is good’” [Is 41.7]. Such fabrication of idols is an apt description for the *mimty*m of vs. 14, for it is an activity of the *world*, *cheled*, with its sense of temporal *duration* (of life as opposed to that belonging to *kairos*); use of this word and *mut* imply the weariness of such duration. It is intensified by the addition of *life*, *chayym*.

May their belly be filled with what you have stored up for them. *Beten* can also mean *womb*; the term applies to both the inside and outside: “Your *belly* is a heap of wheat encircled with lilies” [Sg 7.2]. The contents which God has *stored* for the wicked is undetermined, but the word *tsapahan* also suggests something hidden which in the context of vs. 14 is negative and reminiscent of the following: “I will pull down my barns and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods...But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” [Lk. 12.18 & 20].

May their children have more than enough. Notice the closely sounding phrases, *Their children* or *vany*m and *vitnam*, *their belly*. The (indeterminate) satiety is transferred to children.

May they leave something over to their babes. Again, the indeterminate satiety is handed over to grandchildren, signifying the transmission of evil traditionally associated with the banishment of the man and woman from Eden. This *something* or *yatar* is an excess of that *enough* inherited from *their children*, implying a doubling, as it were, of its contents. A *babe* or *holel* shows that anything *stored up* or *tsapahan* as above takes immediate root or when a person is born from which it proceeds to develop on to adulthood and the next generation, etc.

Vs. 15: As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding your form. *In righteousness* (*betsedeq*) comes first in the Hebrew text, thereby summing up Psalm 17. This *tsedeq* is the place-where or the *in* (*b-*) which the psalmist is located and imparts vision of God. Note that *as for me* or ‘any, simply *I*, stands in contrast to the wicked of the past several verses. Because of their unrighteousness, these people tend to propagate evil through their physical offspring as noted in vs. 14. In contrast, being-*in* *tsedeq* liberates the psalmist from the consequences of this begetting, not only physical but in the moral (depraved) sense. Here he can *behold* or *chazah* God’s *face*, *panah*. The verbal root to this word means *to turn*, signifying that the face is not simply fixed in a static position but moves. Contrast this *chazah* with Ex 33.23: “but my *face* shall not be seen.” The common verb *ra’ah* is used here for *to see* as opposed to the more steady, intense gaze of *chazah*.

When I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding your form. Such awakening hearkens back to vs. 3 when the psalmist was visited by God at night. The verb *quts* implies being aroused; compare with Ps 139.18: “When I *awake*, I am still with you.”

Such *quts* implies that while asleep, the psalmist was unmindful of God, sleep being a common metaphor for death. The Hebrew lacks “beholding;” it reads “I shall be satisfied when I awake, your form.” I.e.,

the act of quts, an image of the Resurrection, yields this *satisfaction* or completeness, shavah, only in terms of God's *form*, temunah, which means something more like an appearance as opposed to an eikon. "With him [Moses] I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the *form* of the Lord" [Num 12.8]. Such *beholding* or navat implies respect: "Whenever Moses went out to the tent...every man stood at his tent door and *looked after* Moses until he had gone into the tent" [Ex 33.8]. Here is a human type of navat followed by Moses being in the tent where "the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" [vs. 11].

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Psalm Eighteen⁸

Vs. 1: I love you, O Lord, my strength. A short sentence for a lengthy Psalm composed of 50 verses but a statement coming right from the heart. Racham for *love* connotes a sense of affection, of tenderness, from which comes rachamym, *bowels*, the seat of affection; *womb* is also derived from this verbal root. An example of divine racham: "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my *steadfast love* (chesed) shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who *has compassion* on you" [Is 54.10]. It should be noted that the Hebrew letter "m" or mem pervades this verse, a fact which communicates a special intense feeling attributed to God. Keeping in mind the association of racham with *womb*, cf. "Consecrate to me all the first born; whatever is the first to open the *womb* among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine" [Ex 13.2]. Implied in this divine command to Moses is that such first born are to be marked by racham; relate to Col 1.15: "He is the image of the invisible God, the *first born* of all creation." Jesus Christ as prototokos and his association with eikon, *image*, can apply to his two natures: image (of eternal God) as eternal and first born (of all creation) as temporal.

My strength, chizqy, with its element of (divine) fortitude contrasts well with the psalmists racham or softness.

Vs. 2: **The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.** Here the psalmist's address to God as *my strength* is amplified by eight words denoting hardness and protection; they also convey an idea of both loftiness and hiddenness. *Rock* or selah implies elevation and the final Hebrew letter he is similar in sound to that in selah, *pause*, or hayin. Cf. Pss 31.4, 42.10. Two references with different meanings of selah: 1) "And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the *rock* with his rod twice, and water came forth abundantly" [Num 20.11]. 2) "O my dove, in the clefts of the *rock*, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice" [Sg 2.14]. The first refers to drinking and the second to seeing (face) and hearing (voice). Perhaps after Moses struck the selah the Hebrews were able to say to God, "Let me see your face, let me hear your voice."

Fortress or metsudah is a defensive position; also means a *snare* (cf. Ezk 12.13). It therefore has a positive and negative connotation, although the first is more commonly used.

Deliverer or mepalat, from the verbal root palat meaning *to escape* with a dual meaning of escaping *from* and escaping *to*. Cf. Ps 55.9.

My God, 'ely, comes after the three nouns of rock, fortress and deliverer which are identified with *The Lord*, YHWH. The tetragrammaton is the most sacred name for God, whereas 'el is a more common one and also can refer to a pagan god. Use of 'el implies a formality which the psalmist gained after being in/with the divine rock, fortress and deliverer (YHWH). Use of this familiar name comes midway, so to speak, in vs. 2, and the psalmist now continues with addressing God with further titles.

My rock, tsur (i.e., a compact, solid mass) being derived from a verbal root meaning *to press, to besiege*. This notion of assaulting God much like a fortified hilltop is associated with the verb used, chasah, with its basic meaning of *trust*. Chasah frequently occurs throughout the Psalter. The word bu (*in him*)

⁸Cf. chapter 22 of 2nd Samuel which has close parallels with this psalm.

suffixed to *chasah* gives direction to this verb; the psalmist not only flees to God as *tsur* but is present *in* this same *tsur*.

My shield, *maginy*, is frequently mentioned in the Psalter, and the Song's words (4.4) may apply to it: "There hang a thousand *shields*."

Horn of salvation, *qeren* used with another reference to *yashah* ("horn of '*Jesus*'"). Such a *horn* or *qeren* is a symbol of strength, and was used by Joshua...Jesus...at the walls of Jericho (cf. Jos 6.5). *Qeren* should be contrasted with *shophar*, horn as *trumpet*, as used in the same context, but only now when the priests sound this *shophar* to bring down the walls of Jericho (cf. Jos 6.16).

My stronghold, *misgavy*, a word connoting a lofty place: "He will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the *fortresses* of rocks" [Is 33.16].

Vs. 3: I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. We could say that such *calling* is a voice echoing from within a cavern (the above mentioned *tsur*). This may seem illogical, but the psalms, like the rest of Scripture, freely make use of prepositions to express various moods and relationships with God, etc. The words *worthy to be praised* occur first in the Hebrew text, *mehulal*; *I call upon* come next followed by *the Lord*. It is as though the psalmist were sandwiched in between these two realities which is consonant with the *bu*, *in him*, suffixed to *chasah* in the last verse.

And I am saved from my enemies. Another use of the verb *yashah*, *to save*, or "to Jesus," in reference to the generic *my enemies*, 'oyevy. This act of being Jesus-ed is yet another instance of being in the *tsur* or *rock* of vs. 1.

Vs. 4: The cords of death **encompassed** me, the torrents of perdition assailed me. The verses from this point on recount past experiences when the psalmist had experienced extreme distress and recalls them from being situated in the Lord such as *rock*, *fortress*, *horn of salvation*, *stronghold* (vs. 2). These *cords* or *chevel* (singular form) can also mean a *pledge* which is a type of cord: "Take a man's garment when he has given surety for a stranger, and hold him in *pledge* when he gives surety for foreigners." [Prov 20.16]. To associate a *chevel* with *death* implies the absolute surety death has over the psalmist. These cords *encompass* the psalmist, 'aphaq, in the sense of restraining him firmly.

The torrents of perdition assailed me. Such *torrents* or *nachal* should be compared with Ps 16.6, "The *lines* have fallen for me in pleasant places." The verbal root of *nachal* connotes *inheritance*; here these *torrents* seek to "inherit" or to fully consume the psalmist. Their destructive power is intensified by association with *beleyhal*, *perdition*, whose root more accurately means *to benefit*. Such torrents *assailed* the psalmist, more accurately, they *frightened* him: "An evil spirit from God *troubles* you [Saul, 1 Sam 16.15]."

Vs. 5: **The cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me.** The second use of *chevel*, the other being in reference to death; the one under consideration is connected with Sheol, abode of the dead. "I called to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you did hear my voice" [Jon 2.2]. Such words uttered by Jonah prefigure Christ: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" [Mt 12.40]. To be *entangled*, *savav*, implies the act of turning, of going around. With the Jonah image in mind, it is not difficult to associate *savav* with the *entangling* of seaweed.

The snares of death confronted me. *Qadam* for *to confront* means a coming before, of taking precedence, by *snares* or *moqesh*, where death is depicted as a treacherous villain lying in wait. *Qadam* is also the verbal root for the *east*.

Vs. 6: **In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.** Note *distress*, *tsar*, from same verbal root as *rock* in vs. 2, *tsur*; we may say that the psalmist could intuit the association between such two different realities. He *calls* upon

YHWH from such tsar, whereas *he cries for help*, shuah, to *my God*, 'elohay. Shuah is related to the more common yashah already mentioned.

From his temple he heard my voice. Reference is to the heykal at Jerusalem, the most obvious place for a Jew to contact God. Note that these words of the psalmist are in the past tense, suggestive of that association of tsar/tsur mentioned above, i.e., God's presence.

And my cry to him reached his ears. Another instance in the same verse of shuah (past tense), *cry*, only this time it *reaches* (in the common sense of coming) God's ears, literally *in* (v-) his ears or fully penetrates them.

Vs. 7: Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. Note the simultaneous action of an external event upon the penetration of the psalmist's cry entering God's ears. The two verbs gahash and rahash, *reel* and *rock*, sound similar, applicable to an earthquake; former can refer to a state of drunkenness.

The foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked. Mosadoth as foundations comes from a verbal root similar to that of *fortress* above in vs. 2, metsudah; connotation is that of firmness which here is applied to *mountains*. These mountains ragaz and gahash, this latter word being the second instance in the same verse.

Because he was angry. Verb here is charah which connotes *burning*: "And my wrath will *burn*, and I will kill you with the sword" [Ex 22.24].

Vs. 8: Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. This verse is consonant with that charah mentioned just above. Another example of such *smoke* or hashan as expressive of divine wrath: "These are a *smoke* in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day" [Is 65.5]. Hashan can represent God as bridegroom as in Sg 3.6: "Who is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of *smoke*?" reminiscent of "And Mount Sinai was wrapped in *smoke*, because the Lord descended upon it in fire" [Ex 19.18]. Note that 'aph as nostrils can mean *face*.

And devouring fire from his mouth. *Mouth* or peh is the source of smoke; it is associated with *devouring fire*, the adjective coming from 'akal, *to eat*. Peh also means *according to*, suggesting an intimate union between the mouth that which is connected with it. Furthermore, peh is the source of divine *commandments* spoken by God: "because you rebelled against my *commandment* in the wilderness" [Num 27.14].

Glowing coals flamed forth from him. Such coals or gacheleth are physical objects, having weight and mass opposed to the more intangible yet destructive *fire* just mentioned. "In the midst of the living creatures there was something that looked like *burning coals* of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures" [Ezk 1.13]. Compare with Is 6.6: "Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a *burning coal* which he had taken with tongs from the altar." The Hebrew word here is retseph, more specifically, a coal used for cooking and in the context, may signify coals used in conjunction with sacrifices. The adjective *glowing* of vs. 8, bahar, implies a consuming activity; the coals here are more active than the ones of Isaiah in the sense of coming directly from God in contrast to a sacrifice made to him.

Vs. 9: He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. "In the beginning God created the *heavens* and the earth." The opening words of Genesis where shamayim is the word commonly used. Compare shamayim with *firmament*, raqyah, from the verbal root raqah, *to spread out*; Ex 39.3 conveys the sense of this verb: "And gold leaf was *hammered out* and cut into threads to work into the blue and purple and the scarlet stuff." Although shamayim and raqyah are similar in many ways, the latter seems to reveal the created nature of the sky above whereas the former is often used in reference to the boundary of creation, that is, vis-a-vis God's transcendence.

Vs. 9 puts this heavenly creation in perspective regarding divine transcendence by saying that he *bowed* them, natah, which indicates an inclining as well as a stretching as seen with regard to Ps 17.6 (“*Incline* your ear to me, hear my words”). Since vs. 9 indicates that God bended or stretched out shamayim, it is not apparent how he *came down*, yarad, or made a transition from above the heavens to below them, more accurately, from a transcendent to a created realm. Natah seems to conceal God just as much as to reveal him. For an example of yarad which imparts this sense, cf. Ex 19.18: “And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord *descended* upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.”

Thick darkness was under his feet. Haraphel is associated with clouds and the revelation of God to Moses on Mt. Sinai: “And the people stood afar off, while Moses drew near to the *thick darkness* where God was” [Ex 20.21]. This word is also indicative of final judgment: “A day of clouds and *thick darkness*” [Jl 2.2]. Note that such haraphel is under God’s feet, i.e., this symbol of transcendence or of an ultimate boarder from the human point of view is for God insignificant because these words of vs. 9 indicate the subjection of haraphel to him.

Vs. 10: He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind. This *riding* or rakav is an image appropriate to a chariot; it is the first manifestation of God after the above mentioned bowing of heavens. It is reminiscent of Ps 45.4: “In your majesty *ride forth* victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right.” In vs. 10’s instance, the “chariot” is a *cherub*, keruv, which rhymes with rakav. Such a divine being is first mentioned as guarding paradise: “He placed the *cherubim* and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life” [Gen 3.24]. This verse implies a distinction between cherubim and the flaming sword. Later in the Old Testament images of cherubim were located in the innermost part of the temple: “And you shall make two *cherubim* of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat” [Ex 25.18].

Not only did God rakav on a cherub, he *flew*, huph, a word naturally associated with the flight of birds: “Oh that I had wings like a dove! I would *fly away* and be at rest” [Ps 55.6]. This huph reveals God’s manner of descent from behind the shamayim or *heavens* as already mentioned; furthermore, it signifies a soaring over the division between divine and human spheres as a result of sin, namely, the *flaming sword* of Gen 3.24. This weapon as a threatening presence is enhanced by the fact that it *turned every way*, hamithapeketh; to use a modern example, this sword was like a glass (and hence, shimmering) revolving door impossible to cross except by huph.

He came swiftly upon the wings of the wind. The verb da’ah implies the rapid motion of birds of prey; only two other references exist, Dt 28.49 & Jer 48.40, 49.22, which imply destruction for Israel. *Wings* (kanphy) and *wind* or ruach are both invisible, so to use these two words together suggests the source of wind’s power. Ruach is the well known word for *Spirit*.

Vs. 11: He made darkness his covering around him, his canopy thick clouds dark with water. Another image of darkness as divine transcendence, the term here being cheshek within the larger context of Psalm 18’s imagery of divine power manifested through natural powers. The Book of Exodus is the classical locus for such imagery although the particular word cheshek has a defensive overtone as in 14.20: “And there was the cloud and the *darkness*; and the night passed without one coming near the other all night.”

The verbal root for *covering* or satar has a charming connotation as in Gen 31.49: “The Lord watch between you and me, when we are *absent* one from the other,” i.e., when we (Laban and Jacob) are out of contact with each other. Despite such satar, God nevertheless *watches*, tsaphah, as in Jer 6.17: “I set *watchmen* over you.” This tsaphah is characteristic of a prophet’s function of watching, of paying attention. Another reference related to the verse at hand: “I answered you in the *secret place* of thunder” [Ps 81.7]. In vs. 11, note that such seter (the noun) is *around him*, sevyothayu, namely, completely enveloping God.

His canopy thick clouds dark with water. Not only is darkness a covering *around* God, he has a *canopy*, sukah, a word associated with *booth* as in Lev 23.42-3: “You shall dwell in *booths* for seven days; all

that are native in Israel shall dwell in *booths*, that you generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in *booths* when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” Such dwelling in a *sukah* for seven days represents the (Genesis) six days of creation and the day when God rested from his work. Note the purpose of *sukah*, to recall Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

Thick clouds or *havey shechaqym*: Hav for *thick* pertains to a cloud as in Ex 19:9: “Lo, I am coming to you in a *thick* cloud.” Here *cloud* equals *hanan*. In vs. 11 the Hebrew words *thick clouds* follow *dark with water* or *cheshkath-maym*, where the word *chashak* is first found in Gen 1.2: “and *darkness* was upon the face of the deep.” This association of *cheshk* (the noun) with the very beginning of creation upon which “the Spirit of God was moving” is one image the psalmist may have in mind vis-a-vis the coming of God to deliver him in Ps 18. *Water* or *maym* can be taken as related to that *deep* of Gen 1.2, *tehom*.

Vs. 12: Out of the brightness before him there broke through his clouds hailstones and coals of fire. The mention of light, *brightness*, within the broader context of images pertaining to darkness. The word used is *nogah* which more accurately implies a type of illumination. “And for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her vindication goes forth as *brightness* and her salvation as a burning torch” [Is 62.1]. In this verse *salvation* or “Jesus” is equated to a *burning torch*, *lapeyd yivhar*; *vahar* (*burning*) suggests a consuming action.

Note that this brightness is situated *before* God, *minogah*, better, *from* before him (m-); there is a play on words here, *minogah* *negedu*, which accents the connection between brightness and its position before God.

There broke through his clouds hailstones and coals of fire. The Hebrew verb for *break through* is *havar*, or more fundamentally, *to pass over*, signifying a transition from divine *brightness*, *nogah*, to the above mentioned three elements of clouds, hailstones and coals of fire. First we have *clouds* or *havey* as mentioned in vs. 12 which instead of producing rain, yield *hailstones*, *barad*, which implies scattering. One of the most well known references is the plague of hailstones as one of the punishments inflicted upon the Egyptians (cf. Ex 9). For a different use of this same verbal root: “The he-goats which leaped upon the flocks were striped, *spotted* and mottled” [Gen 31.10].

The *coals of fire*, *gachaley-‘esh*, were first mentioned in vs. 8; there *‘esh* or *fire* is lacking.

Vs. 13: The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. Scientifically speaking the precedence of thunder before lightening is correct; here it is identified with YHWH’s voice, and the verb *raham* is associated with the expression of anger. Such *raham* is also a warning: “The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them he will *thunder* in heaven” [1 Sam 2.10]. Note that *raham* precedes utterance of God’s voice; the Hebrew text reads, “gave his voice,” a more poetic expression signifying preparation or intention of what such thundering will mean to whomever *listens* to it, not simply hear it. *Most High* or *Helyon* is used, indicating the lofty position from which comes the divine *raham*.

Hailstones and coals of fire. These elements which were mentioned in the previous verse are associated with God’s *voice*; note the contrast between the cold of the former and heat of the latter. In vs. 12 they were associated with God’s *brightness*, i.e., visual manifestation, whereas in vs. 13 their association is with his *voice*, auditory manifestation.

Vs. 14: And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them. The dispatch of *arrows* (*chets*, singular) refers to lightening bolts. *Chets* is frequently mentioned throughout the Psalter, usually in a negative sense or when referring to the psalmist’s adversaries. The image of lightening bolts, especially plural as with vs. 14, is one of awesome power yet of disarray, a fact emphasized by the verb used, *puts*: “Should your springs *be scattered* abroad, streams of water in the streets” [Prov 5.16]? *Puts* is sometimes used in reference to Israel’s dispersion abroad: “countries in which you *have been scattered*” [Ezk 11.17]. This image of arrows scattering foes may apply to Israel on those occasions when it aggravated God.

He flashed forth his lightnings and routed them. A better way of reading the Hebrew is as follows:

“He multiplied his shafts and routed them.” The *multiplication* or *ravah* of such shafts intensifies the earlier words of this verse. Note the distinction between *arrow* and *shaft*, *chets* and *baraq*, the latter more specifically referring to a bolt of lightning. The use of *baraq* in this context can allude to Ezk 21.15: “I have given the *glittering* sword; ah! It is made like lightning.” The *multiplication* or *ravah* of such swords suggests an army composed of soldiers with shafts which they hurl all at once to *route* God’s foes, *hamam*. “For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to *destroy* them from the camp until they had perished” [Dt. 2.10], a verse at the beginning of Israel’s wandering in the desert after coming from Egypt. Perhaps the author had in mind Ex 14.24: “And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians and *discomforted* them.” What God had done then he is expected to do again.

Vs. 15: Then the channels of the sea were seen and the foundations of the world were laid bare, at your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils. This verse speaks of *channels* and *foundations* which are commonly associated with the “bottom” or utmost reaches of creation in contrast to the “upper” reaches of heaven described in earlier verses. *Channel* or ‘aphyq (verbal root means *to restrain*; cf. vs. 4, ‘The cords of death *encompassed* me’) are a kind of ancient plumbing system and the source of water which is associated with chaos as we see in the opening words of Genesis. For a similar verse, cf. 2 Sam 22.16: “Then the *channels* of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were laid bare, at the rebuke of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.” ‘Aphyq may also be found in Sg 5.12: “doves by the *rivers* of waters.” Thus this word contains the alternate meaning of water as nourishing.

The foundations of the world were laid bare. Two types of becoming visible: channels *were seen* (verbal root is the common ra’ah) and foundations were *laid bare*, galah, in the sense of making naked. The former pertains to an object becoming visible, whereas the latter with its sense of uncovering suggests revelation, a discovery of something which previously had remained hidden or unknown. The imagery of vs. 15 is that of channels lying on the foundations, a network of tubing, as it were, which taps into the ground beneath to reach the source of those “waters under the firmament” [Gen 1.7]. Galah may apply to God’s manifestation: “There he [Jacob] built an altar and called the place El-Bethel because there God *had revealed* himself to him” [Gen 35.7]. For a negative sense of this verb: “and the earth *will disclose* the blood shed upon her and will no more cover her slain” [Is 26.21].

Galah is connected with *foundations*, mosadoth, as in Prov 8.29: “When he marked out the *foundations* of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman.” *Master workman* or ‘amon, a rare Hebrew word perhaps associated with ‘aman, from which we get our *amen* and which connotes faithfulness in the sense of being a *support*. We thus may take the psalmist as being an ‘amon with God who makes the foundations galah.

At your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils. This *rebuke* (from the verbal root gahar) is the agent which caused seeing and revealing, that is, ra’ah and galah. Without such a rebuke, the sea’s channels and earth’s foundations would not become manifest. An example of such gahar as related to the created realm which is put to service of the people of Israel: “He *rebuked* the Red Sea, and it became dry” [Ps 106.9].

This general type of rebuke is amplified by the *blast of the breath of your nostrils*. The main word *breath*, nashamah (from nasham, *to pant*) which modifies *breath*, ruach, is the word generally used to indicate divinity in action, the Holy Spirit of the New Testament. The source of this divine ruach is God’s *nostrils*, ‘aph, which can mean *anger* and *face*.

Vs. 16: He reached from on high, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. Perhaps this *reaching* or shalach (fundamentally means *to send*) is primarily through God’s *breath*, ruach, of the last verse, so it is invisible to human sight. “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God *took* (laqach as in vs. 16) him” [Gen 5.24]. Since Enoch lived in between the two floods, as it were—those of the first creation and those before Noah—such taking at the early stage of human history is etched in Israel’s collective mind as an archetype.

He drew me out of many waters. Compare Ex 2.10: “And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son; and she named him Moses, for she said, ‘Because I *drew* him out of the water.’” The same verb is used here, mashah, which forms the verbal root for the name Moses, indicative of his future role of *drawing* Israel from Egypt through the Red Sea.

Vs. 17: He delivered me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me. This verse is easy to apply to the Exodus at the Red Sea. The verb *natsal*, *to deliver*, has the connotation of pulling away or drawing out; it deals with emancipation of a rather sudden, unexpected nature as before the Egyptian forces. With this in mind, it could be intimated that “In the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians and discomfited the host of the Egyptians” [Ex 14.24, cf. vs.14 above]. *Natsal* is thus connected with this divine *looking down* or *shaqaph*, which implies looking from a window, almost in a furtive manner.

In addition to an enemy which is *strong*, *haz*, the psalmist is rescued from *those who hated me* and who are marked by *might*, from the verbal root ‘amats which implies alertness: “And when Naomi saw that she *was determined* to go with her, she said no more” [Rt 1.18].

Vs. 18: They came upon me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my stay. The verb *qadam* means *to precede, to come before* (cf. Ps 17.13), implying suddenness or surprise attack which is countered by God’s *shaqaph* of Ex 14.24 just above. The use of *day* with regard to *calamity* or ‘*eyd* implies a burden; such a day does not especially mean from sunrise to sunset but an occasion or special event. Thus the two, day and calamity, are one: “For the *day* of their *calamity* is at hand” [Dt 32.25]. And, “I will show them my back, not my face, in the *day* of their *calamity*” [Jer 18.17].

But the Lord was my stay. *Mishhen* is closely related to *mishheneth*, *staff*: “Your rod and your *staff*, they comfort me” [Ps 23.4]. This word is different from the *match* of Moses: “Take your *rod* and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent” [Ex 7.9]. *Match* also means *tribe* as those composing Israel (cf. Num 1.4-49).

Vs. 19: He brought me forth into a broad place; he delivered me because he delighted in me. Obviously, the *broad place* is the other side of the Red Sea after Israel’s deliverance; it can also refer to the Promised Land. *Merchav* is the destination, distinct from the narrow confines of *day of my calamity* of vs. 18. Such *merchav* is also a *day*, an occasion, worthy of commemoration: “This *day* shall be for you a *memorial day*, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord” [Ex 12.14]. Such an injunction to recall the most important event in Israel’s history is frequently repeated in the Old Testament; the *merchav* into which the people entered after crossing the Red Sea is the real place-where that is commemorated.

He delivered me because he delighted in me. Note the similar sound of *deliver* and *delight*, a fact which implies their unity: *chalats*, *chaphats* within the context of this verse. Cf. Ps 6.4 for the double sense of *to draw out* and *to be ready*. *Chalats* has the sense of drawing out or taking away; its secondary meaning is *to be manful, active* as in Dt 3.18: “The Lord your God has given you this land to possess; all your men of valor shall pass over *armed*.” With this second use of *chalats* in mind, we may say that God has *delivered* the psalmist as well as having *armed* him. *Chaphats* as *to delight* implies a deep sense of ardor, of longing after something, and in the following verse is linked with marriage: “But you shall be called My *delight* is in her and your land Married, for the Lord *delights* in you, and your land shall be married” [Is 62 4]. For another reference, cf. Num 14.8: “If the Lord *delights* in us, he will bring us into this land give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.” That is to say, if God will espouse us.

Vs. 20: The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me. An exact correspondence between divine *reward* and *righteousness* as indicated by the word *according to*, *k-*. *Gamal* as *to reward* also means *to wean*: “As a child *weaned* at its mother’s breast, like a child that is *weaned* is my soul” [Ps 131.2]. For *gamal* as *to ripen*: “For before the harvest when the blossom is over, and the flower becomes a *ripening* grape, he will cut off the shoots with pruning hooks” [Is 18.5].

This notion of reward/wean applies to the psalmist's *righteousness*, tsadaqah, as discussed earlier in several places. In the next few verses the psalmist boasts of his tsadaqah which appears alien to genuine religious sensibility. Nevertheless, it should be taken as a manifestation of parresia, a New Testament concept signifying both freedom and boldness of speech: "It is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but that with *full courage* now as always Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or by death" [Phil 1.20]. Thus Paul was *rewarded*...gamal...according to his parresia.

According to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me. Another form of divine redress only here applied to the psalmist's *hands*. Such *cleanliness* or bor also can mean *son*, from the verbal root bara', *to beget, create*. Two instances of bor: "The *choice* one of her who bore her" [Sg 6.9] and "fair as the moon, *clear* as the sun" [Sg 6.10]. The notion of creating and cleanliness can imply the correct use of the psalmist's *hands*, that is, with regard to divine service. The verb yashav, *to recompense*, implies a dwelling or permanent lodging; applied to the psalmist, his *recompense* is therefore an abiding reality.

Vs. 21: For I have kept the ways of the Lord and have not wickedly departed from my God. Such *ways*, derek (singular) imply treading and therefore feet, however, the *keeping* of this verse, shamar, often refers to the Divine Law as spelled out in Ps 119 and may equally apply to the *cleanliness of my hands* of the last verse. *Departure* from God is disagreeable for the psalmist which he emphasizes by the verb rashah, *to do evil*. The Hebrew lacks *departed* and reads, "have not done wickedly from my God." *From* (m-) suggests this turning away in the RSV.

Vs. 22: For all his ordinances were before me, and his statutes I did not put away from me. Mishpat or *ordinance* is a frequent theme in the Psalter and closely related to the Torah. Note that they are before me, negedy, implying constant attention by the psalmist's eyes, a fact which concurs with keeping *the ways of the Lord* in vs. 21.

And his statutes I did not put away from me. Such *putting away* or sur means in this context, a removal from sight or that negedy just above. Sur connotes not just this but more specifically a departure from divine *statutes*, chuqah (singular); this word whose verbal root applies to something which is established means that the psalmist is determined to keep the divine statutes. Note that we have here *from me* (meny), whereas earlier vs. 22 reads *before me*, negedy.

Vs. 23: I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt. *Blameless* or tamym, from the verbal root tamam, implies perfection in the sense of something having been accomplished or fulfilled: "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be *blameless*" [Gen 17.1]. It also applies to a sacrificial victim, for example, when the Israelites celebrated the first Passover: "Your lamb shall be *without blemish*" [Ex 12.5], words applicable to Jesus Christ as in "Behold, the lamb of God" [Jn 1.36], a statement which John the Baptist immediately applied to Christ upon seeing him. *Before him* or himu is better rendered in the Hebrew as "*with him*," signifying an abiding presence.

And I kept my self from guilt. Shamar, another reference to *keeping* as in the Divine Law or Torah which has this secondary sense of constantly refraining from *guilt* or hon which suggests punishment.

Vs. 24: Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight. Shuv for *recompense* as discussed with regard to Ps 14.7 ("When the Lord *restores* the fortunes of his people"), namely, to restore something which had been in the psalmist's possession, has lost, and got back again. I.e., this three-fold action is implied in the verb shuv, here in conjunction with *righteousness*, tsadaqah, more precisely *my* righteousness or that

righteousness inherent as being made in God's image and likeness.

According to the cleanness of my hands in his sight. The second *according to* or k- in this verse. These words closely parallel vs. 20 ("*according to* the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me"), only the present verse refers this bor to God's *sight*, leneged heyнау or better, his eyes, faculties which do the actual seeing with regard to the psalmist.

Vs. 25: With the loyal you show yourself loyal; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless. An equal exchange of *loyalty*, chesed, this being one of its multiple meanings; the use of chesed (which equates the New Testament agape) is related to the earlier verses where the psalmist has described the exchange of qualities he shares with the divinity, this one being the most noble. It should be noted that there are approximately 127 references to chesed in the Psalter.

With the blameless man you show yourself blameless. The key word here is tamym first encountered in vs. 23. "For the upright will inhabit the land, and men of *integrity* will remain in it" [Prov 2.21].

Vs. 26: With the pure you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you show yourself perverse. Still yet another correspondence between God and the psalmist, all qualities which reflect a person being made in God's image. Bor or *pure* was discussed in vs. 24 above in reference to hands; here the whole person is implied. The opposite of bor is described by the equation of a *crooked* person—the verbal root is haqash which means to twist—with God being *perverse* or patal which has a similar meaning emphasizing the quality of deceit. This interplay of human haqash and divine patal reveals the mirror quality of eikon or *image*; whatever a person chooses is reflected upon God which, in turn, is reflected back and in a more intense manner.

Vs. 27: For you deliver a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. Another instance of the verbal root of "Jesus," yashah, this time in conjunction with a *humble people* with the adjective derived from hanah with its alternate meanings of *to answer, to sing, to testify*. "Towards the scorners he is scornful, but to the *humble* he shows favor" [Prov 3.34].

But the haughty eyes you bring down. Note the play on words, *humble* (hany) and *eyes* (henyaym). The verb shaphal, *to bring down*, does not necessarily apply to the *humble people* or to put *haughty eyes* on this level. “The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he *brings low*, he also exalts” [1 Sam 2.7]. Vs. 27 specifies the such arrogance, by associating it with eyes, a familiar image to describe a contemptuous attitude. This image is in contrast to God’s eyes as in Ps 11.4, “His *eyes* behold, his eyelids test, the children of men.”

Vs. 28: Yes, you light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens my darkness. The image suggests God being a wick bending over to light the psalmist as a lamp, something one does at the approach of evening. Here we have the general word for *light*, ‘or, a creative act reminiscent of “Let there be *light* and there was *light*” [Gen 1.3]. This verse is interesting in that there is a unity between the words *let there be* (yehy) and *light* (‘or). *Lamp* or ner often carries over this creative or vivifying aspect of light and can refer to a person: “You shall no more go out with us to battle, lest you quench the *lamp* of Israel” [2 Sam 21.17, referring to King David].

The Lord my God lightens my darkness. Note the words *Lord my God* as opposed to a simple “you” of the first part of this verse. They seem to emphasize the transcendent power of God in contrast to *darkness*, choshek, first mentioned in Gen 1.2, “and *darkness* was upon the face of the deep,” a fact which relates to the *light* of Gen 1.3 just above. The word *lighten* or nagah underscores the luminous quality of light as opposed to its heat: “Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day and smoke and the *shining* of a flaming fire (‘esh lehavah) by night; for over all the glory (kavod) there will be a canopy and a pavilion” [Is 4.5]. Here the image of light is protective, acting as a cover which again is reminiscent of the Genesis narrative; to be more specific, cf. vs. 8, “And God called the firmament Heaven,” the luminous night sky being this canopy.

Vs. 29: Yes, by you I can crush a troop; and by my God I can leap over a wall. First it should be noted that *yes/for*, ky-, also introduces vss. 27 & 28 and suggests resolve with regards to faith in God, not dissimilar to the word *amen*. Once endowed with divine luminosity, the psalmist is emboldened to face his enemies as we see here; veka or *by you* (more specifically, ‘in you’) carries over the psalmist as having received that nagah of vs. 28.

The psalmist applies his divine illumination not just to someone hostile but to a multitude of antagonists or *troop*, gedod, from the verbal root gadad, *to cut into*, words descriptive of the ripping action proper to an assault force. This penetrating force can be *crushed*, ratsats, namely, shown the same violence with which it brought against the psalmist; ratsats implies oppressing, that is, not just a simple assault on the troop but a sustained action against it.

And by my God I can leap over a wall. After crushing the troop sent against the psalmist, he then escapes over a *wall*, shur, from the verbal root meaning *to go round*, *to journey*, suggesting a fortified bulwark. The verb shur also means *to behold* in the sense that from this bulwark the psalmist looks out over the victory he has accomplished with divine help. An instance of shur: “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the *wall*” [Gen 49.22].

Also the *leaping* of vs. 30 or dalag can refer to an assault on a fortified place after having crushed the troop sent against the psalmist. “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, *leaping* upon the mountains, bounding over the hills” [Sg 2.8]. Here dalag in conjunction with the bridegroom’s voice implies that his voice echoes throughout the valleys of the mountains. Such dalag is described in Is 35.6: “Then shall the lame man *leap* like a hart.” Note the similarity of two animals noted for their ability to leap, stag (cf. Sg 2.9) and hart.

Vs. 30: This God—his way is perfect; the promise of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all

those who take refuge in him. God's *way* or *derek* is *perfect*, *tamym*: note the singular as opposed to plural "ways," reminiscent of Jn 14.6: "I am the *way*, the truth and the life," a statement also in the singular along with *truth* and *life*. The aspect of walking normally associated with *way* may apply to these other two features of Jesus Christ.

The second feature of God in vs. 30, more specifically YHWH, is his *promise* or in Hebrew, *word* ('imrah). Such is the dual feature of 'imrah as something uttered which is reliable. "Every *word* of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him" [Prov 30.5]. This verse brings out another aspect of the divine 'imrah as *proven true* or *tseruphah* whose verbal root means *to refine* which is also in vs. 30.

The third feature belonging to God is a *shield* or *magen* as in vs. 2 *for all those who take refuge in him*. This taking of *refuge* or *chasah* implies trust; from an associated verb *chush*, *to make haste*. Thus the act of taking shelter or hiding suggests swiftness in its accomplishment.

Vs. 31: For who is God but the Lord? And who is a rock except our God? The asking of these two questions is more a boast with respect to God as *perfect*, *true* and a *shield* (of vs. 30); i.e., nothing can compare with their divine qualities. The two questions are uttered only once the psalmist has *taken refuge in him*, that is, from the protective side of this divine shield. *But* or *balhaey* (*without*; the prefix *m-* is used here) stresses *God/Lord* or 'eloah/YHWH as true being compared to which nothing exists.

And who is a rock except our God? The second boast about God as *tsur*. As noted with regard to vs. 2, *tsur* derives from a verb meaning *to besiege*, and its use in vs. 31 implies a fortified place (the question reveals this as well). Moses was located on such a *tsur* to behold God: "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the *rock*; and while my glory passes by I will put you in cleft of the *rock*, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by" [Ex 33.21-2]. Although God and rock are not synonymous, the reality is the same. Note the Exodus passage reads "*cleft* of the rock," a more precise location; the Hebrew reads *neqarah*, from the root *naqar*, *to bore* (Is 2.21 is the only other reference). The psalmist calls the divinity "*our God*," alluding to the collective nation of Israel.

Vs. 32: The God who girded me with strength and made my way safe. *To gird* or 'azar denotes clothing as well as protection; also signifies preparation as in "*Gird now your loins like a man*" [Job 30.18]. When such 'azar comes with divine *strength* (*chayl*; other meanings are army, wealth) as in this verse, a type of splendor is implied, almost of the flashy variety. "And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light" [Mt 17.2].

And made my way safe. The Hebrew reads for *safe* *tamym* as seen in vss. 23 & 30 in the sense being *perfection*, *complete*. Here it is related to *derek* as in vs. 30 where God's way is *tamym*; it is though the perfection of divine *derek* were transferred to that of the psalmist's. The direction of such a *derek* needs not demonstration except in conjunction with Jn 14.6 used above as Christ being such a *derek*, truth and life.

Vs. 33: He made my feet like hinds' feet, and set me secure on the heights. *To make like* or *shawah* was first encountered in Ps 16.8: "I *keep* the Lord always before me." The alternate meaning of this verb is to fear: "You make me to melt and *frighten* me" [Job 30.22]. Such act of making similar connotes a definite setting or place; i.e., permanence. Note that God works with the psalmist's *feet*; these are the principle means by which a person treads a *way*, *derek*, of the previous verse. "I will run in the *way* of your commandments" [Ps 119.32], that is, run like a *hind* or 'ayalah. The verbal root implies *strength* more than swiftness, although this is certainly included. "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the *hinds* of the field, that you stir not up nor awaken love until it please" [Sg 2.7; cf. 3.5].⁹ Note that the *strength* of this animal is used in reference to the bridegroom being asleep.

And set me secure on the heights. *Heights* or *bamah* is the goal of the hind, more precisely where God *secures* the psalmist, *hamad*. This verb also means *to stand* in the sense of remaining in a given position and implies that such standing makes one conspicuous. "God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like *hinds'* feet, he makes me tread upon my *high places*" [Hab 3.19]. Note "*my high places*" as opposed to those belonging to pagan deities; to *hamad* in one means to destroy this false type of worship (cf. 2 Kg 15.4). *Bamah* also means a *fortress*, so to *hamad* in such a place makes one stand out much as a castle does on a hilltop.

Lastly, this *hamad* as making secure, of making permanent, may be illustrated by Ezekiel's vision of the divine throne-chariot: "When those [wheels] went, these went [living creatures]; and when those *stood*, these *stood*; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels" [Ezk 1.21].

Vs. 34: He trains my hands for war so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. This *training* or *lamad* evidently takes place on the *heights* of vs. 33; this verb implies a chastisement as well as preparation for battle. *Lamad* is frequently used in reference to the chief object of study for Jews, the Torah with its various statutes as in Ps 119. Note that the Syriac translation of the New Testament has a word for Christ's disciples which is derived from this verb and implies that they have been taught not only by him but by the Torah. The object of *lamad* in vs. 34 is for *war*, *milchamah*, more specifically, it refers to the psalmist's *hands* which implies skill with a bow and or sword. Only his hands can be trained in this fashion after his feet became like those of a hind in vs. 33.

So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. Here is the particular skill in which the psalmist receives his divine *lamad*. Such a *bow* is made of *bronze* implying one of great strength as the following clearly shows: "Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead *brass*" [Is 48.4]. Such *brass* or *nechushah* is also indicated by the leviathan: "His bones are as strong pieces of *brass*" [Job 40.18]. The Hebrew reads for *bend*, *nachat*, more precisely, *to break*, *to go down*, indicating that the psalmist snaps this bow of bronze in pieces.

⁹Cf. my **Notes on the Song of Songs** for more information on this verse.

Vs. 35: You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your help made me great. This bestowal of protective armor is reminiscent of Eph 6.14-17: “Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breast plate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; above all take the shield of faith with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.” We encountered *magen* in vs. 30 (“He is a *shield* for all those who take refuge in him”), only here it is one belonging to “Jesus,” *yeshah*. With this association, it is not difficult to see that the *magen* is Christ’s cross.

And your right hand supported me. Note use of *right hand* as opposed to the left, this hand being considered the better of the two. *Sahad* for *support* more specifically applies to encouragement as in Gen 18.5: “*Refresh* your heart.” Such *sahad* may be considered a more specific action of that *lamad* spoken of in vs. 34.

And your help made me great. More specifically, “your *gentleness*,” *hanawah*, from the verb *hanah* (cf. vs. 27). Introduction of this quality contrasts with the (apparently) militaristic images of this psalm. There is a contrast between *hanah* and *ravah*, *to be great*, in the sense that the former can apply to *humility* (a derivative of *hanah*) and the latter to fame, but note that it is “*your* [divine] gentleness.”

Vs. 36: You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip. *Rachav* for *to be wide* is like the Latin *amplus* which embraces the notion of height and depth; the noun suggests this by often being translated as *breadth* as with regard to the description of the divine temple in Exodus 25-37. Note that *rachav* is used in other places to describe the temple especially in Ezekiel 40-45. It also applies to God’s commandment: “Your commandment is exceedingly *broad*” [Ps 119.96]. With this latter verse in mind, it is not difficult to see that such *rachav* is the place on which the psalmist may tread or set *my steps*, *tsahady*. This word refers to a slow, solemn pace as well as an ascending motion.

And my feet did not slip. Note the difference between *tsahady* and *qarsol*, more precisely, *ankle, little joint*. This and 2 Sam 22.37 are the only uses of the word. *Mahad* for *to slip* suggests a tottering motion, that is, in contrast to the stability of *rachav* just mentioned.

Vs. 37: I pursued my enemies and overtook them; and did not turn back till they were consumed. The sure footing which God bestowed upon the psalmist is intended for his *pursuit* of enemies, *radaph*. The psalmist can liken his unswerving intent the Egyptians who chased the Israelites right into the sea but without their malicious objective: “And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he *pursued* the people of Israel while they went forth defiantly” [Ex 14.8]. *Radaph* can be used in the positive sense of following righteousness: “Hearken to me, you who *pursue* deliverance, you who seek the Lord” [Is 52.1]. Not only did the psalmist *radaph* his enemies, he *overtook* them, *nasag*, in the sense of attaining his goal, their destruction. Again, referring to the Egyptians’ pursuit, “and *overtook* them encamped at the sea” [Ex 14.9]. This verse illustrates that *nasag* does not mean actualization of a goal but close proximity to it, a necessary stage before final accomplishment.

And did not turn back till they were consumed. This determination not to shuv, *to turn back*, suggests forward, unstoppable motion. Kalah, *to consume*, refers to a final consummation of the task at hand, reflective of that tamym of vs. 32 (“and made my way *safe*”). “Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken in my jealousy, when I *spend* my fury upon them” [Ezk 5.13]. This verse reveals the psalmist’s intent, not for destruction but for knowledge of the Lord.

Vs. 38: I thrust them through so that they were not able to rise; they fell under my feet. More often than not machats is used (*to thrust*) to convey a sense of wounding: “I kill and I make alive; I *wound* and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand” [Dt 32.39]. Not being able *to rise* implies that this wounding is permanent, no longer a threat to the psalmist.

They fell under my feet. A symbol of subjection as in war which is abiding, but as the earlier words of this verse suggest, death to such enemies is not especially implied. Reference to *feet* is rather frequent in the Book of Revelation and aptly so because this text documents the apokatastasis or restoration of all things in Jesus Christ, namely, their subjection (hupotage).

Vs. 39: For you did gird me with strength for the battle; you did make my assailants sink under me. Compare with vs. 32 (“The God who *girded* me with strength”) where the same word for *to gird* is used, ‘azar; same applies to *with strength*, only here such chyal is more specific, *for battle, lamilchamah* (note l- prefixed, in the sense of ‘in the direction of,’ ‘to’) as in vs. 34, “He trains my hands for *war*.” For another reference with ‘azar: “The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble *gird* on strength” [1 Sam 2.4]. Here as in vs. 39 chyal or *strength* is used similar to a garment or piece of armor.

You did make my assailants sink under me. Karah for *to sink* mores specifically means *to bend, to bow*: “To me every knee shall *bow*, every tongue shall swear” [Is 45.23]. And, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” [Phil 2.10]. This action does not necessarily imply destruction as we have seen in vs. 38; it is more an acknowledgment of divine sovereignty, of creation’s eventual hupotage. Qamay for *my assailants* derives from the verb *to rise* (qum) and represents the movement opposite to karah and which is the inevitable outcome of this upward motion of attack.

Vs. 40: You made my enemies turn their backs to me, and those who hated me I destroyed. Haraph is the verbal root for *neck*, horeph; it often signifies rebellion or a rebellious attitude: “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff *necked* people” [Ex 32.9]. While the image in vs. 40 is one of flight before the psalmist, we may refer it to a complaint of Jeremiah: “Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear but stiffened their *neck*” [Jer 7.26]. Perhaps it is because of this latter hardness of heart that the psalmist has to resort to *destruction*, tsamath.

Vs. 41: They cried for help, but there was none to save; they cried to the Lord, but he did not answer them. This *cry* or shuah for “Jesus” or moshyah goes unheeded; note the play on words here. Compare with the sentiment expressed in Mt 25.45: “Truly I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.” Note that the cry of vs 41 is a general one, whereas the second part of this verse has them crying to the *Lord*. An even more ominous silence greets them because their shuah is direction to YHWH who gives no *answer* or hanah.

Vs. 42: I beat them fine as dust before the wind; I cast them out like the mire of the streets. Shachaq or *to beat* is the verbal root for *cloud* which is composed of fine droplets of moisture: “By his knowledge the deeps broke forth, and the *clouds* drop down the dew” [Prov 3.20]. *Before the wind* or the ruach intimates the Holy *Spirit* before which such enemies are destroyed. The noun for *out* is chuts and signifies banishment which may or may not be permanent and was the worst fate that could befall

anyone: "You shall put out both male and female, putting them *outside* the camp, that they may not defile the camp" [Num 5.3]. *Streets* definitely refers to a town (Jerusalem) as opposed to the transitory nature of Israel's time in the desert. Nevertheless, the concept of banishment remains the same.

Vs. 43: You delivered me from strife with the people; you made me the head of the nations; people whom I had not known served me. *Palat* is the verb for *to deliver* in this context, and with its connotation of sleekness, this type of deliverance suggests a covert escape. The deliverance we have here is from *strife* or *ryv* with the people which can mean verbal as well as physical and which can apply to Jesus' *ryv* with the Pharisees. The singular *people* (as opposed to plural *nations* which follow) suggests Israel.

You made me the head of the nations. This setting of the psalmist as *head*, *r'osh* is in reference to the plural *nations*, *goyim*, traditional word for Gentiles. This *r'osh* suggests the source or beginning of something; mention of *strife* with *people* is reminiscent of early Christianity's turning from Judaism to the Gentiles or peoples of the Hellenistic world. "and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the *head* (*kephale*) over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all" [Eph 1.22-3]. Here the task of *r'osh/kephale* is to *fill* the body with its own being, thereby making this body the head, as it were.

People whom I had not known served me. Within the context of the New Testament, such people may be designated as those who have not yet received the Gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all *nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" [Mt 28.19]. Note the identity of *nations* and *disciples*, the latter term being derived from the verb *lamad* (cf. vs.34 above). They are the ones who *serve* the psalmist who in this case may be posited as Jesus Christ.

Vs. 44: As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me; foreigners came cringing to me. The word *shamah* is one and the same for *hear* and *obey*. Note that the text does not say that such people (the *nations* and *people* of vs. 43) heard the psalmist directly which here can be the person of Christ. I.e., their faith in God is implied by the dual nature of *shamah*. "When Jesus heard this he marveled at him [centurion], and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, 'I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith'" [Lk 7.9]. The centurion's faith may represent that *shamah* of vs. 44. Note that in vs. 8 this man demonstrates his authority by saying that those under his authority obey...listen...to him which actually caused Jesus to marvel at him.

Foreigners came cringing to me. Another category of people distinct from Israel, from the verbal root *nakar*, *to estrange*, *to alienate*, *to know*. This last definition seems to come from the fact that one looks at...knows...that which is different or new. Such people approach *cringing*, *kachash* which also implies *to lie*, *to deceive*. Perhaps they are compelled to approach the psalmist (i.e., Christ) out of fear and thereby carry with them their old habits of deceit much as unbelievers listened but did not believe in Christ. For a positive use of *nakar*, cf. Is 60.10: "*Foreigners* shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you."

Vs. 45: Foreigners lost heart, and came trembling out of their fastnesses. The same verbal root *nakar* for *foreigners*. Since this verse follows the one before it with these people who approached (Christ) *cringing*, here they clearly have *lost heart*, *naval*, which fundamentally means *to be foolish* and from which is derived the proper name Nabal: "Let not my lord [David] regard this ill-natured fellow, Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name" [1 Sam 25.25]. The alternate meaning of *nabal* is *to fade*, *lose strength*, which is applicable to vs. 45. Cf. Is 40.7 which amplifies this losing of heart: "The grass withers, the flower *fades*, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it...The grass withers, the flower *fades*, but the word of our God will stand forever."

And came trembling out of their fastnesses. Keep in mind that this capitulation described here as well as the last few verses results from “As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me” or that shamah as obedience. Such *trembling* or charag (only use in the Old Testament) is a sign of surrender, especially when coupled with *fastnesses*, misgereth (from the root sagar, *to shut up, to enclose*). Most often it is used as a *border* in the sense of an ornamentation: “And he [Bezalel] made around it [table for inside the ark] a frame a handbreadth wide and made a molding of gold around the *frame*” [Ex 37.12].

Vs. 46: The Lord lives; and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation. This expression, *the Lord lives*, is both one of joy and triumph at the psalmist’s victory over his enemies as just described. Not only is he chay but a *rock*, tsur, a word discussed in vs. 31 with reference to Moses’ vision on Mt. Sinai. Cf. Mt 16.18: “You are Peter, and on this *rock* I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.” Catholic tradition identifies this passage with the church, so on a deeper level vs. 46’s exultant expression *blessed be my rock* similarly may be applied to the church.

Exalted be the God of my salvation. Another reference to the “God of my ‘Jesus’” which may be taken as a reference to God the Father (of Jesus Christ).

Vs. 47: The God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me. The verbal root of *vengeance* is naqam which conveys the sense of breathing heavily (cf. the kindred nacham). “Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will plead your cause and take *vengeance* for you” [Jer 51.36]. This divine form of vengeance is equivalent to zeal: “Zeal for your house will consume me” [Jn 2.17, quoting Ps 69.9] and is more specific in that it requires greater discipline to execute than simply taking out vengeance.

And subdued peoples under me. The end result for such naqam, namely, *subjection* of people. The Hebrew has the word davar, *to speak*, for this verb suggesting that verbal utterances are more effective than military or political actions.

Vs. 48: Who delivers me from my enemies; yes, you did exalt me above my adversaries; you delivered me from men of violence. The verb palat is used for this first of two instances of *deliverance* (cf. vs. 43). Note the different use of two verbs pertaining to the notion of rising, *exalt* (rum) and *adversaries* (verbal root is qamah). The former is a more specific exultation, that is, rising above anything else to which it may be compared, whereas the latter is a simple ascending motion. No matter how high these *adversaries* qumah, the psalmist can rum yet higher.

You delivered me from men of violence. Natsal or *to deliver* (cf. vs. 17; natsal connotes a pulling out). “It will be a sign and a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt; when they cry to the Lord because of oppressors he will send them a savior, and will defend and *deliver* them” [Is 19.20]. Here the word for *savior* is the familiar “Jesus,” moshyah who effects this pulling out; *men of violence* (Hebrew has singular, *man*) or chamas.

Vs. 49: For this I will extol you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing praises to your name. Yadah is the verb used for *extol* which fundamentally means *to cast, to throw* (usually upwards); the idea is that one’s hand is raised to point out something. Consider this with respect to Acts 1.11: “This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” In a sense, the Apostles’ task is to yadah Jesus in that their preaching works within the descent-ascent of Jesus Christ. Note that these words are quoted in Rom 15.9. The locale for such yadah is *among the nations*, more specifically in (v-) goym, a fact consistent with the apostolic task.

And sing praises to your name. Note emphasis upon the divine *name* or *shem* as opposed to God himself; such a name refers to that most fundamental of divine revelations, Ex 3.14, “I am who am.” In addition to this, God identifies himself with “the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Thus we have a two-fold revelation of God: supreme unknowability and as a being who interacts in space and time (i.e., transcendence and history).

Vs. 50: Great triumphs he gives to his king and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever. *Triumphs* or better, *deliverances* (*yeshuhoth*) with the connotation of (the multiple use of) “Jesus” which may apply to his continuous actions with regard to *his king*, the first one being David and mentioned a bit later in this same verse.

And shows steadfast love to his anointed. The noun here is *meshyach*, a common appellation for Jesus Christ who is the object of divine *love*, *chesed*. “This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” [Mt 17.5], *beloved* being equal to *chesed*.

To David and his descendants forever. Not just the first king of Israel but his royal descendants. *Zarah* is the verbal root for *descendants* and from which comes *seed* often used in reference to continued divine blessings in the future: “To your *descendants* I will give this land” [Gen 12.7], the first seed from which the three monotheistic religions spring, Judaism, Christianity, Islam.

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