

Notes on the Psalter, #2

Psalm Nineteen

Vs. 1: The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Note the distinction between *telling* and *proclaiming*, *saphar* and *nagad*, in the present tense. *Saphar* connotes *writing* or better, *inscribing* (also connotes the sense of numbering): “I will *tell* of all your wonderful deeds” [Ps 9.1] and “My tongue is like the pen of a ready *scribe*” (sopher, Ps 45.1). Perhaps the joyous words of Baruch (LXX) may apply here: “The stars shined in their watches and rejoiced; when he calls them, they say, ‘Here we are, and so with cheerfulness they showed light to him who made them’” [3.31]. Such is the *glory of God*, his *kavod*, which implies a sense of *heaviness*, as though the heavens dropped down to the psalmist. For another instance of *kavod*: “The *glory* of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud” [Ex 24.16]. Once Moses ascended Sinai for “forty days and forty night” [vs. 18], he received revelation of the ark, etc; we could say that Moses *inscribed*...*saphar*...his vision condensed on the “two tables of the testimony that were *written* (the verb here is *katav*; writing in the sense of describing) on both sides” [Ex 32.15].

And the firmament proclaims his handiwork. The second type of announcement by the natural world of God, namely, through *proclaiming* or *nagad*, which implies a strong sense of full manifestation and confession; *neged* is a preposition meaning *in front of*, *in the presence of*, a fact which demonstrates this point. The very first use of *nagad* clearly brings home this point: “Who *told* you that you were naked” [Gen 3.11]? To paraphrase, “Who *revealed* to you that you were naked?” (a fact which was already present; it’s a matter of awareness).

Handiwork or *mahaseh* in Hebrew is better rendered “deeds of his hands,” something akin to a professional craftsman, and the result is the *firmament* or *raqyah*: “And God made the *firmament* and separated the waters which were under the *firmament* from the waters which were above the *firmament*. And it was so” [Gen 1.7]. Cf. Ps 18.9 for remarks on *raqyah* as something *spread out* intimating the stretching of a sheet or tent: “and [Peter] saw the heaven opened, and something descending like a great sheet let down by four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air” [Acts 10.12-2]. Note a certain parallel of this sheet (heaven) with Noah’s ark.

Vs. 2: Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. *Day to day* implies perpetual continuity in the form of *speech*, ‘omer, from the common verb ‘amar. The common bond of such ‘omer, that is, from one day to the next, is by *pouring forth* such speech, *navah*: “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a *gushing stream*” [Prov 18.4]. Also, “Give heed to my [Wisdom] reproof; behold, I will *pour out* my spirit to you” [Prov 1.23]. Since the verse under consideration refers to *day*, it is not difficult to associate it with light: “The true *light* that *enlightens* every man was coming into the world” [Jn 1.9]. Here is a type of “un-incarnation”...light already existing within a person is going outside this person to come back into the world. Since this *light* is the *Word* or *Logos*, it can now *navah day to day*.

Night to night declares knowledge. The Hebrew phrase *laylah lelaylah* has a lovely rhythm to it. This period of darkness is the bridge between *day to day*; emphasis is more upon the implied stars and moon as opposed to the night per se which is reminiscent of Baruch 3.31 mentioned in vs. 1. Since these celestial objects do not speak, their physical presence is a form of silent manifestation of God’s creative word in Genesis. The *declaring* of this verse or *chawah* (only 4 references, all in Job) is equivalent to the Chaldean verb found in Daniel, all with reference to the *showing* of interpretations with regard to dreams, etc.: “Tell your servants the dream, and we will *show* the interpretation” [Dan 2.4]. This alternate meaning relates well with the *knowledge* or *dahath* manifested at night. Another point to consider with *night to night*: implied is a cycle or a year’s time which presents a composite revelation of divine creativity through the heavenly luminaries.

Vs. 3: There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. Contrast the words of vs. 2, “Day to day pours forth speech” with the lack of *speech* and *words* in this verse; former is singular and latter is

plural. Mention of *voice* or *qol* emphasizes this silent present of the heavenly luminaries. Another way of looking at this verse is that they cannot be heard from on earth due to their great height.

Vs. 4: Yet their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the ends of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun. For *voice* the Hebrew has *line*, *qaw*, in the sense of a measuring cord used for construction. “And the *measuring line* shall go out farther, straight to the hill Gareb, and shall then turn to Goah” [Jer 31.39]. Towards the conclusion of Revelation an angel has a *measuring rod of gold* [21.15] to measure the heavenly Jerusalem which unlike the heavenly luminaries under discussion descends from heaven: “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” [21.2]. If *qaw* is applied to this city, we could trace its outline in the firmament, as it were, prior to full revelation. *Qaw* in vss. 3 & 4 thus implies silence as the true measuring rod. Perhaps that’s why Rev 8.1 says that “there was silence in heaven for half an hour.”

Note that vs. 4 has voice “going through all the *earth*.” whereas words go “to the ends of the *world*.” Such words may be taken as the particulars of the singular voice; they are needed to expand this voice to the earth’s four corners which are north, south, east and west. This verse is used in Rom 10.18 with respect to the preaching of the Gospel. Also, refer to “Nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” [Rom 8.39]. *World* or *tevel* more specifically means inhabited areas.

In them he has set a tent for the sun. Such a *tent* or ‘ohel can refer to the tabernacle of God’s dwelling with its origins during Israel’s wandering in the desert. To place the sun *in* the heavenly luminaries means that the sun’s brightness outshines them much as Christ outshines his disciples. Thus sun/Christ “rules in the midst of your foes” [Ps 110.2].

Vs. 5: Which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. If the sun is a *bridegroom* or *chatan*, then the heavenly luminaries are his escort. “Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the *sun*, terrible as an army with banners” [Sg 6.10]? With the previous two verses in mind, the sun exits his *tent* or ‘ohel among which are *no speech, no words, their voice is not heard*; i.e., the sun dwells among silence and *comes forth* (*yatsa’*) into utterance or expression. Isaiah’s words are thus fulfilled: “and as the *bridegroom* rejoices over the bride [in this case, the earth], so shall your God rejoice over you” [62.5]. Perhaps this is why the verse before says “your land [shall be called] Married.”

Note that the sun/bridegroom exits his *chamber*, *chephah*, more properly, a covering or nuptial bed. “Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her *chamber*” [Jl 2.16]. Another use of the verbal root *chaphah* is Ps 68.13: “the wings of a dove *covered* with silver, its pinions with green gold.”

Like a strong man runs its course with joy. *Strong man* or *gibor* intimates that the bridegroom is a warrior: “The Lord your God is in your midst, a *warrior* who gives victory” [Zeph 3.17]. He “runs its *course*,” ‘*orach*, suggestive of going to battle: “David *ran* quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine” [1 Sam 17.48]. To *rejoice* strongly connotes that victory will be attained.

Vs. 6: Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and there is nothing hid from its heat. This *end*, *qetseh*, is the east and is used in the sense of an extremity which in this context may include predawn twilight. “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” [Is 5.26]! *Rising* or *motsa’* more specifically means a going forth, not necessarily a vertical ascent. The *circuit* or *tequphah* has a temporal connotation: “and in *due time* Hannah conceived and bore a son” [1 Sam 1.20]. *Tequphah* proceeds in a westerly direction to the opposite *end* or *qetseh*.

And there is nothing hid from its heat. The interval/space in between the two points of sunrise and sunset is marked by *heat*, *chamat*. “and his face was like the sun shining in full strength” [Rev 1.16].

Vs. 7: The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. Torah is equivalent to the sun of vs. 6 in its all pervasiveness or better, resembles the sun just depicted, has a *circuit*, tequphah, from east to west. The only word to express this omnipresence is by being *perfect*, tamym (cf. earlier remarks regarding this word). Tamym connotes a sense of no blemish and thus has sacrificial overtones, for example: “Your lamb shall be *without blemish*” [Ex 12.5]. Such tamym, instead of being immolated, “*revives the soul*,” namely, *returns* (shuv is the verb) in the sense of restoring the *soul* (nephesh) to its being made as God’s *image*, eikon.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. This *testimony*, hud, derives from the verb meaning *to return* in the sense of repeating one’s testimony before several witnesses which in the context of this psalm may be taken as the heavenly luminaries among which the sun is the greatest. There is an equivalent of Torah and this hud, the latter being *sure*, ‘emunah, the verbal root being ‘aman, worthy of *faith*.

Keeping in mind the sameness of Torah and sun whose circuit is from east to west or being all-inclusive; we may say that its furthest reaching rays extend all the way to the *simple*, from patah, *to spread out* (alternate meaning, *to deceive*). Here hud makes the simple partake of *wisdom*, chakmah. “Does not *wisdom* call, does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights beside the way, in the paths she takes her stand” [Prov 8.1-2]. These exposed positions where chakmah presents herself is like the sun’s all-pervasive presence in Psalm 19.

Vs. 8: The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. *Precepts* are an expanded form of the Torah/sun, from the verbal root paqad (cf. Ps 8.4). They are *right*, yashar, in the sense of being *straight* and without deviation: “I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a *straight* path in which the shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel” [Jer 31.9]. There seems to be a direct correspondence between such rightness and the human *heart* which the divine precepts cause *to rejoice* or samach, which implies making a loud joyous noise in relationship with the *heart* as in this verse: “My son, if your *heart* is wise, my *heart* too will be *glad*” [Prov 23.15].

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. Singular *commandment*, mitswath, as opposed to plural *precepts* which is demonstrated in the following: “Now this is the *commandment*, the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord your God commanded me to teach you” [Dt 6.1]. In the verse at hand mitswath is *pure*, bar, from the verbal root barar, *to select, separate*. “I said in my heart concerning the sons of men that God might *manifest* them and that they might see that they are beasts” [Eccl 3.18]. Such barar in vs. 8 applies to the *eyes*, that is, the faculty of sight. “Let your *eyes* look directly forward, and your *gaze* be straight before you” [Prov 4.25]. Here *gaze* in Hebrew is *eyelids*, haphhapym, which connotes frequent blinking.

Vs. 9: The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. *Fear* or yer’eth (verbal root, yara’) connote reverence; its verbal root is similar in sound to that of various forms of ra’ah, *to see*. With this in mind, instances when these two verbs are used can be interchanged without doing violence to the text’s meaning. Such yer’eth is *clean*, tahar, which connotes brightness; this luminosity *endures forever*, humedeth lahad; the verb hamad means *to stand, to remain*, thereby suggesting endurance. “That the kingdom might be humble and not lift itself up, and that by keeping his covenant it might *stand*” [Ezk 17.14]. *Forever* or lahad (l + had): had implies endurance; can also mean *testimony*, a fact which can tie in with *endurance* connected with hamad.

The ordinances of the Lord and true and righteous altogether. This part of vs. 9 contains familiar words which were already discussed: mishpeth, ‘emeth, tsadaq; refer to earlier occasions in this document. *Altogether* or yachadaw derives from yachad, *to unite*; intimation is that such ordinances participate in the divine unity. “The Lord our God is *one* Lord” [Dt 6.4]. Yachad also intimates a *beginning*.

Vs. 10: More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Further description of *ordinances*, this time linked with *desire*, chamad, which also connotes the notion of yearning for something not in our power to attain. “You shall not *covet* your

neighbor's house; you shall not *covet* your neighbor's wife or his manservant or his maidservant, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's" [Ex 20.17]. Thus *chamad* as used in vs. 10 means desire with the intent to possess if not to steal to attain this possession. *Gold* was and still is the most precious commodity, and to say that divine ordinances supercede this material, to *chamad* it, is more than pious expression. The addition of *much fine gold*, *paz rav*, is a refinement of regular *zahav* or *gold*. The (disused) verbal root is *pazaz*, *to leap*: "As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David *leaping* and dancing before the Lord" [2 Sam 6.16]. Perhaps such *paz* is so named because it sparkles...*leaps*...in the light. "His head is the *finest gold*; his locks are wavy, black as a raven" [Sg 5.11].

Sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. A shift away from visual delight to one of taste regard two elements. The first, *honey*, *devash*, applies to the land Israel was about to inherit: "a land flowing with milk and *honey*" [Ex 3.8]. There is a lesser value in this commodity as opposed to the *gold* and *fine gold* of the same verse, but it suggests a deeper comprehension of divine *ordinances*. *Sweet* or *mataq* implies sucking, so the enjoyment such *ordinances* is a slow, continuous (baby-like) activity by which one gains nourishment.

Drippings of the honeycomb or *nopheth tsuphym* emphasize this slowness of enjoyment. "Your lips *distill* nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue" [Sg 4.11]. The opposite quality of such drippings: "For the lips of a loose woman *drip* honey, and her speech is smoother than oil" [Prov 5.3]. The verbal root of *nopheth*, *nuph*, is used in these two examples.

Vs. 11: Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. While obvious reference is to *ordinances* of vs. 9, we may include the just mentioned descriptions which such ordinances transcend. Note the verb *to warn*, *zahar*, which is a kind of play on *zahav*, *gold*, of vs. 10; alternate meaning of *zahar* is *to be bright*, *to shine*. There is no direct mention of what the psalmist as *servant* is to be warned; presumably it is anything lying outside the divine ordinances. "And those who are wise shall *shine* like the brightness of the firmament" [Dan 12.3]: they are able to *shine* as *warnings* to others.

The *keeping* of ordinances, *shamar*, is the requisite for God keeping the keeper: "*Preserve* me, O God, for in you I take refuge" [Ps 16.1]. *Shamar* occurs with considerable frequency in the Psalter as to be expected and is almost always associated with divine precepts, etc. The *great reward* for such *shamar*, *heqev rav*, derives from the verbal root *haqav* which basically means *to take hold of*; an alternate meaning of the noun is *footstep*, *because*, *end*. For an example of the first definition: "By the *footsteps* of the flock" [Sg 1.8].

Vs. 12: But who can discern his errors? Clear me from hidden faults. A desire for purification after the "luminous" descriptions with regard to divine precepts in vss. 8-10. The verb *to discern* is *byn* which is also the general verb *to understand*. Cf. Ps 5.1 for an explanation of this word as *in between*. *Byn* is used in conjunction with *errors*, *shegagah* (singular), with its fundamental implication of wandering. Thus vs. 12 suggests "getting in between" these wanderings or standing still, as it were, in their midst in order to see that they lead nowhere.

Faults are not in the Hebrew text, just the adjective *hidden*, from the root *satar* examined several times in this document. Another example: "*Hide* your face from my sins" [Ps 51.9]. It is precisely from this *satar* that the psalmist wishes to be *cleared*, *naqah*, which means *to be pardoned*. Thus *naqah* operates "in secret."

Vs. 13: Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. This is the final verse of Ps 19 which expresses anxiety with regard to keeping the divine Torah and its precepts. *Chasak* is the psalmist's (i.e., as *servant* again) request, a verb similar to *chashak* (i.e., the accent over the letter *shin*), *to be dark*. For an similar use, cf. Is 58.1: "Cry aloud, *spare* not, lift up your voice like a trumpet." With the distinction made between *chasak* and *chashak*, we may say that vs. 13's request is to "*make* presumptuous sins *dark*" for the psalmist. Such *presumptuous sins* are the one word *zed* which connotes inflation. "Azariah...and all the *insolent men* said to Jeremiah, 'You are telling a lie. The Lord our God did not send you to say, 'Do not go to Egypt to live there'"

[Jer 43.2].

The psalmist fervently requests that such zed do not *dominate* him, mashal (verb is used here); its fundamental meaning is *to make like*, hence, in the context, that zed does not make the psalmist *like* it.

Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. *Blameless* or tamam means *to complete, to finish*, in the sense of achieving a goal which is appropriate at this point in Ps 19. Here it is coupled with naqah as in vs. 12, namely, *to clear* from “hidden faults” but more specifically in this verse, of *great transgression*, peshah, the verbal root meaning *to fall away*. I.e., the psalmist beseeches God not to pashah (verb) from the goal implied in tamam.

Vs. 14: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. *Acceptable* or ratson is a noun in the Hebrew text and derives from ratsah, *to be delighted, to satisfy*; alternate meaning of the noun is one’s *own will* as in “When you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the Lord, you shall offer it from your *own will* so that you may be accepted” [Lev 19.5]. Compare with “For he who finds me finds life and obtains *favor* from the Lord” [Prov 19.5]. Thus the request made in vs. 14 has a sacrificial sense with regards to *words* and *meditation*, ‘imry and hegyon; the former is the common term for *words* and clearly implies something uttered for all to hear (*mouth*), whereas the latter is not and is interior as indicated by *heart*. Hegyon also means a *sound* coming from a harp: “upon the harp with a *solemn sound*” [Ps 92.3], thereby implying a musical noise. The psalmist asks God that both ‘mry and hegyon be aligned with God’s ratson, more specifically, in his *sight*, lephaneyka. I.e., that these two verbal elements, one heard and the other silent, be transferred to divine seeing.

The identity of God as *rock* and *redeemer*, tsur and ga’al, suggests the psalmist taking refuge in a fortified place (cf. Ps 18.2, “my *rock* and my fortress”), that is, a suitable place in which to conclude this psalm. Since God is a ga’al, the psalmist *has been bought back* after having admitted his sins in the previous verses. “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have *redeemed*, you have guided them by your strength to your *holy abode*” [Ex 15.13]. This “*holy abode*” or neweh more specifically means a resting place, equivalent to Ps 19’s tsur. Note the two modes of leading, *steadfast love* or chesed and *strength* or haz.

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Psalm Twenty

Vs. 1: The Lord answer you in the day of trouble! The name of the God of Jacob protect you! The first of eleven longings (through vs. 6) the psalmist intended for the ears of his listeners or most likely, that the king of Israel be victorious in battle. To desire that God *answers* (hanah) implies that entreaty had first reached him “*in the day of trouble*,” *day* being equivalent to kairos or special occasion. Such *trouble* or tsarah is noted in Ps 120.1: “In my *distress* I cry to the Lord that he may *answer* (hanah) me.”

Instead of God directly offering *protection*, sagav (implies *to be high*), it is his *name*, shem which acts like a shadow. Note the affiliation with the God of Jacob who is here singled out from among the other patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac, a common identity God assumes when revealing himself: “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” [Ex 3.6]. This connection with the three patriarchs and the true divine name of YHWH is revealed in vs. 14. Numerous examples could be picked out why God and Jacob are associated, but the chief one seems to be Jacob’s dream at Bethel (cf. Gen 28.10-22) and wrestling with an angel (cf. Gen 32.22-32). After each incident Jacob bestows a name upon the place: the former is called Bethel (*House of God*) and the latter, Peneil (*Face of God*).

Vs. 2: May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion! *Help* or the common verb hezer emanates from the Jerusalem temple’s *sanctuary*, qodesh, literally, *holy* place, and can apply to the temple as a whole in contrast to the devyr discussed with regard to Ps 11.4 as “place of *speaking*,” the inner sanctuary being off limits except to the high priest who entered it only once a year. From its verbal root as *to be apart*, qodesh signifies not only the holiness of the temple itself but the city of Jerusalem. The Psalter contains numerous references to this qodesh, often in connection with the temple situated on a hill, perhaps in

imitation of Mt. Sinai.

And give you support from Zion! Here *support* is a verb, *sahad*, connotes continuous sustenance as with food: “and bread to *strengthen* man’s heart” [Ps 104.15]. Compare with “Loyalty and faithfulness preserve the king, and his throne is *upheld* by righteousness” [Prov 20.28]. *Zion* may represent a more inclusive type of aide which includes the nation of Israel. Often *Zion* is equated with King David: “Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel...to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David which is *Zion*” [1 Kg 8.1].

Vs. 3: May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! Selah. Here desire is expressed to God that he *remember* past devotions, *zakar*, from which as noted regarding Ps 6.5, is derived *male*; the role of a male was to pass on to future generations not just descendants but memories of Israel’s history and relationship with God. In a sense, such *offerings* are a living inheritance. “That you may tell the next generation” [Ps 48.13]. In vs. 3 *zakar* is more specific, namely, the (implied) king’s *offerings*, *minchah*, which implies paying tribute. Perhaps this verse which follows mention of *Zion* and the Jerusalem sanctuary has in mind words from the Book of Isaiah: “And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an *offering* to the Lord” [66.20]. Note that vs. 3 has “*all* your offerings,” not just some among many.

And regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! *Dashan* is the verb here, *to be fat*, and is related to the performance of a sacrifice. The Hebrew thus may read, “And may your burnt sacrifices *be fat*,” i.e., give off plenty of smoke as incense to God. *Holah* is the word for *burnt sacrifices*, from the verb *halah*, *to ascend*, with its implication of rising smoke. Such a *holah* is the sacrificial animal as a whole as opposed to parts of it: “He shall lay his hand upon the head of the *burnt offering* [NB: it is still alive], and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” [Lev 1.4]. The context of vs. 3 of this psalm implies the king is also a priest making these offerings.

Vs. 4: May he grant you your heart’s desire and fulfil all your plans! Note the close association of *burnt sacrifices* of vs. 3 and *heart’s desire* of this verse, as though the latter participation in the sacrificial offering. The Hebrew reads, “according to your heart,” *kilvaveka*; it does not specify what this *levav* (of King David) intends but implies close affinity with God. We may situation *plans* or *hetsah* (singular) in the just mentioned *levav* from which they emerge; as observed earlier (the word implies *counsel*; from a verbal root *to make firm* and from which is derived *bone*). With the notions of *bone* and *plan* in mind, we can better see that the latter emerges from deep within a person. The common word for *to fulfill* is *mala’* which here refers to something not yet accomplished or attained.

Vs. 5: May we shout for joy over your victory, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the Lord fulfil all your petitions! Again, *victory* (singular as opposed to multiple victories) is not specified; the word is *yeshuhah*, “Jesus” *in* (b-) which we *rejoice*, *ranan*, implying as the English does, a celebration with loud noise.

This *ranan* is the first step followed by the second one of *setting up of banners*, *dagal*. “Terrible as an army *furnished with banners*” [Sg 6.4, 10] and “His *banner* over me was love” [Sg 2.4]. Such a banner signals achievement of a military victory in a visible spot as on a hilltop or battlement. With this notion of height in mind, perhaps this *degel* (noun) may apply to Jn 19.19: “Pilate also wrote a *title* and put it on the cross; it read ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.’”

May the Lord fulfil all your petitions! Second use of *mala’*, the previous one in reference to the *plans* of the previous verse; here *petitions* are the object of this verb, the root being *sha’al*, the common word for *to ask*. Perhaps these petitions were made in the Jerusalem temple or *sanctuary*, *quodesh*, of vs. 2.

Vs. 6: Now I know that the Lord will help his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories by his right hand. *Know* or *yadah* in the sense of realize, of coming to full awareness that something has been accomplished. Another instance of *yashah*, “to Jesus” in connection with the specific title

of the Messiah, meshyach. We could render this as “Now I know that the Lord (YHWH) will *Jesus his Christ*,” the former referring to humanity and the latter to divinity (“will make human the divinity”). The exact *now-ness* can refer to the previous desires: grant heart’s desire, fulfil plans, shout for joy, set up banners, fulfil petitions.

He will answer him from his holy heaven. These words presumably addressed to *his anointed*, meshyach, are reminiscent of “and behold, the heavens were opened and he [John the Baptist] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased” [Mt 4.16-7]. Note the place-where from which this *answering* or hanah derives, *holy heaven*, qodesh being the adjective. Compare with vs. 2, *sanctuary*, quodesh, from which comes *help* or hezer. In the Hebrew text the hanah of vs. 6 consists of “the saving strength” or gevorah coupled with still another occurrence of “Jesus.” Such impartation of “Jesus” fits in with the confirmation of God the Father concerning Jesus’ mission in Mt 4.16-7 just cited.

Such “*Jesus*” strength more specifically comes from God’s *right hand*, yamyn, traditional place of honor: “The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my *right hand*’” [Ps 110.1].

Vs. 7: Some boast of chariots and some of horses, but we boast of the name of the Lord our God. A verse reminiscent of Ex 14.9: “The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh’s *horses* and *chariots* and his horsemen and his army and overtook them encamped at the sea.” Note that the Hebrew text lacks “boast.” The antithesis of this reliance upon military might is Ps 68.17: “With mighty *chariots*, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place.”

But we boast of the name of the Lord our God. The Hebrew lacks “boast;” instead it reads, *remember*, zakar (cf. remarks on Ps 6.5). Such remembrance with its connotation of begetting (a noun is *male*) suggests inheritance and is interesting to apply to the words of consecration used at Mass, “Do this in *memory*...in zakar...of me.” I.e., one *inherits* the person of Jesus Christ. This insight receives more value when considering the previous verse when “the Lord will *Jesus his Christ*,” i.e., effect redemption. Furthermore, the *name* or shem of YHWH is Jesus Christ.

Vs. 8: They will collapse and fall, but we shall rise and stand upright. References is to those persons boasting in chariots and horses, but recall that this verb is lacking; the *collapse* and *fall* may apply to such objects as well as those making use of them. The former verb, carah, more specifically means *to bend* (the knee) in the sense of showing obeisance, not necessarily destruction. “Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not *bowed* to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him” [1 Kg 19.18]. The latter verb, naphal, does mean *to fall* in the common sense but also may refer to doing homage; coupled with carah, this seems the sense of vs. 8.

But we shall rise and stand upright. First comes *rising*, qum, followed by *standing upright*, hud, the opposite (upward) motion of carah and naphal just above. Use of hud is the only occurrence and is the same verbal root as *to testify*, *bear witness*, thus implying that such a hud is giving attestation to victory, a notion readily applicable to Christ’s resurrection. “Beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a *witness* to his resurrection” [Acts 1.22].

Vs. 9: Give victory to the king, O Lord; answer us when we call. *Give victory* is from the familiar verbal root yahsah, “Jesus.” Note the use of the proper name of God, YHWH, with this word. The second half of vs. 9 reads in Hebrew, “Let the king answer us when we call.” With “Jesus” implied, we may say these words are a way of beseeching Jesus Christ. The Hebrew text yields to the *king*, melek, in that he has the option not *to answer*, hanah. More specifically, the verse reads, *in the day*, veyom, the preposition b- (*in*) signifying presence-in; thus *day* may equal a kairos event. “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my *day*; he saw it and was glad” [Jn 8.56]. From such in-ness the king’s subjects *call*, qara’.

Psalm Twenty-One

Vs. 1: In your strength the king rejoices, O Lord; and in your help how greatly he exults! In Ps 20.9 mention was made of *in the day*, *yeyom*, which may be compared with this verses's *in your strength* (*hez*), *behazka*; it is a refinement of the former, the place-where (King David) *rejoices*, *samach* (cf. Ps 19.8). Such place-where-ness is common in the Psalter, and it is worth keeping this fact in mind as how it is used to express non-temporal and non-spacial reality. "Fear not, O land; be glad and *rejoice*, for the Lord has done great things" [Jl 2.21]!

And in your help how greatly he exults! Another example of in-ness, *in your help*, *vyshuhatka* ("Jesus"). For references to being present in Jesus, cf. Jn 14-17, for example, "that they me all be one; even as you, Father, are *in* me, and I *in* you, that they also may be *in* us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" [17.21]. Here is the fulfillment of oneness as related to Christ and his Father.

"How greatly he exults" is more exuberant in Hebrew with the adverb *me'od* which implies excessiveness. The verb *gyl*, *rejoice*, suggests a round dance or going around in a circle which intensifies this exuberance, and may be tied in with the dynamic relationship of Jn 17.21 just above. Even the "you have sent" me alludes to an invitation to participate in this *gyl*. To conclude, *how*, *mah*, is yet another intensification of joy.

Vs. 2: You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah. *Heart's desire* refers to the king's victory; *desire* or *ta'awath* (cf. Ps 10.17) is from the verb *'awah*, essentially *to designate, to describe*. "My soul *yearns* for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you" [Is 26.9]. In light of the verb *'awah*, such desire may be perceived as a form of designation, of claiming territory; although its object is God's infinity and can never be satiated, there is need to denote the parameters of one's search.

And have not withheld the request of his lips. *Request* or *'areseth* is from an unused verbal root, and this is the only occurrence. To make a request implies verbal utterance as opposed to the silent *heart's desire*. Vs. 2 combines both types of petitions, centering them on the king's *heart*. This verse located at the beginning of Ps 21 concludes with *selah*, *pause*; such an interval gives time to reflect upon what has transpired; it can also be a preparation for what is to transpire in the future, so *selah* looks both ways, back and forward.

Vs. 3: For you meet him with goodly blessings; you set a crown of fine gold upon his head. *Qadam* is the verb used (*east* is a derivative), reminiscent of "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine [to Abraham]; he was a priest of God Most High" [Gen 14.18]. Perhaps *east* may be the direction from which Melchizedek came to Abraham, same direction as the wise men: "Now when Jesus was born...wise men from the *East* came to Jerusalem" [Mt 2.1]. Their *goodly blessings*, *barakah*, being the common noun used, are "gold and frankincense and myrrh" [vs. 11]. Compare with "Then she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices, and precious stones; never again came such an abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon" [1 Kg 10.10].

You set a crown of fine gold upon his head. First reference to a coronation in the Old Testament is to Saul: "Then Samuel took a vial of oil and kissed him and said, 'Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel'" [1 Sam 10.1]? The crown's material is *paz*, already encountered in Ps 19.10: "More to be desired are they [divine ordinances] than gold, even much *fine gold*." This parallel between a crown of *paz* and divine ordinances is reminiscent of "She [wisdom] will place on your head a far garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful *crown*, *hatarah*" [Prov 4.9].

Vs. 4: He asked life of you; you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever. The request for such *life* or *chayym* may be put in the mouth of Jesus to his Father as connoted in "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" [Lk 23.46]. The Hebrew reads for "of you" *mimka*, "*from* you," signifying derivation of *chayym*. Also, the Hebrew has "you gave it to him" follow succinctly after the request almost as though it were necessary, again, connoting that derivative sense.

Length of days forever and ever. Such is the result of the *request*, the royal sha'al. *Length* clearly means temporal extension, 'orek, and can imply anything durable not just extended: "Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, *slow* to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil" [Jl 2.13]. Holam wahed for *forever and ever* is composed of two words, the first being derived from a verb meaning *to hide*; emphasis is upon future, implying that this dimension is hidden from human perception. The second word comes from hadah, *to pass over, to go on*, implying perpetuity of time. Thus the phrase in vs. 4 may be seen in light of continuation, not eternity as transcending space and time.

Vs. 5: His glory is great through your help; splendor and majesty you bestow upon him. *Glory* or kavod is perhaps the most appropriate attribute of God and does not appear in Genesis; first mention is Ex 16.7: "In the morning you will see the *glory* of the Lord." Thus Exodus begins a tradition of perceiving divine kavod as something remote which God intermittently bestows upon his people; such kavod is qedesh, *holy*, which intensifies this attribute by making it be *apart* from everything else. This transition evolves from Genesis' familiarity with God beginning in the Garden of Eden. According to vs. 5 of the Psalm under consideration, only can divine *help*, yeshuah or "Jesus" make this glory *great*, gadal.

Splendor and majesty you bestow upon him. Two qualities as a result of being "Jesus-ed:" *splendor* or hod which usually applies to royalty; it can also connote beauty as in "His shoots shall spread out; his *beauty* shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon" [Hos 14.6]. *Majesty* or hadar similarly applies to royalty (cf. Ps 8.5); from the verbal root which means *to be large, swell*: "I will level the *enlarged* place" [Is 45.2]. *Ornament* is another derivative. These two qualities God *bestows* upon the king, shawah (cf. Ps 16.8: "I have *set* the Lord always before me"). Another reference signifying shawah's essential meaning of equality: "To whom will you compare me that I *should be like* him" [Is 40.8]? Note that such shawah is "*upon* him," halayu, or from a position above.

Vs. 6: Yes, you make him most blessed forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence. *Most blessed* or verakoth is plural, signifying multiple blessings which God *makes*, shyth, in the sense of appointing or establishing them. "I will *put* enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed" [Gen 3.15]. Vs 6 is the antidote, as it were, to this type of shyth which is passed on through succeeding generations. A counsel to nullify this shawah is found by another use of the verb: "*Apply* your heart to my [i.e., wisdom] knowledge" [Prov 22.17]. Had prefixed by l- (*to, in the direction of*) signifies perpetuity (cf. vs 4).

You make him glad with the joy of your presence. *Face* would be appropriate here for *presence*, peney, which connotes a being *before* someone who is doing the gazing. First mention of this word is Gen 1.2: "And darkness was upon the *face* of the deep." Such peney has the capacity of making a person *glad*, chadah, from the verbal root which means *to be sharp*: "As iron is *sharpened* on iron, so a man *sharpens* the face of another" [Prov 27.17].

Peney has the ability to produce *joy*, simchah, from the verbal root samach noted earlier. Sg 3.11 has such simchah located in the *heart* as opposed to *face* connoted by peney: "and behold King Solomon...on the day of the *gladness* of his heart."

Vs. 7: For the king trusts in the Lord; and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved. No mention of the king's name is here but most likely refers to David or even Solomon. Divine *steadfast love* or chesed is marked by constancy as the refrain in Ps 136 constantly brings home ("For his *steadfast love* endures forever"). Chesed is diametrically opposed to *moved*, mut, which implies tottering; chesed derives from extreme loftiness, helyon, *Most High*, or absolute transcendence which contrasts with the earthiness of mut (as in an earthquake).

Vs. 8: Your hand will find out all your enemies; your right hand will find out those who hate you. This retribution of enemies is a result of the king's trust in divine chesed; since it comes from helyon, we may assume that the king participates in divine loftiness from which his hand finds these enemies. More

specifically, it is the king's *right hand*, *yamyn*, that does the work of *finding*, *matsa'*; both instances of this finding occur in the future. "Sit at my *right hand*, until I make your enemies your footstool" [Ps 110.1].

Vs. 9: You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear. The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath; and fire will consume them. Again, action is located in the future; *blazing oven* or *tanur* is from the verbal root *tanan*, *to smoke*. "And he [Lot] looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a *furnace*, *kivshan*" [Gen 19.28]. Another reference with *tanur*: "They are all adulterers; they are like a heated *oven*" [Hos 7.4]. The word for *blazing*, 'esh, is the common term for *fire*. Note that the *tanur* becomes *blazing* "when you *appear*," i.e., simultaneous with divine manifestation, or according to the Hebrew, "in the time of your *anger*," *panym*, this word more commonly meaning *face*, *before*. Compare with vs. 6, "joy of your *presence*," *peney*. The words of vs. 9 could also read, "in the time of your *face*."

The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath. *Balah* for *swallow* more specifically means *to devour*, thus conveying suddenness of destruction. The image of Joseph's dream vividly describes this: "And the thin ears *swallowed up* the seven plump and full ears" [Gen 41.7]. Also consider Prov 1.12: "Like Sheol let us *swallow* them alive and whole, like those who go down to the Pit." An alternate meaning of *wrath* or 'aph is *face*, *countenance*.

And fire will consume them. Second use of 'esh (cf. *blazing*); 'akal is the common word for *to eat*.

Vs. 10: You will destroy their offspring from the earth, and their children from among the sons of men. 'Avad for *to destroy* connotes wandering or losing, and in this context refer to Gen 4.14: "Behold, you have driven me [Cain] this day away from the ground; and from your face I shall be hidden; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." *Offspring* or *periy* also means *fruit*; for one's descendants to wander in the just mentioned implies a fate worse than death. *Children* or *zerah* also translates as *seed* (cf. Ps 18.50), suggesting that one's descendants will not be sown for future propagation. Consider this in connection with the flood: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth...and was sorry that he had made man on the earth" [Gen 6.5-6].

Vs. 11: If they plan evil against you, if they devise mischief, they will not succeed. *Plan* or *natah* fundamentally means *to stretch, extend* (cf. Ps 17.6); here it is "against you" or "*on* (hal) you" as if to get the upper hand on God. *To devise* or *chashav* means to plan something deliberate or with intent: "Come, let us *make plots* against Jeremiah" [Jer 18.18] which also uses *hal*. *Mizmah* or *mischief* is the object of such *chashav* and can have a positive connotation: "that prudence may be given to the simple, knowledge and *discretion* to the youth" [Prov 1.4].

Vs. 12: For you will put them to flight; you will aim at their faces with your bows. More literally, "you will make them turn their back," *thyt shakam*, the second word more specifically meaning *shoulder*. "But Lot's wife behind him looked back, and she became a pillar of salt" [Gen 19.26].

Not only does God make his foes run away, he shoots at them while they are in retreat which seems to be a cowardly or unfair tactic. Here the Hebrew text reads "you shall make ready upon your strings" referring to arrows which are not mentioned. *Meytar* is the word for *string*, more specifically, *cords*: "the hangings of the court which is around the tabernacle and the altar, and its *cords*; all the service pertaining to these" [Num 3.26]. Carrying this imagery of *tend cords* further, consider: "Enlarge the place of your tent, habitations be stretched out; hold not back, lengthen your *cords* and strengthen your stakes" [Is 54.2]. The aim towards which these strings are directed is "on their *faces*," *peney*, which is interesting because the enemy is presumably retreating, however, with the reference to Lot's wife in mind as quoted above, God shoots when they look back.

Vs. 13: Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength! We will sing and praise your power. Reference not so much to the king but to God who strengthens him, a fitting conclusion to this psalm. *Be exalted* or *ramam* as in Is 33.10: "Now I will arise," says the Lord, 'now I will lift myself up; now I will be *exalted*'" [Is 33.10].

Strength or *hoz* is a manifestation of God found frequently in the Psalter and conveys a sense of military exultation: “The Lord is my *strength* and my song, and he has become my salvation” [Ex 15.2]. Both *singing* (*shyr*) and *praising* (*zamar*; cf. Ps 7.17 for alternate meaning *to prune*) are combined in Moses’ song of praise of Ex 15, and vs. 13 under consideration may be related to it. The *strength* or *gevurah* is more specific with regards to military prowess. It is such *gevurah* that the Egyptians perceived when pursuing the Israelites: “Let us flee from before Israel; for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians” [Ex 14.25].

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Psalm Twenty-Two

Vs. 1: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? This psalm traditionally has been associated with Jesus Christ on the cross and is quoted in Mt 27.46 in the Hebrew. *Hazav* is the word for *to forsake*, with a sense of letting go as in Ps 9.10 (“For you have not *forsaken* those who seek you”). Referring to Christ, such *hazav* was uttered shortly before his death implying that he was about to *let go* of human existence. The person uttering these words posits a sharp distinction between *help* and *distance*, *yeshuah* (“Jesus”) and *rachok*, this latter term augmenting the notion of remoteness by the prefix *m-* (*from*) to *yeshuah*; it is interesting to consider verbal root of *Jesus* in conjunction with the crucifixion.

From the words of my groaning? Not only is God *rachok* ontologically, as it were (i.e., from “Jesus”) but from *groaning*, *sha’ag* being the verbal root which connotes roaring as of a lion: “They shall *roar* like young lions” [Is 5.29]. Note that the psalm does not include such *sha’ag* alone but is accompanied by *words* (“of roaring”).

Vs. 2: O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night but find no rest. Two general periods of divine silence, *by day* and *by night*. With regard to the former there is *crying*, *qara’*, and the latter, no *rest*, *damah*. “My *days* are past, my plans are broken off, the desires of my heart” [Job 17.11]. The period of day, not simply the period of light, may be extended to a more inclusive time frame as well as a reference to *kairos* event. Contrast the silence of vs. 2 with “*Day to day* pours forth speech” [Ps 19.2]. The psalmist’s complaint of no *answer* from God, *hanah* (cf. Ps 4.1 for this word’s multiple meanings), to his *qara’* which fundamentally means *to call*, is suggestive of the burning sun from which “nothing is hid from its heat” [Ps 19.6].

And by night but find no rest. Contrast with Ps 4.8: “In peace I will both lie down and sleep,” with *shalom* being the word for *peace* which in the context of vs. 2, *damah*, escapes the psalmist. This verb was discussed in Ps 4.5, having the alternate meaning of *to be like*. With this in mind, we may say that (at night) the psalmist lacks awareness of his being made in God’s image and likeness. Also, he has lost his capacity to draw comparisons or *likenesses* between experience and the divine presence, a fact which becomes more disconcerting at night.

Vs. 3: Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. Despite the divine silence of vs. 2 the psalmist recognizes the essential *holiness* of God, the adjective being derived from the verbal root *qadash* which implies a setting apart from normal human experience. Note that this word is lacking in the book of Genesis or that early stage of human development which did not discern between the nearness or absence of God but more precisely, preceded it. “*Holy, holy, holy* is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” [Is 6.3]. Here *glory* or *kavod*, is a type of emanation from God, secondary to his being *qadash*. With this context of Isaiah in mind, the second half of vs. 3 may be taken in conjunction with: “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple” [vs. 1]. The *sitting* or *yashav* of Ps 22 is similar to the Lord *sitting* on the throne of Isaiah’s vision, more specifically, has *praises* or *tehiloth* as its support which parallels the heavenly Jerusalem’s foundation: “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” [Rev 21.14]. Note that *tehiloth* are more specific, that is, belonging to *Israel*, prefigure of John’s revelation.

Vs. 4: In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. Such *trust* parallels the foundation and praise mentioned in vs. 3; *batach* is the commonly used verb used in conjunction with Israel's patriarchs, *fathers*, a frequent refrain as in Ex 3.16: "The Lord, the God of your *fathers*, the god of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, has appeared to me" [Ex 3.16]. It is interesting to contrast this traditional theological view of Israel's heritage with the Father of Jesus Christ who supercedes the human process of begetting, of giving birth, instead of the transmission of Israel's historical identity to future generations.

And you delivered them. *Palat* is the verb used (cf. Ps 17.14, the fundamental meaning is *to slip away*); most common reference is that of Exodus when the Israelites *slipped* through the Red Sea, thereby escaping the Egyptian army.

Vs. 5: To you they cried and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed. *Zahaq* for *to cry* also connotes the forming of an assembly as in Jos 8.16: "So all the people who were in the city were *called together* to pursue them." The reference in vs. 5 pertains to the *fathers* of the previous verse, notably those instances when Abraham, Isaac and Jacob *cried out* to God; their corporate exclamation is representative of Israel. The psalmist is quick to add that God *saved* them, *malat*, that is, *to slip away* furtively, not in a dramatic sense. This notion of *malat* as well as the earlier *palat* may be taken as different aspects of *yashah*, "Jesus."

In you they trusted and were not disappointed. The psalmist again uses the verb *batach* (cf. vs. 4) for *to trust* with the emphasis upon not being *disappointed*, *bush*, which connotes being ashamed. For examples, refer to those instances of Abraham (Gen 15.5+), Isaac (Gen 26.24+) and Jacob (Gen 28.12+) when each had a special revelation of God.

Vs. 6: But I am a worm and no man; scorned by men and despised by the people. This verse as well as many of Ps 22 are reminiscent of Isaiah's Suffering Servant, 52.13-53.12, and is applicable to Jesus Christ. *Worm* or *tolah* may also be taken as an agent of revenge: "For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the *worm* will eat them like wool" [Is 51.8]. *Tolah* also connotes the color *scarlet*: "Though your sins are like *scarlet*, they shall be as white as snow" [Is 1.18]. It is interesting that this verse describes the *color* of sins, not their essence; i.e., their essence remains the same but under a different guise. The lowly condition of a worm is intensified by the additional words, *no man*.

Scorned by men and despised by the people. The word *cherpah*, *reproach*, occurs frequently in the Psalter, usually in the form of complaints to God. *Cherpah* endures through the collective process of a people's memory as illustrated by Is 54.4: "Fear not, for you [Israel] will not be ashamed...and the *reproach* of your widowhood you will *remember* no more." *By men* refers to people in general and *by the people* suggests the nation of Israel. Note that the latter *despise* or *boz* the psalmist, a more intense form of scorn.

Vs. 7: All who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads. "And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads" [Mt 27.39]. Three aspects of disgrace mentioned in this verse: 1) For reference to *lahag*, *to mock*, cf. Ps 2.4, which implies speaking in a barbarous fashion. 2) *Patar* for *make mouths*, more specifically, *to spit* or *to open* (the womb). The latter meaning implies greater contempt, coming, as it were, from deep inside the person who does the *patar*. The Hebrew of this verse reads, "shoot out of the lip." 3) *To wag* the head (singular), *nuah*, can also apply to drunkenness: "The earth *staggers* like a drunken man, it sways like a hut" [Is 24.20].

Vs. 8: He committed his cause to the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights in him! *To commit* derives from the verbal root, *galal*, *to roll*, so these words may read, "He *rolled* to ('el) the Lord." Also cf. Ps 37.5 ("*Roll* upon the Lord your way"). With Ps 22's close association to Christ's passion, *galal* may be taken to infer his resurrection when the stone was *rolled* away from his tomb. The act of rolling takes place downhill, so the psalmist can be seen as gradually rolling down a slope into divine hands ready to receive him.

Let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights in him! Palat (cf. Ps 17.13) is the first of two taunts directed towards the psalmist, the second one being natsal which means *to draw out* as well as *to deprive*; usually it is associated with a exiting (from) as “I will *deliver* my flock *from* their mouth” [Ezk 34.10]. Chaphats, *to delight* (cf. Ps 1.2) with its sense of bending (down) aptly fits in this verse as God were stooping over to pluck the psalmist from danger. Contrast this bending with the galal or *rolling* (down motion earlier in this verse).

Vs. 9: Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you kept me safe upon my mother’s breasts. Now it is the psalmist’s turn to speak after his mockers; note that he does not address them but God. Gych is the word for *to take*, more specifically, *to break out* as in giving birth: “Writhe and *break forth*, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail” [Mic 4.10]. In vs. 9 it is God who acts as midwife for the psalmist. Applied to Christ, the words of Sg 7.2 have meaning with regard to the pregnant Virgin Mary: “Your belly is like a heap of wheat.” *To keep safe* is the common batach, *to trust*; in the context of this verse, such batach continues from birth to adulthood with the continual protection of the psalmist’s mother. Since Ps 22 often refers to Christ on the cross, such batach is implied in the following: “But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene” [Jn 19.25]. Since John was also present (cf. vs. 26), he was entrusted to Mary, *my mother’s breasts*.

Vs. 10: Upon you was I cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. Such *casting*, shalach, is a sudden movement from birth directly *upon* (hal) God. I.e., it is an abrupt transition from the human to the divine sphere of existence. Parallel this shalach with the *rolling* or galal of vs. 8. “Before I formed you in the *womb* I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” [Jer 1.5]. Rechem is derived from the verbal root *to show mercy*.

Since my mother bore me you have been my God. Parallel “*from* (m-) the womb of my mother” with the words, “*from* (m-) my birth.” “You knitted me together in my mother’s *womb*” [Ps 139.13].

Vs. 11: Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help. Such spacial distance, *far* or rachaq, is intensified by *from*, min; compare this min with the two prepositions of the last verse. Rachaq is contrasted with a desire for God to be *near*, qerovah, from the verbal root qarav which indicates the *midst* of anything. Note that qarvan, *offering, sacrifice*, comes from this root. In vs. 11 tsarah, *trouble*, is near; from the same verbal root meaning *enemy*. The *help* requested, hozer, suggests a girding, which the psalmist finds is lacking.

Vs. 12: Many bulls encompass me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me. *Bulls* or parah (singular) also apply to a heifer or a young cow which has not yet born a calf, so they can refer to female animals which *surround* the psalmist, savav; cf. Ps 7.7 which contains a meaning opposite to the one here, “Let the assembly of the peoples *be gathered about* you.” The second kind of animal which *surrounds* the psalmist is a *bull*, ‘abyr, which also means a strong person or animal in general; actually this word is used alone, *bull* being implied. They are identified with *Bashan*, a fertile area east of the Jordan River: “Hear this word, you cows of *Bashan*, who are in the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the need” [Am 4.1].

Vs. 13: They open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. Patsah for *to open* implies a tearing to pieces: “But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house; *open* your mouth and eat what I give you” [Ezk 2.8]. Words addressed to the prophet Ezekiel, asking him not only to open his mouth but to patsah...*to devour*...the scroll handed to him. This leonine gesture is *ravening* and *roaring*, taraph and sh’ag, in a desire to consume the psalmist.

Vs. 14: I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast. Vivid descriptions of the psalmist's distress and physical suffering which continue through vs. 18 and which traditionally have been ascribed to Jesus Christ. They also bear resemblance to Job's sufferings and number as follows:

- strength dried up.
- tongue cleaves to my jaws.
- lay in dust of earth.
- dogs about me.
- evildoers surround me.
- pierced hand and feet.
- count my bones.
- enemies stare and gloat.
- divide my garments.
- cast lots for my raiment.

Vs. 19: But you, O Lord, be not far off! O you my help, hasten to my aid! *But* is lacking in Hebrew; the verse begins with *you*, 'atah, which stands in contrast to the above mentioned laments over the psalmist's miserable condition. His desire for YHWH not to be *far off*, rashaq, is similar to the same request in vs. 11 where it is *from me*, a phrase lacking here. In such a state, God is identified with *help*, hazar, which according to Ps 20.2 comes from the divine *sanctuary*, quodesh. Such a statement can apply to Christ on the cross outside Jerusalem who may have gazed upon the temple in which this quodesh was located.

Vs. 20: Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! *Deliver* or natsal was used mockingly in vs. 8 ("Let him *rescue* him") but here in all sincerity by the psalmist. While his *soul* cannot be touched by a physical *sword*, this image applies to one's inmost being. Contrast *soul*, nephesh, with the same desire for natsal with regard the "*hand* of the dog," *hand* meaning as an agent. "Each evening they come back, howling like *dogs*" [Ps 59.6], *evening* being the same time as Christ's death on the cross which tradition equates with the temple's evening sacrifice. The Hebrew text reads for "my life" *only one*, yachyd, which can refer to an only begotten child. "Make mourning as for an *only son*, most bitter lamentation" [Jer 6.26].

Vs. 21: Save me from the mouth of the lion, my afflicted soul from the horns of the wild oxen! The verbal root yashah or "Jesus" for the desire to be *saved*, and lion may represent the Devil as in 1 Pt 5.8: "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring *lion*, seeking someone to devour."

The second part of vs. 21 in Hebrew reads, "For you have heard me." The immaterial *hearing*, hanah, from God has the capacity to effect the yashah just mentioned. Keep in mind that hanah can also mean *to afflict*. Such hanah is in the past tense, has already taken place where it is associated with "horns of the *oxen*," re'em, which is an unidentified animal translated in the LXX as *unicorn*, monokeoes. Contrast this with the yachyd of the previous verse.

Vs. 22: I will tell of your name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you. The act of *telling*, saphar, suggests an inscribing as in Ps 2.7: "I will *tell* of the decree of the Lord;" i.e., the psalmist will *write* this divine name much like Moses with the tablets on Mt. Sinai. The brethren here can refer to Christ's apostles, not only them, but to the four evangelists who *write*...saphar...about Jesus Christ. "Now *write* what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter" [Rev 1.19]. Note the close connection between writing and seeing (i.e., the Logos, Jesus Christ).

In the midst of the congregation I will praise you. Words quoted in Heb 2.12 as applied to “he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified” [vs. 11]; they preface a teaching on Jesus Christ as high priest. Qahal for *congregation* is the classic word for an assembly gathered to worship God.

Vs. 23: You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you sons of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you sons of Israel! A more specific group of persons whom the psalmist bids to praise God after he himself had praised God in the previous verse, i.e., those who *fear* him, yare’. Cf. Ps 11.12 for this word’s parallel with ya’ah, *to see*. Then he moves on to two specific groups: first are the “sons of Jacob” whom he wishes to *glorify* God no doubt with Jacob’s dream at Bethel in mind (cf. Gen 28). For zerah as *son*, cf. Ps 20.7; from the verbal root from which the noun *seed* is derived; notion is to “plant” one’s memory in the future. Such *glory* or kavod is that which is most typical of God as emanating from him; verbal root fundamentally means *to be heavy*, as if part of God oozed out of him.

The second group, “sons of Israel” (note similar use of zakar), are bidden *to stand in awe* of God, gur, which means *to turn aside, to sojourn*. Canaan as well as Egypt was the traditional land for such exile, the scene of Jacob’s wanderings: “I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they dwelt as *sojourners*” [Ex 6.4]. Note too that God changes Jacob’s name to Israel: “God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but *Israel* shall be your name” [Gen 35.9-10].

Vs. 24: For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him. Note the double use of the same verbal root, hanah: *affliction* and *afflicted* which escape divine *despising* and *abhorring*, boz and shaqats, the latter implying impurity or unclean.

God manifests his face, i.e., does not *hide* it, satar, as in Ps 13.1: “How long will you *hide* your face from me?” The same word is used in Ex 3.6 as an act of reverence: “And Moses *hid* his face, for he was afraid to look at God.” Later after Israel’s departure from Egypt at Mount Sinai God prevents Moses from seeing his *face*, panym: “then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my *face* shall not be seen” [Ex 33.23]. In the context of Ps 22 we may say that the revelation of his face is Jesus Christ: “He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation” [Col 1.15].

But has heard when he cried to him. *To cry*, shuah, is related to yashah, “Jesus,” “when he *Jesus-ed* to him.” Note the play on words with shuah and *to hear*, shamah; i.e., “Jesus” and hearing are similar in this context.

Vs. 25: From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. Here there is an identity between *praise*, tehilath, and the qahal (of Israel) which is *great*, implying the nation as a whole. Implied is a sacrificial offering in the Jerusalem temple as at its dedication by Solomon: “And King Solomon and all the *congregation* of Israel...sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered” [1 Kg 8.5].

Neder or *vow* has for its verbal root the meaning of scattering; the making of a vow is thus a type of scattering or spreading of seed. It is often associated with a sacrifice: “And you offer to the Lord from the herd...an offering...to fulfil a *vow* or as a freewill offering” [Lev 15.3]. Again we have mention of persons who *fear* God who appear distinct from the *great congregation*. *To pay* such a neder (shalam) is the same verbal root of shalom, *peace*, and thus has a more specific meaning as a peace offering.

Vs. 26: The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord! May your hearts live forever! Hanawym is the classic term for those favored by God, from the verbal root hanah in vs. 24, the *affliction* of the *afflicted*. The opposite of hanawym is to be *satisfied*, savah; the food they eat (rather, *shall* eat, future tense signifying fulfillment not achieved) is unspecified but may be taken as from sacrificial (*peace*, shalam) offerings noted in the previous verse. “You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the *bread of affliction*—for you came out of the land of Egypt in hurried flight” [Ex 16.3]. Note the italicized words, lechem hony, the latter term derived from hanah.

Those who seek him shall praise the Lord! The Hebrew text is reversed, “They shall praise the Lord those who seek him.” At first glance one does not celebrate what one does not see; the verbal root *to seek*, darash, implies a treading, a going over familiar ground in search for something; more specifically, darash connotes consulting an oracle. With this dual meaning in mind, we may say that the psalmist is speaking of persons going over areas already known to them, the very act of which is a kind of vision. It is therefore an act of *praise*, halal.

May your hearts live forever! *Hearts* or the inmost aspect of a person do the “living forever,” lahad, composed of l- and had, perpetuity of time.

Vs. 27: All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. *Remember* is another occurrence of zakar; suggests that act of begetting from the past with a view towards propagation into the indefinite future. Such remembrance can apply to the recovery of the divine image and likeness which Genesis recounts as having been lost. Zakar is thus a reversal of Babel: “So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth” [Gen 11.8].

In vs. 27 zakar applies not just to the earth but their *ends*, ‘ephes, as in Ps 2.8: “and the *ends* of the earth your possession” as in the four cardinal directions of north, south, east and west. Compare with Is 52.10: “and all the ends of the earth shall see the *salvation* [i.e., the ‘Jesus’] of our God.” This word can also mean *nothingness* as in Is 40.17: “All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than *nothing* and emptiness.”

And all the families of the nations shall worship before him. The act of *worship*, shachah, has the sense of falling prostrate before God. “*Worship* the Lord in the beauty of holiness” [1 Chron 16.29], *beauty* (plural) or hadar implying here sacred ornaments or dress. *Families* or mishpachah more specifically means a unit comprising a tribe and used extensively in the Book of Numbers which details the composition of the nation of Israel.

Vs. 30: Posterity shall serve him; men shall tell of the Lord to the coming generation. Another instance of zarah, *posterity*, which means *to scatter*; actual use in this verse is the noun *seed*. “To your *descendants* I will give this land” [Gen 12.7], the promise God made to Abraham. I.e., from Abraham faith in God is *scattered* throughout succeeding generations: “It is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham” [Gal 3.7]. Havad is the common word for *to work*; implies subservience as a slave to a master.

The second half of vs. 30 in Hebrew reads, “It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.” The *it* presumably is serah which will be *told*, saphar, or more accurately, be *written*. “But nothing unclean shall enter it [the new Jerusalem], nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the *book of life*” [Rev 21.27]. That is to say, only those persons *sown* in this

book. Such a divine book represents the culmination of *generations*, dor, which had their origin of faith in Abraham.

Vs. 31: And proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, that he has wrought it. The Hebrew reads, “They shall come,” that is, come in the sense of from Abraham’s faith which is *scattered*, zarah: “If anyone thirst, let him *come* to me and drink” [Jn 8.37], that is, come in the sense of being realized that one’s faith is told, saphar, from Abraham’s seed.

Instead of *deliverance* the text has *righteousness*, tsedaqah, in which people who believe are justified: “he himself is *righteous*, and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus” [Rom 3.26]. Another instance of faith in God springing...scattered...from Abraham and proclaimed to generations not yet born. Note in the Hebrew text the juxtaposition of the future (“people that shall be born”) and the past (“that he has done this”), an expression of Jesus Christ as Alpha and Omega, cf. Rev 22.13.

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Psalm Twenty-Three

Vs. 1: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Here YHWH is associated with being a *shepherd*, rahah, a rich word from which is also derived raheyah, *love*, as found in nine places in the Song of Songs, for instance, 2.10, “Rise up, my *love*, my fair one.” There comes to mind the obvious “I am the good *shepherd*” of Jn 10.11. With this identification in mind, the psalmist can say “I shall not *want*,” chasar, as in Ps 34.10: “The young lions suffer *want* and go hungry.”

Vs. 2: He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. The reason for the psalmist’s sufficiency is *green pastures*, the noun being na’ah, from the verbal root meaning *to dwell, to be suitable*: “Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the *pastures* of the wilderness are *green*” [Jl 2.22]. Here *green* is the same adjective as in vs. 1, deshe’, more specifically intimating tender grass. It is in such places as these that YHWH/raheyah causes the psalmist to *lie down*, ravats, a verb used of quadrupeds who gather their feet under their bodies: “As he [Jacob] looked, he saw a well in the field, and lo, three flocks of sheep *lying* beside it” [Gen 29.2]. Jacob rolled away the stone over this well’s mouth for Rachel’s flocks, a superhuman task (cf. vs. 8). It was this well besides which Jesus said “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst” [Jn 4.13-4].

This *leading* or nahal suggests receiving something as one’s own; nachal or *stream* is derived from the same verbal root. Cf. Is 49.10: “By the springs of water shall he *guide* them” which may be contrasted with the (Hebrew) “waters of *quietness*,” menuchah, from the verbal root nuach which is related to na’ah in the paragraph above. “Like cattle that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them *rest*” [Is 63.14]. Note this verb used with cattle who rest according to the above mentioned verb ravats. The Lord who leads the psalmist by such menuchah implies no stopping or perhaps briefly to take refreshment and then move one, that is, to continue nahal.

Vs. 3: He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. To *restore* one’s soul, shuv, is a recovery of what had been lost in what the Cistercians had called the “land of unlikeness.” This shuv is effected in the *green pastures* and *still waters* of vs. 1. Perhaps these two elements may be symbolic of Eden: “A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden” [Gen 2.10], river having a parallel with the *still waters*. Compare shuv with its equivalent in Mt 17.11: “Elijah does come, and he is to *restore* all things;” apokatasteso being the verb and used by the Greek Fathers as the culmination of all creation in Jesus Christ. Also, “*Return* [shuv], O my soul, to your *rest* [menuchah]”

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[Ps 116.7].

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Such *leading*, nachah, tells more about the restoration of the psalmist's soul above; it consists in proceeding along *paths*, mahgal (singular), or more specifically, *ruts* made by cart wheels. "The *tracks* of your chariot drip with fatness" [Ps 65.13]. For both a positive and a negative sense, "Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good *path*" [Prov 2.9]. And, "For her house sinks down to death, and her *paths* to the shades" [Prov 2.18]. In Ps 23, mahgal is associated with *righteousness*, tsedaqah. Note the plural use of *paths* indicating that tsedaqah is not monolithic but has a variety of approaches.

Here the *leading* or nachah is because of the divine *name*, shem, in order to glorify God. "Your *name* is as ointment poured forth" [Sg 1.3].

Vs. 4: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Contrast this *walking*, halak, with the *leading* of vs. 3; the former is done under divine guidance, whereas the latter has the psalmist on his own. The valley of which he speaks is marked by tsalmaweth, composed of two words, tsel (*shadow*) and maweth (*death*). The former is derived from the verbal root which also means *image*, as in Gen 1.27: "God created man in his *image* and likeness," that is, his *shadow*, which is reason for the psalmist not to fear *evil*, rah. Hence his confidence is saying "you are *with* me," himady, from the verbal root meaning *to stand* and hence an enduring presence.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Two objects with one effect, *comfort* or nacham which can also mean *to lament, take vengeance*. "I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your hanger turned away, and you did *comfort* me" [Is 12.1]. And, "*Comfort, comfort* my people, says your God" [Is 40.1]. The first agent to effect such nacham is shevet, *rod, tribe*, the latter after the leader of such a tribe. The second agent is mishhan, *staff*, as in Ps 18.18 ("But the Lord was my *stay*"). Note that the rod associated with Moses is mateh which also means *spear, twig*. Mateh can also mean *tribe*, so we may imply that when Moses used this rod to effect plagues on the Egyptians, it was the *tribes* of Israel who were indirectly involved.

Vs. 5: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Such a *table* shulchan can apply to Jesus and his disciples in the upper room at the Last Supper. Note that the Book of Exodus goes into some detail describing the preparation of the shulchan for divine worship: "He made the poles of acacia wood to carry the *table*, and overlaid them with gold" [37.14]. Such a shulchan is divinely *prepared*, harak, implying set in order. "Where will you have us *prepare* for you to eat the Passover" [Mt 26.17]?, words addressed to Christ by his disciples where such preparation is associated with the Passover.

You anoint my head with oil. As applied to Christ, just prior to the Passover: "A woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at table" [Mt 26.7, also note *table* here]. Such *anointing*, dashan, fundamentally means *to be fat* as in Ps 20.3, "May he remember all your offerings, and regard with favor your *burnt sacrifices!*" Also, cf. Prov 28.25, "but he who trusts in the Lord will be *enriched*," i.e., made fat. Thus the act of making dashan implies preparation for sacrifice and harkens back to the woman who anointed Christ: "In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial" [Mt 26.12]. By the psalmist's *head* being anointed with oil, it can refer to Christ, "the *head* of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior" [Eph 5.23]. The *cup*, kus, is none of than that of *salvation*, yeshuah as in Ps 116.13. It *overflows*, rewayah, akin to rawah, *to satiate*.

Vs. 6: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. After being led (passively) in paths of righteousness and having walked (actively) through the valley of death, the psalmist is qualified, as it were, to have *goodness* (tov) and *mercy* (chesed) follow him, radaph, basically meaning *to pursue* almost in a hostile sense. Thus tov and chesed are actively in the psalmist's train for the rest of his life.

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. These final words of Ps 23 see the psalmist at rest, *dwelling* (shavat, from which comes *Sabbath*). "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he *rested* on the seventh day" [Gen 2.2]. From this statement derives the Jewish Sabbath; we may say that the psalmist took six days of work to attain this divine rest in the Jerusalem temple ("house of the Lord"). He does so *forever* or "for *length* of days," 'orek meaning indefinite temporal extension not so much eternity. However, 'orek as applied to the seventh day on which God rested may be said to be a foretaste of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

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Psalm Twenty-Four

Vs. 1: The earth is the Lord's and its fulness, the world and those who dwell therein. The psalmist makes a distinction between the *earth* ('erets) and its *fulness* (melo'), former referring to the planet itself and the latter to what lives on it. He makes a further distinction between the *world* (tevel) and those *dwelling* (yashav) on it. More specifically, tevel refers to the inhabitable world, human situations or oikonomia, opposed to the *desert* or midbar. "In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole *world* with fruit" [Is 27.6]. This verse alludes to its *dwellers*, yoshvey (from yashav) in the person of Jacob/Israel who *fill* it; cf. melo' above.

Vs. 2: For he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers. Allusion to the Genesis account, "and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" [1.2], *found* being associated with this Spirit-ual *moving*, rachaph (in the sense of brooding); yasad suggesting the establishment of a building as in Is 14.32, "The Lord has *founded* Zion." This Psalm's verse has yasad on the *seas*, yamym, which harken back to the same water of Gen 1.2. Note that this verse makes a distinction between "darkness upon the face of the *deep*" and "Spirit...over the face of the *waters*." The addition of *face* or peny suggests a vaguely outlined surface here at the very beginning of divine creation, whereas Ps 24.2 simply has "earth *upon* (hal) the seas."

For *rivers*, nahar (singular), refer to Gen 2.10: "A *river* flowered out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers," namely, sources of water emanating from the *deep*, tehom, which then expanded to the four corners of the world; tevel is implied here in that people *inhabited* or lived by such rivers. We get a picture of the destructive aspect of these rivers in Jon 2.3: "For you did cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the *flood* was round about me."

Vs. 3: Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? Probable reference to ascending Mt. Zion and the Jerusalem temple. Note the use of these two high places after mention of the seas and rivers located in lowly places. The first *ascent* (halah) reads "*in* (v-) the hill;" similarly, with regard to the second act of *standing*, qum, it is "*in* his holy place." Note use of qum whose basic meaning is *to rise* as though there were a second ascent within the holy place. Meqom is the word for *place*. The two rhetorical questions of vs. 3 can refer to any person who has emerged from the chaos symbolized by the above mentioned seas and rivers; cf. Christ's emergence from the Jordan River after having been baptized by John (Mt 3.16).

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Vs. 4: He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully. The verbal root for *clean*, naqah, implies being *free* or *to pardon*. “The wicked shall not be *unpunished*” [Prov 11.21]. Perhaps this word as applied to *hands* suggests that these hands had been manacled and are now free. The hands represent external activity whereas *heart* is the inner person which is pure, bar; alternate meanings are *son, beloved, field*.

This harmony between outer and inner cleanliness is carried over to the second half of vs. 4: *lifting* of soul, nasa’ (which is a silent gesture) and refraining from a false oath. *False* or shawe’ fundamentally means *to lay waste*; *vanity* is a noun. “*In vain* have I smitten your children, they took no correction” [Jer 2.30]. The verbal gesture of not “swearing *deceitfully*,” mirmah, is the external gesture.

Vs. 5: He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from the God of his salvation. The *blessing* or verakah is a generalized one received on the “hill of the Lord” and in “his holy place,” the two high places of vs. 3 after the waters of vs. 2. Such verakah is reminiscent of Noah’s after the flood: “Then Noah built an altar to the Lord...and offered burnt offerings on the altar” [Gen 8.20]. The second gift received from God is more specific in that it consists of *vindication* or better, *righteousness*, tsedaqah; it’s source is the “God of his *salvation*,” i.e., of “Jesus.”

Vs. 6: Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.
Selah. Despite the positive attitude towards the (current) *generation*, dor (alternate meaning, *circuit of life*), the Bible recounts the propensity towards evil manifested by every generation starting from the first man and woman. Blessedness consists in *seeking* God, darash, not necessarily finding him, the very act of which counters the that tendency towards evil. Note the first part of vs. 6 has darash (implying a treading down as in Ps 9.10) whereas the second part has baqash for the same English word; it suggests making a petition which here is in conjunction with the divine *face*. Even more specifically, such face is associated with the “God of *Jacob*,” notably his wrestling with a mysterious divine being: “So *Jacob* called the name of the place Peniel (face of God), saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face and yet my life is preserved’” [Gen 32.30]. Note inclusion of that “divine (liturgical) pause” or selah.

Vs. 7: Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors that the King of glory may come in! A verse reminiscent of 2 Sam 6.12-2: “The Lord has blessed the household of Obbededom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.’ So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obbededom to the city of David with rejoicing.” The New Testament context is Christ’s entry into Jerusalem (i.e., Palm Sunday): “And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest’” [Mt 21.9]! In both instances the *gates*, shahar (singular), are not assailed by an attacking enemy but welcome the Messiah. “On the top of the walls she [Wisdom] cries out; at the entrance of the city *gates* she speaks” [Prov 1.21]. Wisdom is there to welcome Jesus Christ; she has no need of this with regard to the heavenly Jerusalem which has three gates on each of its four sides (cf. Rev 21.12-3).

Note that vs. 7 has “lift up” (active) and “be lifted up” (passive); the former which refer to gates are younger, as it were, whereas the ancient doors are older and require assistance in being lifted up. The former *gates*, is derived from shahar, *to cleave, to divide*, whereas the latter, *doors*, comes from patach, *to open*. Such doors are *ancient*, hulam, whose verbal root meads *to hide* implying that olden times were concealed or not present in living memory except perhaps vaguely.

The king who enters is marked by *glory*, kavod, which as noted earlier, is the prime attribute of God. Because this king (Christ) has entered the city, there was no need for a temple there “for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” [Rev 21.22].

Vs. 8: Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle!

Instead of ignorance with regard to this king, it appears more as a refrain in his honor. This is evident by acknowledging him by two qualities, *strong* and *mighty*.

Vs. 9 continues the refrain with regard to (Jerusalem's) gates and ancient doors, only here the latter are in the active mode, *lift up* as opposed to the passive mode. Vs. 10 concludes the psalm with words similar to vs. 8 only reading "Lord of hosts" and a statement that the Lord "is the king of glory" instead of a rhetorical question which brings Ps 24 to a fitting conclusion. This conclusion is enhanced by the closing (liturgical) word *selah*, *pause*. We could add that *selah* has a mystical sense in that it invites reflection upon the king's entry.

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Psalm Twenty-Five

Vs. 1: To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. Note the act of *lifting*, *nasa'*, a verb we saw in vss. 7 and 9 of Ps 24 with respect to gates and doors. It is as though the king upon entering Jerusalem now lifts up his soul once these entry ways have been lifted to receive him. Consider this in light of King Solomon's prayer of dedication with regard to the temple, 1 Kg 8. This *nasa'* suggests an almost universal perception of the divinity being "up there" to which a person assents.

Vs. 2: O my God, in you I trust, let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. The three-fold desire of the psalmist spells out that *nasa'* or *lifting* just discussed. The expression of *trust*, *batach*, implies waiting or expectation. "And they shall dwell *securely* in it, and they shall build houses and plant vineyards" [Ezk 28.6]. In vs. 2 the psalmist perceives a threat of being *shamed*, *bush*, which involves a failure of hope or that *batach* just mentioned. In the meantime, he has his soul lifted up to God (vs. 1), suspended, as it were, between heaven and earth much like Christ on the cross.

The *exulting* of enemies, *halats*, fundamentally is an expression of joy as in this positive sense: "I will be glad and *rejoice* in you" [Ps 9.2]. It is kind of upward movement just like the psalmist's *nasa'* of his soul of vs. 1, so we see a struggle between two types of upward gestures where the outcome is not yet certain.

Vs. 3: Yes, let none that wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. *Waiting* or *qawah* forms a basic theme to all genuine religious expression, and this example is no exception; *qawah* almost suggests strength, and from it is derived *qaw*, *rope*, *cord*; in Ps 19.4 this word reads "yet their *voice* goes out through all the earth," *voice* being (measuring) line. We may envision the persons of which the psalmist speak as hanging or being suspended on such a *qaw* which is open to *shame* by others, *bush*.

To *shame* or *bagad* also means *to oppress* from which is derived *beget*, a *covering*, so we get the idea of being *veiled* in disgrace. The following verse applied to Christ's suffering on the cross suggests this twofold meaning: "They parted my *garments* among them and for my clothing they cast lots" [Ps 22.18, Jn 19.24]. *Reyqam*, *treacherous*, intensifies this *bagad*, for it means vanity. "You shall sow your seed *in vain*" [Lev 26.16].

Vs. 4: Make me know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Two examples of passage, *ways* (*derek*) and *paths* (*'orach*) which comprise two types of comprehension, a desire to *know* (*yadah*) and a desire to be *taught* (*lamad*). This wish for instruction in the psalmist eyes pertains to something with which he is unfamiliar; both courses are in the plural and imply a multiplicity of goals.

Vs. 5: Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait

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all the day long. An amplification of derek in vs. 4 with the verbal form, darak, *to lead*, that is, with respect to *truth*, 'emeth, not just truth but "*your truth*," God's. Instead of a desire to be taught in divine paths (again, vs. 4), vs. 5 has a desire for being directly taught by God whom the psalmist identifies with *salvation*, yeshuah, "Jesus." I.e., leading and teaching are brought in line with "the God of my Jesus."

For you I wait all the day long. Here *waiting*, qawah, (cf. vs. 3) applies to kal-hayom, *all the day long*, "day" being a kairos expression of time as *event*.

Vs. 6: Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Often the Psalter has the psalmist speaking about the necessity to *remember* (zakar) God, etc, but here his wish is applied to God himself or more specifically, his *mercy*, rechem (cf. Ps 18.1 for a note on the former). In vs. 6 an alignment, as it were, is brought between rechem and zakar (*mindful*) together with chesed, *steadfast love*. The psalmist is quick to note their ancient quality, "from of *old*," holam, which refers to indefinite temporal extension however long. Perhaps he has in mind not only God's favoring of Israel but holam as extending back to the Genesis account of creation. As noted earlier, zakar is the verbal root for *male*; it is as though the psalmist wants God to propagate the two qualities of mercy in the sense of making them an inheritance for extension into the future.

Vs. 7: Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord! Note the continued insistence upon *remember*, zakar, only here applied to the psalmist's *sins*, chata'ah (singular), or better, "from my *youth*," nehurym, which is plural in form. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his *youth*" [Gen 8.21], words uttered after the flood. This chapter of Genesis begins with "But God *remembered* Noah," another instance of zakar, that is, he takes steps to insure propagation of Noah into the future. In addition to the psalmist's sins, he wishes that God also not zakar his *transgressions*, pesheh (singular), which connotes rebellion. "My *transgressions* were bound into a yoke" [Lam 1.14].

According to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord! An association of zakar with chesed. Note the connection of the psalmist with God in relation with this chesed according to the Hebrew: zekar-ly-'atah, "remember-me-you" with the psalmist sandwiched in between. He ties in chesed here with divine *goodness*, using the general tov.

Vs. 8: Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. Two general attributes, tov and yashar, applied to God; while familiar to readers of the Psalter, their frequent usage acts as a reminder and as words of introduction to a more particular facet of the divinity. In this instance, it is God's faculty of *instructing*, darak, the verbal root for the noun *way* frequently used thus far. For *sinners* we have hanawym, a word associated with those who are afflicted, not necessarily by sinfulness (cf. Ps 22.26).

The second part of vs. 8 contains the word derek, *way*, which here is unspecified but assumed to be the divine Torah; also applicable to Jesus Christ as the way. Sinners are instructed, lamad, the verb from which Talmud is derived; also note that in the Syriac version of the New Testament Christ's disciples are called talmydim.

Vs. 9: He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. Continuation of the theme of *leading* and the *way* discussed just above, only here with respect to the *humble*, hanawym, who are mentioned twice. The second example is in conjunction with lamad; note the different use of hanawym here as opposed to *sinners* of vs. 8.

Vs. 10: All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies. *Paths* or 'orek (singular) are "of the Lord," not *to* the Lord, indicating those qualities he wishes to manifest which here are *steadfast love*, *chesed*, and *truth*, 'emeth. A person becomes attuned to this divine outflow, as it were, by *keeping*, *natsar* two things: the divine *covenant* and *testimonies*, *beryth* and *hed*. Cf. Ps 12.7 for mention of *natsar* as *watching*; while suggesting a keeping, it also involves watching in that one can lose them as well as gain further insight into them. First mention of *beryth* is Gen 6.18: "But I will establish my *covenant* with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife and your sons' wives with you." The last mention is Mal 3.1: "Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the *covenant* in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts." With these two covenants in mind, it is interesting to observe the various usages of *beryth* in between, as it were, them. *Hedothayu* (*his testimonies*) are more specific rules or features of the general *beryth*.

Vs. 11: For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great. Not so much as for YHWH himself but for his *name* which we may assign as the person of Jesus Christ; better, "for your *Word's* sake," *Logos*. This incarnation of the divine *shem*, *name*, or Jesus-as-salvation is directed toward extending *pardon*, *salach*, which has the notion of lightness, of lifting up (for example, on the cross of Christ).

Vs. 12: Who is the man that fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. A rhetorical question which can be taken as addressed to a crowd, *fear* or *yir'ath* being the first step on the road to acquire wisdom. "The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" [Prov 1.7]. Here *beginning*, *re'shyth*, is used in the sense of embracing all other aspects; it is a kind of Alpha implying an Omega (cf. Rev 22.13).

Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. Here the choice is up to the person, after which the Lord will *instruct* him, *arah*, which can also mean *to lay foundations*, *to sprinkle*, both which have the basic meaning of casting something: "Behold, the pillar which I have *founded*" [Gen 31.51]. And, "He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that *water* the earth" [Hos 6.3]. Implied is human free will (*bachar*) which makes choices under divine inspiration after which comes *arah* which has a specific path, *way* or *derek*.

Vs. 13: He himself shall abide in prosperity, and his children shall possess the land. *Nephesh* or the common word for *soul* is used for "he himself," one's inmost being. Such *prosperity*, *tov*, is contingent upon the vs. 12, fear of God, which implies a continuous state signified by the word *abide*, *lun*; used more specifically for spending the night as in Gen 32.21: "and he himself [Jacob] *lodged* that night in the camp." Such *lun* was a preparation for Jacob's wrestling bout with the mysterious divine being who bestowed upon him a change of names, i.e., to Israel. Compare with Sg 1.13: "He *shall lie all night* between my breasts." In the case of Jacob, his new name of Israel suggests the presence in his person of future generations, the children of vs. 13 who "shall *possess* the land," *yarash*, in the sense of becoming inheritors.

Vs. 14: The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant. Those who enjoy divine *friendship*, *sod*, stem from Jacob/Israel discussed in the preceding verse; it requires that *fear* of Prov 1.7. *Sod* also means a *couch*, *assembly*, therefore an abiding relationship; the notion of reclining may be associated with sharing a meal as Christ with his disciples at the Last Supper. At a *sod* there is often intimate conversation, reminiscent of Christ's discourse on his mission and coming of the Holy Spirit, that is, Christ divulged to the disciples his *covenant*, *beryth*: "for this is my blood of the *covenant*, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" [Mt 26.28].

The act of making *known*, yadah, suggests an indirect disclosure where one must do active work or searching to realize what is being done.

Vs. 15: My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he will pluck my feet out of the net. In God's relation with Moses, he never disclosed himself but only spoke with Moses: "and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen" [Ex 33.23]. In light of this, how can the psalmist's eyes gaze upon YHWH? *Toward*, 'el, suggests in-the-direction-of, not necessarily in the sense of direct gaze; perhaps the psalmist had in mind God's words to Moses just mentioned, namely, that God's *back* can be seen, not his face. In this light, his gaze is following God as he is in the act of moving.

This gaze fixed towards God thus directs a person's actions signified by *feet* which God will *pluck* from a *snare*, yasta' and resheth. Once liberated, the psalmist can then follow God's *back*. "Draw me after you, let us make haste" [Sg 1.4].

Vs. 16: Turn to me and be gracious to me; for I am lonely and afflicted. Perhaps the desire for God to *turn*, panah (from which is derived *face*), is a wish to see God in light of Moses' wish discussed in the previous verse. God can turn about but this would kill Moses who is well aware of the fact which is why vs. 16 can be put in Moses' mouth, *be gracious*, chanan, which implies an inclining gesture.

The psalmist appeals to God for this chanan by stating his miserable condition, *lonely* or yachyd and hany (from hanah, same verbal root for *eyes* of vs. 15).

Vs. 17: Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distresses. *Troubles* derive from the verb tsarar which pertains to something which is pressed, and applied to the *heart* or center of feeling connotes extreme distress. The psalmist wishes *relief* from such constraints, rachav, *to be spacious*. "For now the Lord has *made room* for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" [Gen 26.22].

And bring me out of my distresses. The two verbs here are vivid descriptions of the psalmist's predicament, for they are similar sounding, mimtsuqothay and hotsy'eny; matsaq can mean *column* and comes from the same verbal root as tsuq, *to be narrow* which is similar in meaning to tsarar.

Vs. 18: Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins. Haneny (again, hanah) is the word for *affliction* which the psalmist wishes God to *consider*, ra'ah, or more accurately, *to see*, which is his way of having God reciprocate his words in vs. 15, "My eyes are ever toward the Lord." The second object the psalmist wishes God to ra'ah is his trouble, hamal, more specifically, *labor*. This word is frequently used in Ecclesiastes to reveal the vanity of human endeavors: "What does man gain by all the *toil* at which he *toils* under the sun" [1.3]? With this verse in mind, the psalmist intimates that God should consider his *vanity*, havel.

Finally vs. 18 has the psalmist beseeching God not simply to cast a look upon his situation but to actively step in and *forgive* his sins (chete', singular), nasa', more fundamentally, to take them up as though removing that havel from his eyes.

Vs. 19: Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me. Another instance of ra'ah for *consider*, i.e., *to see*, this time with respect to the psalmist's *foes*, 'eyvah (singular); the first ra'ah seems to concern his own inner turmoil, whereas this second one is external. Their *hatred*, sin'ah, is intensified by the wording of the Hebrew, "They hate me with cruel hatred," sin'ah being used twice. Chamas, *violent*, a frequently used word in the Psalter; this term is situated in between the two words, sin'ah

Vs. 20: Oh guard my life and deliver me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. When *nephesh* is used for *life*, almost always it suggests *soul* which here the psalmist wishes God to both *guard* (*shamar*) as well as to *deliver* (“me”), *natsal* which implies a pulling out of a dangerous situation. Note use of *natsal* in conjunction with *me*, not *nephesh*, perhaps signifying a more pointed or urgent request for assistance from God.

The act of *taking refuge*, *chasah*, is bound up with the notion of fleeing, of hurried flight from a dangerous situation; it also means *to trust*: “under whose wings you have come to *trust*” [Rt 2.12]. Although in vs. 20 the psalmist bids God to *deliver* him—thereby implying a *chasah*—he nevertheless adds the statement of already having accomplished this same *chasah*.

Vs. 21: May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you. *Tom* and *yosher* are two elements which *preserve* (*natsar*) the psalmist, the former signifying fullness or completion and the latter straightness. It is the function of *natsar* to effect these two types of protection; it signifies a type of watching as in Jer 31.6: “There shall be a day when the *watchmen* will call in the hill country of Ephraim.” Actually vs. 21 expresses a wish of the psalmist, not its accomplishment and his based upon his expectation or *waiting*, *qawah*. Vs. 5 above specifies this *qawah* by saying it is “all the day long.”

Vs. 22: Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles. This concluding verse of Ps 25 shifts attention away from the psalmist’s personal woes to the larger community in which he belongs, *Israel* whom he wants God to *redeem*, *padah*, which means a setting free. “And the *ransomed* of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing” [Is 51.11]. This notion of setting free is enhanced by “out of all his *troubles*,” *tsar*; cf. vs. 17: “Relieve the *troubles* of my heart.”

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Psalm Twenty-Six

Vs. 1: Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. The psalmist wishes God to *vindicate* or judge him, *shapat*, a desire implying certainty of a favorable outcome on his behalf. Note the connection of *shaphat* with motion or *walking*, *halak*; perhaps the psalmist has been delayed en route or has seen something which gives him confidence, for he speaks of “my *integrity*,” *tom*, which connotes perfection or completeness; here it can be in reference to the divine Torah or *Law*. Action is in the past tense or indicative that the psalmist has culminated his walk or journey. *Tom* also means *Thummim* or *sacred lots* used by the levitical priests: “And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart when he goes in before the Lord” [Ex 28.30].

And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Such *wavering*, *mahad*, implies *slipping* or losing one’s balance. “Trust in a faithless man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that *slips*” [Prov 25.19], the opposite of which is *trust*, *batach*. Applied to the psalmist’s walking of vs. 1, such steadiness is suggestive of 1 Sam 6.12: “And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh...they turned neither to the right nor to the left.”

Vs. 2: Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind. Three desires associated with the psalmist’s walking of the previous verse: prove, try and test; the last two are applicable to his *heart* and *mind*, and all three may apply after the psalmist has completed his walk. *Bachan* for *prove* suggests watching (cf. Ps 7.9). With Ps 11.4 in mind, we may say it is God’s eyelids which do this *bachan*: “His *eyelids* try the children of men.” Furthermore, *bachan* is connected with *nasah*, *to try*, in the sense of to tempt: “I will not ask, and I will not *put* the Lord *to the test*” [Is 7.12].

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Both *bachan* and *nasah* pertain to the psalmist himself as opposed to his *heart* and *mind* in the second half of vs. 2 where he uses the verb *tsaraph*. This word applies to refining as a goldsmith: “I will turn my hand against you and will *smelt away* your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy” [Is 1.25]. Thus *tsaraph* melts the psalmist’s “reins” (Hebrew text) and “heart,” *reins* or kidneys, *kilyah* (singular), traditionally the seat of affections. “My *soul* will rejoice when your lips speak what is right” [Prov 23.16]. In addition to *kilyah*, the psalmist bids God to *nasah* his mind or in Hebrew, *heart*, *lev*.

Vs. 3: For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you. Another example of *chesed*, *steadfast love*, with a specific place-where-ness, that is, “*before* (neged) my eyes.” Such *chesed* is not interior but acts as a guide for the psalmist’s walking of vs. 1 which he specifies again as in (Hebrew), “in your *faithfulness*,” ‘*emeth*, not that of the psalmist. While *chesed* is “exterior,” ‘*emeth* is “interior” (i.e., “*in your faithfulness*”).

Vs. 4: I do not sit with false men, nor do I consort with dissemblers. To *sit* (*yashav*) implies a being-with, active participation, here in the negative sense as with Ps 1.1: “Nor *sits* in the seat of scoffers.” Note use of *methey*, *men*; this term has a possible relationship with the verb *to die* (moth), so with this in mind, it can be assumed that the psalmist intensifies his contempt for “false men” by using *methey* to indicate their mortality. *Methey* is joined with *shawe’*, *wickedness* or more precisely, *nothingness*. “Take not the name of the Lord your God *in vain*, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name *in vain*” [Ex 20.7].

The second group which the psalmist mentions his dissociation is *dissemblers*, from the verbal root *halam*, *to hide*, implying something like a conspiracy of evildoers. For an inverse meaning, cf. Ps 55.2: “*Hide* not yourself from my supplication.” The psalmist states that he does not *consort* with such people, *bo’*, the simple verb for *to enter*; the preposition *b-* (*in*) is prefixed to *dissemblers* meaning a full participation.

Vs. 5: I hate the company of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. *Qahal* for *company*, the exact opposite of that sacred *qahal* gathered to worship God: “In the midst of the *congregation* I will praise you” [Ps 22.22]. This term represents the collective nature of Israelite society, and not to share in *qahal*-ness is a fate worse than death. Thus in a sense that of evildoers is preferable to banishment or separation.

The second group which the psalmist mentions is *wicked*, *reshahym*, a general term which could be taken as not belonging to the *qahal* (*evildoers*); the latter can apply to those *sitting* (*yashav*) outside the sacred *qahal* of Israel.

Vs. 6: I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, O Lord. A liturgical act as in Dt 21.6: “And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall *wash* their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley.” The verb used is *rachats*, as in Sg 5.12: “His eyes are...*washed* with milk.” Such washing is a clear dissociation with that *qahal* of evildoers of vs. 5 among whom may be counted Pontus Pilate: “He took water and *washed* his hands before the crowd saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood’” [Mt 27.24]. That *innocence* or *niqayon* is ritual purity done prior to *going about* (*savav*) the altar of sacrifice, the opposite of which is “And they limped about the altar which they had made” [1 Kg 18.26], ritual dance by priests of Baal on Mount Carmel with whom the prophet Elijah contended. The *altar* or *mizbeach* of vs. 6 most likely refers to the one in the Jerusalem temple.

Vs. 7: Singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and telling all your wondrous deeds. A continuation of vs. 6 with respect to the Jerusalem altar and part of the psalmist’s *savav* of it. The Hebrew of the

first part of vs. 7 reads, “That I may *publish* with the voice of thanksgiving,” the verb being shamah, *to hear* (or “may cause to be heard”). I.e., he wants his voice to be heard as part of the ritual savav. “Offer a sacrifice of *thanksgiving* of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings, *publish* them” [Am 4.5]. Note use of same words, shamah and todah, in both verses.

The psalmist also adds that he *tells*, saphar, as in “I will *tell* of your name to my brethren” [Ps 22.22]; as has been pointed out, this verb implies the act of writing or inscribing. Perhaps saphar may be applied to God *writing* the “two tables of the testimony” [Ex 34.29] after which the psalmist’s face, like Moses, “shone because he had been talking with God” [Ex 34.29]. “Your *wondrous deeds*,” niphel’otheyka, suggest God’s numerous interventions on behalf of Israel.

Vs. 8: O Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. Note the object of love here—not just *house* but “*habitation* of your house,” mehon, *dwelling* in a general sense. “Look down from your holy *habitation*” [Dt 26.15]. As situated within *house*, bayth, mehon suggests a central spot such as the *holy of holies* or devyr (cf. 1 Kg 6.5; also cf. Ps 20.2 for notes on this term); while divine holiness is certainly present within the context of vs. 8, the association with bayth intimates the intimacy of a household. Kavod or *glory* has a different location from what we just considered, having as its position a *place*, meqom, which *dwells*, shakan. “But now, if your land is unclean, pass over into the Lord’s land where the Lord’s tabernacle *stands* and take for yourselves a possession among us” [Jos 22.19]. Again, “As the *glory* of the Lord entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the *glory* of the Lord filled the temple” [Ezk 43.4].

Vss. 9 & 10: Sweep me not away with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, men in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes. Four types of people whom the psalmist beseeches God to avoid: sinners, bloodthirsty men, men with evil devices and those full of bribes. *Sweep* or ‘asaph also means *to take away* in the sense of making a collection; the implication is that the psalmist does not want to join that “*company*, qahal, of evildoers” of vs. 5, of which these men are members.

Vs. 11: But as for me, I walk in my integrity; redeem me and be gracious to me. The words “but as for me” (wa’any) separate the psalmist from the above mentioned qahal of four types of evildoers; he associates himself again with tom, *integrity*, as in vs. 1: “I have walked in *integrity*.” Note past tense whereas vs.11 is in the present (same verb). This tom or *perfection* achieves fullest realization when a person grasps that he or she is made in God’s image and likeness.

Despite his tom, the psalmist makes two requests from God: 1) for *redemption*, padah, a setting free or liberation, and 2) for God to be *gracious*, chanan, as in Ps 6.2. Surely the psalmist must have realized that God can be chanan to whomever he wants: “I will be *gracious* to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” [Ex 33.19].

Vs. 12: My foot stands on level ground; in the great congregation I will bless the Lord. This *level ground* or myshor also means *righteousness*. “Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain be made low; the uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a *plain*” [Is 40.4]. Also, “Let your good spirit lead me on a level path” [Ps 143.10]! Contrast this *standing*, hamad, with the *walking* of vs. 3 which is in *righteousness*, ‘emeth.

Then the psalmist mentions (in Hebrew) the *congregations*, qahal, whose multiplicity offsets that of evildoers as mentioned in earlier verses. Also, each of the twelve tribes of Israel may be considered a qahal; they are transformed as part of the heavenly Jerusalem which has three gates on each of its four

sides (cf. Rev 21.12-3) on which were the “twelve names of the twelve apostles (i.e., qahal) of the Lamb” [vs. 14]. “I will bless:” action is in the future, much like the future coming of the heavenly Jerusalem just mentioned. Contrast this future intent with the present “my foot *stands* on level ground.”

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Psalm Twenty-Seven

Vs. 1: The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Two qualities of YHWH: *light* (‘or) and *salvation* (yashah or “Jesus”); note that ‘or precedes “Jesus.” “I [i.e., Jesus] am the *light* of the world” [Jn 9.5]. Such confidence in these two qualities leads the psalmist to exclaim, “whom shall I *fear*, yara’,” which as noted earlier (Ps 19.9), bears a resemblance in certain forms to the verb ra’ah, *to see*. This confidence at the beginning of Psalm 27 continues throughout all fourteen verses.

In the second sentence which is a rhetorical question, the psalmist mentions a verb similar to yara’, pachad, *to be afraid*, which connotes a trembling motion. “And they shall come in *fear* to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days” [Hos 3.5]. Only here he transforms the *light* and *salvation* into a *stronghold* or mahoz: “O Lord, my strength and my *stronghold*, my refuge in the day of trouble” [Jer 16.19]. Not only is YHWH this mahoz but he is thus with respect to his *life*.

Vs. 2: When evildoers assail me, uttering slanders against me, my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall. Such *evildoers* or merehym are the first and foremost group whom the psalmist mentions as lacking fear which he boldly asserts in vs. 1. Here they are identified with *assailing*, qarav, more precisely, *to draw near*, almost in the sense of becoming familiar with the psalmist. Instead of the words, “uttering slanders against me,” the Hebrew text reads “to devour my flesh” much like dogs. “And anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the *dogs* shall eat” [1 Kg 14.11].

This qarav or insinuation by human dogs is thwarted by *stumbling* (kashal) and *falling* (naphal). Perhaps alluding to the four legs of a dog, such tripping up is a more remarkable sight and for that reason, humiliating. Note that the psalmist divides the evildoers into two classes, *adversaries* (tsar) and *foes* (‘ayav), the former coming from the same verbal root from which *rock* is derived. With this in mind, there can be a connection between dogs assailing the psalmist much like a *fortress*, another derivative of tsar’s verbal root.

Vs. 3: Though a host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. To *encamp*, chanah, implies a bowing motion (as if to pitch a tent); the words for *prayer*, *mercy*, also derives from this verbal root possibly because God bends down to the suppliant. In vs. 3 a *host* or machaneh does this chanah against the psalmist, which derives from chanah. Such a hostile force takes position “*against* me,” literally, “*on* (hal-) me” suggesting an overwhelming assault. Despite this, the psalmist’s heart does not fear because as vs. 4 says, he seeks to “dwell in the house of the Lord.” Even this not yet attained reality suffices to give supreme confidence in the midst of a violent onslaught.

The psalmist continues with his *confidence* or batach in God despite *war* breaking out against him, milchamah being a more general and widespread type of hostility as opposed to the specific machaneh just noted. Such machaneh is hal-, *on* the psalmist as the *host’s* attack.

Vs. 4: One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. In the

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face of attack (vs. 3), one would expect urgent entreaty for divine protection; instead, the psalmist remains tranquil, making a simple *request* (sha'al), which he *seeks after* (baqash), a verbal root implying the sense of touch, of groping. "Upon my bed by night I *sought* him whom my soul loves" [Sg 3.1]. Such is the *one thing* ('achath). "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; *one thing* is needful" (henos chreia, Lk 10.41).

In the case of vs. 4, this henos chreia is to " *dwell* in the house of the Lord," yashav, as in Ps 22.3: "You are holy, *enthroned* on the praises of Israel." Thus the psalmist wishes to participate in this divine sitting which is "in the *house* of the Lord" or bayth, the general word for a dwelling. He does not simply wish to yashav there temporarily but "all the days of my life" or the rest of his temporal existence. "She [Anna] did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day" [Lk 2.37].

It should be pointed out that the 'achath which the psalmist requests consists of three parts: 1) that yashav just discussed, 2) "to *behold* or chazah the Lord's beauty," i.e., taking in this *beauty* or noham all at once. This word implies loveliness which concurs with the more inclusive nature of noham. "Her ways are ways of *pleasantness*" [Prov 3.17]. 3) to extend his initial *seeking* or baqash through a more intense *inquiring*, baqar, which suggests a cleaving; also the word morning is derived from this same verb, the morning being a time when the dawn *cleaves* the night. "In the *morning* you hear my voice; in the *morning* I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch" [Ps 5.3]. Such "cleaving" takes place in God's *temple*, heykal, presumably at Jerusalem.

Vs. 5: For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent, he will set me high upon a rock. Such is a result of that baqar or *cleaving*, with three results: hide, conceal, set on high; they occur during the *day*, more specifically, "in the day of *trouble*," rahah, the common word for *evil*.

The first act of protection is *hiding*, tsaphan, or a storing up as if for a siege or famine. "He *stores up* sound wisdom for the upright" [Prov 2.7]. It occurs "in God's *shelter*," sukah. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, God commanded them "to dwell in *booths* for seven days...that your generation may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in *booths* when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" [Lev 23.42-3]. Note the purpose, to *know* or realize God's action on behalf of Israel.

The second act of protection is *concealing* the psalmist in his *tent*; the latter is derived from the former, satar which implies defense against an enemy. "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the *covert* of the cliff" [Sg 2.14]. More specifically, vs. 5 has "under the cover of his *tent*," ohel, the tent being the place of worship for the Israelites when they were wandering in the desert after their deliverance from Egypt. 'Ohel thus symbolizes a nomadic existence, of an imperfect dwelling waiting for full attainment. "These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" [Heb 11.13].

The third and final act of protection situates the divine shelter and tent "high upon a *rock*" or tsur, safe from assault. Cf. Ps 18.2: "The Lord is my *rock*, and my fortress, and my deliverer."

Vs. 6: And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies round about me; and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord. The words "and now" infer completion, namely, the three forms of protection discussed in the previous verse. Because of divine protection, the psalmist is confident to look up, rather, have his head *lifted up* or subject himself to this lifting or exultation by God. More specifically, it is his *head*, r'osh, peering, as it were, from "high

upon a rock.” Note that the psalmist’s head “shall be lifted up,” i.e., at a future time; furthermore, there is implied that the rest of his body remains concealed (cf. references in vs. 5). Applied to Jesus Christ as “head of the church” [Eph 5.23], he is *lifted up* on the cross whereas the rest of his body, the church, is in the sense of it not actually accomplishing Christ’s saving work but participating in it. This lifting takes place in the context of “enemies round about me,” indicative of Christ’s enemies.

And I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy. The simple *and* indicates continuous or successive action after the first words of this verse. Note that the action of *offering*, *zavach* (more precisely, it pertains to the actual slaying of the offering), transpires within God’s *tent*, ‘ohel, a word encountered “He will conceal me under the cover of his *tent*” which in light of Christ’s sacrifice noted in the paragraph above, may be taken as his human condition; its concealment is stressed further by mention of “*under the cover of his tent.*” The current use of *zavach* is plural and united with “shouts of joy” or as the Hebrew reads, “sacrifices of *joy*,” *teruah*, which can also mean the sound of a trumpet: “Then you shall send abroad the loud *trumpet* on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall send abroad the *trumpet* throughout all your land” [Lev 25.9].

I will sing and make melody to the Lord. *Shyr* or *to sing* is a vocal act, whereas *zamar* or *make melody* (alternate meaning, *to prune*) implies dancing as well as singing.

Vs. 7: Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! The Hebrew reads, “Hear, O Lord, my voice when I cry.” Obviously *crying* or *qara’* gets attention, something the psalmist wishes to do with respect to God. Such *qara’* has two objects, for God to be *gracious* (*chanan*) and to *answer* (*hanah*), two words examined earlier. The shortness and direct nature of vs. 7 is refreshing in that it comes straight from the heart.

Vs. 8: You have said, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, Lord, do I seek.” Now the psalmist puts himself in a position to bargain with God by recalled earlier words spoken to him, namely, “*Seek my face*,” *baqash*, last examined in the context of vs. 4, “One thing...that I will *seek after*; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord.” There *baqash* equals “house of the Lord” whereas here it is tied in with God’s *face*, *panah*. Actually, the psalmist...rather, his *heart*...is simply carrying out God’s command to do this *baqash* which as noted elsewhere, suggests feeling or even groping without clear perception of the object sought. *Heart* seems to take on an identity independent from the psalmist which is acceptable in this context because its beating motion is ideal for perceiving...feeling...God.

This verse seems contradictory to the command of Ex 33.23, “You shall see my back, but my *face* shall not be seen.” Here *you* refers to Moses and can apply to the psalmist but not necessarily to the heart which as just noted, is independent from *you*. Also, the Exodus injunction is indirect, “shall not be seen,” not “you shall not see” (as with God’s back).

Vs. 9: Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Cast me not off, forsake me not, O God of my salvation! *Me* is the psalmist, not his heart which keeps on going in its *baqash*. This use of *satar*, *to hide*, was first encountered in Ps 13.1, “How long will you *hide* your face from me?” Compare this use of *satar* with Elijah at Mount Horeb, 1 Kg 19.13: “And when Elijah heard it [still, small voice], he *wrapped* his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.” Here *lut* is a type of hiding which implies secrecy as opposed to not being manifest.

Turn not your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. *Anger* or ‘aph derives from the same verbal root as *face* and which is different from the same word discussed in vs. 8, *panah*. *Natah* or *turn away*; cf. Ps 13.6 for a different use but with the same notion of inclining:

"*Incline* your ear to me, hear my words." Thus *natah* is a divine attribute which can either move towards the psalmist or away from him. In vs. 9 he identifies himself as God's *servant* or *heved*, that is, as one who is submissive with the intention of gaining divine *help*, *hazar*. Note the play on words here, *hazar* and *heved*; this *heved* the psalmist places in the past tense as if to remind God of past instances when he had assisted him.

Cast me not off, forsake me not, O God of my salvation! By appealing to God as his *salvation*, his "Jesus," the psalmist is bound to get a positive response, that is, for him not to *cast off* nor *forsake* him, presumably while God moves on ahead to other matters.

Vs. 10: For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me up. Perhaps the psalmist is speaking of actual abandonment by his parents, but the main point is that this intimate human relationship pales in comparison to God. This being *forsaken* is the second instance of *hazav*, vs. 9 being the last, in quick succession. In contrast to this *hazav* the psalmist is convinced that God will *take him up*, 'asaph, which suggests a gathering together or collection. "The glory of the Lord will be your *rear guard* [lit., 'gather you up', Is 58.8]."

Vs. 11: Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. The *way* (*derek*) which the psalmist wishes *to be taught* (*yarah*, also *to lay foundations*) can be taken as a desire for this road to be laid out by God himself. With Christ identified as the *way*, God instructs him in Christ.

In addition to this divine *derek*, the psalmist speaks of a "level *path*," 'orach, which is a more poetic word; 'orach is *level* or *myshur*, namely, *just*, this word coming from the same verbal root *yashar*. "I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into *level* ground" [Is 42.16]. And, "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will *make straight* your paths" [Prov 3.6]. While the psalmist's way may be level or just, certainly this is not true for his *enemies* who are not just. Such straightness is reminiscent of the Red Sea through which the Israelites passed safely (cf. Ex 14.22).

Vs. 12: Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. Another verse applicable to Jesus Christ in his sufferings. *Will* or *nephesh* more fundamentally means *soul*; to be handed over to hostile *souls* is the worst fate imaginable for the psalmist, for this word suggests partaking in their very nature of evil.

In addition to the *adversaries* or *tsary*, the psalmist confronts "false *witnesses*," *hed* (singular) whose chief characteristic is being *false*, *sheqer*. "The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the *witness* is a *false witness* and has accused his brother *falsely*" [Dt 19.18]. Such witnesses are vividly described as "*breathing out violence*," *yaphach*, which stresses the exhaling of air in the sense of sighing. Compare it with the noun *ruach*, *breath*; while also connoting the same exhalation, this word does not involve expenditure of energy. *Chamas* is a good result of that *yaphach* by the psalmist's foes as opposed to the creative breath of *ruach*.

Vs. 13: I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! The opening words in the Hebrew read "Unless I had believed" which is somewhat unclear. Nevertheless, action is in the past with regard to *believe*, 'aman, verbal root for *amen*. To express this faith implies past occasions when the psalmist experienced divine goodness. Here the object of 'aman is transferred into a *seeing*, *ra'ah*, which in Hebrew is "*in* (b-) the goodness; i.e., seeing becomes a being-in divine *goodness* (*tov*).

This *tov* has a location, "*in* (b-) the land of the living" which may be associated with the nation of Israel.

Vs. 14: Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord! The *waiting* is for YHWH and can be in the “land of the living” or at least at its gates. The verb here is *qawah* which implies being strong; compare it with ‘aman just mentioned. “For you I *wait* all the day long” [Ps 25.5]. The following verse stresses the hope dimension of *qawah*: “We *set our hope* on you, for you do all these things” [Jer 14.22].

Be strong or *chazaq* which also means *to seize*; it is an intimation that *qawah* will attain full realization. ‘Aman also implies strength or courage: “Be strong and of good *courage*” [Jos 10.25]. Note the singular *heart* of what most likely applies to more than one person; can apply to Israel. The psalmist concludes this verse with the same exhortation to *qawah* with which he began it.

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Psalm Twenty-Eight

Vs. 1: To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the Pit. Instead of a simple *calling* (*qara'*), the psalmist calls *to* ('el-) or in the direction of the Lord, signifying distance. By designating God as “my *rock*,” *tsur*, such distance is implied or better, the psalmist being in a lower position and the Lord in a higher one. He also bids God not to be *deaf*; *charash*, which also means *to inscribe* and *to plow*; the noun means an *engraver* and is thus associated with the fabrication of idols: “The *workman* melts a graven image” [Is 40.19]. We could say that the psalmist thereby wishes God *to plow* or cultivate him. “See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed” [Gen 27.27]!

The psalmist is quick to warn God that if he remains *charash*, he will be cut off. *To be like* or *mashal* such condemned persons comes from the same verb meaning *to rule*: “Let them [presumptuous sins] not *have dominion* over me” [Ps 19.13]. The *Pit* or *bor* also means a sepulcher and cistern, thereby connoting a confined, underground place. “Come now, let us kill him [Joseph] and throw him into one of the *pits*” [Gen 37.20]. Note that vs. 1 says “like those who *go down* to the Pit,” with emphasis on the *going down*, *yarad*, an action more terrible than being in the Pit in that it is freighted with anticipation.

Vs. 2: Hear the voice of my supplication as I cry to you for help, as I lift my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. These words may be addressed from the edge of that Pit of vs. 1, beseeching God not to enter it. Note “*voice* (*qol*) of my supplication,” with emphasis upon the psalmist’s cry which is further accentuated by “as I cry for help,” these words in Hebrew being contained in the verb *shawah* which is akin to *yashah*, the root for “Jesus.” We may therefore take this “as I *Jesus* to you;” again, not direction towards-which, “to you,” ‘el-.

In addition to “Jesus-ing” God, the psalmist raises his hands towards that holiest of places, the *devyr*. Cf. Ps 11.4 for notes on this important term, *devyr* being the only occasion in the Psalter. Yet another occasion of towards-which, ‘el-.

Vs. 3: Take me not off with the wicked, with those who speak peace with their neighbors while mischief is in their hearts. Such *taking off* may be into the Pit of vs. 1, from the verb *mashak* which more fundamentally means *to draw* as if God would grab the psalmist by the neck and drag him along the ground.

The *wicked* or *reshahym* may be in reference to such persons or those speaking a false peace. Note here the Hebrew reads “with the *workers* of iniquity,” the verbal root *pahal* indicating a carefully

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contrived fabrication.

Peace or shalom implies fullness and here is associated with the *speaking* (davar; contrast with the sacred devyr of vs. 2, of falsehood; this exterior action is an expression of an interior, evil (*hearts*) intent.

Vs. 4: Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds; requite them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward. Note the important word *according*, ke- which occurs three times: work, evil of deeds, work of hands. I.e., such ke- is associated with the accomplishment of something as signified by three different words: *work* (pahal), *deeds* (halal), *work* (mahseh). In conclusion, the psalmist beseeches God to take direct action, that is, to give them not *according* but their *due reward*, from the verb gamal with its fundamental positive meaning or recompense.

Vs. 5: Because they do not regard the works of the Lord or the work of his hands, he will break them down and build them up no more. Such *regarding*, byn, is an understanding or comprehension which here is neglected as a result of that threefold action of the previous verse. Contrast pehuloth with the pahal of vs. 4, one of YWHH and “his hands” and the other of evildoers. To *break down* or haras something pertains to a building or something made: “So I will *break down* the wall” [Ezk 13.14].

Vs. 6: Blessed be the Lord! For he has heard the voice of my supplications. Such an exclamation is the result of a divine intervention as noted in the previous verse, however, note that there action is in the future: “*will* break them down” and “(*will*) build them up no more.” In vs. 2 the psalmist requests “Hear the voice of my supplication,” the same words used here in vs. 6 with emphasis (as there) on his *voice*; vs. 6 has the plural, *supplications*.

Vs. 7: The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and with my song I give thanks to him. *Strength* (hoz; also, *glory* as in Ps 8.3) and *shield* (magen) have military overtones, of inner divine might. “Fear not, Abram, I am your *shield*” [Gen 15.1]. And, “Above all, taking the *shield* of faith” [Eph 6.16].

The very act of having God as strength and shield enables the psalmist, rather his *heart*, to *trust*, batach; it results in his being *helped*, hazar; this action may be attributed to being function of a similar word, yashah (“Jesus”) enabling the psalmist to thank God “with my *song*,” shyr which we may designate as Psalm 28 in its entirety.

Vs. 8: The Lord is the strength of his people, he is the saving refuge of his anointed. Another instance of hoz only this time as applied to Israel, whereas vs. 7 has it applied to the psalmist alone; he wishes to have this divine hoz transferred to God's *people*, not keep it for himself. Mahoz is a variant reading of hoz, this time with respect to yeshuhoth ("Jesus" again as *saving*); the inference to Jesus Christ is further enhanced by *anointed*, meshych. While the first part of vs. 8 clearly refers to *people*, the second part refers to the person (singular) who effects this meshych.

Vs. 9: O save your people, and bless your heritage; be their shepherd, and carry them forever. A final plea to God with four parts to it, the first one, *save* or "Jesus" being the most important. While applied to *people* or Israel, the words of St. Paul may be inferred: "He is the head of his body, the Church" [Col 1.18]. The object of divine *blessing* or barak is God's *heritage*, nachalah, from the verb *to possess*; the notion here is that God will extend into the future this gesture of *saving* or "Jesus."

When the psalmist bids God to be Israel's (the Church's) *shepherd* or more accurately, "*to shepherd them*" (rahah), he hearkens back to Psalm 23, "The Lord is my *shepherd*." Note there in vs. 1 the meaning of rahah as the verbal root which can mean *to love*. "My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to *pasture* his flock in the gardens" [Sg 6.2]. Thus we may apply vs. 9's words as an appeal for God to rahah in "*his garden*" and "*in the gardens*."

To *carry* or nasa' (Israel) can be associated with the *garden(s)* of Sg 6.2, i.e., God's perpetual act of going there (*forever*); contrast it with that *going down* to the *Pit*, bor, of Ps 28.1.

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Psalm Twenty-Nine

Vs. 1: Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. The Hebrew for *ascribe* is yahav which simply means a giving or imparting; the psalmist uses yahav as a command to the *heavenly beings* or in Hebrew, "sons of gods." Perhaps he has in mind the collective nature of Israel as a chosen race where each member is made in God's image and likeness. "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a *son of the gods*" [Dan 3.25]. The command of yahav which is uttered twice has two objects: *glory* and *strength*, kavod and hoz; cf. Ps 21.13 for the latter.

Vs. 2: Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy array. A third instance of yahav which attributes the kavod mentioned in vs. 1 to the divine *name*, shem. We may assume that the psalmist again is exhorting the *sons of gods*; by referring to the divine name, YHWH (it was mentioned already), he may be implying its revelation to Moses: "What is his *name*?...I am who am" [Ex 3.13-4].

"And before the Lord your God, in the place which he will choose, to make his *name* dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain" [Dt 14.23]. Note the place-where-ness with regard to the divine shem. This verse is within the wider context of the Torah, so it has a certain liturgical overtone. Such an association makes sense with the second command of vs. 2, *worship*, shachah, which connotes a sense of bowing down. "The two angels came to Sodom in the evening; and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them he rose to meet them and *bowed* himself with his face to the earth" [Gen 19.1].

The liturgical nature of vs. 2 is amplified by "*holy attire*," hadar being the verbal root. Cf. Ps 8.5 for an example, "You have crowned him [man]...with glory and *honor*." With this notion of hadar in

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mind, we may say that the (priestly) attire is closely affiliated with that innate hadar which is part and parcel of man being made in the divine image and likeness.

Vs. 3: The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, upon many waters. Attention now shifts from exhortation to a description of God's creative word manifest through the imagery of a storm. Here the divine qol (first of seven references in this psalm) is "upon the waters, hal, reminiscent of Gen 1.2: "and the Spirit of God was moving *over* (hal) the face of the *waters*." Both examples have the same insight; Genesis has the Spirit *moving*, rachaph, in the sense of brooding. Furthermore, Gen 1.2 speaks of "darkness was *upon* the face of the deep," another instance of hal, which may be contrasted with the "rachaph-ness" of the Spirit's hal.

The God of glory thunders, the Lord, upon many waters. In other places I mentioned the fundamental notion of heaviness associated with kavod, *glory*, which here is an agent for *thundering*, raham, which connotes trembling. It can be applied as an image of human emotions: "And her rival used to provoke her sorely, to *irritate* her" [1 Sam 1.6]. With respect to the verse under consideration, we may draw a parallel between the divine *voice* and *glory* whose raham takes place "upon (hal) many waters," *many* being an image of chaos.

Vs. 4: The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. A continuation of the storm theme begun in the last verse. The paramount manifestation of God to Israel took place on Mount Sinai which is described in similar violent terms (cf. Gen 19.16+). Perhaps the opening words of Ps 29 regarding *holy attire* is intended as covering to protect its readers from being consumed by such a dreadful manifestation of God as intimated in these words of Psalm 29 describing a tempest.

Note the primary point of identification with regards to the storm, "*voice* of the Lord," qol, from which issues God's words; the plurality of these words achieve full revelation Jesus Christ as the *Word* or Logos. Most likely Matthew had in mind the storm-like theophany under consideration when describing Christ's transfiguration: "his face shone like the sun," "his garments became white as light," "a bright cloud overshadowed them," "a voice from the cloud," 17.2 & 5. While Christ bade his disciples to remain silent with regard to this *vision* (vs. 9), what struck them most directly was the divine *voice* ("This is my beloved Son," vs. 5).

The divine qol has two qualities, *powerful* and "full of *majesty*;" the Hebrew has prefixed to each word the preposition b-, *in*, indicating place-where with respect to these qualities.

Vs. 5: The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. Here the divine qol moves from being "upon the waters" to the land; it is as though the loftiness of cedars, symbolic of human pride, were an image of that watery chaos. Note the distinction: *cedars*, 'arazym, and "cedars of *Lebanon*." "For the Lord of hosts has a day...against all the *cedars* of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up" [Is 2.12-3]. The association of pride with Lebanon cedars may be due in part to their odor as well as lofty appearance. When the bride says that "the beams of our house are cedar" [Sg 1.17], perhaps he had in mind Ps 29.5. Shavar or *to break* means that such cedars are reduced to power in order to reveal their pleasant odor. Also, vs. 5 makes a distinction between the "*voice* of the Lord" doing this breaking and "the *Lord*" performing the same act.

Vs. 6: He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox. *To skip* or raqad can mean *to dance*: "There is a time to mourn and a time to *dance*" [Eccl 3.4], so it has a joyful connotation. Applied to Lebanon as a *calf*, source of cedars for Solomon's construction of the Jerusalem temple (cf. 1 Kg 5), this verse can infer the joyful cutting of its cedars for such a purpose.

The second half of vs. 5 refers to *Sirion*, another term for Mount Hermon in Lebanon which is frequently covered in snow. “Does the snow of Lebanon leave the crags of *Sirion*” [Jer 18.14]? When *Sirion* skips or raqad, it scatters this beneficial snow on the plains below. *Sirion* is a “young wild ox” or untamed in its inaccessibility, whereas Lebanon is a “calf” which is domesticated.

Vs. 7: The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. *Chatsav* or *to flash* has the primary meaning of cutting or of hewing which applied to “flames of fire” connotes the plurality of such energy. For an example of such hewing, refer to Hos 6.5: “Therefore I have *hewn* them by the prophets.” Apply this to the following: “And if anyone would harm them [two lamp stands before God], *fire* pours from their mouth and consumes their foes” [Rev 11.5]. Again, the implication that such lamp stands have mouths and therefore *voices* as the qol of vs. 7. These flames are reminiscent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: “And there appeared to them tongues as of *fire*” [Acts 2.3].

Vs. 8: The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness, the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. Here the divine qol *shakes*, chol, the *wilderness* or midbar. Chol suggests a trembling motion and can also mean to beget a child: “I travail not, nor *bring forth* children” [Is 23.4]. Midbar is both a place of terror and place where Israel defined itself as a nation after leaving Egypt; also the midbar is where the prophets took refuge and place where they communicated with God. To chol such a place infers that it is the true source or birth where events essential to salvation history had developed. Once God *shakes* it, we can ask “Who is that coming up from the *wilderness* leaning upon her beloved” [Sg 8.5]? It is these numerous holy persons who *leaned* upon God while there.

The “wilderness of *Kadesh*” is a more specific midbar; its verbal root is qadash, *to be holy*. “And the people of Israel came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in *Kadesh*; and Miriam died there, and was buried there” [Num 20.1]. Note mention of Miriam, Aaron’s sister and a prophetess, to whom is attributed the oldest song celebrating Israel’s salvation from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea (cf. Ex 15.21).

Vs. 9: The voice of the Lord makes the oaks to whirl and strips the forests bare; and in his temple all cry, “Glory!” Last of seven references to qol, this time regarding to *oaks*, ‘ayahoth; the Hebrew reads, “makes the hinds to calve.” This word in the singular is ‘elah, perhaps meaning that such animals give sudden birth during a tempest. Also, the divine qol “*strips* the forests *bare*,” chasaph, as in Is 52.10: “The Lord *has made bare* his holy arm.”

Vs. 10: The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. After all the above mentioned sevenfold activity of God’s *voice*, qol, it is time for him to be at rest, something akin to that rest after the six days of creation. The chief purpose of qol’s various manifestations was to reveal God’s lordship over creation whether on land or on sea. Since the *flood* or mabul more precisely connotes the one of Noah, vs. 10’s image is one suggestive of restoration of the Spirit’s original rachaph or *brooding* over the waters in Genesis. The Hebrew simply has “The Lord *sits*,” yashav, which implies both lordship and rest. Note the prefix l- for *on*, i.e., “to the flood.”

Note only does YHWH yashav but does so “as king,” that is, after his initial yashav where he pauses to consider the sevenfold effects of his voice, the Lord can now transfer such yashav to his kingly power.

Vs. 11: May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace! A twofold desire by the psalmist on behalf of the people who are the beneficiaries of God’s qol, *voice*: *strength* or hoz and a blessing of *peace*, shalom. The latter can only come after a manifestation of hoz which offers security for shalom to flourish.

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Psalm Thirty

Vs. 1: I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. *Extol* or *rom* fundamentally means a lifting up as an acknowledgment that God has *drawn up* the psalmist, *dalah*; this verb means *to hang down, to draw or take out*. “An Egyptian...even *drew* water for us and watered the flock” [Ex 2.19]. As a noun, it can mean *locks*: “Your flowing *locks* are like purple” [Sg 7.5]. Thus with vs. 1 we have an upward and downward motion combined as one which may be considered in light of Eph 4.10: “He who *descended* is he who also *ascended* far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.” Note the purpose of this up-down motion prefigured in Ps 30.1, “that he might *fill* all things.”

The *rom-dalah* pattern just delineated is followed by another up-down one, namely, the psalmist’s foes being hindered from “rejoicing *over* me,” *l-*, which connotes a direction towards which, not necessarily vertically. Because *rom-dalah* is divine in origin, the *l-* of such foes is nullified.

Vs. 2: O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. The verb *to cry for help* is *shawah* as discussed in Ps 28.2, noting its similarity to the verbal root for “Jesus.” Thus vs. 2 may intimate, “I *Jesus-ed* to you.” The response from God is *healing*, *rapha’*: “For I am the Lord (i.e., your ‘Jesus’), your *healer*” [Ex 15.6]. In Prov 3.8 *rapha’* is associated with fear: “Fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be *healing* to your *flesh*” [Prov 3.7-8], more precisely in Hebrew, *navel*, *shor*.

Vs. 3: O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those who have gone down to the Pit. Another way of expressing deliverance in an “up-down” framework, this time with respect to Sheol, abode of the dead. Contrast it with King Saul consulting the medium of Endor when Samuel said, “Why have you disturbed me by *bringing me up* [1 Sam 28.15]?” The words of vs. 3 may apply to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as preached by Peter after Pentecost, quoting Ps 16.8, “For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption” [Acts 2.27]. This association of incorruption with *bringing up* (*halah*) is inferred by the psalmist’s words in vs. 3. Compare with Jon 2.2: “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.”

Restored me to life from among those who have gone down to the Pit. The Hebrew reads, “that I should not go down to the Pit.” The verb for *to restore* is *chayah*, *to be alive*. Note that such restoration takes place with those in the *Pit* or *bor*, another name for Sheol, as discussed in Ps 28.1: “Lest...I become like those who go down to the *Pit*.” Here the descent is in the present tense, whereas vs. 3 is in the past tense.

Vs. 4: Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. This exhortation to *sing praises*, *zamar* (as in Ps 1.9) is directed to God’s *saints*, the verbal root being the familiar *chesed*, those who practice what is perhaps the most divine attribute and who are worthy of being so called. “Saints” in the New Testament or *hagioi* is a frequent term with regard to those who follow the Gospel: “Because the Spirit intercedes for the *saints* according to the will of God” [Rom 8.27].

In addition to *zamar*, the psalmist bids those who practice *chesed* to “thank his holy *name*” or *zeker*, a word with *zakar* as its verbal root and discussed often in this document. In this context, *name* implies remembrance; it is though the psalmist wishes those so *remembered* to be associated with the divine *zeker*.

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Vs. 5: For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. Since vs. 4 spoke of *saints* in the sense of those who are *remembered*, vs. 5 implies recollection of the two divine attributes from past personal experience, *anger* ('aph) and *favor* (retson). The former is brief in duration, "for a *moment*," regah; its alternate meaning is *face, countenance*. Since 'aph is expression of a person's whole being, to be *angry* means that the person is wholly angry. "The people of Israel saw the *face* of Moses, that the skin of Moses' *face* shone; and Moses would put the veil upon his *face* again" [Ex 34.35]. Here a human face has reflected God ("No man shall see my face and live," Ex 33.20) and even this causes fear among those beholding it. In the psalm under consideration such 'aph is brief, regah, which derives from a verbal root meaning *to terrify*, so it is interesting to connect it with the double meaning of 'aph.

And his favor is for a lifetime. *Favor*, retson, connotes delight and lasts for a temporal extension, *lifetime* or chayym. "In a time of *favor* I have answered you, in a day of salvation, I have helped you" [Is 49.8]. Here both *time* and *day* enhance the psalmist's association of retson with such temporal extension; they are true kairoi or *occasions*.

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. More references to period of time. The first, *night* or herev, more specifically means *evening*. It is an appropriate time for *weeping* because of the onset of darkness after evening sacrifice and prayer. Note that it *tarries*, lun, in the sense of continuous abiding. "Is there room...for us *to lodge in*" [Gen 32.22]? Contrast it with Sg 1.13: "He *shall lie all night* between my breasts." Perhaps such weeping remains until appearance of the evening star which according to Jewish tradition marks the beginning of the Sabbath.

Once the Sabbath has arrived, i.e., at night, the psalmist can wait with expectation for *morning*, boqer, from the same verbal root as *oxen*; the notion is that such animals break up the earth with their cloven hooves, image of the sun cleaving the eastern horizon. Such is the time for *joy*, rinah, whose verbal root implies shouting and song. "*Sing*, O heavens, for the Lord has done it" [Is 45.23]. Note the lack of "comes" in Hebrew; it simply has in the morning, joy."

Vs. 6: As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved." The words "as for me" indicate a change of tone to the psalm; inference is that the author had been referring to other people or the nation of Israel despite the opening words of "I will extol you," etc, and others in the first person singular. The psalmist's *prosperity* or shelew derives from shalah, *to be safe*. "They *shall prosper* who love you" [Ps 122.6]. The shelew of vs. 6 differs from this one in that it is one based upon confidence in one's own efforts as opposed to God's. It makes the psalmist boast of stability or of not being *moved* in his shelew or mut, which connotes shaking.

Vs. 7: By your favor, O Lord, you had established me as a strong mountain; you did hide your face, I was dismayed. Contrast the psalmist's boast about not being moved in vs. 6 with this verse's mention of divine *establishment*, the verb being hamad which suggests a standing or stability. Hamad comes about only by God's *favor*, retson, already seen in vs. 5 ("his *favor* is for a lifetime"). The direct result of hamad is a "strong mountain" as distinguished from Ps 46.2: "though the *mountains* shake in the heart of the sea." Here the verb mut is used as in vs. 6, "I *shall never be moved*." Perhaps Mount Sinai and/or Mount Zion are the mountains to which the psalmist is compared.

You did hide your face, I was dismayed. This statement was put into the form of a question in Ps 12.1: "How long will you *hide* your face from me?" The *hiding* or satar of God's face is consonant with the revelation to Moses on Sinai: "but my *face* shall not be seen" [Ex 34.23]. It effects *dismay*, bahal, which also connotes *hastening*: "An inheritance gotten *hastily* in the beginning will in the end not be blessed" [Prov 20.21], words applicable to the psalmist in his pride. For another psalm verse parallel to the one under consideration, cf. Ps 104.29: "When you hide (satar) your face, they are *dismayed*."

Vs. 8: To you, O Lord, I cried; and to the Lord I made supplication. The verb *to cry*, qara', was encountered several times thus far in the Psalter and is a frequent expression of distress; here it is in connection with that boasting of prosperity in vs. 6. Immediately after qara' comes *supplication* or chanan; a similar verse is Ps 27.7: "*Be gracious* to me," words preceded by another use of qara', "Hear, O Lord, when I *cry* aloud." God reserves to extend this chanan at his own discretion: "I will be *gracious* to whom I will be *gracious*" [Ex 33.19]. Note that these words are immediately followed in vs. 20 by "But you cannot see my *face*; for man shall not see me and live," words we may associate with the hiding of the divine face in the previous verse.

Vs. 9: "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?" This verse and well as the next consist of the psalmist's *supplication*, chanan, and takes the form of four questions which center upon human mortality; none are stated in vs. 10:

1) Betsah or *profit* more specifically means *prey* or *unjust gain* within the context of the psalmist's *death*. "Every one is given to *covetness*" [Jer 6.13].

2) another mention of *Pit*, shachat (compare with bor, Ps 33.3) which signifies corruption: "For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see *corruption*" [Ps 16.8, Acts 2.27].

3) *Dust* or haphar is almost paradoxical in this context, more specifically, in a desert area where sand abounds; it is as though the psalmist were to become as dry as his physical surroundings. "...until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are *dust*" [Gen 3.19]. Despite the harsh words, keep in mind that it was from such haphar that man was made; here is intimated divine creativity even in tribulation: "The Lord god formed man of *dust* from the ground" [Gen 2.7]. Thus the second and third questions of Ps 30.9 may be answered in the positive.

4) 'Emeth is the common word for *faithfulness* used in conjunction with nagad, *to tell* as in "and the firmament *proclaims* his handiwork" [Ps 19.1].

Vs. 10: "Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!" The second and concluding part of the psalmist's *supplication* stated in vs. 8, consisting of two sections. Another appeal for God to be *gracious* chanan, a verb used in vs. 8 with a different sense: "to the Lord I made *supplication*." The second part of vs. 10 is a request for God to be a *helper*, from the verbal root hazar already discussed in Ps 28.7. These words conclude the psalmist's words of *supplication*, his chanan, begun in vs. 9.

Vs. 11: You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness. This verse and the next express divine response to the chanan made in vs. 8. *Mourning* or misped derives from the verbal root meaning to beat the breast as a sign of grief, especially for the dead. "They shall *mourn* for him as one *mourns* for an only child" [Zech 12.10], a verse in reference to the dead of Christ (cf. Jn 19.37, quoting the first part of Zechariah's verse, "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced"). God changes such misped into *dancing*, machol, derived from chol which fundamentally means *to turn, to twist* (cf. Ps 29.8). Machol is used two more times in the Psalter, Pss 149.3 & 150.4, both of which mean dancing. Lam 5.15 reverses the order: "Our dancing has been turned to mourning."

You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness. The verb for *to loose* here is patach, meaning *to open*; cf. Ps 24.7, where the noun *doors* derives from the same root. Applied to *sackcloth* or saq, a sign of mourning as in the previous verse (misped), it means a release as if coming out of a shell.

The result is an exchange for this earlier clothing, as it were, for the one of *gladness*, simchah; not just a simple putting on but of *girding* or fastening around the loins, 'azar. "The Lord who *girded* me with strength" [Ps 18.32]. And, "They who stumbled are *girded* with strength" [1 Sam 2.4].

Vs. 12: That my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever. This verse intimates that the 'azar, a rather tight binding, is a prerequisite for *praise*, zamar which suggests making melody or song, a fact inferred by not being *silent*, dum; compare with Ps 62.1, "For God alone my soul waits in *silence*." Ps 30 concludes with a statement, perhaps it can be taken as a promise, to *thank* or yadah God *forever* which connotes an upward throwing as into the sky or heaven.

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Psalm Thirty-One

Vs. 1: In you O Lord, do I seek refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! This *seeking refuge*, chasah, which also means *to trust*, has occurred several times thus far in the Psalter; here chasah is joined with *beka*, *in you*, as though such seeking were taking place in God much as in a large building. The desire not to be *shamed*, bosh, as used in conjunction with chasah was already seen in Ps 14.6: "You would *confound* the plans of the poor, but the Lord is his *refuge*." Note "*in your righteousness*," another use of the preposition b-; consider this second *in* which follows that of "*in you*." This *righteousness* or tsedeqath is the place-where the psalmist beseeches God to place him by *delivering* him, palat, which connotes a stealthy departure.

Vs. 2: Incline your ear to me, rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! This *inclining* of the divine ear, natah, suggests someone "up above" in the act of shaqaph, looking out from a window: "The Lord *looks down* from heaven" [Ps 14.2], only here emphasis is more on listening than on looking. The psalmist begs to be *rescued*, natsal, literally, to be snatched or pulled away from a dangerous situation which is not specified. He wants this to be done *speedily*, meherah, whose verbal root is mahar; as applicable to God, it can be used either with respect to approaching or fleeing him. "They *soon* (i.e., made haste) forgot his works" [Ps 106.13].

Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! Two types of sanctuary already encountered in the Psalter; "*rock of refuge*" (tsur); cf. Ps 18.2; *refuge* or mahoz suggests more a fortified place: "For you have been a *stronghold* to the poor" [Is 25.4]. The second shelter the psalmist requests from God is a *strong fortress*, mestudoth, which is in the plural as though intimating Jn 14.2, "In my Father's house are many *rooms*." In vs. 2 mestudoth is connected with yashah, *to save* or "to Jesus."

Vs. 3: Yes, you are my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me. Another mention of mestudoth only closely identified with selah, *rock*; this word phonetically resembles selah (final he), *pause*, a liturgical term to signify an interval in the psalms. The second half of vs. 2 could pertain to a *leading* (nachah) and *guiding* (nahal) into the rock and fortress or the same act occurring *within* these two strongholds. Cf. two references from Psalm 23: "He *leads* (nachah) me in the paths of righteousness" [vs.3]. And, "He *leads* (nahal) me beside still waters" [vs. 2]. In the psalm under consideration, these two verbs are done for God's *name*, shem, which is Jesus Christ.

Vs. 4: Take me out of the net which is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Presumably the psalmist has been snared in a *net*, reshet, and begs release. Other references to reshet in the Bible almost always have negative connotations, and it is mentioned seven times in the Psalter. Thus reshet implies ambush from unidentified enemies. Even while snared, the psalmist perceives God as his *refuge*, mahoz, as in vs. 2 where it is associated with a *rock*, tsur. In brief, mahoz is a high place as opposed to

the lowly place in which is located the reshet.

Vs. 5: Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God. Note the singular *hand*, yad; most likely it is God's right hand: "Sit at my *right* hand, until I make your enemies your footstool" [Ps 110.1]. Compare vs. 5's words with Christ on the cross, "Father, into your *hands* I commit my spirit" [Lk 23.46]; here it is in the plural. This act of *committing* or paqad was noted in Ps 8.4, "...and the son of man that you *care* for him." It's object is the psalmist's *spirit* or ruach, which is akin to the Holy *Spirit*.

You have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God. This statement is uttered in the past, as something already accomplished, *have redeemed*, padah, which has the sense of being untied or set free. "Zion shall be *redeemed* with judgment" [Is 1.27]. God is identified as being *faithful* in this act of padad, namely, 'emeth, as someone who has proved himself in the past.

Vs. 6: You hate those who pay regard to vain idols; but I trust in the Lord. What is especially odious to the psalmist is the *paying regard* with respect to objects which are not 'emeth as is God in vs. 5. The verb here is shamar, *to keep guard*, almost implying that these objects are hoarded. Contrast this shamar with the one of the divine Torah as celebrated by Ps 119, for example: "My soul has *kept* your testimonies" [vs. 167]. Those persons not doing this are the special objects of divine *hate*, sane'. Again, contrast this divine sane' with the reward of being loved by the shamar of Torah.

Idol or hevel derives from a verb meaning *to breathe*, thus symbolizing their transitory nature; the verb haval is thus completely opposed to ruach, often associated with God. The character of such a hevel is intensified by its affiliation with shawe', *vain*, in the sense of nothingness. "The bellows blow fiercely, the lead is consumed by the fire; *in vain* the refining goes on" [Jer 6.29]. This verse obviously is associated with the manufacture of idols.

While God expresses his *hatred*, his sane' towards images, note that another action is going on concomitant with it, "I *trust* in the Lord," batach, a word noted earlier and frequently used throughout the Psalter.

Vs. 7: I will rejoice and be glad for your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction, you have taken heed of my adversities. Two actions which flow from God's *steadfast love*, chesed: *rejoice* or gyl and *be glad*, samach; former (often used in the Psalter) connotes a round dance ("We will be *glad* and rejoice in you," Sg 1.4; note that English translation reverses vs. 7's meanings) followed by the latter which is often associated with a loud noise ("The light of the eyes makes the heart *rejoice*," Prov 15.30).

The reason for this two-fold joy rests upon God's act of *seeing* (ra'ah) which we may associate with shaqaph noted earlier: "The Lord *looks down* from heaven" [Ps 14.2]. Ra'ah has as its object the psalmist's *affliction*, hanaw, from the same verbal root (hanah) meaning *to answer*; in this light, his affliction is a type of answering, a response.

Finally the psalmist expresses delight in God who "*has taken heed* of the adversaries of my soul," as the Hebrew text has it. The verb here is yadah, *to know*, which connotes a giving birth. "Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain" [Gen 4.1]. Note that *adversaries*, tsaroth, is prefixed by the preposition b-, *in*; i.e., God "*knew in*."

Vs. 8: And have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place. This verse is a continuation of vs. 7, reason for the psalmist's rejoicing and gladness. Sagar for *to deliver* more properly means *to shut up* (as a door): "Every house is *shut up*" [Is 24.10]. Note the

singular, *hand*, as in vs. 5. Also consider the Chaldean of *sagar*, “and has *shut* the lions’ mouths” in reference to Daniel in the lion pit, Dan 6.22]. The next verse says that “Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of hurt was found upon him because he had trusted in his God.” Such is the *broad place*, *rachav* being the verbal root, in which Daniel was *situated* or *hamad* with its connotation of being firmly established. Cf. Ps 4.1: “You *have given me room* when I was in distress.” Because *rachav* refers to feet, the psalmist is now free to run in the way of God’s commandments; cf. Ps 119.32.

Vs. 9: Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief, my soul and my body also. The desire for divine *graciousness*, *chanan* being the verbal root, is in conjunction with the psalmist’s *distress* or *tsar* is akin to the verb *tsur* as noted several times and which means *to besiege* from which comes the noun *rock*.

Next the psalmist complains that his “eye is wasted from (*in, b-*) *grief*” or *kahas*, that is, subject to reproach or anger. The verb for *to waste* is *hashash* and occurs only two other times in the Psalter, 31.9 & 10. *Eye* is singled out perhaps because it engages in expectation or waiting for God. “Be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks” [Lk 12.36]. Although the eye is the primary organ for this task, vs. 9 implies engagement of the whole person: “my soul and my body also”...suffer this *kahas*.

Vs. 10: For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with signing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away. A four-fold complaint. 1) The verb *to be spent* or *kalah* has an alternate meaning of completion: “Solomon built the house and *finished* it” [1 Kg 6.14]. Implied in vs. 10 is that the psalmist’s life has attained an undesired fulfillment in *sorrow*, *yagon*.

2) Similarly, his years are *kalah* with *sighing*, *‘anachah*, from a verbal root meaning *to groan* which implies deeper pain than a sigh. Note association of *years* with this word, whereas *life* is associated with *sorrow*; i.e., two temporal dimensions, one the full extent of a person’s existence and the other of long duration but not necessarily an entire life (perhaps that period onward from which pain is experienced, not retroactive).

3) The psalmist’s *misery* (the Hebrew reads *iniquity*) or *hawon* derives from the same verbal root as *hanah* noted several times earlier. Such *hawon* is subject to *failing* or *kashal* which basically means to stumble.

4) Finally *bones* are mentioned, the most durable aspect of one’s physical constitution. They *waste away* or *hashash*, the same verb mentioned in vs. 10 with respect to *eye*.

Vs. 11: I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. This verse states four afflictions:

1)The word for being an object of *scorn* is *cherphah*, from the verbal root *charaph* which fundamentally means *to gather, to pluck off*; the noun *winter* also derives from it. “This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they *scoffed* and boasted against the people of the Lord of hosts” [Zeph 2.10].

2) The Hebrew reads, “especially to my neighbors,” implying that the psalmist suffers the same *cherphah* as from adversaries; that from neighbors is worse in that they have a more intimate knowledge of the psalmist.

3) The *dread* or *pachad* connotes trembling and is connected with the psalmist’s *acquaintances* which derives from the verbal root *yadah*, to know in a very intimate sense. The reproaches listed thus

far move from out to in or to various degrees of intensity.

4) Finally those in the *street* or chuts may be taken as neighbors. This word means anything that is without, implying outside the doors of a house or a city. The only person who doesn't scorn the psalmist is Wisdom: "Wisdom cries aloud in the *street*" [Prov 1.20].

Vs. 12: I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. The verb here is shakach, *to forget*, which is associated with a dead person. Thus forgetfulness and death are equated, the worst fate possible, especially in an ancient culture which places a premium on the faculty of memory which recalls the past for projection into the future. This horror is emphasized even more by the Hebrew, "out of *heart*," lev, the center of human awareness. This center is associated with a *broken vessel*," better, *destroyed* which is the meaning of 'avad.

Vs. 13: Yes, I hear the whispering of many—terror on every side!—as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. The word *whispering* derives from davav, *to go slowly*, meaning that the psalmist's four-fold adversaries in vs. 11 sneak up on him quietly to do him harm. An alternate meaning: "And your kisses like the best wine that goes down for my lover, *gliding over* the lips of sleepers" [Sg 7.9].

Terror or magor derives from gor which means *to tarry, turn aside*; it comes from *every side* or those four types of relationships in vs. 11. *To scheme* or sod is the verbal root for *assembly* and *friendship*, the latter as used in Ps 25.14: "The *friendship* of the Lord is for those who fear him."

Zamam for *to plot* has the sense of lying in wait; it can refer to God: "As the Lord of hosts *purposed* to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us" [Zech 1.6].

Vs. 14: But I trust in you, O Lord, I say, "You are my God." Despite the psalmist's foes, he maintains *trust* (batach) in God which is expressed by claiming God to be his alone. This verse serves to introduce vss. 15-18 which are wishes flowing from this divine batach.

Vs. 15: My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors! Heth or *time* translates in the LXX as kairoi, special times or *seasons*: *my*, and are in God's *hand* (singular) as in vs. 5, "Into your *hand* I commend my spirit." Thus the psalmist's *spirit* or ruach may be equated with his *times*, ruach being sensitive to special occasions when God is active on the psalmist's behalf. Heth is frequently used in Ecclesiastes ("A *time* to...").

With his *times* firmly planted in the divine hand, the psalmist confidently requests *deliverance* or natsal with its connotation of *snatching* from the equally singular *hand*, yad, of the multiple enemies and persecutors. Note that while the psalmist's *times* are in the divine hand, he begs God to rescue him (*me*).

Vs. 16: Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love! Here we see the means of deliverance from the enemies and persecutors of vs. 15, God's face *shining* on the psalmist, 'or, reminiscent of Genesis' "Let their be *light*" [1.3]. These words echo "Arise, *shine*, for your light has come" [Is 60.1].

Closely affiliated with 'or is *salvation*, the verb being here the familiar yashah, "Jesus," in whom "was life, and the life was the *light* of men" [Jn 1.4]. The psalmist's request to be "Jesus-ed" has a specific place, "in your *steadfast love*" or chesed.

Vs. 17: Let me not be put to shame, O Lord, for I call on you; let the wicked be put to shame, let

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them go dumbfounded to Sheol. In the psalmist's eyes, the act of *calling upon* God (qara') is associated with the potential of being *shamed*, yavash, which basically means to be dried up. "Ephraim is stricken, their root is *dried up*, they shall bear no fruit" [Hos 9.16]. Thus yavash gives new meaning to Christ's words, "May no fruit ever come from you again! And the fig tree *withered* at once" [Mt 21.19], that is, as when the psalmist applies yavash to the *wicked*.

Let them go dumbfounded to Sheol. *Dumbfounded* is the verb damah with its alternate meaning of *to resemble*. Thus we may say that the wicked are *likened* to Sheol, abode of the dead, and associated with a terrible silence: "In *Sheol*, who can give you praise" [Ps 6.5]?

Vs. 18: Let the lying lips be dumb which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt. Here "*lying* (shaqar, *to deceive*) lips" are made *dumb*, 'alam, from which comes the word *widow*, thus implying that such deceit has begotten something which then is orphaned. The object of this emptiness are the *righteous*, those who practice tsedaqah. The manner in which this desolation is expressed is insolently, hataq, the verb meaning *to remove*, and has a two-fold expression, *pride* (ga'on which also means *splendor*) and *contempt* (boz).

Vs. 19: O how abundant is your goodness which you have laid up for those who fear you, and wrought for those who take refuge in you in the sight of the sons of men! Such abundant *goodness* (tov) is the antithesis of the insolence mentioned in vs. 18 which bears no fruit. Vs. 19 implies that such tov is not expended but *laid up*, tsaphan: "...and over our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I *have laid up* for you, O my beloved" [Sg. 7.13]. Since "*fear* (yire'ah) of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" [Prov 1.7], it may be said to be directed to this divine abundance as *first fruits* or aparche: "We...who have the *first fruits* of the Spirit" [Rom 8.23].

And wrought for those who take refuge in you in the sight of the sons of men. Reference is of course to God's tov, more specifically, to persons who *have taken refuge* in God, chasah (cf. Ps 7.1), better "*in the sight of* the sons of men," neged, a preposition implying before-ness; verbal root means *to declare, confess*. "For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's *sight* but also in the *sight* of men" [2 Cor 8.21]. This verse unifies both types of sight, of before-ness.

Vs. 20: In the covert of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you hold them safe under your shelter from the strife of tongues. *Them* refers to "those who take refuge in you" of vs. 19. Vs. 20 continues this theme, more specifically referring to God's presence or satar; the Hebrew uses satar twice, as verb and as noun. Compare with Ps 17.8, "*Hide* me in the shelter of your wings;" presence is the common word for *face*. Thus the divine face is protection from *plots* or rekes (singular) whose verbal root means *to bind*; God's face serves to loosen these bonds.

Tsaphan is the word for *holding safe*; cf. vs. 19 above. Such protection is offered under the divine *shelter*, sukah, as in Ps 27.5: "He will conceal me under the *cover* of his tent," which also uses the verb tsaphan. In the verse under consideration, tsaphan has as its aim protection from the "strife of tongues." Compare this turmoil with the descent of the Holy Spirit: "And there appeared to them *tongues* as of fire" [Acts 2.3].

Vs. 21: Blessed be the Lord, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was beset as in a besieged city. Pala', a word frequently cited in the Psalter for *wondrously shown*, fundamentally means to make a distinction, an interesting connotation in light of the Spirit's descent referred to in Acts 2.3 just above. Often it alludes to past deeds done by God on behalf of Israel: "before all your people I will do *marvels*" [Ex 34.10]. It is therefore not difficult to associate pala' with steadfast love or chesed.

There is a distinction time for the revelation of chesed, that is, when the psalmist was under *siege* in a city, *tsur* being the verb used.

Vs. 22: I had said in my alarm, "I am driven far from your sight." But you did hear my supplications when I cried to you for help. Chaphaz for *alarm* translates in the LXX as *ekstasis*, a fact noted by several Fathers of the (Greek) Church. The Hebrew verb means *to make haste*: "...garments and equipment which the Syrians had thrown away in their *haste*" [2 Kg 7.15]. It is interesting to see the association of this alacrity with the psalmist saying that he is *driven away*, *gazar*, which has the basic meaning of *to cut, to divide*: "To him who *divided* the Red Sea" [Ps 136.13]. In vs. 22 *gazar* is with respect to "your sight" or in Hebrew, "from before (*neged*) your eyes."

Despite the psalmist's difficulty, he admits that God heard (in Hebrew) "the voice of my *supplications*," the verbal root being *chanan* which connotes pity; here they are synonymous with his *cry*, *shawah*, akin to *yashah*, as noted with respect to Ps 28.2. Thus these words may read "when I Jesus-ed to you."

Vs. 23: Love the Lord, all you his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly requites him who acts haughtily. *Saints* are those who practice *chesed* because their name is derived from this verb. Here is an instance when a name is in strict conformity with the essence it denotes. They are bidden to *love* the Lord, 'ahav which intimates breathing and thus longing. Next the psalmist switches to a statement with regard to another class of people akin to saints, namely, the *faithful*, those who are 'aman. This group is the object of divine *natsar*, *preservation* and as noted on several occasions, implies watching. The 'emunym stand in stark contrast to those who are *haughty*, more precisely, "making haughtiness." *Shalam* is the word for *requite* (from which derives *shalom*) and implies fullness or completion.

Vs. 24: Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord! Two exhortations which complete Psalm 31, *chazaq* and 'amats respectively, the latter apply more specifically to the *heart*. Another use of 'amats: "When he *established* the clouds" [Prov 8.28]. Both counsels are directed to people *waiting* for the Lord, *chul*, which also means *to be strong*. "His ways *prosper* at all times" [Ps 10.5].

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