

Notes on the Psalter, #3

Psalm Thirty-Two

Vs. 1: Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 'Ashry for *blessed* is the very first word of the Psalter. As noted there, this word connotes being in a state of transition, of constant movement. It is used with regard to two failings, *transgression* (peshah: "For I knew that...from birth you were called a *rebel*," Is 48.8) and *sin* (chata'ah). The former is *forgiven* or nasa', *to raise*, which in this case would be divine chesed; the latter is covered or kasah, *to cover*, in the sense of putting on something. A transgression is wiped out, but a sin is concealed; it thus remains present though not manifest.

Vs. 2: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit. A second instance of 'ashry, this time with regard to a person without *iniquity* and *deceit*, hawon and remyah. I.e., 'ashry is defined negatively as in vs. 1 of this psalm and as in Ps 1.1, "*Blessed* is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked." The lack of hawon in a person, rather, the Lord not *imputing* it to him (chasav), whereas remyah is simply not present in a person and apparently has no reference to God. Perhaps this is because the psalmist is speaking of a person's ruach which is akin to the divine Ruah, *Spirit*.

Vs. 3: When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. Charash is the verb here which fundamentally means *to inscribe* as well as *to be deaf*, hence, implying silence. Here with regard to sin, it implies that making known one's trespass is beneficial; with regard to charash it suggests writing it down for others to see. From this verb derives the work of craftsman: "As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you *engrave* the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel" [Ex 28.11]. As applied to sin, the formation of such an "engraving" of it means that it is made known in such a way as to inspire other persons.

In vs. 3, not to charash one's sin is harmful; it makes one's physical body waste away, balah, *to fall away* as with regard to clothes: "Your clothing did not *wear out* upon you" [Dt 8.4]. The means of removal is through the psalmist's *groaning* or sha'ag which implies roaring as of a lion: "Their *roaring* is like a lion" [Is 5.29]. "All the day long" means that this sha'ag gradually strips away, as it were, at the psalmist, little by little.

Vs. 4: For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah. "Day and night" suggest fatigue: "When I lie down I say, 'When shall I arise?' But the *night* is long, and I am full of tossing till the *dawn*" [Job 7.4]. Such is Job's experience of the divine hand which is *heavy*, a word derived from the verbal root kavod and from which comes *glory*. The idea behind kavod seems to be that divine glory is "heavy" in that it emanates from God into creation, dripping down, as it were.

My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. The negative perception of divine heaviness has direct impact upon the psalmist's physical constitution. These words are difficult in the Hebrew text, reading something like "my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." *Moisture* or leshad refers to a person's vital power; in Num 11.8 it has a different meaning: "and the taste of it [manna] was like the taste of *cakes* baked with oil." During Israel's forty years of wandering in Sinai, this manna was the leshad or vital power sustaining the people. Note that Moses commanded the people to gather the manna only for daily sustenance and leave the rest alone, otherwise, it would rot (cf. Ex 16.16+). A parallel can be made between vs. 4 of Ps 32 and vs. 21 of Exodus and manna: "Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted." Such was the power of the "heat of summer."

Vs. 4 concludes with Selah, one of three instances in this psalm; it gives time to *pause* and reflect upon the psalmist's condition and this experience of his leshad being dried up.

Vs. 5: I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord;" then you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. *Acknowledgment* here is yadah, to make known in an intimate way the psalmist's sin; it is the direct result of his having taken the *pause* or selah in the previous verse. Furthermore, he does not *hide* or kasah his hawon (*iniquity*) in the sense of covering it

with clothing. Parallel this with Gen 3:21: "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and *clothed* (lavash) them."

"I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." The opposite sentiment to Adam and Eve who "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" [Gen 3:8]. Compare the use of *transgression* here, pashah, with that of vs. 1: "Blessed is he whose *transgression* is forgiven." This part of vs. 5 the psalmist utters to himself which is a type of that charash in vs. 3 where like Adam and Eve he hide his condition.

As soon as the psalmist confesses his pashah (note plural use of the noun), he realizes that God forgave not just his sin but its *guilt*, hawon, the same word used for sin at the beginning of this verse which he *acknowledged*, yadah. While important to realize forgiveness of sin, this verse implies that it is better to forgive guilt which tends to project memory of it into the future which can have harmful effects. In gratitude for blotting out the potential for such memory, the psalmist takes another selah to reflect upon what had just transpired.

Vs. 6: Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. The *godly* person or the one who practices chesed *prays* to God, that is, reflects the divine chesed back to him. The means for doing this is through *prayer*, palal, which implies judging. "Phinehas stood up and *executed judgment*" [Ps 106:30]. Such palal thus involves putting oneself aright with God and suggests tsedaqah, *justice*.

Instead of *distress*, the Hebrew reads "in a time when you may be found." Such time or heth is a kairon, a special occasion. These words form part of a sentence with those preceding it.

The offering of prayer or palal takes place with respect to "great waters," more specifically, their *rush* or sheteph which aptly connotes an inundation. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods *drown* it" [Sg 8:7]. Such waters are symbolic of chaos upon which God sent his Spirit; for them to *reach* or nagah (also infers a *blow*) a person means that the primeval chaos has invaded his life.

Vs. 7: You are a hiding place for me, you preserve me from trouble; you encompass me with deliverance. Selah. Another use of the common verbal root satar from which *hiding place* is derived and may be tied to that divine safety from the "rush of many waters" of vs. 6. "Be a *refuge* to them from the destroyer" [Is 16:4]. The function of this seter is protection from trouble; note the play on words here, *preserve* or natsar connected with *trouble* or tsar, both words which had been discussed earlier.

To be *encompassed* with palat or *deliverance*, savav, is the opposite as expressed in Ps 22:12: "strong bulls of Bashan *surround* me." The Hebrew reads "with *shouts* of deliverance," with the possibility of such ranan being a liturgical gesture. While selah always signifies an appropriate time to pause and reflect on divine intervention which is very frequent in the Psalter, the psalmist seems to be especially careful in taking such time in this particular psalm.

Vs. 8: I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Three aspects of divine guidance recommended by the psalmist: 1) *instruct* or sakal which fundamentally means to behold (cf. Ps 14:2). Thus he will cause his pupils to pay careful attention. "That you may have good success wherever you go," Joshua's words to the Israelites prior to entering the Promised Land, Jos 1:8.

2) *Teach* or yarah in the sense of laying foundations; verbal root for Torah which may be implied here. Both yarah as well as sakal have as their aim the *way* or derek to proceed, namely, Jesus Christ as the Way (Truth and Life).

3) Once those persons under the psalmist's tutelage have acquired sakal and yarah, the psalmist imparts *counsel* or hetsah of a special sort, that is, by keeping his *eye* (singular) on them. The Hebrew reads, "I will counsel on you my eye." Such an eye has beheld God and can now impart this same beholding to

others. It is the fulfillment of Ps 27.4, "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after...to *behold* the beauty of the Lord."

Vs. 9: Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not keep with you. These two animals are noted for stubbornness, "without *understanding*" (byn) or the capacity to discern. "And he *understood* the word and had *understanding* of the vision" [Dan 10.1]. Furthermore, horses and mules were essential for transportation. For them to function in this fashion, they need to be disciplined, "else it will not *keep* with you," qarav, *to draw near*.

Vs. 10: Many are the pangs of the wicked; but steadfast love surrounds him who trusts in the Lord. *Pangs* or mak'ovym with reference to wicked persons infers sorrow and thus not birth of what such persons devise. For a use of mak'ovym with reference to the just man, cf. Lam 1.12 which the Catholic Church quotes in the liturgy for Good Friday: "Look and see if there is any *sorrow* like my *sorrow* which was brought upon me."

With the notion of fruitless birth in mind, divine *steadfast love* or chesed implies successful birth, that is, with regard to *trust* or batach. The verb *to surround* or savav here intimates chesed acting as a midwife to such batach. "Hearken to me...you who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb" [Is 46.3]. Batach may be considered as this being *borne* by God.

Vs. 11: Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! Two commands for the righteous person, the one who practices tsedaqah or *righteousness: to be glad* (samach) and *to rejoice* (gyl). The latter means going around in a circle as in a liturgical dance, the direct result of samach or making a loud sound. Note the parallel between gyl and savav, the latter having been discussed in vs. 10 above.

The third command to *shout for joy* or ranan is as noted in vs. 7 a liturgical act which pertains to the "*upright* in heart," yashar; compare with the tsedaqah, the former connoting more a sense of being pleasing: "Perhaps it will *please* God that you may curse them for me from there" [Num 23.27].

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Psalm Thirty-Three

Vs. 1: Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright This psalm being with the exhortation to ranan and carries over the same sense of this word from the concluding verse of the preceding psalm. The phrase "*in the Lord*" occurs frequently and is carried over into the New Testament by St. Paul when he speaks of being "*in Christ*." Such in-ness is an important feature to note, for it is a way of stating divine presence both with respect to an individual and a (liturgical) group which here consists of the *righteous* or tsadyqym.

Praise or tehilah (connotes the singing of a hymn) refers to the *upright*, the verbal root being yashar; cf. Ps 32.9 just above with the distinction between yashar and tsedeqah. *To befit*, derives from na'ah with its basic meaning of *to sit, to dwell*: "He makes me *lie down* in green pastures" [Ps 23.2].

Vs. 2: Praise the Lord with the lyre, make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! These two musical instruments are clear indications of Psalm 33's liturgical nature, both of which consist of strings: kinor and nevel: "And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the Lord with all their might, with songs and *lyres* and *harps* and tambourines and castanets and cymbals" [2 Sam 6.5]. Note that the latter derives from the verbal root naval, *to be foolish*.

Vs. 3: Sing to him a new song, play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts. The phrase *new song* (shyr chadash) occurs five other times in the Psalter, 40.3, 96.1, 98.1, 144.9 & 144.9; chadash or *new* is phonetically similar to qadesh, *holy*. In addition to singing, the psalmist bids the congregation (of Israel as a

nation or those assembled in the Jerusalem temple) to *play skillfully* or nagan, the words “on the strings” being omitted in the Hebrew text. “Take a harp, go about the city, O forgotten harlot! Make *sweet melody*, sing many songs, that you may be remembered” [Is 23.16]. This verse enhances the purpose of liturgy, both to remember past divine saving deeds as well as for beseeching God to remember those participating in the liturgical acts.

Teruhah or *loud shout* can also apply to battle: “with a *shout* in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind” [Am 1.15]. Thus teruhah can apply at the beginning of an event, its engagement or conclusion. It is also associated with a trumpet: “Then you shall send abroad the loud *trumpet* on the tenth day of the seventh month” [Lev 25.9].

Vs. 4: For the word of the Lord is upright; and all his work is done in faithfulness. Both a correspondence and difference between two aspects of God: his *word* or devar and his *work* or mahaseh; another way of viewing this is a distinction between divine intent and action. The word “all” does not need to apply to the immaterial (spiritual) devar but is needed for the concrete mahaseh.

Vs. 5: He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. In the first half of this verse God *loves* (‘ahav) tsedaqah and mishpat, two terms with judicial overtones; they may be situated under that *word* or devar of vs. 4 which is God’s spiritual realization prior to its physical manifestation. This latter realizes the former by being full of divine chesed; implication is that physical objects both animate and inanimate participate in such chesed which gives the foundation for the faculty of our imagination to work.

Vs. 6: By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth. Attention is turned to the *heavens* or shamaym as opposed to the earth of vs. 5 which is created by the (*upright*, yashar of vs. 4) devar of God. Implication is that shamaym, while physical, partakes of the divine realm by reason of its ethereal character; shamaym is thus “easier” to make than concrete physical reality.

The heavenly *hosts* or tseva’am (tsava’, singular) may apply to angels or stars and planets; anyway, hosts defy gravity and live in an in between realm of part spirit and part matter. This term is frequently used by the prophets as an accompaniment of God: “Therefore, thus says the Lord, the Lord of *hosts*” [Is 1.24]. Perhaps their intimacy with God is due to their being made by the “*breath* of his mouth,” i.e., his ruach or *spirit*.

Vs. 7: He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle; he put the deeps in storehouses. Attention moves from heavens above of vs. 6 to waters below which God *gathers*, kanas, which implies hiding and which in fact is done (according to the Hebrew text), “in a *heap*,” ned. Immediately comes to mind Ex 14.22: “The waters being a *wall* (chomah) to them on their right hand and on their left.” Here chomah derives from a verbal root meaning *to surround*, whereas ned is exactly what it means, a heap or pile. For its use parallel to Exodus, cf. Jos 3.13: “and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one *heap*.” Maybe there is a parallel between such a heap and the stones placed in the middle of the Jordan River when it was dry: “So these *stones* shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever” [Jos 4.7]. This latter memorial is unique in that it is under water and remains so until Christ’s baptism in the Jordan.

He puts the deeps in storehouses. *Deep* or tohu (singular) as in Gen 1.1 is the archetypal symbol of chaos. For the deeps to be posited in *storehouses* (the verbal root being ‘atsar, *to treasure up*) suggests seeing something valuable in them. The agent for such ‘atsar is the divine Ruach: “And the *Spirit* of God was *moving* over the face of the waters” [Gen 1.2]. This spirit-ual *moving* or rachaph is a type of brooding as a bird taking care of its young in a nest.

Vs. 8: Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! Attention is shifted from water to earth which is exhorted to *fear* the Lord, that is, the physical constitution of our planet. Compare this with a different type of fear in Gen 9.2: “The *fear* of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground

and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered.”

To stand in awe or *gur* with respect to God implies a turning away and well as sojourning. “That you may live many days in the land where you *sojourn*” [Jer 35.7]. Such *gur* is with respect to “inhabitants of the *world*,” *tevel*, which means more specifically the inhabited world as opposed to the earth of the first part of vs. 8.

Vs. 9: For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth. ‘Amar is the common verb for *to speak* which brings things into being. Divine *command* or *tsawah* is necessary for these created things to *stand forth* or *hamad* which suggests taking hold as in a foundation. The picture has military overtones; there comes to mind an officer summoning a soldier to stand forth from a drawn up rank of troops. “The stars shone in their watches and were glad; he called them and they said, ‘Here we are!’ They shone with gladness for him who made them” [Bar 3.34].

Vs. 10: The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nought; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. *Nations* or *goyim* are all those opposed to Israel or at least not sharing in its divine mission; you get a special sense of this hostility when numbered as in Jos 3.10: “He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Nivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites and the Jebusites.” Such people took *counsel*, *hetsah*, against Israel. “The *counsel* of the wicked is far from me” [Job 21.16]. Human *hetsah* is *frustrated*, *parar*, or broken.

In addition to such *parar*, God *frustrates* or *no’ plans* (*machshevoth*); the verb *no’* connotes a sense of refusal, of preventing maturation. “Why will you *discourage* the heart of the people of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord has given them” [Num 32.7]? The verbal root for plans is *chashav* which has an alternate sense: “and the son of man that you *care* for him” [Ps 8.4].

Vs. 11: The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Compare use of *hetsah*, *counsel*, with the previous verse in reference to that of the nations. Also, the verb *hamad* (cf. vs. 11) is used with regard to such *hetsah*. “Let the *purpose* of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it” [Is 5.19].

Machshevoth for *thoughts* (again, cf. the previous verse) by implication *hamad*—*stand*—“to all generations,” *ledor waledor*, or in Hebrew “from generation to generation.”

Vs. 12: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! Here a (singular) *nation* or *goy* as opposed to plural *goyim* of vs. 10; it could refer to Israel as possessor of God or inheritor of him. *Heritage* or *nachalah* as applied to God’s choice is the source for this human right of possession, *bachar* being the verbal root. It is interesting to note the great frequency of this word in the Books of Numbers and Joshua when Israel was beginning to establish itself.

Vs. 13: The Lord looks down from heaven, he sees all the sons of men. *Navat* for *to look* implies a beholding with respect; “*from heaven*” is the source of such *navat*, a general gaze, which is transformed into a more specific *seeing* (*ra’ah*) directed towards “all sons of men.” Compare this distance between God and creation with Jer 23.24: “Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?, says the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth?”

Vs. 14: From where he sits enthroned he looks forth on all the inhabitants of the earth. This verse specifies the *navat* and *ra’ah* mentioned just above, as emanating from God’s throne, rather, “the place of his habitation.” This phrase is composed of *mekon* and *shvet* respectively: “You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the *place*, O Lord, which you have made for your *abode*” [Ex 15.17]. The two types of seeing already noted become here *shagach*, to behold as through a window: “*Gazing in* at the windows, looking through the lattice” [Sg 2.9] and “Those who see you will *stare at* you” [Is 14.9]. Such *shagach* is directed at persons as opposed to other created beings, “inhabitants of the earth.”

Vs. 15: He who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds. This verse is a continuation

of vs. 14; such *fashioning* or *yatsar* is prefixed, as it were, by *shagach* or beholding through a window. "I have *formed* you and made you the author of a covenant of the people" [Is 49.5]. *Hearts* of each person is specified, not just a chosen few or the nation Israel; *yachad* as an adverb implying suddenness and consistency.

After such fashioning, human beings are let loose on their own and are now the object of divine *observation*, *byn*, or to consider with understanding how they behave (*their deeds*, *mahaseyhem*). *Byn* does not imply something mechanical in that people function independently in the sense of far off-ness but a continuous being-with.

Vs. 16: A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. I.e., a king is not "Jesus-ed" or *yashah* through temporal might or *army*, *chayl*; same applied to a *warrior* or *gibor* who is not *malat*: "and that all this assembly may know that the Lord *saves* (*yashah*) not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you [Goliath] into our hand" [1 Sam 17.47].

Vs. 17: The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save. "War" and "hope" are not in the Hebrew text; a *horse* is *vain* or *sheqer* in the sense of being false: "With *lies* you have made the heart of the righteous sad" [Ezk 13.22]. Such fallacy has not share in *victory* or *teshukah* ("Jesus"). As in vs. 16 regarding the warrior, its *chayl* cannot *malat*. That is to say, both a man and the means by which his military power is extended (*horse*) are of no value for "Jesus."

Vs. 18: Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love. *Hineh* or *behold* is designed to get attention away from human strength depicted in the last few verses to God. Although implicit (*eye*), any type of looking is not mentioned here; note that such eye is "on those who fear him," *'el* or *towards*, in sense of in the direction of. No temporal gap exists between this *'el* and *fear*, *ra'ah*.

Similarly, no temporal gap exists between *hope* or *yachal* in divine *steadfast love* or *chesed*. Various forms of this verb resemble *chayl* or *might* as noted above but with different implications.

Vs. 19: That he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. This verse is dependent upon the "eye of the Lord" of vs. 18, *to deliver* or *natsal* in the sense of pulling away from a distressful situation which in this instance is death. Not only this, but the divine eye is extended to another action, to keep alive during a *famine* or *rahav*. "For God sent me [Joseph] before you to preserve life. For the *famine* has been in the land these two years" [Gen 45.5-6].

Vs. 20: Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and shield. Note the plural *we* and singular *soul* (*nephesh*), most likely referring to the collective nature of Israel. It seems as though soul is *waiting* for deliverance from death mentioned in vs. 19, *chakah*: "Therefore the Lord *waits* to be gracious to you; therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who *wait* for him" [Is 30.18]. Here this a reciprocal *chakah*, from God and from the people.

He is our help and our shield. Such invisible *chakah* is transformed into the visible *help* (*hezer*) and *shield* (*magen*), both of which have military overtones.

Vs. 21: Yes, our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Another instance of a plural (*our*) and singular (*heart*); the in-ness to which the psalmist refers is that *hezer* and *magen* of the previous verse. The result of such divine protection is *samach*, *gladness*. This interplay between "our" and "heart" is consummated in *trust* or *batach*, more specifically, "in his holy name," which is not necessarily God himself. *Holy* derives from the verbal root *qadash*, *to set apart*; thus the divine *name* or *shem* is apart in the sense that *hezer* and *magen* are apart.

Vs. 22: Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you. Psalm 33 concludes with a desire, not necessarily its fulfillment, for divine *chesed* to be "upon us," *hal*; implication that such *chesed* comes from above to below. The key word is *ka'asher*, *even as*, meaning that divine *chesed* is meted out in proportion to those who *hope* or *yachal* "in you," *l-* *towards*, in the direction of.

Psalm Thirty-Four

Vs. 1: I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. An alphabetical acrostic psalm, that is, each verse beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In vs. 1 the psalmist is doing the *blessing*, barak, a gesture usually associated with God yet performed at special times by people, for example, a father blessing his son: “And Isaac called Jacob and *blessed* him” [Gen 28.1]. Rightly does the psalmist say “at all *times*,” heth, the closest approximation in human terms to God’s eternal nature.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Tehilah (*praise*) which belongs exclusively to the human realm as opposed to the shared human and divine character of barak. Such praise is in the psalmist’s *mouth*, indicating vocal and/or liturgical prayer in conjunction with a community. Note tamyd, *continually*, as distinguished from heth or *time*. The former may refer to an action done repeatedly and at set times, not necessarily in a ceaseless fashion without pause: “And you shall eat at my table *always*” [2 Sam 9.7].

Vs. 2: My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and be glad. The verb *to boast*, halal, implies brightness and also means *to praise*; i.e., halal refers to anything that is obvious or displayed. Obviously this verb occurs frequently in the Psalter. “And you shall rejoice in the Lord, in the Holy One of Israel you shall *glory*” [Is 41.16].

Let the afflicted hear and be glad. Such hanawym or afflicted are *glad* or samach as a result of the psalmist’s boasting, his halal. With their verbal roots in mind as discussed earlier, we may say that such praise is transferred to them by reason of its brightness which causes illumination.

Vs. 3: O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together! Such magnifying or gadal (*to be large*) is an exhortation to the hanawym, a request for them to gadal their inherent brightness and let it shine. “Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, ‘*Great* is the Lord, beyond the border of Israel” [Mal 1.5]! And, “Let your light shine before men” [Mt 5.16]. The psalmist’s exhortation, like so many in the Psalter, may be taken in a liturgical context.

The second request is for both the psalmist and the hanawym to *exalt* God, ramam, which implies a raising on high, the proper “place” where God dwells. More specifically, he speaks of God’s *name* or shem which is YHWH as revealed to Moses.

Vs. 4: I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Now the psalmist gives his own testimony as far as divine help is concerned. It consists of two features: *seeking*, darash (rather, past tense) whose verbal root connotes a treading or going back and forth in earnest pursuit; we also have *deliverance*, natsal, a verb standing in relation to *fear*, gur, which implies a turning away.

Note that the God had *answered* or hanah the psalmist; this verbal root is the same for the hanawym mentioned already; their “affliction” is a type of hidden “answering” from God.

Vs. 5: Look to him and be radiant, so your faces shall never be ashamed. An association between vision (*look*) and light (*be radiant*), navat and nahar. For a use of navat with vision/light/hanah, cf. Ps 13.3: “*Consider* (navat) and *answer* (hanah) me, O Lord, my God; *lighten* my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.” The radiance produced is an outflow; the verbal root nahar means *to shine, to flow*, from which is derived the noun *river*. “I will extend peace to her like a *river*” [Is 66.12], that is, make this peace radiant.

Implied in vs. 8 is that *faces* will partake in the divine nahar, hence, they will never be *ashamed*, chapfar, whose alternate meaning is *to dig, search*. “Behold, certain men of Israel have come here tonight to *search out* the land” [Jos 2.2]. Perhaps inferred in chapfar is that those faces which have become nahar will never reveal shame; instead, they will be like that of Moses: “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses *face to face*, as a man speaks to his friend” [Ex 33.11].

Vs. 6: This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The psalmist identifies himself as an *hany*, *poor man*, from the same verbal root as the *hanawym*, *afflicted*, of vs. 2. *This* (*zeh*) sets himself up as an example to follow yet bespeaks a certain detachment from his situation.

In addition to having *heard* him (*shamah*), the Lord *saved* the psalmist, *yashah* (“Jesus” again); not only this, but “Jesuses” him from his *troubles* or *tsarah* (singular): “In my *distress* I called upon the Lord” [Ps 18.6].

Vs. 7: The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them. *Angel* (*mal’ak*) is not specified but here has two functions on behalf of those persons who fear the Lord:

1) *Encamps* or *chanah*; this word can imply Israel’s nomadic existence in the desert or an army in the field. It also refers to the divine tabernacle: “When the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is *to be pitched*, the Levites shall set it up” [Num 1.51]. You might say that the Levites or priests acted as angels with regard to the tabernacle.

2) The angel’s second function is to *deliver* those who fear the Lord, *chalats*: cf. Ps 6.4 for this word’s double meaning *to draw out* and *to be ready*. Such *chalats* can only be affective (i.e., by the angel) within the camp.

Vs. 8: O taste and see that the Lord is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him! Here the act of *tasting* (*taham*), of putting something in one’s mouth, is the prerequisite of *seeing* (*ra’ah*), of vision. Such *taham* is applied to discretion or reason: “A fair woman without *discretion*” [Prov 11.22]. Thus discretion and seeing are united, in this order as applied to divine *goodness*, *tov*.

Happy is the man who takes refuge in him! Although this second half of vs. 8 can be read independently of the first, it is a result of *taham*, i.e., it produces *happiness* or ‘ashry. This first word of Ps 1 which as already noted, implies being in a state of transition, of progression towards a goal. In this instance, ‘ashry leads to *refuge* in God, *chasah*; it connotes taking flight, a notion not dissimilar to ‘ashry’s forward movement.

Vs. 9: O fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no want! Such an exhortation to *fear* God, *yara’*, is the first and direct result of *taham*, of *tasting*: “The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” [Prov 1.7]. The psalmist addresses God’s saints or those who are *qadash*, *set apart*, that is to say, set apart by reason of having taken *refuge* or *chasah*. The consequence of *yara’* is no *want*, *chesor*: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not *want*” [Ps 23.1].

Vs. 10: The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. The psalmist thinks of what could be the greatest contrast to fearing God, *young lions* or *kephyr* (singular): “As a lion or a *young lion* growls over his prey” [Is 31.4]. This noun derives from the verbal root *kaphar*, *to cover*, *make expiation*, possibly because of the lion’s mane. “And Aaron shall make an *atonement*” [Ex 30.10]. A *kephyr* suffers *want* and *hunger*, *rosh* and *rahav*. “There was a *famine* (*rahav*) in the land” [Rt 1.1].

In contrast to the want experienced by such a strong animal such as a *kephyr*, the psalmist identifies *seeking* God with satiety, *taham* (*taste*) again implied. The verb here is *darash*. “Such is the generation of those who *seek* him” [Ps 24.6]. The object of *darash* in vs. 10 is *tov* which that *goodness*, the object of which was obtained through tasting and seeing of vs. 8.

Vs. 11: Come, O sons, listen to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord. The psalmist *teaches* (*lamad*) *fear* (*yir’ath*) of the Lord, that is, he has learned it himself as in Prov 1.7 cited in vs. 9 above; i.e., he has *begun* to advance in this fear (“*beginning* of wisdom...”) or has become blessed or ‘ashry by his own forward movement. In brief, *fear* may be defined as acknowledgment of a lack of resources. However, before imparting his *lamad* (which fundamentally means *to chastise*), the psalmist bids sons to *come*, *yalak*. After having engaged in divine *lamad* for a period of time, these sons are entrusted with the more advanced type of coming,

'ashry, with its implication of *blessedness*.

Vs. 12: What man is there who desires life and covets many days, that he may enjoy good? This question resembles Wisdom's crying aloud (Prov 1.20+) with whom the psalmist may be identified. His question has two aspects:

1) *Life* (chayym) can mean biological existence which is certainly *desired*, chaphats, and means an inclining to what one delights in: "But you shall be called My *Delight* is in her" [Is 62.4].

2) The act of *coveting*," 'ahav, which as discussed earlier, is a common word which means a longing after with emphasis upon breathing. *Many days* is a clear reference to a aspiration for indefinite temporal extension. Both chaphats and 'ahav have as their goal enjoyment—the Hebrew reads *see*—the *good* or tov.

Vs. 13: Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. This and the next verse contain six exhortations which will be numbered in parentheses, all of which hearken back to the opening chapter of Proverbs where Wisdom addresses both those willing and unwilling to listen to her. Each exhortation is a form of constraint. (1) Vs. 13 has to do with speaking which forms a major theme of the Book of James: "Look at the ships also; though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire" [3.4-5]. Both tongue and (2) lips of the verse under consideration have as their restraint the verb natsar. "All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness for those who *keep* his covenant and his testimonies" [Ps 25.10]. Note the "binding" nature which reenforces the sense of natsar: paths, steadfast (love), faithfulness.

Vs. 14: Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. Once the natsar or binding action has taken place, the psalmist turns attention to separation from *evil* (roah) which assumes a form of movement, of (3) *departure* (sur) which implies withdrawal: "But you have *turned aside* from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction" [Mal 2.8]. The type of (4) *good*, tov, is not specified; the proper response is implied from the act of sur from evil.

The final goal is shalom, in the sense of a restoration of all things in God, of seeing their divine origin. It requires (5) *seeking* (baqash) or a mental attitude and *pursuit* (6) (radaph) or action, two verbs already discussed.

Vs. 15: The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. We may assume that this divine vision and listening are directed toward the six forms of constraint outlined in the last two verses. The object of divine attention is the *righteous*, those who practice tsedaqah. Their *cry* or shawah (for help) is related to the verb yashah ("Jesus") for whom they long. God's "towardness" or 'el (occurs twice) is an inclination implied in the verb shaqaph as in Ps 14.2: "The Lord *looks down* from heaven."

Vs. 16: The face of the Lord is against evildoers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. Attention is now turned towards or *against* (b-) *evildoers*; they do not have God's eyes or ears...sight and vision...directed towards them but the fulness of the divine *face*, peney, which includes not only these two faculties but that of speaking (the mouth) which issues judgment. An example of this face: "And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud *looked down* upon the host of the Egyptians and discomfited the host of the Egyptians" [Ex 14.24]. Here is a mention of shaqaph where the Egyptians bear the full brunt of the divine face. Indeed, their *remembrance* or zakar in the sense of *male* (i.e., an agent for propagation) is *cut off*, karath. This verb has a positive sense in the sense of making a covenant: ""The covenant which the Lord has *made*" [Ex 24.8].

Vs. 17: When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. Words reminiscent of Israel's deliverance mentioned in the last verse and prefigured in Ex 3.7: "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters." Note both the divine seeing and hearing here which results in an *outstretched* hand (cf. vs. 20), shalak, which is the essence

of Israel's remembrance of the divine covenant. The Song of Miriam celebrates what vs. 17 implies, Ex 15.21.

Note the frequent use of the Hebrew letter ts in vs. 17: *tsahaqu*, *tsarutam*, *hitsylam* (*cry*, *troubles*, *deliver*) which indicates both distress and emancipation.

Vs. 18: The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Divine *nearness* (*qarov*) also means the interior of something or a person ("Sarah laughed *within* herself, Gen 18.12) and may be viewed in light of *shaqaph* discussed in vs. 16 and elsewhere; the verbal root of this word suggests warfare: "which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of *battle* and war" [Job 28.33]. Also, the word *sacrifice* is derived from *qarav*: "But you shall *offer* the burnt offering" [Num 28.27]. Thus *near* of vs. 18 contains the twofold notion of God fighting and receiving sacrifice. He does this from the *brokenhearted* or *nishberey-lev*, the verbal root *shavar* being found in Ps 10.15: "*Break* the arm of the wicked and the evildoer."

And saves the crushed in spirit. Yet another instance of *yashah*, "Jesus," with reference to those who are not simply *crushed* (*daka'* in the sense of *to trample*: "Yet it pleased the Lord to *bruise* him," Is 53.10) in the physical sense but in *spirit*, *ruach*, that aspect of a person made in the divine image and likeness as resembling the Holy *Spirit* or *breath* of God.

Vs. 19: Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. *Rahoth* for afflictions hints at badness in the moral sense but may include physical sufferings. Despite them, God delivers or *natsal* the *tsadyq* (who is equivalent to one practicing *chesed*, *divine mercy*).

Vs. 20: He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Words reminiscent of Ex 12.46 as quoted in Jn 19.36: "Not a bone of him shall be *broken*," *shavar*, as used in vs. 20. Compare with Ps 10.15: "*Break* the arm of the wicked and the evildoer." What prevents such breaking is God's *keeping* or *shamar* (which is similar in sound to *shavar*), a word connoting the keeping of watch as a guard. "I am a companion of all who...*keep* your precepts" [Ps 119.63], *shamar* often being associated with the divine Torah. This verb applied to *bones*, *hetsem* (singular), involves protection of the body as a whole. Perhaps vs. 20 and its reference to Christ on the cross is suggestive of Adam's first words to his newly formed wife: "This one is now *bone* of my *bones*" [Gen 2.23].

Vs. 21: Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. A play on words, *rashah* and *raha*, *evil* and *wicked*, indicating their similarity. Such persons who practice *raha* are the exact opposite of the *tsadyq* or *righteous*, the word here being singular. To be *condemned* or *'asham* implies failure to perform or complete one's duty. "When a ruler sins...and is *guilty*, if the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a goat" [Lev 4.22-3]. Thus *'asham* as applied to the details of Torah have a juridical and sacrificial sense.

Vs. 22: The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. The object of *redemption*, of *padah*, is not God's servants proper but their *life* or *nephesh* which is singular in this verse for the plural "servants." It is as though participation in the common heritage of Israel were signified by a single *nephesh* despite many members. *Padah* means a loosening from bonds, a setting free: "The firstborn of an ass you shall *redeem* with a sheep" [Ex 34.20].

None of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. The psalmist speaks of such *refuge* or *chasah* in the sense of having trust perhaps in terms of his earlier words of vs. 7, "Taste and see..." The word *'asham* for *condemn* as in vs. 21 applies to the wicked in general; it also implies desolation: "Flocks of sheep are made *desolate*" [Jol 1.18].

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Psalm Thirty-Five

Vs. 1: Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me! This psalm is a prayer for deliverance from enemies, especially personal ones. From vs. one through vs. 11 we have ten requests...demands...by the psalmist of God. This boldness or freedom of speech may be summed up

by the Greek New Testament word *parresia*: “Since we have such a hope, we are very *bold*” [2 Cor 3.12]. Here are the ten demands:

1) *contend* or *ryv* in the sense of taking up a plea; also implies to engage in strife. “Unto you have I revealed my *cause*” [Jer 11.20].

2) *fight* or *lacham*; also means *to eat*. “The Lord shall *fight* for you” [Ex 14.14].

3) vs. 2: *shield* (*magen*) and *buckler* (*tsinah*); latter is a much larger shield protecting the entire soldier; also means a *thorn*. “They shall set themselves against you on every side with *buckler*, shield and helmet” [Ezk 23.24]. Both means of protection are passive in that they are situated within the context of God actively *rising* (*qum*) to *help* (*hazar*) the psalmist.

4) *spear* (*chanyth*) and *javelin* (*segor*), two offensive weapons for casting at the enemy from a distance. Perhaps this distance may be situated within God’s *qum* or *rising* of vs. 2, i.e., the place from which he casts them.

5) *say*, a simple utterance or ‘*amar*’ from God directed towards the psalmist, not his adversaries. The desire to have God as his “Jesus” (*deliverance*, *yashah*) is sufficient protection.

6) vs. 4: *putting to shame* (*yavash*, also means *to be dry*) and being *dishonored* (*kalam*, also means *to wound*): conveys an image of the psalmist’s enemies withering away before God’s presence.

7) *turn back* (*sug*; also means *to hedge about*: “Your belly is a heap of wheat, *encircled* with lilies,” Sg 7.2) and *confounded* (*chaphar*, *to dig* as a well).

8) vs. 5: being as *chaff* or *mots*: “You shall make the hills like *chaff*” [Is 41.15]. Such refuse is blown by the *wind* (Spirit) or *ruach* instead of being infused by it. The opposite sense is implied in Jn 3.8: “The *wind* blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of its, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the *Spirit*.”

9) “*angel* of the Lord,” reminiscent of Ex 14.19: “Then the *angel* of God who went before the host of Israel moved and went behind them.”

10) vs. 6: *dark* (*choshek*) and *slippery* (*chalaqlaqoth*) with reference to the way of evil persons, implying that they are lost. Cf. Ex 10.22-3: “And there was thick *darkness* in all the land of Egypt three days; they did not see one another...but all the people of Israel had light where they dwelt.” “He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by *flatteries* (slipperiness, Dn 10.21). While in this confused state, God’s angel *pursues* them, *radaph*; i.e., such pursuit causes even more confusion. *Radaph* has a positive sense: “Seek peace and *pursue* it” [Ps 34.14].

Vs. 7: For without cause they hid their net for me; without cause they dug a pit for my life. *Chanam* for *without cause* signifies something done *in vain*: “I have not said *in vain* that I would do this evil to them” [Ezk 6.10]. The Hebrew reads that “they hid their net me for in a pit” signifying entrapment as for a wild animal. Although vs. 7 says that the psalmist’s adversaries dug a pit for his *life* or *nephesh* (*soul*), it intimates the already well already dug into which Joseph was cast: “Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the *pits*” [Gen 37.20]. However, the psalmist does not say that he had fallen or was cast into one.

Vs. 8: Let ruin come upon them unawares! And let the net which they hid ensnare them; let them fall therein to ruin! In vs. 7 a parallel was drawn between the pit and Joseph. This verse is a response to the plotters against the psalmist. Contrast this sentiment with that of Joseph towards his brothers much later when he was virtual ruler over Egypt: “And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life” [Gen 45.5].

Vs. 9: Then my soul shall rejoice in the Lord, exulting in his deliverance. If we keep the Joseph theme, this *rejoicing* or *gyl* (intimates going around in a circle) and *exulting* or *sus* (implies leaping) did not take place in Egypt despite the good shown to him. Rather, Joseph bade his brothers to take his bones from Egypt: “God will visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here” [Gen 50.25]. Such *deliverance* or *yeshuah* (“Jesus”) may therefore be taken as a premonition of the Exodus several centuries later, the true “Jesus” event for Israel.

Vs. 10: All my bones shall say, “O Lord, who is like you, you who deliver the weak from him who is too strong for him, the weak and the needy from him who despoils him?” The psalmist puts words in his bones which resemble those of Joseph mentioned in vs. 9. It is as though Joseph’s bones foresaw the Exodus in terms of both Moses’ Song [Ex 15.1-18] and Miriam’s Song [Ex 15.21]; his command to have them taken up from Egypt

bears witness to God who *delivers* or natsal or snatches them away. “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for Joseph had solemnly sworn the people of Israel saying, ‘God will visit you; then you must carry my bones with you from here’” [Ex 13.19]. Note that Joseph bade “the people of Israel” which in his lifetime were his eleven brothers. This oath spanned about 450 years from his death to the Exodus, so it required close preservation through succeeding generations of Israelites in Egypt.

Vs. 11: Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I know not. This verse comes right after the joyous exultation of deliverance of vs. 10 and represents a sudden turn of events. The alteration between two opposites, exultation and despair, is not out of place in a psalm or psalms because it represents both personal and communal vicissitudes which are perceived as a unity.

This *rising up* or qum of “malicious witnesses” implies suddenness, as though they appeared on the scene at once. Despite their presence, the psalmist prays for them in their misfortune. “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head” [Rom 12.20, quoting Prov 25.21-2]. The “burning coals” of the psalmist are as follows:

- 1) I wore sackcloth
- 2) I afflicted myself with fasting
- 3) I prayed with head bowed
- 4) vs. 14: I grieved for my friend & brother
- 5) I went about as one lamenting his mother

Nevertheless, these persons for whom the psalmist showed chesed did the following:

- 1) vs. 15: gathered in glee
- 2) gathered against him
- 3) cripples slandered him
- 4) vs. 16: mocked him
- 5) gnashed their teeth

Vs. 17: How long, O Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their ravages, my life from the lions!

Ra’ah for *to look* on is the common word used here, as though God were an idle spectator to his afflictions. He desires God to *rescue* him, shuv, which intimates a returning or restoration to former good fortune. “Repent and *turn* from all your transgressions” [Ezk 18.30]. The object of shuv which the psalmist requests is his *life* or yachyd, *only one* or that which is most dear. “Take your son, your *only son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains” [Gen 22.2]. This yachyd is attacked by *lions* or more specifically, “*young lions*,” kephyr (singular).

Vs. 18: Then I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you. The place-where in which the psalmist *gives thanks*, yadah, (the verb intimates giving witness or confession, “Then will I also *confess* unto you,” Job 40.14) is the “*great congregation*” or qahal which can be a liturgical assembly or in a larger sense, the nation of Israel. This later development of a nation is prefigured in Isaac’s words to Jacob which echoes that of God to Abraham, “That you may be a *multitude* of people” [Gen 28.3].

In the mighty throng I will praise you. The second place-where in which the psalmist joins his fellow worshippers, “*mighty throng*” or ham, the common word for *people*. Hatsom for *mighty* derives from the same word as *bone* as noted above in vs. 10 with respect to Joseph. With this association in mind, we may say that it intimates Joseph’s bones which were present in the “*mighty throng*” of Israel as it exited Egypt through the Red Sea and gave God *praise*, halal, another term with liturgical overtones.

Vs. 19: Let not those rejoice over me who are wrongfully my foes, and let not those wink the eye who hate me without cause. Once again the psalmist returns to list his assailants which actually commenced in vs. 17 with the *lions* (1):

- 2) those who are foes
- 3) those who wink the eye
- 4) those who hate him without cause
- 5) vs. 20: those who do not speak peace
- 6) those who are antagonistic towards the quiet
- 7) those who conceive words of deceit
- 8) vs. 21: those who say "our eyes have seen it"

Vs. 22: You have seen, O Lord; be not silent! O Lord, be not far from me! The object of God's *seeing*, *ra'ah*, is not explicit but may be assumed as the above mentioned eight varieties of assailants. If this is so, then the psalmist claims that God cannot remain *silent* or *charash*: "My rock, be not *deaf* to me" [Ps 28.1]. As noted in this section, *charash* also means *to engrave*, so with this in mind, we may that in vs. 22 the psalmist bids God not to pass by without engraving, namely, his image and likeness.

The perception of distance (*far*) or *rachaq* with respect to God ultimately goes back to Gen 3.24: "He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim."

Vs. 23: Bestir yourself and awake for my right, for my cause, my God and my Lord! The verbal root for *bestir* or *hur* (which implies watchfulness) has three other different meanings: *to be blind*, *to be hot*, *to make naked* as noted with respect to Ps 7.6: "Awake, O my God; you have appointed a judgment."

Compare *hur* with the next verb depicting watchfulness, *quts*, *to be aroused*; the alternate meaning is *to be weary*, *to loathe*. "When I *awake*, I am still with you" [Ps 139.18]. In vs. 23 such *quts* is applied to the psalmist's *right* or *mishpat* which also means *judgment*.

Vs. 24: Vindicate me, O Lord, my God, according to your righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me! From this verse to 27 we have a list of six desires for divine vengeance:

- 1) vindicate me
- 2) let them not rejoice over me
- 3) vs. 25: let them not say, "we have our heart's desire"
- 4) let them not say, "we have swallowed him up"
- 5) vs. 26: let them be put to shame and confusion
- 6) let them be clothed with shame and dishonor

Vs. 27: Let those who desire my vindication shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, "Great is the Lord who delights in the welfare of his servant!" This verse is yet another "let" but one in a positive light with regard to the psalmist, rather, for those who desire or *chaphats* his *vindication* or *tsedaqah* which also means *righteousness*. The verbs used are *ranan* and *samach* as were discussed earlier.

Such persons taking the psalmist's side are opposed to his enemies which were delineated above. Like him, they share in the divine *delight*, *chaphats*. "The messenger of the covenant in whom you *delight*, behold, he is coming" [Mal 3.1]. The object of *chaphats* in vs. 27 is the servant's *welfare* or *shalom* which implies peace. "Then I was in his eyes as one who finds *peace*" [Sg 8.10].

Vs. 28: Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all the day long. The psalmist's tongue *tells* or *hagah* in the sense of Ps 1.2: "And on his law he *meditates* day and night." I.e., the very act of telling is a meditation. For an alternate use of *hagah*, cf. Is 31.4: "The young lion *roaring* for his prey."

Tsedaqah is the first object of such *hagah*, and *praise* of God the second, *tehilat*, from *halal*. Such praise has liturgical overtones here, "all the day long," perhaps signifying different set hours.

Psalm Thirty-Six

Vs. 1: Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes.

Transgression or peshah assumes a personal character here, addressing the wicked person. This is reenforced by the verb na'am which is often used when God speaks to a person. All one has to do is quickly read through the prophets and soon you will find the classic statement, "Thus *says* the Lord." Because na'am is used for a special form of address, here in vs. 1 the penetration of peshah is all the more revealing; it is amplified by "deep in his heart," qerev. "And you shall take all the fat that covers the *entrails* and the appendage of the liver and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and burn them upon the altar" [Ex 29.13].

There is no fear of God before his eyes. Once transgression gets qerev, its deep seated presence moves outward to one's countenance as manifest in the *eyes*, hayn (singular), which also means a *fountain*. With this association in mind, we may say that the eye is the fountain of the soul, the qerev, amongst all which peshah creates an unfortunate unity. Pachad (connotes trembling) is the word used here for fear which is lacking as in Mic 7.17: "They shall be *afraid* of the Lord."

Vs. 2: For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated. This verse delineates the effects of peshah of vs. 1 as it continues to manifest itself outward from one's qerev or inner being. They may be listed as follows:

- 1) flatters himself
- 2) iniquity cannot be found out and hated
- 3) vs. 3: words are mischief and deceit
- 4) plots mischief
- 5) sets himself on a broad way
- 6) does not spurn evil

Vs. 5: Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. While the sin's transgression may extend from his qerev to his eyes as delineated above, God's chesed extends (verb is lacking in the Hebrew text) or is *in* (b-) the heavens, his proper dwelling place. Once this is clear, the psalmist speaks of divine *faithfulness* or 'emunath which reaches not to heaven but to the lesser region of the *clouds*, shachaq (singular), which is more accessible to humans living on earth. "Have you, like him, spread out the *sky* which is firm like a molten mirror" [Job 37.18]? This leaves the realm between shachaq and shamaym (*heavens*) not discussed; i.e., the (unanswered) question remains, what can lie between chesed and 'emunath?

Vs. 6: Your righteousness is like the mountains of God, your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O Lord. This verse moves to comparisons of divine attributes with respect to terrestrial objects; here it is divine tsedaqah are "like the mountains of God." Note the plural which can refer to a range or several holy mountains, the most notable one being Sinai. We have reference to the same word harar in Sg 4.8: "Depart from...the *mountains* of leopards," signifying threatening places. At the opposite pole of these high peaks is the "great *deep*," tehom, the same word used for the primeval waters: "And darkness was upon the face of the *deep*" [Gen 1.2], and upon which the divine Spirit brooded. With this in mind, God's *judgments* (mishpat) which are compared to tehom implies such a two-fold notion of chaos and creativity.

Now that the two extreme poles, mountains and deep, have been established, the psalmist situates both man and beast in between, as it were, as being the object of divine yashah, "Jesus."

Vs. 7: How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of men take refuge in the shadow of your wings. God's chesed is *precious*, yaqar, which implies heaviness as with regards to stones. "Because you are *precious* in my eyes" [Is 43.4] as a rare gem. This chesed is a type of *refuge* chasah, and being made of fine stones, resembles the heavenly Jerusalem: "The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass" [Rev 21.18].

The heavenly Jerusalem indeed resembles *wings*, kanaph (singular), which are a means of descent to earth; while the city is intended to dwell on earth, we may say it has a certain maneuverability. Note the notion of brightness: "Now as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them. As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction, their appearance was like the gleaming of a chrysolite" [Ezk 1.15-6]. Such creatures were endowed with *wings*: "Everyone had four *wings*" [1.6]. The psalm verse under consideration specifies the chasah: "In the *shadow* of your wings," tsel: "I sat down under his *shadow*" [Sg 2.3].

Vs. 8: They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. *House* (beyth) may equal God's wings and the heavenly Jerusalem of the last verse which is noted for its *abundance*, deshen, which connotes fatness and therefore sacrifice. "Hearken diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourselves in *fatness*" [Is 55.2]. The psalm verse at hand says that "the sons of men" *feast* or rawah on this deshen; the verb intimates drinking more than actual eating. "For I will *satisfy* the weary soul and every languishing soul I will replenish" [Jer 31.25].

And you give them drink from the river of your delights. Note only is food given but *drink*, shaqah, which implies irrigating: "But a mist went up from the earth and *watered* the whole face of the ground" [Gen 2.6]. The *river* or nachal may be identified with that flowing from Eden [2.10] prior to its division into four parts. Note that the alternate meaning of nachal is *inheritance*; with the Genesis text in mind, the nachal given by God is a true bequest. Nachal in vs. 8 is associated with divine *delights*, heden, from which is derived *Eden*, source of the nachal.

Vs. 9: For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light. Words reminiscent of Jn 4.14: “But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Such a *fountain* (meqor) can be threatening in that it is the source of that tehom or primeval waters: “On that day all the *fountains* of the great *deep* (tehom) burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened” [Gen 7.11].

In your light do we see light. Presumably the person drinking from Christ as spring of water becomes *light* ('or); light was the first created thing resulting from the Spirit's brooding (cf. Gen 1.3). The psalmist says that by participating in this primal light we *see* it, ra'ah, i.e., become seeing. “Arise, shine, for your *light* has come” [Is 60.1], which follows upon drinking from Christ-as-well.

Vs. 10: O continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your salvation to the upright of heart! Mashak for *continue* fundamentally means *to draw* in the sense of Sg 1.4: “*Draw* me, we will run after you.” With the Song verse in mind, we may say that vs. 10 implies this running in divine chesed; the requirement is *knowledge* of God, yadah, an intimate knowing which can apply to sexual relationships.

The psalmist also bids God to mashak...*draw...salvation* or as the Hebrew has it, *righteousness*, tsedaqah which is proper to *uprightness* (yeshar, implies straightness) situated in the *heart*.

Vs. 11: Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away. *Foot* as used here is an image of subjection as when a conquering king places his foot over his enemies. We may assume that the *hand* of wicked men is simultaneous with this placing of a foot over the psalmist who is threatened with subjection to evil.

Vs. 12 continues with this theme, saying that “*there* evildoers lie prostrate,” the place where not being specified but perhaps having come to the same fate as intended towards the psalmist.

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Psalm Thirty-Seven

Vs. 1: Fret not because of the wicked, be not envious of wrongdoers! The first exhortation not to *fret* or charah sets the tone for this lengthy psalm; the verb basically means *to be angry*, and the counsel is to avoid it. *Because of equals* b- or *in*, that is, not to be “in” the *wicked* or have full communion with them.

The second exhortation not *to be envious*, qana', is the opposite quality of that divine qana': “You shall not bow down to them [images] or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a *jealous* God” [Ex 20.5].

The result of charah and qana' are described in vs. 2; such persons *fade* and *wither*, reminiscent of Mt 13.4: “But when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away.”

Vs. 3: Trust in the Lord and do good; so you will dwell in the land and enjoy security. The direct results of *trusting* (batach) in God and doing *good* (tov) is in light of the parable of the seed cited in vs. 2 is “Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty” [Mt 13.9].

In light of this taking root, a person will reap two benefits lying in the future: 1) “*dwell* in the land” (shakan), thereby imitating God's promise to be with Israel: “And let them make me a sanctuary

that I may *dwell* in their midst" [Ex 25.8]. 2) "Enjoy security." The verb here is *raha* with its alternate meaning of *to feed, pasture*. "My beloved has gone down...to *feed* in the gardens" [Sg 6.2]. *Security* or 'emunah means *faithfulness*; thus the result of *batach* and *tov* effects a feeding on faith.

Vs. 4: Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. *Hanag* for this *delight* "in the Lord," *hal* = *on, upon*, implies a mode of life marked by luxury and ease. For a comparable verse: "Then you shall take *delight* in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth" [Is 58.14]. The implications of such divine *hanag* is to receive (in the future) "the *desires* of your heart," *mish'alah* (singular), more precisely, *petition*.

Vs. 5: Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. The first part of this verse reads in Hebrew, "*Roll* upon the Lord your way," the verb *gyl*, as has been pointed out several times, implies a circular dance. Vs. 5 suggests that a person who *rolls* his or her *derek* puts it in the shape of a ball or stone which can easily be moved.

The second use of *batach* (*trust*) in quick succession (cf. vs. 3) here involves God performing an unspecified deed; implication is that the act of *batach* has a mysterious quality.

Vs. 6: He will bring forth your vindication as the light and your right as the noonday. Another promise intended for the future, dependent upon the exhortations of vss. 3 & 4: "trust," "do good," "take delight." *Tsedaqah* or *vindication* implies righteousness which is paralleled with *light*, 'or: Cf. Ps 36.9 where this word was discussed: "In your *light* do we see *light*." Here 'or is taken in the general, all-pervasive sense and is contrasted with the more specific *noonday*, *tsaharaym*, from the verbal root *tsahar, to shine*; this latter brightness is a more specific form of 'or and marked by its strongest point or noon. Note its alternate meaning with regard to Noah's ark: "You shall make a *window*" [Gen 6.16], presumably to let in the strong light while floating upon the destructive flood. The word for right is *mishpat, judgment*, which applies to Noah, namely, the ark being a judgment regarding the world's evil.

Vs. 7: Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not over him who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Three exhortations:

1) *to be still* or *dum* suggests confidence: "For God alone my soul waits in *silence*" [Ps 62.1]. Compare this verse with Lam 3.26: "It is good that one should *wait quietly* for the *salvation* (i.e., the 'Jesus') of the Lord."

2) *wait patiently* or *chul* as in Ps 32.24: "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all who *wait* for the Lord." This verb connotes both trembling and a round dance: "And watch if the daughters of Shiloh come out *to dance* in the *dances*" [Jdg 21.21]. To a certain degree, *chul* is a liturgical act of waiting in the sense of performing a dance.

3) another exhortation not to *fret*, *charah*, the first word of Ps 37. Here it is in conjunction with one who "prosper in his *way*," *derek*, which is a different use of this term as discussed above in vs. 5 ("Commit *your way* to the Lord"). Note the use with respect to *his* and *your*. The former sense as used in vs. 7 *prosper*, *tsalach*. "From it too you will come away...and you will not *prosper* by them," Egypt and Assyria, Jer 2.37]. In addition to the negative use of *tsalach* here, vs. 7 speaks of *devices* or *mizmah*, counsel which implies craftiness. Its positive definition: "that prudence may be given to the simple, knowledge and *discretion* to the youth" [Prov 1.4].

Vs. 8: Refrain from anger and forsake wrath! Fret not; it tends only to evil. *Raphah* for *refrain* also connotes relaxation as well as weakness. "Let not your hands be *weak*" [2 Chr 15.7]. Also, "I held him and would not *let him go*" [Sg 3.4]. This verb is phonetically similar to *rapha'*, *to heal*; we may say that one implies the other. Such *raphah* is the prerequisite to "*forsaking* wrath," *hazav*; once insight

into the nature of raphah is gained, this similar action may be pursued. I.e., hazav implies detachment.

Fret not, it tends only to evil. Another invitation to refrain from *fretting*, charah, whose goal is *evil*, rahah. Such an association is noted by the two similar sounding words.

Vs. 9: For the wicked shall be cut off; but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land. Here *wicked* persons are those practiced in rahah; *to be cut off* or karath from the *land* or 'erets implies the corporate nature of Israel and is a fate equivalent to death. This is amplified by the alternate meaning of karath, *to make a covenant*: "and both of them *made a covenant*" [Gen 21.27].

Such a covenant when applied to God is bound up with "*possessing the land*," yarash: "and his children shall *possess the land*" [Ps 25.13]. And, "God has given you this land to *possess it*" [Dt 3.18]. However, such claim is dependent up "*waiting for the Lord*," qawah, whose alternate meaning as noted before is *to be strong*. "*Be strong* (chazaq) and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them" [Jos 1.6].

Vs. 10: Yet a little while and the wicked will be no more; though you look well at his place, he will not be there. The Hebrew for *will be no more* is "and will not be" ('eyn), signifying their destruction or better, lack of being. The time span of a *little while* or mehat is that period of qawah or *waiting* in vs. 9. While awaiting completion of this mehat, the psalmist bids his listeners to *look well* or byn in the sense of to have understanding. Such byn leads to an accurate perception of the situation, another instance of 'eyn with regard to the wicked.

Vs. 11: But the meek shall possess the land and delight in abundant prosperity. *Meek* or the haniwym as used here is reminiscent of the Beatitude, "Blessed are the *meek*, for they shall inherit the earth" [Mt 5.5]. They will yarash the 'erets as noted in vs. 9 above. Not only will the meek yarash but will "*delight in*" abundant prosperity," hanag, in contrast to "*delighting in the Lord*" of vs. 4. Shalom for *prosperity* is the well known term for wholeness. "Then I was in his eyes as one who found *favor*" [Sg 8.10].

Vs. 12: The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him. Zamam for *to plot* connotes a lying in wait and may be applied to God: "For I have spoken, I have *purposed*; I have not relented nor will I turn back" [Jer 4.28]. The preposition *against* here is l-, direction towards which (*righteous* or those who practice tsadaqah); compare it with the "*gnashing of teeth*," charaq whose object is also the *righteous*; more specifically, "*on (hal) him*."

Vs. 13: But the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. The verb sachaq (*to laugh*) almost always implies derision or contempt: "They shall *deride* every stronghold" [Hab 1.10]. In vs. 13 the reason for such sachaq is that God sees the *day* of the wicked advancing; though not clearly specified, it most likely applies to the day of judgment: "Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable on the *day* of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town" [Mt 10.15].

Vs. 14: The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those who walk uprightly. This warlike behavior shown by the wicked happens in the present while they are unaware of that impending *day* of vs. 13. Such behavior backfires as revealed by vs. 15: the sword which enters their heart seems to have taken a life of its own. Note singular *sword* for the singular *heart*; this close identity shows the tight knit conspiracy of the wicked.

Vs. 16: Better is a little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. The *little* or mehat is unspecified, and the beatitude of Mt 5.6 implies a similar want or lack: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for *righteousness*, for they shall be satisfied." But since both instances refer to

tsadaqah, attention belongs to this unfulfilled state, hence the reason for hungering and thirsting. While incomplete and signifying something in the future, it is better than the *abundance* or hamon of “many wicked” persons. This word implies noise: “Take away from me the *noise* of your songs” [Am 5.23].

Vs. 17: For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The word for such *arms* or zeroah (singular) also means *strength*; we may associate them with the swords and bows of vs. 14. Contrast their *breaking* (shavar) with the divine samak pertaining to the righteous or those who practice tsadaqah. “Sustain me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love” [Sg 2.5].

Vs. 18: The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will abide forever. Here we have plural *days* as opposed to the singular *day* of the wicked which is coming (cf. vs. 14). As pointed out several times, yadah for *to know* implies intimate (sexual) familiarity, and here applies to the *blameless* or tamam (singular) whose verbal root suggests completion, often as destruction, in contrast to shalom. “When Israel had *finished* slaughtering all the inhabitants of Ai” [Jon 8.24]. The immediate result of divine yadah is that “their *heritage* will abide forever,” from the verbal root nachal (alternate noun is *river*). With this alternate meaning in mind, we may say that this *heritage* will flow like a *river*. “I will extend prosperity to her like a *river* (nahar, Is 66.12) which lasts *forever*, leholam.

Vs. 19: They are not put to shame in evil times, in the days of famine they have abundance. Those not *put to shame* or yavash are the tamam of vs. 18. *Time* (heth) which is associated with evil is equivalent to a kairos event, a term which can refer either to favorable or unfavorable circumstances. I.e., such heth/kairos is definitive and by reason of this, stands apart from the normal perception of chronological time.

The “days of *famine*,” rehavon, harkens back to Joseph’s stewardship in Egypt: “And Joseph stored up grain in great *abundance* (rebeh), like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured” [Gen 41.49]. The Hebrew of s. 19 reads for abundance, “they shall be *satisfied*,” savah: “In your presence there is *fulness* of joy” [Ps 16.11].

Vs. 20: But the wicked perish; the enemies of the Lord are like the glory of the pastures, they vanish—like smoke they vanish away. Another mention of the *wicked* (reshahym) which occurs frequently in this psalm; here they simply *perish*, ‘avad. On the other hand, we have “*enemies* of the Lord,” ‘oyev (singular) who are more set against God in the sense of being at enmity: “I will put enmity between you and the woman” [Gen 3.15], referring to the serpent, traditional image of evil.

Such adversaries of the Lord resemble the “*glory* of the pastures,” yaqar, which connotes heaviness much like the alternate word kavod. “With all the *precious* stones and gold” [Ezk 27.22]. “But if God so clothes the grass of the field which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith” [Mt 6.30]?

The word for *vanish* which occurs twice in vs. 20 is kalah whose alternate meaning is *to be completed*.

Vs. 21: The wicked borrows and cannot pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives. This failure to *pay back* or shalom intimates a fuller sense of what it meant to lend in ancient times. Shalom with its connotation of peace and wholeness filters down into the realm of borrowing and lending. *Borrowing* or lawah also means *to join*: “and aliens will *join* them and will cleave to the house of Jacob” [Is 14.1].

In contrast to the wicked who are unable to consummate shalom, we have the *righteous* or

tsadyq who is *generous*, chanan being the verbal root; such a person is one who has received divine chesed and *gives* it to others. “I will be *gracious* to whom I will be *gracious*” [Ex 33.19].

Vs. 22: For those blessed by the Lord shall possess the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off. The contrast between *bless* (barak) and *curse* (qalal) is reminiscent of Dt 11.26: “Behold, I set before you this day a *blessing* and a *curse*” with regard to obedience to God’s commandments. This stark choice is carried over in terms of (future) *possessing* land, yarash, which connotes possession by force: “Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to *take possession* of it” [1 Kg 21.16]. Compare this with Mt 5.5 in conjunction with vs. 11 above: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall *inherit* the earth.” Also, cf. Is 65.9: “My chosen shall *inherit* it [mountains], and my servants shall dwell there.”

To be *cursed* comes from qalal which also means *to be light*: “Perhaps he will *lighten* his hand from off you and your gods and your land” [1 Sam 6.5]. For another use, cf. Gen 8.11: “the waters were *diminished* from off the earth.” *To be cut off* or karath (which also suggests the making of a covenant) from God suggests the breaking of an agreement or covenant; in vs. 22 it is bound up with *land*, ‘erets, which was sacred and the equivalent of a death sentence.

Vs. 23: The steps of a man are from the Lord, and he establishes him in whose way he delights. *Steps* or mitshad (singular) implies being in one’s company: “and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow in his *train*” [Dan 11.43]. The verbal root tsahad means *to go slowly, to mount up*; compare with the first word of the Psalter, ‘ashry, *blessed*, which connotes walking in the sense of being in a state of transition. In the verse under consideration, a mitshad results directly “from the Lord” who is “above” in heaven and therefore is an ascent to him.

And he establishes him in whose way he delights. The upward ascent implied in vs. 23 to the Lord is carried over in the verb kun, *established*, which can mean direction in the sense of an arrow: “For you will *aim* at their faces with your bows” [Ps 21.12]. For kun in the sense of creating, cf. Gen 32.6: “Is not he your father who created you, who made you and *established* you?” In vs. 23 such kun is associated with *way*, derek, in which God *delights* or chaphats. Cf. remarks on these two words elsewhere in this document, especially as Christ as the *Way*.

Vs. 24: Though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord is the stay of his hand. Such *falling* or naphal takes place within that upward journey signified by *steps*, mitshad, of the previous verse. “If he sins against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him” [Lk 17.4]. This sentence acts as a deterrence from being *cast headlong*, tul: “behold, the Lord will *hurl* you away violently, O you strong man” [Is 22.17]. The Lord thus acts as a “*stay* of his hand,” somek. “I awake again, for the Lord *sustains* me” [Ps 3.5].

Vs. 25: I have been young and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging bread. The psalmist’s declaration of old age stems from a remembrance of his own upward mitshad. He has, in a sense, ascended Jacob’s ladder (cf. Gen 28.12) and views life from the perspective of being on top of this ladder. His view is like that of Moses over the promised land (cf. Dt 34. 1-4) which embraces the *righteous* (tsadyq). The person who practices righteousness enjoys a two-fold divine protection: he is never *forsaken* (hazav) nor does he ever see his *children* (zareh) in want; this word as noted in Ps 21.10 also means *seed* which here means that his children are assured of being *sown* in the future.

Vs. 26: He is ever giving liberally and lending, and his children become a blessing. The Hebrew for *ever* is “all the day,” indicating temporal extension of divine tsedaqah through the medium of chanan and lawah, two verbs discussed earlier in this psalm. I.e., it is something like a kairos event. This

generosity is modeled after human propagation, as it were, and transcends it: one's *children* (zareh...seed) are transformed into a *blessing*.

Vs. 27: Depart from evil and do good; so you abide forever. The foundation for perpetuation of one's zareh, "*departure* (sur) from evil" and "doing *good* (tov);" i.e., retreat followed by advancement. The result is "*abiding* forever" or shakan, implying continuous possession of a place. "No one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you *dwell* except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun" [Num 14.30].

Vs. 28: For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. The righteous shall be preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. *Justice* (mishpat) is intimated as being analogous to God's *saints* or those who practice chesed. "Righteous" is lacking in Hebrew which reads "they shall be *preserved*..." or shamar as in Ps 17.8: "*Keep* me as the apple of your eye." The antithesis to shamar is being *cut off*, karath (cf. vs. 9 for discussion); it is in reference to "seed" or zareh. "Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees" [Mt 10.3].

Vs. 29: The righteous shall possess the land and dwell upon it forever. Such *possession* (yarash) and *dwelling* (shakan) are in the future as an inheritance (alternate meaning of yarash) for those who practice tsedaqah. For a promise made in the future, cf. Dt 34.4: "This is the *land* ('erets) of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, 'I will give it to your *descendants* (the zareh discussed above)."

Vs. 30: The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom and his tongue speaks justice. Note the distinction here between *mouth* and *tongue*; former is more inclusive than the latter and can imply a facial expression which reveals the utterer's intention. The verb hagah implies murmuring or groaning. "And on his law he *meditates* day and night" [Ps 1.2]. With this verse in mind, we may say that hagah is part and parcel of Torah, the prime object which contains *wisdom*, chakmah. "The book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall *meditate* on it day and night" [Jos 1.8]. It should be noted that chakmah has a wider meaning such as a skill: "And you shall speak to all who have *ability*, whom I have endowed with an able mind" [Ex 28.3].

And his tongue speaks justice. Mishpat is the object of speech, better, from the tsadeq's *tongue* or leshon. "But no human being can tame the *tongue*, a restless evil, full of deadly poison" [Jms 2.8]. As for an exposition of mishpat, cf. 1 Ezzr 9.41: "And he [Ezra] read aloud in the open square before the gate of the temple from early morning until midday...and all the multitude gave attention to the law."

Vs. 31: The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip. The reason for the righteous person's ability to utter wisdom and speak justice stems from the divine Torah being in his *heart*, lev. Such a one has paid close attention to Ezra's reading as mentioned just above: *gave attention*, epedokan ton noun, Greek for "gave the mind." Note singular, implying one mind for the people assembled before the Jerusalem temple.

His steps do not slip. The presence of Torah in the heart governs locomotion, an image for continuous advancement as implied in the first word of the first psalm, 'ashry, and to which I often have made reference. Actually the word for *steps* here derives from this word's verbal root, 'ashar. "My foot has held fast to his *steps*; I have kept his way and have not turned aside" Job 23.11. I.e., an example of not *slipping*, mahad, as in Ps 18.36: "You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not *slip*."

Vs. 32: The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him. A verse suggestive of Jesus' enemies who is *the* tsadeq: "Then the Pharisees went and took counsel how to entangle him in his talk"

[Mt 22.15]. First the *wicked* (*rashah*) *watch* or *tsaphah* which as noted regarding Ps 5.3 implies brightness; it often is used of prophets, Israel's watchmen *par excellence*. With the notion of brightness in mind, *tsaphah* can either "shine" positively or negatively; the main point here is simply to say that brightness is neutral and can be used for either good or ill. Allied with *tsaphah* is the verb *baqash* used often in the Psalter in the positive sense. "And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, 'Go back to Egypt; for all the men who were *seeking* your life are dead" [Ex 4.19].

Vs. 33: The Lord will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial. Another verse more explicit of Jesus Christ prior to his death (cf. Lk 22.54-23.25). Note that vss. 32 & 33 speak of a singular righteous man and a singular wicked man. This can refer to Satan with respect to Job: "Behold, he is in your power; only spare his life" [Job 2.6]. The verb *condemn* is *rashah*, the verbal root for *wicked*; thus God will not let the *tsadeq* become *rashah* through undergoing *rashah*.

Vs. 34: Wait for the Lord and keep to his way, and he will exalt you to possess the land; you will look on the destruction of the wicked. *Wait* or *qawah* in the sense of Ps 25.5: "For you I *wait* all the day long." In vs. 34 "*for* the Lord" has 'el-, *to* in the sense of in the direction of. This is elucidated by the second exhortation, "*keep* to his way," *shamar*, as one would the divine Torah. Both exhortations at first glance appear contradictory: on one hand we have the future orientated "*wait*" and on the other, the present "*keep*." Both are resolved through *way*, *derek*, which is transitional in the sense of having a beginning, middle and end or goal.

And he will exalt you to possess the land. *Ramam* for *exalt* is not simply a lifting up but one related more specifically to God: "And the cherubim *were lifted up*" [Ezk 10.15]. Apply this *ramam* to the prophet Elijah: "And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" [2 Kg 2.11]. This *land* or 'erets is heaven where "we have...*possess* or *yarash* (in the sense of to inherit...our citizenship" [Phil 3.20].

You will look on the destruction of the wicked. The Hebrew reads, "When the wicked are cut off, you will see it." Again, action is in the future but intuited in the present through that special act of *qawah* and *shamar*. With the prophet Elijah again in mind, we may posit him watching over his associate Elisha and guiding his activity from heaven.

Vs. 35: I have seen a wicked man overbearing and towering like a cedar of Lebanon. Generally speaking (as in this verse), action pertaining to the future pertains to the godly person; action in the past or even in the present refers to the *wicked*, *rashah*. This person has two characteristics: *overbearing* (*harats*, *to terrify*) and *towering* (*harah*, *to spread out*)¹. Thus the latter part can read, "spreading out like a green *bay tree*," *'ezrach* which in Lev 16.29 & 18.26 refers to a *native*.

Vs. 36: Again I passed by and lo, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found. The Hebrew reads, "Yet he passed away," most likely referring to the often mentioned wicked man. Contrast the words *he was no more* ('eynenu) with Gen 5.24: "Enoch walked with God and *he was not* ('eynenu), for God took him." The next part of vs. 36 show a different result in light of Enoch's translation; the psalmist's *baqash* or *seeking* yields no result.

Vs. 37: Mark the blameless man and behold the upright, for there is posterity for the man of peace. Three types of persons: 1) The familiar *shamar* for *mark* is used with reference to the man who is *tam*, a word signifying integrity and fulness. "He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in *integrity*" [Prov 2.7]. 2) In addition to this *tam* we have the *upright* person or *yashar*. "He who walks in his *uprightness*" [Prov 14.2]. 3) Finally "the man of *peace*," *shalom*, who

¹Most sources claim this section is problematic or obscure.

has descendants *after him*, 'acharyth, which may be read in light of Is 2.2: "It shall come to pass in the *last days*." Thus the finality suggested by 'acharyth and shalom point to the consummation of divine revelation.

As part and parcel of this restoration is the destruction of evil as stated in vs. 38. Note here the use of 'acharyth with regard to the *wicked*, reshahym.

Vs. 39: The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their refuge in the time of trouble. A reference to "Jesus," teshuhath, in conjunction with those persons who are tsadyqym. With "Jesus," in mind, we may take these words as pointing to a generation, as it were, of Jesus Christ: "Abraham was the father of Isaac and Isaac the father of Jacob..." and so forth to the birth of Jesus (Mt 1.2+). This birth is associated with a "*time of trouble*," heth, or a particular kairios.

Vs. 40: The Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him. The tsadyqym are the object of divine *helping* (hazar) and *deliverance* (palat), two aspects of "being Jesus-ed." Note that the second half of the same verse is more or less a refinement; palat is used again but yashah ("Jesus") is used with respect to persons who have *taken refuge* in God, chasah. Note that chasah (in the sense of trusting) while not that frequently used, occurs often in the Psalter.

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Psalm Thirty-Eight

Vs. 1: O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor chasten me in your wrath! Two aspects of the psalmist's plea, both of which are concerned with divine indignation and are numbered for easier reference: *rebuke/anger* (#1yakach/#2qetseph) and *chasten/wrath* (#3yasar/#4chemah).

Word #1 implies arguing and confuting: "It may be that the Lord your God...will *rebuke* the words which the Lord your God has heard" [2 Kg 19.4].

Word #2 derives from a verbal root *to break*; i.e., anger *breaks forth*. "For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be *angry*" [Is 57.16].

Word #3 implies correction by blows or stripes as well as to teach. "My father *chastised* you with whips" [1 Kg 12.14]. And, "Those whom I love I reprove and *chasten*" [Rev 3.19].

Word #4 fundamentally means *to be hot*, thereby signifying intense anger. "Lest my *fury* come forth like fire" [Jer 4.4].

Vs. 2: For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. The plural of *arrows* (chez, singular) imply the four-fold divine displeasure delineated just above; they *sink* (nachath) within the psalmist, that is, descend fully, the opposite sense being Prov 17.10: "correction *goes down* into the mind of the prudent."

In addition to this penetration of divine anger, God's hand *comes down* on the psalmist, a second use of nachath. *On* suggests that the arrows which are already present in the psalmist's body, are pressed even further by the divine hand.

Vs. 3: There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. The psalmist lacks *soundness* or metom, another form of tam in Ps 37.37

above (“Mark the *blameless* man”). Another reference to metom: “And the men of Israel turned back against the Benjaminites and smote them with the edge of the sword, *men* and beasts and all that they found” [Jdg 20.48]. Such slaughter is reminiscent of those occasions when peoples opposed to Israel were utterly destroyed, that is, put under a sacred ban as in Jos 6.17, “And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction.” *Men* as derived from metom here can imply that totality...tam...of destruction.

Note that such metom is lacking in the psalmist’s physical constitution (“my flesh,” “my bones”); he traces it to his *sin*, chata’ah (singular), the result from a lack of *health*, shalom, which obviously intimates health in the fullest sense. The direct source for sin is God’s *indignation* or zaham. “And the nations cannot endure his *indignation*” [Jer 10.10].

A number of verses in this psalm continue with the theme of a lack of metom as related to the psalmist’s health, and may be outlined as follows:

- 1) vs. 4: my iniquities - over my head
- 2) vs. 5: my wounds - foul and fester
- 3) vs. 6: bowed down and prostrate, mourn
- 4) vs. 7: my loins - burning, no soundness - flesh
- 5) vs. 8: utterly spent and crush, groan - heart
- 6) vs. 10: heart throbs, strength fails, light of eyes departs
- 7) vs. 11: friends and companions stand aloof, kinsmen are far off
- 8) vs. 12: seek my life, seek my hurt, meditate treachery
- 9) vs. 13: I am like a deaf man, like a dumb man
- 10) vs. 14: like a man who does not hear, has no rebukes
- 11) vs. 17: I am ready to fall, pain before me

Vs. 9: Lord, all my longing is known to you, my sighing is not hidden from you. This verse is a refrain, so to speak, in the midst of the psalmist’s complaints about his terrible afflictions; he sums them up in terms of a *longing*, ta’awah, in the sense of desire or delight. The Hebrew reads, “all my longing is *before* (neged) you.” “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a *delight* to the eyes, and that the tree was to be *desired* (chamad) to make one wise” [Gen 3.6]. In light of this verse, we may say that the psalmist openly makes known this ta’awah to God instead of hiding from him as did Adam and Eve (cf. Gen 3.8).

My sighing is not hidden from you. *Sighing* or ‘anachah implies affliction as in Ex 2.23: “And the people *groaned* under their bondage and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God.” Another case where such pain is not *hidden* (satar) from God. Note that Israel’s ‘anachah is in terms of a cry which “came up to God,” that is, ‘anachah has the capacity to ascend or cross over to the transcendent sphere.

Vs. 10: My heart throbs, my strength fails me; and the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me. Words applicable to Israel under Egypt’s bondage as noted in the previous verse. Sachar for *to throb* is the only instance of this word from the same verbal root meaning *to travel, to go round* (in the sense of a merchant); usually it has a negative sense as applying to material wealth: “You were the *merchant* of the nations” [Is 23.3]. Perhaps such sachar results in the psalmist’s strength failing and loss of sight. “For both prophet and priest *ply* their *trade* through the land and have no knowledge” [Jer 14.18]. I.e., these key figures in Israel have lost their strength (priests) and eyesight (prophets).

Vs. 18: I confess my iniquity, I am sorry for my sin. Here the psalmist acknowledges responsibility for his physical plight as enumerated in vs. 3 above, i.e., his eleven afflictions. To *confess*

(nagad) something means to place it *before* (neged) God or a person who will take the request from there. For a use of nagad from the divine perspective, cf. Is 43.12: “I *declared* and *saved* (yashah, ‘Jesus’) and proclaimed.”

To *be sorry* or ka’av implies a sense of pain as well as destruction. “And for the house of Israel, there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to *hurt* them among all their neighbors” [Ezk 28.24]. Thus ka’av when associated with sin or chata’ah brings out the piercing nature of an offense.

The psalmist resumes his complaints against his foes in vss. 19 & 20, that is, because “I follow after good” (vs. 20). Note that the verb radaph for *follow* can mean *to persecute*: “Let those who *persecute* me be confounded” [Jer 17.1]. The psalmist applies the same verb to the good who may be used to describe the essential sameness of his foes’ determination to victimize him.

Vs. 21: Do not forsake me, O Lord! O my God, be not far from me! Two direct, heart-felt requests: not to be *forsaken* or hazav and not *to be far* or rashaq, both with similar connotations as related to (spacial) distance. In a sense, the whole problem of relationship with God is articulated in spacial and temporal terms as in vs. 21. As in Psalm 38 with the above mentioned eleven afflictions, vs. 21 as an expression of spacial alienation assumes special intensity.

Vs. 22: Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation! The conclusion of Psalm 38 continues the theme of spacial alienation and a desire to overcome it (vs. 21). Chusah (*make haste*) implies taking refuge and trust as in Ps 7.1 (“O Lord, my God, in you do I *take refuge*”). The verse under consideration identifies *Lord* (‘adony) with teshuah, “*Jesus*” whom the psalmist wishes to bestow *help* or hazar. “But Israel is saved by the Lord with everlasting *salvation*” [Is 45.17].

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Psalm Thirty-Nine

Vs. 1: I said, “I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue; I will bridle my mouth so long as the wicked are in my presence.” The psalmist recounts past experience here by most likely addressing a liturgical assembly. Shamar for *to guard* pertains to the psalmist’s *ways* (derek, singular); they are not specified but most likely refer to various human activities, all of which are subject to *sin*, chata’ah or in the literal sense, of missing the mark. They all find expression through the tongue which implies speech either for good or ill. “In my *presence*” or neged, “before me.”

The next two verses (2 & 3) describe the psalmist’s negative internal condition (dumb, silent, held peace, distress grew worse, heart became hot, the fire burned) which leads the psalmist to express himself as follows, that is, from vs. 4 through vs. 6:

Vs. 4: “Lord, let me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is! The psalmist’s desire to *know* (yadah) is indirect, i.e., “cause me to know,” which signifies a certain autonomy from God but one founded upon being made in the divine image and likeness. The first direct object of yadah is *end* or qets. “For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the *end—it will not lie*” [Hab 2.3]. This sentence shows the unity between qets and *time*, heth (kairos) as a specific event.

The second direct object of yadah is *measure* of days, midah. “And I lifted my eyes and saw and behold, a man with a *measuring line* in his hand” [Zech 2.1]!

Both objects of measurement, qets and midah, are *fleeting* to human perception, chadal being

the verbal root which means *to leave off, desist*.

Vs. 5: Behold, you have made my days a few hand breadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight. Surely every man stands as a mere breath! Selah. Another grievance with regard to awareness of human mortality expressed through images related to temporal extension. *Behold* (hineh) is intended to get both the attention of God and the audience which the psalmist is addressing; it serves to emphasize the two fold nature of his communication:

1) “my days a few *hand breadths*”: tephech, from the verbal root taphach, *to expand, to carry*. “And behold, there was a wall all around the outside of the temple area, and the length of the measuring reed in the man’s hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a *handbreadth* in length” [Ezk 40.5].

2) “my lifetime is as nothing in your sight:” The psalmist’s entire *lifetime* (cheled) is of no value in comparison to the “few hand breadths” of his days. Cheled also refers to the world in general: “Remember, O Lord, what the *measure* of life is” [Ps 89.47].

The psalmist concludes this verse by an exclamation which uses the verb natsav, *to stand*, in the sense of a person being a hevel, *breadth*, which can also mean vanity (compare with tephech). “*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*” [Eccl 1.1].

Vs. 5 concludes with the well known selah, *pause*; perhaps the psalmist wishes to linger a few moments to consider the inherent vain nature of his humanity before death.

Vs. 6: Surely man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nought are they in turmoil; man heaps up and knows not who will gather! A continuation of vs. 5's theme, this time seeing a person in terms of a *shadow*, tselem, another image of anything vain, but it has a positive aspect as *image*: “Let us make man in our *image*, after our likeness” [Gen 1.26]. Perhaps the psalmist is saying that despite the vain condition of human beings, this tselem nature is always present. In light of this, the next observation makes better sense, “for *nought* (hevel again) are they in *turmoil*,” hamah, which implies a kind of humming or growling: “We all *growl* like bears” [Is 59.11].

To *heap up* something or tsavar signifies avarice. “And he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods’” [Lk 12.18].

Vs. 6 concludes the psalmist’s “speaking with my tongue” in vs. 3. From vs. 7 through vs. 11 he addresses God directly which concludes with another selah; he then continues his petition to God (vss. 12-3).

Vs. 7: “And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you. The psalmist questions his *waiting* or qawah in light of the futile striving depicted in the last few verses, all of which are hevel. Ps 37.9 says “but those who *wait* for the Lord shall possess the land,” the true object of his qawah. Note the alternate use of this verb: “Let the waters under the heaven *be gathered together* to one place” [Gen 1.9]. This qawah which suggests a divine, creative act, took place on the third day of creation, each day being more like a kairos event than a chronological extension.

My hope is in you. Tochalet, from the verbal root yachal, *to wait*. “The *hope* of the righteous ends in gladness, but the expectation of the wicked comes to nought” [Prov 10.28]. Compare Ps 28.18 which has the verb yachal: “Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who *hope* in his steadfast love.” Such tochalet intimates a presence, a being *in* (b-) God.

Vs. 8: Deliver me from all my transgressions. Make me not the scorn of the fool! Natsal for *to*

deliver is in the sense of to snatch away which in this instance is (personal) *transgressions*, peshah (singular) and implies the breaking of a covenant: "After the death of Ahab, Moab *rebelled* against Israel" [2 Kg 1.1]. It appears stronger than chata'ah, *sin*, or an intensified form of this deviant behavior. Perhaps the psalmist obtained clearer perception of his personal peshah in light of the vanity he described just above through the examples of other persons.

Similarly, the psalmist begs God not become the "scorn of the *fool*," naval rhyming with hevel (*vanity*): "The *fool* has said in his heart, "There is no God" [Ps 14.1]. It is as though the fool were applying his own naval to God. *Scorn* derives from the verbal root charaph with the alternate meaning *to gather, to pass the autumn, winter*. "And all the beasts of the earth will *winter* upon them" [Is 18.6]. And for the alternate meaning: "Zebulun is a people that *despised* their lives to the death" [Judg 5.18].

Vs. 9: I am dumb, I do not open my mouth; for it you who have done it. The psalmist attributes his being *dumb*, 'alam (verbal root implies being bound), and not opening his mouth to God. "Who makes him *dumb*, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord" [Ex 4.11]? Such 'alam in the context of Ps 39 may be allied to the qawah of vs. 7, that is, in *waiting* for God.

Vs. 10: Remove your stroke from me; I am spent by the blows of your hand. *Stroke* or negah comes from a verbal root meaning *to touch*. "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you *touch* it, lest you die" [Gen 3.3]. With this divine prohibition in mind, we could put these words in Adam's mouth as a refusal to be tempted. Because Adam did succumb to temptation, the second half of vs. 10 may be put into his mouth upon his expulsion from paradise: "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken" [Gen 3.23]. *Blow* or tegrah implies strife ("I will put enmity between you and the woman," Gen 3.15).

Nagah also can mean *to explain*: "And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could *explain* it to me" [Gen 41.24]. The verb kalah means *spent* in the sense of having come to an end which can be either positive or negative.

Vs. 11: When you chasten man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely every man is a mere breath! Selah. A *rebuke* or tukachath implies a correction as in Prov 1.25: "And you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my *reproof*." Note that this word occurs sixteen times in Proverbs, the most number, a fitting subject for this book which offers practical instruction for moral training. The verb (yakach) is found in Prov 3.12: "For the Lord *reproves* him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." Ps 39.11 has for *sin* hawon, which implies guilt: "then you forgave the *guilt* of my sin" [Ps 32.5]. God takes action by yasar or the impartation of instruction as in Ps 16.7: "In the night also my heart *instructs* me."

Moth or has is a conventional symbol for mortality and corruption. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where *moth* and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal" [Mt 6.19].

Vs. 11 concludes with words similar to vs. 5, referring man to a "mere *breath*," hevel, which as noted above means *vanity*. Note the use of selah once again as in vs. 5 which concludes a series of addresses to God, vss. 7-11 and as noted by parentheses.

Vs. 12: "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am your passing guest, a sojourner, like all my fathers. A lengthy verse commencing two more (and final) requests to God which has three objects:

- 1) *prayer* or tephilah in the sense of a supplication; verbal root palal implies judgment.

2) *cry* or *shawah* whose verbal root means *to be broad, ample*.

3) The psalmist's tears at which he bids God not to *hold peace* or *damah*; "and be *silent*," Ps 4.4, the positive sense of *damah*. Cf. that verse for the alternate meaning of the verbal root (*to be like*).

For I am your passing guest, a sojourner, like all my fathers. An obvious reference to Israel's nomadic past which may be stated in three ways:

1) *passing guest* or *ger*. The Hebrew reads, "I am a *passing guest* with you," a statement which combines both (human) alienation and (divine familiarity). "She [Moses' wife] bore a son and he called his name Gershom; for he said, 'I have been a *sojourner* in a foreign land'" [Ex 2.22].

2) *sojourner* or *toshav*: "I (Abraham) am a stranger and a *sojourner* among you; give me property among you for a burial place" [Gen 23.4]. The verbal root *yashav*, *to dwell*, can mean permanency or in the nomadic or temporary sense.

3) *like all my fathers*, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all nomads. Perhaps the archetypal father is Adam who was banished from the garden of Eden (cf. Gen 3.24).

Vs. 13: Look away from me, that I may know gladness, before I depart and be no more! The verb *shahah* can also mean *to look around*. Note the two uses: "And the Lord *had regard* for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no *regard*" [Gen 4.4-5]. It is interesting to see that the psalmist bids God to *shahah* from him; our common perception is that such observation would be beneficial. What makes it more puzzling is that he believes that such inattention will bring *gladness*, *bilgah*, the verbal root meaning *to be bright, cheerful*. "If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad countenance and *be of good cheer*'" [Job 9.27].

The psalmist situates his desire for God to look away prior to his death, so the words just described may be attributed to him on his death bed. Perhaps there is an intimation of Enoch who "walked with God and was not ('eynenu, Gen 5.24).

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Psalm Forty

Vs. 1: I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. The expression of patience is emphasized by double use of the verb *qawah*. In Hebrew the word *for* is missing, making the urgency and dependence more direct. For *qawah* as *to gather*: "At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall *gather* to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart" [Jer 3.17].

The twofold outcome of this waiting/gathering:

1) God *inclined* (*natah*, which implies stretching). "Who *stretches out* the heavens like a curtain" [Is 40.22]. Here is a "horizontal" used of *natah* in contrast to the "vertical" *natah* of the psalm.

2) As a result of God's *natah*, he heeded the psalmist's *shawah* or *cry* (cf. Ps 39.12 for alternate meaning of *to be broad, ample*). I.e., hearing produces broadening or extension. "And to bring them up out of that land to a good and *broad* (*rachav*) land" [Ex 3.8].

Vs. 2: He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock,

making my steps secure. Two divine actions, the first two as one unit related to a pulling out and the third as an establishment which also consists of one unit:

1) *Drew up* or *halah* in the sense of causing an ascent which in this instance refers to a “*desolate pit*,” *sha'on*; the noun derives from a verbal root implying noise and tumult. “Therefore the *tumult* of war shall arise among your people” [Hos 10.14]. Such desolation or *sha'aon* applies to the *pit*, *bor*, similar to the one in which Joseph was cast (cf. Gen 37.20). However, Joseph was not in a “*miry bog*” or *tyt*. “He shall trample on rulers as on mortar, as the potter treads *clay*” [Is 41.25]. *Miry* or *yawan* derives from an unused verbal root meaning *to boil up*.

2) Upon delivery from his predicament, the psalmist almost boasts that God has “set his feet upon a *rock*,” *selah*: “And he [Samson] smote them hip and thigh with great slaughter; and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the *rock* of Etam” [Jdg 15.8].

Once upon this *selah*, the psalmist, like the strong judge Samson could say that his ‘*ashur*’ (singular) or *steps* were established, that is, were free to advance (cf. Ps 1.1 for notes on this word’s verbal root as *blessed*). This implies that *selah* has a space of indeterminate length and breadth for walking.

Vs. 3: He put a new song into my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. This physical gesture belays a certain humor. “Open wide your mouth and I will fill it” [Ps 81.10]. If God inserts in the psalmist’s mouth a “*new song*” (*shyr* having liturgical overtones), the old one is not specified here. He only says that besides its newness, the *shyr* is “*praise to our God*,” (*tehilah*) the word “*song*” not being found in the Hebrew text. Such a song is returned, as it were, to God once it is firmly placed in the psalmist’s mouth.

Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. Note the correspondence between *see* (*ra'ah*) and *fear* (*yara'*), more specifically, often these two verbs can be confused by their various constructions throughout the Bible; i.e., seeing can be fearing and visa versa. The result of this correspondence is “*trust in the Lord*,” *batach*. Note that all three verbs are in the future, that is, expectation resulting from the “*new song*.”

Vs. 4: Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods! *Blessed* or ‘*ashry*’ as noted in Ps. 1’s opening words. The word for *man* here is *gever* as opposed to Ps 1’s ‘*ysh*’; the verbal root implies *strength* and the male gender in contrast to the more general ‘*ysh*’. “A woman shall encompass a *man*” [Jer 31.22]. The word for *trust* is *batach* as in the last verse. Here the Hebrew reads has “*makes the Lord his trust*,” vs. 3 has “*trust in the Lord*.”

Such “*in-ness*” prevents a *gever*...one endowed with *strength*...from two perverse inclinations: “*turning to the proud*” (*panah*, in the sense of diverting from a path) and “*turning aside to lies*” as the Hebrew text has it, *satah*; former has a preposition (*to*) and the latter does not...*satah* and *lies* being implied as the same. “Let not your heart *turn aside* to her ways” [Prov 7.25].

Vs. 5: You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be numbered. Two objects of divine multiplication (Hebrew: “*made many*”) which may be seen as action and consideration:

1) *wondrous deeds* or *pala'*, the verbal root meaning *to separate, to distinguish*. “Your [Jonathan] love to me [David] was *wonderful*, passing the love of women” [2 Sam 1.26].

2) *thoughts* or machasheveth (singular), often in the negative sense: "All their *thoughts* are against me" [Ps 56.6]. The verbal root is chashav in the sense of devising something. "Saul *thought* to make David fall" [1 Sam 18.25]. Such is the indirect way which the psalmist attributes to God, but perhaps means chashav in the sense of being complicated or involved. Note that thoughts are directed "*towards* us," 'el, implying distance from the thinker to their object.

None can compare with you! A detection of frustration along with marvel at the divine deeds and thoughts just noted. The word for *compare*, harak implies an arranging; i.e., "nothing can be set in order to you," a difficult verse perhaps meaning that God's deeds and thoughts are not the same as he is in himself. Thus we have a division put in human terms: action, thoughts and the person who produces both.

Where I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be numbered. *To proclaim* (nagad) and *to tell* (davar) are two aspects of making known the above mentioned divine deeds and thoughts. As noted regarding Ps 38.18, nagad is the verbal root for the preposition *before*, that is, the psalmist sets *before* the "multiplication" of deeds and thoughts and even has *compared* (harak) them with God himself. Nevertheless, they both transcend *counting*, saphar, which also means *to write*. Such saphar is reminiscent of Jn 21.25: "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be *written*, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be *written*."

Vs. 6: Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Such rites as performed in the Jerusalem temple are not the objects of God's *desire*, chaphats, which as noted elsewhere, connotes a sense of intense delight. "He (King Cyrus) is my shepherd and shall fulfil all my *purpose*" [Is 44.28]. Thus chaphats connotes joy and intent.

In place of sacrifice and offering (as the Hebrew text reads), "ears you have *dug* for me," karah, suggesting the forming of a well. With this association of a well and listening in mind, cf. Jn 4.14: "the water that I shall give him will become in him a *spring of water* welling up to eternal life." Karah also means *to buy, to make a feast*: "So he *prepared* for them a great *feast*" [2 Kg 6.23].

Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Another statement almost as if to reinforce the *sacrifice* (zevach) and *offering* (minchah) just mentioned: holah and chata'ah.

Vs. 7: Then I said, "Lo, I come; in the roll of the book it is written of me. *Then* or 'az signifies determination that the psalmist has firmly realized the insufficiency of the above mentioned four types of sacrifices, and it leads him to a statement made to himself which is also for the benefit of his listeners (perhaps attending such sacrifices to God in the temple). He begins with *lo*, hineh, which corresponds to 'az in that it not only a rhetorical statement of readiness, but of immanent action. "*Behold*, I have given you every plant yielding seed" [Gen 1.29]. In vs. 7, note the close association of hineh with *I come*: the statement of being present and ready is allied with the necessity of getting to that same state of intention.

This verse and the next are quoted in Heb 10.6-8; also refers to 1 Sam 15.22; the New Testament context is Christ as mediator of the new covenant. *Roll* or migilah refers to the Torah; *book* or sepher derives from the verbal root saphar as noted in vs. 5 above ("they would be more than could be *numbered*"). The psalmist applies this act of being *numbered/written* (katav) to himself which is developed in vs. 8.

Vs. 8: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart. The close of the

psalmist's address, both to himself and others. Compare *delight* (chaphats) and *will* (retson), the latter also implying delight. Two verses which enhance these two words respectively: "I will make your pinnacles of agate, your gates of carbuncles, and all your wall of *precious stones*" [Is 54.8]. And, "For in my wrath I smote you, but in my *favor* I have had mercy on you" [Is 60.10].

Because divine favor connotes this special joy or delight, the psalmist can eagerly say that God's Torah is "within my heart." Another way of looking at vs. 8 is that this Torah was present *within* (betok) and causes chaphats. The word for *heart* here is meheh which signifies more intestines or bowels. "And my *heart* was thrilled within me" [Sg 5.4].

Vs. 9: I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; lo, I have not restrained my lips as you know, O Lord. The word *to proclaim news* or basar suggests a sense of beauty. "O Zion, herald of *good tidings*" [Is 40.9]. The noun flesh or body derives from this verbal root, so we may assume that corporality is a type of "good news," an insight which can be related to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Such basar takes place not in isolation but in the "great *congregation*" or qahal, the assembly of Israel as a nation which has secular as well as religious overtones. The psalmist then acknowledges that God is aware of his exuberance regarding basar.

Vs. 10: I have not hid your saving help within my heart. I have spoke of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation. Emphasis here is on communicating the message of basar of the last verse, of "incarnating" it, and is divided into three exclamation, all of which have taken in the past:

1) The Hebrew has *righteousness* (tsadaqah) instead of "saving help" which is located in the psalmist's *heart* or lev (i.e., as opposed to meheh above); he does not *hide* it, kasah, which as noted before implies a covering as with clothes.

2) The psalmist moves from hiding to speaking of two divine qualities: *faithfulness* ('emunah) and *salvation* (teshuhah or "Jesus"). Perhaps the act of speaking about them intimates that basar or making-corporeal in one's own person.

3) Another reference to not *concealing*, kachad, this verb connoting the act of denying or disowning. "They proclaim their sin like Sodom, they do not *hide* it" [Is 3.9]. What the psalmist does not "disown" is God's chesed and 'emeth; note the similarity of the latter with the just mentioned 'emunah; latter implies duration and perpetuity, where as the former, firmness: "and Moses' hands were *firm*" (firmness, Ex 17.12).

Another mention of Israel as qahal or *congregation*; consider the psalmist's desire to publish divine mercy or not withhold it in his heart as well as not to withhold it from this qahal. I.e., the two form parallel realities.

Vs. 11: Do not, O Lord, withhold your mercy from me, let your steadfast love and your faithfulness ever preserve me! The previous verse spoke of God's *love* or chesed; here the psalmist mentions his *mercy*, rachamyn, which is in the plural. The verbal root racham means *to love tenderly*, and the noun *womb* derives from it. "Hearken to me, O house of Jacob...who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the *womb*" [Is 46.3]. Thus such rachamyn is a "place of birth."

The psalmist includes God's chesed and 'emeth, that is, he wishes them to *preserve* him, yatsar, which connotes the formation of something with artistic value. "Then the Lord God *formed* man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" [Gen 2.7]. Such an action is continuous (*ever*), tamyd.

Vs. 12: For evils have encompassed me without number; my iniquities have overtaken me until I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me. The psalmist refers first (possibly) to external enemies who encompass him, ‘aphaph. “I went down to the land whose bars *closed upon* me forever, yet you did bring up my life from the Pit” [Jon 2.6].

Next the psalmist speaks of “internal” enemies or his *iniquities*, haon (singular), which produce a kind of blindness or inability to see clearly. By comparing them to “hairs of my head,” it is as though such iniquities hung down over his eyes as long hair. This blindness makes his heart *fail*, hazav, or better, abandon him.

Vs. 13: Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me! Two short, heart-felt cries from the heart (which has *failed*, hazav, the psalmist as noted just above); it is as though he were crying out from behind this “long hair” of iniquity. Here we have two pairs of entreaties, both with mention of YHWH, the *Lord*: divine *pleasure* (ratsah) and *deliverance* (natsal) on one hand and divine *haste* (chush) and *help* (hazar) on the other. All words have been examined at other places within the **Notes**. The first pair is a restrained type of appeal, whereas the second is more desperate.

Vs. 14: Let them be put to shame and confusion altogether who seek to snatch away my life; let them be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt! In this verse and the next one we have a series of wishes in the form of curses which may be related to the just mentioned personal desire to be *delivered* and *helped* by God:

- 1) put to shame and confusion = snatch away my life
- 2) turned back and dishonored = desire my hurt
- 3) (vs. 15) be appalled = at their shame

This verse may be summed up by the word *turn back*, sug, i.e., a motion backwards or reverse to the generally forward-looking verbs of the Psalter which relate to the psalmist’s advance in love and knowledge of God. “Those who have *turned back* from following the Lord, who do not seek the Lord or inquire of him” [Zeph 1.6].

Vs. 16: But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, “Great is the Lord!” As just noted, sug represents the general fate of persons hostile to the Lord; vs. 16 shows the antidote to sug through the verb baqash, *to seek*, as in Ps 27.4: “One thing I have asked of the Lord, that I will *seek after*.” Another example of this verb: “David therefore *besought* God for the child” [2 Sam 12.16]. Baqash in the Psalter signifies both a restlessness, a dissatisfaction, coupled with joy as here, *rejoice* and *be glad*, sus and samach. For an example of the former, cf. Is 35.1: “The wilderness and the dry land *shall be glad*.” And the latter, “The light of the righteous *rejoices*” [Prov 13.9]. Both verbs culminate “*in you*,” b-, that is, being-in God.

The object of people engaged in sus and samach is *loving* (‘ahav) God’s *salvation* or “Jesus,” teshuhat. In light of the New Testament, those who say “Great is the Lord” (the Hebrew reads, ‘May the Lord *be magnified*’, gadal) are addressing God the Father of Jesus Christ. They do this *tamyd*, *continually*. On the other hand, this group of people may be seen as different from those engaged in sus and samach but not distinct from them.

Vs. 17: As for me, I am poor and needy; but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not tarry, O my God! The psalmist closes this psalm with a statement with regard to divine protection after he speaks about others engaged in seeking God. He states his case: *poor* and *needy*, hany and ‘evyon. Cf. Ps 25.16 for the verbal root of the former as related to *eyes*. As for the

latter, it suggests a person who believes in God, not simply destitution. “And the first-born of the poor will feed, and the *needy* lie down in safety” [Is 14.30]. Because of this humble condition, the psalmist confidently says that the Lord *takes thought* of him, *chashav* (“What is man that you are mindful of him, and the sons of man that you *care for* him,” Ps 8,4?). For a definition of this verb which implies planning or devising, cf. Ex 31.4: “to *devise* artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and bronze.” Thus *chasahav* can signify work on God’s part as an artisan.

You are my help and my deliverer; do not tarry, O my God! Two names attributed to God as if to counter the psalmist (his two “names,” *poor* and *needy*), *hesrath* and *mepalat*. While they do not have the same weight as *yashah* (“Jesus”), they may be seen as attributes of it (i.e., of him).

The psalmist concludes this psalm with a command for God not *to tarry*, ‘*achar*, which also means *to be after*, *to follow*: “I remember...how you *followed* me in the wilderness” [Jer 2.2]. Compare this expression of incompleteness, of not being fulfilled, with the *chashav* or *care*; the psalmist constantly alternates between presence and absence regarding God without seeing any contradiction in his expression of it.

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Psalm Forty-One

Vs. 1: Blessed is he who considers the poor! The Lord delivers him in the day of trouble. ‘Ashry or blessed as in Ps 1.1: “*forward* is he...”, more specifically, in-the-direction-of the *poor*, *dal* (singular in vs. 1) from a verbal root signifying *to hang down* and hence connoting feebleness. “David became continually stronger and the house of Saul *grew weaker* (literally, ‘going weaker’) and weaker” [2 Sam 3.1]. *Dal* has a religious significance as the *hanawym*, another word for the *poor*. The person who is ‘*ashry* *considers* such unfortunates, *sakal*: “I will *instruct* you and teach you the way you should go” [Ps 32.8].

The Lord delivers him in the day of trouble. The *day* or *yom* is a *kairos* event, an occasion which here is one of *trouble*, *rahah*, with the connotation of evil. Note that the Lord *delivers* or *palat* the person showing *sakal* towards the poor *in* (b-) that day; i.e., God is fully present within such a *kairos*.

Vs. 2: The Lord protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. Two objects of divine favor regarding the just mentioned person who is *sakal* (towards the poor): *protects* or *shamar* and *keeps alive*, *chayah*; both are transpiring in the *kairos* of *evil* or *rahah*.

As a consequence, people call such a person *blessed* or ‘*ashry*; i.e., they recognize his *forward-looking* attention and do so in a particular location, “in the *land*” or ‘*eretz* which can signify Israel as a nation. Note the correspondence between “*in* the day of trouble” and “*in* the land.” Because of this “*in-ness*,” God does not hand him into “the *soul* (as the Hebrew reads) of his enemies,” *nephesh* signifying the hostility of their nature.

Vs. 3: The Lord sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you heal all his infirmities. This verse concludes the psalmist’s praise of the person considering the poor. To *sustain* or *sahad* implies refreshment as noted in Ps 18.35; cf. Gen 18.5 cited there. The sickbed or “bed of *languishing*,” *dawah* being the verbal root. “For this our heart has become *sick*” [Lam 5.17]. Also consider 1 Kg 1.47: “Your God made the name of Solomon more famous than yours, and made his throne greater than your throne.’ And the king bowed himself upon the *bed*” [1 Kg 1.47]. The word for *bed* here is *mishkav*

which differs from that of the psalm's use, heres; it implies a covering round about: "So shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued with the corner of a couch and part of a *bed*" [Amos 3.12].

In his illness you heal all his infirmities. The Hebrew reads, "You change all his bed in his sickness." This verse is reminiscent of 2 Kg 20.5: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord." Reference is to King Hezekiah's illness and recovery through the mediation of the prophet Isaiah. As for the verse under consideration, the word for *bed* is *mishkav* as in 1 Kg 1.47 just above which implies a lying down. This *changing* (*haphak*) of the *mishkav* suggests that the person's health (i.e., "he who considers the poor") is not altered one way or the other, just his bed.

Vs. 4: As for me, I said, "O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!" This shift away from "him who considers the poor" to the psalmist is a kind of comparison; seems to wish that the kindness of the person just described be applied to him. The Hebrew lacks "As for me" and simply reads, "I said." What he states is a desire for divine *graciousness*, *chanan*. "That he may be *gracious* to you" [Is 30.18]. Such *chanan* takes the more specific form of *healing*, *rapha'*, whose primary idea is a loosening or relaxation. The psalmist seeks such *rapha'* because of his *sin* or *chata'* (*to miss the mark*, as noted earlier); former implies slackening and the latter, tension.

Vs. 5: My enemies say of me in malice: "When will he die and his name perish?" The Hebrew is more direct, "...say *evil* (*rah*) to me." Their focus of enemies is not so much upon the psalmist's death but the death of his name which is more enduring for an ancient person because it implies his continuation through future generations. The similar sounding words "When will he die" (*matay yamuth*) enhance the enemies' desire.

Vs. 6: And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words while his heart gathers mischief; when he goes out, he tells it abroad. Two parts to this verse, namely, the wicked person with the psalmist and then his absence from him. To *see* (*ra'ah*) here means to visit during which an enemy of the psalmist (as the Hebrew has it) "speaks *vanity*," *shawa'*, which can also mean *iniquity*: "Woe to those who draw *iniquity* with cords of falsehood" [Is 5.18]. During this meeting, the evil person's *heart* (*lev*) or inmost being is in the process of *gathering* iniquity, *qavats*, in the sense of assembling it, *iniquity* or 'awen, which like *shawa'* can mean *vanity*; pertains more to idolatry: "For the teraphim utter *nonsense*, and the diviners see lies" [Zech 10.2].

Upon completing his meeting with the psalmist, the wicked man "tells it *abroad*," that is, recounts empty words and the mischief he has gathered. *Chuts* alludes to being outside as opposed to inside a house or building; it implies the opposite of privacy.

Such publication of what the wicked person shared with the psalmist is delineated in the next three verses and may be outlined as follows:

- 1) whisper together
- 2) imagine the worst
- 3) something deadly has afflicted the psalmist
- 4) he will not rise
- 5) the psalmist's *bosom friend* has betrayed him: the word here is *shalom* (Hebrew, "the man of my peace").

Vs. 10: But you, O Lord, be gracious to me and raise me up that I may requite them! The sole purpose of the psalmist's request for divine *graciousness* (*chanan*) and to be *raised up* (*qum*) is for him to *requite* or *shalam* his foes. This is the verbal root for *shalom* and implies bringing to completion.

“As I have done, so God has *requited* me” [Judg 1.7]. While the intent is for revenge, perhaps shalom intimates that the psalmist wishes reconciliation.

Vs. 11: By this I know that you are pleased with me, in that my enemy has not triumphed over me. A statement of proof summed up by *pleased* (chaphats) and the fact that the enemy has not *triumphed* (ruah) over the psalmist. As noted several times before, chaphats means real delight and pleasure, so to associate this intent with God suggests complete confidence. Ruah can also mean *to sound a trumpet*: “And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the *trumpets*” [Num 10.9].

Vs. 12: But you have upheld me because of my integrity and set me in your presence forever. *Integrity* or tom derives from tamam, *to complete*, and implies bringing to perfection. “The just man walks in his *integrity*” [Prov 20.7]. Tom can refer to being made in the divine image and likeness (cf. Gen 1.26), and in light of this, for God to *uphold* or tamak (which is similar in sound) a person implies taking possession of him or her. “I will *uphold* you with the right hand” [Is 41.10].

The intent of such tom is that the psalmist may enjoy God’s presence by being *set* in it, natsav. “The Lord *has taken his place* to contend, he stands to judge his people” [Is 3.13]. *Presence* or lipeny is a preposition, *before*. Note the first letter, l, in conjunction with leholam, *forever*, which also begins with l.

Vs. 13: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and amen. Such *blessing* (barak, the verbal root) is applied to *everlasting*, the same word used in the last verse, holam. Movement is implied here: *from* (min) and *to* (had). The double ‘amen is a confirmation of this truth of barak’s infinite extension.

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Psalm Forty-Two

Vs. 1: As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for you, O God. Two instances of the same verb, harag, one applied to a *hart* and the other to the psalmist’s *soul*; the verb occurs only one other time, J1 1.20: “The beasts of the field *cry*.” The *hart* is the animal to which the psalmist compares himself, ‘ayal. It is mentioned several times in the Song of Songs, for example: “My beloved is like a gazelle or a young *stag*. Behold, there he stands behind our wall” [2.9]. ‘Ayal can also refer to a *ram* and hence suggests sacrifice: “Take a bull calf for a sin offering and a *ram* for a burnt offering, both without blemish, and offer them before the Lord” [Lev 9.2].

The object of harag with regard to the hart is “*flowing streams*”: the verbal root here is ‘aphaq, *to hold fast, to be strong*, and the noun ‘aphyq can mean a strong, rushing stream “held fast” by the confines of a valley. “It will rise over all its channels and go overall its banks” [Is 8.78]. Thus ‘aphyq is associated with the primeval waters, their source as in 2 Sam 22.16: “Then the *channels* of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were laid bare.” The word for *streams* is the common one for *water*, maym.

Vs. 2: My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? Another mention of harag with regard to the psalmist’s nephesh or *soul*. Note the two expressions, “*for God*” and “*for the living God*,” both fors expressing immediacy through the preposition l-. The second phrase has God as living, chay, as if to signify the vitality between harag and the divinity.

In this verse harag signifies incompleteness because the psalmist states a question about entering God’s presence. Note the association between *come* (bo’) and *behold* (ra’ah); the first being a

prerequisite for vision. We also have a distinction here, God's *face*, *peney*, as opposed to God as a whole. There is no indication that the psalmist has come and beheld, only a longing, a *harag*. "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" [1 Kg 19.13].

Vs. 3: My tears have been my food day and night while men say to me continually, "Where is your God?" The psalmist now switches from thirsting as applied to God to hunger with respect to his deserted condition or perceived absence by God. "Day and night" represent this absence as noted by Job: "When I lie down I say, 'When shall I arise?' But the night is long, and I am full of tossing till the dawn" [Job 7.4]. In addition to the prolonged period of distress, the psalmist's enemies say (according to the Hebrew text), "all the day" for the RSV's "continually." Note that they say "*your* God," not their nor anyone else's.

Vs. 4: These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. The *remembrance* (*zakar*) which the psalmist has in mind is both the longing he has for God and his absence when confronted with his foes. Here *zakar* is connected with the *pouring out* of his soul, *shaphak*. For another use, cf. Jol 2.28 (3.1): "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will *pour out* my spirit on all flesh." Here the object of divine *shaphak* is *ruah*; with the psalmist, it is *nephesh*.

What the psalmist has to *zakar* is his role, perhaps liturgical, of leading people to the temple for worship. *Sak* is the word for *throng* which can alternately mean *thick wood*. "Like a lion he has left his *covert*" [Jer 25.38]. Also, *sekah* or *booth* is related: "You shall dwell in *booths* for seven days...that your generations 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]. Come this *sekah* with vs. 4's "*house of God*," *beyth* signifying a stable, permanent structure.

With glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. The Hebrew has *voice* (*qol*) composed of two elements, *rinah* and *today*; the former can imply mourning or wailing and the latter is often bound up with performing a sacrifice. They are done by the *multitude* or *hamon* (as opposed to *sak* just mentioned) which also means a noise. "When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, 'What is this *uproar*'" [1 Sam 4.14]? *Hamon* can thus be positive or negative, and in vs. 4 the former applies as noted by the verb *chagag* which connotes dancing. "Let my people go, that they may *hold a feast* to me in the wilderness" [Ex 5.1].

Vs. 5: Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help. Two questions the psalmist asks himself, almost as a challenge, when recalling his presence with worshipers in the last verse. It consists of being *cast down* (*shachach*) and *disquieted* (*hamah*), and demonstrated by two verses, respectively: "Man is humbled, and men are *brought low*—forgive them not" [Is 2.9]! "I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves *roar*" [Is 51.15]. Note that *hamah* is the verbal root for *hamon*, *multitude*, of the last verse.

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help. These two questions serve to give the psalmist courage, for the second half of vs. 5 is applied both to him and to others. *Hope* or *yachal* also means *to wait*. "They *waited for* me as for the rain" [Job 29.23]. By saying that he will *praise* (*yadah*) God again, implied is that the psalmist was engaged in such activity beforehand; thus hope suggests a kind of remembrance of the past. This verse concludes with the Hebrew reading "the *Jesus* of his face." "And his *face* shone like the sun" [Mt 17.2].

Vs. 6: and my God.² My soul is cast down within me, therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Again, the psalmist says that his soul is *cast down*, shachach; he specifies the location of this nephesh as *within* him (*haly*, literally, “on him”), as if it were a burdensome weight. Such a weight causes him to *remember* God, zakar, without which perhaps he would not have done so. Note the threefold geographic locale of this zakar: *Jordan, Hermon* and *Mount Mizar*. Jordan implies the river; Hermon, Lebanon; Mizar, perhaps near Hermon but unknown. I.e., the psalmist’s zakar extends from south pointing north.

Vs. 7: Deep calls to deep at the thunder or your cataracts; all your waves and your billows have gone over me. Having delineated spacial distance from God on the horizontal plane, the psalmist now shifts this separation to the vertical plane. *Deep* or *tehom* is that formless void from which creation had sprung: “and darkness was upon the face of the *deep*” [Gen 1.2]. For *tehom* to call upon *tehom* can suggest void not in the sense of a vacuum but of readiness to receive “the Spirit of God over the face of the waters” [1.3]. “Was it not your who dried up the sea, the waters of the great *deep*” [Is 51.10]? This verse refers to Israel’s exodus from Egypt, a fact which may apply to vs. 7. Note that this calling of *tehom* is connected to divine *cataracts*, *tsinor* (singular). “Whoever would smite the Jebusites, let him get up the *water shaft* to attack the lame and the blind, who are hated by David’s soul” [2 Sam 5.8].

All your waves and your billows have gone over me. *Waves* or *misbar* (singular; the plural refer to waves breaking on the shore) and *billows* (*gal*, singular; also means *fountain*) submerge the psalmist much as Jonah: “all your *waves* and your *billows* passed over me” [2.3]. We may say that this submersion, like Jonah’s, lasts “for three days and nights” [1.17].

Vs. 8: By day the Lord commands his steadfast love; and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. By mentioning *day* and *night*, the psalmist says that his situation has stabilized regarding the “geographical” nature of his distress depicted in the last two verses. Day is characterized by divine *chesed*, and night by God’s *song*, *shyr*; the former is *commanded* (*yastah*), whereas the latter is “*with* me,” that is, having no need of a divine command. This *shyr* is a prayer where *God* and *life* are identified as one reality. Perhaps this preference for night is reminiscent of a watchman: “One is calling to me from Seir, ‘Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night’” [Is 21.11]?

Vs. 9: I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” Despite calling God his rock (*selah*) whom in Ps 18.2 he also calls fortress, deliverer, rock (*tsur*), shield, horn of salvation and stronghold, he claims abandonment through two “whys.” To be *forgotten* or *shakach* implies a leaving and by reason of this, of going ahead without the psalmist in mind. “My God, my God, why have you *forsaken* me” [Mt 27.46]?, a verse quoted from Ps 22.1 and has essentially the same wording here.

The second question brings up *oppression* by foes, *radaph* being the verbal root which means a following after as in a persecution. Such grief causes *mourning*, *lachats*, whose fundamental meaning is *to press*. “You shall not *oppress* a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” [Ex 23.9].

Vs. 10: As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while the say to me continually, “Where is your God?” The opening words in Hebrew read, “With a *sword* in my bones,” *retsech*, whose verbal root means *to kill*. This is reminiscent of Lk 2.35: “And as sword will pierce through your own soul.” Such are the enemies’ *taunts* (*charaph*) which are continuous (Hebrew, “all the day”) and may be applied to Christ on the cross (cf. Mt 27.41+).

²“and my God:” these words are continued from vs. 5 and are attached to vs. 6.

Vs. 11: Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. The psalmist addresses his own nephesh here which seems unaffected by the taunts just mentioned. The focus of his questioning is twofold: shachach, *cast down*, as in vs.6 above (“My soul is *cast down* within me”) and hamah, *disquieted*, as in vs. 5 above. He finds the solution in *hope*, yachal, which as noted earlier, implies waiting. “Behold, I *waited* for your words” [Job 32.11].

Yachal leads to *praise* of God (yadah) who is addressed as “my help,” i.e., the familiar my “*Jesus*,” (yeshuhot)...who is also “my *God*.”

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Psalm Forty-Three

Vs. 1: Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from deceitful and unjust men deliver me! A desire for *vindication* means a desire for personal *judgment*, shaphat, which here is joined with a similar judicial term, *defend*, ryv, implying contention. “So he [Isaac] called the name of the well Esek because they *contended* with him” [Gen 26.20]. In vs. 1 both shaphat and ryv are directed against “an *ungodly* people, literally, “a people without chesed.” The threat is even more serious, that is, an external one, as indicated by the word goym for *people*. Such goym are composed of *deceitful* and *unjust* men, mirmah and hawlah.

Vs. 2: For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you cast me off? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? After having identified God as his *refuge* (mahoz: “The Lord is a *stronghold* to him whose way is upright,” Prov 10.29), the psalmist asks why he has been *cast off*, zanach, or more graphically, emit a stench: “and its canals will become *foul*” [Is 19.6]. Presumably, this question is asked while the psalmist is in the mahoz.

The second question regards the psalmist’s appearance of *mourning*, qadar, more specifically, *to be darkened*, a word which also implies a stench. “When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars *dark*” [Ezk 32.7]. All this is due to hostile *oppression* or lachats. “Bread of adversity and waters of *affliction*” [Is 30.20].

Vs. 3: Oh send out your light and your truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! Two issues from God, *light* (‘or) and *truth* (‘emeth), both of which are similar. Their lightsome quality should be viewed in light of the psalmist’s qadar or “darkness” in vs. 2. This passage from darkness to light/truth is results from being *led* by God, nachah. “I will *lead* him and requite him with comfort” [Is 57.18].

Not only does the psalmist bid ‘or and ‘emeth to lead him, he has in mind a specific goal which is twofold: *holy hill* and *tabernacle*, both referring to the temple at Jerusalem. The latter is more specific, mishkan (singular); in vs. 3 it is plural, suggesting Jn 14.2: “In my father’s house are many *rooms*.” Mone for *room* implies a permanent dwelling, an abiding, as from the verbal root meno, *to remain*.

Vs. 4: Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God! Having attained the holy hill and dwelling, the psalmist goes yet further, the *altar*, mizbach. Note the several types of altars: the altar for burnt offerings (Ex 30.28), the brazen altar in the outer court (Ex 39.39), the altar of incense or the golden altar within the temple (Ex 30.27). This manifold use of mizbach centers around “God my exceeding *joy*,” samach. Note the Hebrew, “to God...,” ‘el-‘el; *to-ness* and *God* are paralleled.

This samach produces praise with the *lyre*, kinor, which King David excelled in playing (cf. 1 Sam 16.23); kinor is frequently mentioned in the Psalter. "My soul moan like a *lyre* for Moab" [Is 16.11]. In conclusion, note the four times "God" is mentioned in this verse.

Vs. 5: Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. Refer to Ps 42.11 which is identical to this verse; both verses are used to conclude the two psalms.

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Psalm Forty-Four

Vs. 1: We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old. "With our own ears" stresses the continuity which exists down through generations between the present one (listening) and the first one which had received God's revelation, for example, Moses and those Israelites who lived through the wandering in the Sinai desert. This is emphasized by "our fathers have *told* us," saphar, which as noted elsewhere, means *to write*. I.e., these fathers have "written" to the present generation of Israelites those divine deeds done "in the days of old," qedem, which can also mean the *east*. "And the Lord god planted a garden in Eden, in the *east*, and there he put the man whom he had formed" [Gen 2.8]. Perhaps the saphar in vs. 1 can apply to this direction, going all the way back to Adam.

Vs. 2: You with your own hand did drive out the nations, but them you did plant; you did afflict the peoples, but them you did set free. A clear reference (as well as vs. 3) to the generation after Moses which began the conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership. The proper name Joshua is the Hebrew version of "Jesus" who may be considered God's "own *hand*," yad; this yad is diametrically opposed to the goym or *nations*, hostile to God. *Driving out* or garash can also mean to divorce: "They shall not marry a harlot or a woman who has been defiled; neither shall they marry a woman *divorced* from her husband, for the priest is holy to his God" [Lev 21.7]. I.e., Israel "divorces" the goym from their native land. In their place, Israel is *planted*, natah, which can also mean to pitch a tent: "stretching out the heavens land laying the foundations of the earth and saying to Zion, 'You are my people'" [Is 51.16]. Here natah and Israel as finding divine favor are united.

You did afflict the peoples, but them you did set free. In addition to suffering expulsion, we have another class of native inhabitants, *peoples*, la'om, a term which may apply more to a nation of united people. In contrast, God *sets free* Israel, shalach, which can also mean to expel, similar to garash above. The notion of sending implied in shalach intimates the divine mandate Israel has received to possess the Promised Land. We may say that this shalach originated in the Exodus through the Red Sea, an event which has governed Israel ever since.

Vs. 3: For not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm give them victory; but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance; for you did delight in them. Two contrasts: human sword and arm on one hand and divine right hand, arm and light of countenance on the other. Since this and the preceding verse are related to the Book of Joshua, cf. 1.3: "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses." Note that God's promise is in the past tense; the human fulfillment is in the future tense.

The Hebrew for *give victory* is yashah, "Jesus," which aptly fits in with the "Book of Jesus" (Joshua). As the second part of vs. 3 says, such yashah is not through human achievement but by divine action. Note that God's *countenance* (panym) is included as a means of subjection. Such is the blessing

of Moses: "The Lord lift up his *countenance* upon you and give you peace" [Num 6.26], that is, give Israel his yashah or "Jesus." The reason for such "Jesus" is God's *delight*, ratsah: "The Lord *takes pleasure* in his people" [Ps 149.4].

Vs. 4: You are my King and my God who ordains victories for Jacob. This verse continues the theme of divine assistance noted in vs. 3; here God is called *king*, melek, which he later frowned upon as noted in 1 Sam 8.7: "But they have rejected me from being *king* over them." Contrast this with Israel's desire to have a king "to govern us like all the *nations*," [vs. 5], i.e., to be like the goyim Israel was commanded to uproot as noted in vs. 2.

The second part of vs. 4 in an imperative in Hebrew: "Ordain victories for Jacob." Perhaps mention of this patriarch has in mind his later years when his son Joseph was ruler over Egypt. Joseph commanded that his father join him in Egypt (cf. Gen 46.28-47-47.12) which set the stage for Israel's exodus some four hundred years later. Note that Joseph brought Jacob's body up from Egypt to bury him (cf. Gen 50.7) to "await" Israel's arrival after the Exodus and after his own Exodus.

Vs. 5: Through you we push down our foes, through your name we tread down our assailants. Two types of military assault: "*through* you" (literally, *in* you) and "through your *name* (shem)." *Pushing down* or nagach connotes striking with an animal's horn. "When an ox *gores* a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned" [Ex 21.28]. And, "His firstling bull...shall *push* the peoples with his horns" [Dt 33.17].

The second assault is done with the help of God's shem; the preposition b- (*in*; the English has "through"). In light of New Testament revelation, shem can be taken as Jesus Christ; the *assailants* in Hebrew reads as "those who rise up" or qum. "Violence has *grown up* into a rod of wickedness" [Ezk 7.11]. The upward ascent in the sense of rebellion is contrasted with *treading down*, bus. "Our adversaries have *trodden* it (sanctuary) *down*" [Is 63.18].

Vs. 6: Yet you have cast us off and abased us, and have not gone out with our armies. This verse commences a series of complaints against God; the others are as follows in the succeeding verses:

- 1) made us like sheep for slaughter
- 2) scattered us among the nations
- 3) vs. 12: sold your people
- 4) vs. 13: made us the taunt of neighbors
- 5) derision and scorn
- 6) vs. 14: made us a byword among nations
- 7) laughing stock

Then the psalmist turns attention to his own person:

- 1) vs. 15: disgrace before me
- 2) taunters and revilers
- 3) vs. 16: before the enemy and avenger

Vs. 17: **All this has come upon us though we have not forgotten you or been false to your covenant.** Here the psalmist unites the first group of complaints pertaining to Israel as a nation with his own grievances as listed just above. The point of contention centers around the lack of *forgetfulness*, shakach, as related to God. I.e., both Israel and he have remembered God, yet evil has afflicted them. Thus shakach is synonymous with oblivion: "For Israel has *forgotten* his Maker and built palaces" [Hos 8.14].

In addition to shakach, the psalmist mentions shaqar, *to be false* in the sense of deception. The latter verb is found often in the Book of Jeremiah, for example, “They are prophets to you a *lying* vision, worthless divination and the *deceit* of their own minds” [14.14]. Shaqar is more grievous than shakach inasmuch as it is related to the divine *covenant*, beryth. The questioning as to this beryth is seen in light of Ex 2.24: “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his *covenant* with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.” Note here the association of *remember* with beryth as well as the three patriarchs of Israel.

Vs. 18: Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way. This verse is a reminder to God that his people have remained faithful to his prophets who often complain about infidelity. *Heart* or lev is singular for the plurality of Israel, and represents the nation’s intent as a whole to remain faithful to God, i.e., the singular lev has not *turned back* or sug; an alternate meaning of this word is *dross* which occurs only once: “Son of man, the house of Israel has become *dross* to me” [Ezk 22.18].

In addition to the singular lev, the psalmist speaks of Israel’s *steps* or ‘ashur (singular) which is related to ‘ashry as noted with regard to Ps 1.1, that is, in the sense of blessedness and of forward movement. An ‘ashur transforms into action the intent of lev. In vs. 18 these steps follow God’s *way*, ‘orech, which is a more poetic form than the other word for this term, derek. The former implies a whole manner of living: “That he may teach us his *ways*” [Is 2.3]. ‘Orech combined with natah, *to depart*, is thus more significant in that this verb suggests an active stretching forth to something.

Vs. 19: That you should have broken us in the places of jackals and covered us with deep darkness. This verse is a continuation of the previous one and is the completion of a sentence. The Hebrew reads for “places of jackals” “place of *dragons*,” tanym, more precisely, a sea monster. “Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great *dragon* that lies in the midst of his streams” [Ezk 29.3]. This reference to Pharaoh is appropriate with regard to vs. 19 in that reference may be applied to Israel’s exile in Egypt.

The *deep darkness* or tsalmaweth is composed of two words, shadow and death. “Even though I walk through the valley of the *shadow of death*” [Ps 23.4]. With reference to Pharaoh in mind just above, such tsalmaweth may be summed up by Ex 1.8: “Now there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph.” This lacking of knowing can be willed, and it extended from Joseph’s lofty position in Egypt to the Israelites living there.

Vs. 20: If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread forth our hands to a strange god. On behalf of the congregation (“we”) the psalmist brings up two transgressions which they did not commit yet had suffered calamity: *forget* or shakach (cf. remarks in vs. 17) and *spread forth* hands or paras, a verb suggesting the dispersion of resources. Here it refers to ‘el zar, *strange god*, or an idol; the adjective zar can refer to a stranger in the sense of one not belonging to Israel and by implication, the gods that person worships. “Your country lies desolate, your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence *aliens* devour your land” [Is 1.7].

Vs. 21: Would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart. A continuation from vs. 21; by itself, the question heightens the tension. *Discover* or chaqar suggests digging. “Go, *search* the land” [Judg 18.2]. In light of the secret forgetting of God and spreading out of hands to alien gods in light of which the psalmist protests, consider the verb chaqar as implied in Gen 3.9: “But the Lord called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”

The word *secret* or tahalumah derives from halam, *to hide*. “When you spread forth your hands, I will *hide* my eyes from you” [Is 1.15]. The “where” of Gen 3.9 is a discovery, an uncovering of this

halam; its secret nature is emphasized by its association with *heart*.

Vs. 22: No, for your sake we are slain all the day long and are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Vs. 22 is quoted in Rom 8.36, especially in light of Paul's question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ" [vs. 35]. "All the day long" may be designated a *kairos*, a special time or occasion during which the psalmist and Israel are *slain*, *harag*, as by enemies. "The Lord *slew* all the first born in the land of Egypt" [Ex 13.15].

Tavach is used to *slaughter* men as opposed to animals for sacrifice; its association with sheep suggests not so much this notion as wholesale, wanton destruction. Referring back to Romans, those who perform this tavach may be said to be "death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth" (vss. 38-9).

Vs. 23: Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Lord? Awake! Do not cast us off forever! This first question is the first of two (vs. 24) posed to God. *To rouse*, *hur*, fundamentally means *to be hot, to be awake*. "I slept, but my heart was *awake*" [Sg 5.2]. In Ps 44 *hur* is used in connection with *yashan*, *to sleep*, as noted in the Song verse just quoted. The second command is *awake*, *quts*; three other meanings from the same verbal root are *to be weary, to cut off, to pass the summer*. "And many of those who *sleep* in the dust of the earth shall awake" [Dan 12.2]. The object of the three commands just delineated are centered upon a desire not to be *cast off*; *zanach*, which implies something abominable. "O Samaria, your calf is an *abominable* thing" [Hos 8.5]. The psalmist's complaint is not so much in being cast off but suffering this fate *forever*; *netsach*; another meaning of this word is *perfection* but in the sense of totality. "Direct your steps to the *perpetual* ruins" [Ps 74.3].

Vs. 24: Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? The second of two questions which the psalmist brings to God. *Satar* for *to hide* refers to God, whereas Ex 3.6 uses *satar* in reference to Moses' natural response when confronted with God: "And Moses *hid* his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." Cf. Ps 13.1 for the same question.

Two objects of supposed divine *forgetfulness*, *shakach*: 1) *affliction* or *hany* and 2) *oppression* or *lachats*. Both may apply to Israel's experience in Egypt as well as later aggression by enemies in the Promised Land.

Vs. 25: For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our body cleaves to the ground. Note the singular *soul* (*nephesh*) for the plural "we," another instance of Israel's collective nature. This being *bowed down* or *shachah* is a gesture of prostration, of submission to one's enemies; it can also apply to worship of God: "Then Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder and *worship* and come back to you'" [Gen 22.5]. The collection nature of *nephesh* similarly *cleaves* to the ground as a singular *body* or *beten*; this word also means *womb*, so implied is the very source of collective life of Israel.

The severe affliction which as experienced collectively is emphasized by *nephesh* or *soul* being associated with the dust; it is a prostration worse than the *beten* being pressed to the *earth*.

Vs. 26: Rise up, come to our help! Deliver us for the sake of your steadfast love! Compare *rise up* (*qum*) with *rouse* (*hur*) of vs. 23; the former implies more a standing up as opposed to *hur*'s arousal from sleep. *Qum* has in mind deliverance or *hazar* with respect to the above mentioned collective soul and body; the psalmist appeals to God's *chesed* which he earlier complained was asleep.

Psalm Forty-Five

Vs. 1: My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. This psalm is interesting to read in conjunction with the Song of Songs, for it deals with a royal wedding. The psalmist's heart *overflows*, rachash, which fundamentally means to boil or bubble up; vs. 1 is the only instance of this verb in the Bible. The Hebrew for "goodly theme" has "good word," devar, which may be translated as *expression* and is similar in meaning to the Greek logos. This devar takes on the form of verses or "the things which I made" and is directed to the king who may be David or Solomon.

My tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. Scribes were secretaries, and the psalmist's tongue is like a pen in the hand of one of these men. Het for *pen* more specifically refers to an instrument for inscribing on rock: "Oh that with an iron *pen* and lead they were graven in the rock forever" [Job 19.23]! With this in mind, we may say that the psalmist's tongue is endowed with a special gift for writing on stone; it is *ready*, mahyr, in the sense of being quick with respect to a hard object such as stone.

Vs. 2: You are the fairest of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. *To be fair*, yaphah, suggests brightness; for an alternate meaning, cf. Sg 4.10: "How *sweet* is your love, my sister, my bride!" In the psalm such yaphah is applied to "sons of men," masculine, as opposed to the usual feminine use of this word.

After praising the king, the psalmist turns attention to his lips upon which *grace* (chen) is *poured* (yatsaq) and which implies the flow of liquid. "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone; and he *poured* out a drink offering on it and *poured* oil on it" [Gen 35.14]. With this verse in mind which connotes a lasting monument to Jacob's vision, we may say that the king, as a result of divine chen, is "blessed forever" much like a monument.

Vs. 3: Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one, in your glory and majesty! A play on words: *gird* (chagor, imperative form) and *mighty one* (gibor) with respect to cherev, *sword*. I.e., the sword and its girding are one. "Behold, the litter of Solomon! About it are sixty *mighty men* of the *mighty men* of Israel, all girt with *swords*" [Sg 3.7-8].

Glory (hod) and *majesty* (hadar) are two royal as well as divine characteristics often found in the Bible; the latter is found in the next verse. Compare Rev 19.15 which speaks of a sword, this time from Christ's mouth as opposed to the king's thigh of vs. 3: "From his mouth issues a sharp *sword* with which to smite the nations." Compare this verse towards the end of the New Testament with one at the beginning of the Old: "At the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming *sword*" [Gen 3.24].

Vs. 4: In your majesty ride forth victoriously for cause of truth and to defend the right; let your right hand teach you dread deeds! In vs. 3, glory and majesty are applied to the king, whereas in this verse *majesty* (hadar) alone accompanies the king as he "rides forth *victoriously*," tsalach, whose verbal root also means *to attack*. An interesting use of this verb is the coming of the Spirit upon a person: "And the Spirit of the Lord *came mightily* upon him [Samson,] Judg 14.19]. The purpose for such (spiritual) tsalach: *truth*, *meekness* (Hebrew text, hanwah) and *righteousness*.

Let your right hand teach you dread deeds. Here the king's *right hand*, yemyn, *teaches* himself in a self-reflective manner, yarah. "I will instruct you and *teach* you the way you should go" [Ps 32.8]. The object of such teaching is *dread deeds*, nora'oth, most likely referring to military accomplishments. In light of this, consider Ps 110.1: "Sit at my *right* hand until I make your enemies your footstool," the sitting itself being a form of teaching.

Vs. 5: Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you.

Arrows (chets, singular) implies that the king is an expert Bowman even though mention was made of his sword. "He made me a polished *arrow*, in his quiver he hid me away" [Is 49.2]. Note singular use of *heart*, lev, for the plural *enemies*. This corporate unity was pointed out with respect to Ps 44.25 above. Here *peoples* can refer to those nations whom Israel subjected as recorded in the Book of Joshua. "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you" [Jos 1.5]. I.e., subjection depends upon this "face to face" relationship which Moses enjoyed with God.

Vs. 6: Your divine throne endures forever and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity.

The Hebrew text lacks "endures" or any verb. I.e., God's *throne* or *kise'* is thus equivalent with eternity ("forever and ever"). It is symbolic of divine kingship and judgment. Throne plays a significant role in the Book of Revelation, for example, "At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a *throne* stood in heaven with one seated on the *throne*" [4.2]!

The *scepter* or *shvet* is symbolic more of kingship than of judgment; it also means *staff* and *tribe*, a reference to the latter being Jud 20.2: "And the chiefs of all the people, of all the *tribes* of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God." Such a royal scepter is one of "equity" or in Hebrew, "the scepter of your kingdom is a right scepter."

Vs. 7: You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows. Two extremes: *love* ('ahav) and *hate* (sana'), *righteousness* (tsedeq) and *wickedness* (reshah), all of which were examined in varied contexts in the **Notes**. In vs. 7 this contrast leads to *therefore*, hal-ken, i.e., it produces a result delineated in the next sentence. Note twofold mention of *God*: "God" and "your God," as if to exhibit special delight. This divine good pleasure expresses itself through an *anointing*, *mashach*, a verb from which is derived the name *Christ*. *Mashach* can apply to the ordination of a priest or the coronation of a king. In this verse, *mashach* is connected with *oil of gladness*, two words with similar sounds, *shemen sason*. Because it is "above your fellows," vs. 7 can apply more to the anointing of a king. "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and *anointed* him in the midst of his brothers" [1 Sam 16.13].

Vs. 8: Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad. Although an anointing takes place by pouring oil over one's head, vs. 8 suggests that when this oil spreads over the anointed person's *robes* or *beged* (singular), it is transformed into three spices reminiscent of the gifts of the wise men: gold, frankincense and myrrh (cf. Mt 2.11). "Your shoots are an orchard of...nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, *myrrh* and *aloes*" [Sg. 4.13-4]. Note the context of an orchard, a cultivated place as opposed to these spices growing in the wild.

From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad. Such "*ivory palaces*" signify opulence, *heykal*, and can refer to God's temple: "The Lord is in his holy *temple*" [Ps 11.4]. The plurality of such palaces is reminiscent of Jn 14.2: "In my Father's house (singular) are many rooms (plural)." The Hebrew of this part of vs. 8 reads, "whereby they have made you *glad*," *samach*.

Vs. 9: Daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir. Such "daughters of kings" may refer to those nations in good standing with Israel; they are *yaqar* (singular), *ladies of honor*, in the sense of being precious or costly. "She (wisdom) is more *precious* than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her" [Prov 3.14]. One such outstanding lady is the queen of Ophir, possibly from Phoenicia, who is at the king's *right hand*, *lymynka*, a place of honor as in Ps 110.1: "The Lord said to my lord: 'Sit at my *right hand*.'" As for Ophir,

cf. 1 Kg 10.11: "Moreover the fleet of Hiram, which brought gold from *Ophir*, brought from *Ophir* a very great amount of almug wood and precious stones." The word for *queen* in vs. 9 is shegal, from the verbal root shagal meaning *to lie with a woman* usually in a negative or immoral sense. "Their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives *ravished*" [Is 13.16].

Vs. 10: Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house. Four commands to the daughter or possibly the queen of Ophir:

- 1) *hear* (shamah) or pay attention. "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord*" [Dt 6.4].
- 2) *consider* (ra'ah, *to see*), that is, the king's splendor. "But I (queen of Sheba) did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had *seen* it" [1 Kg 10.7].
- 3) "*incline your ear*" (natah) in the sense of extending the just mentioned hearing in a specific direction; also implies a turning away. "*Incline your ear to me, rescue me speedily*" [Ps 31.2]!
- 4) *forget* (shakach) which has two objects related to the daughter's origin: her *people* and *father's house*. "God from your country and your kindred and your *father's house* to the land that I will show you" [Gen 12.1].

Vs. 11: And the king will desire your beauty. Since he his your lord, bow to him. The first sentence culminates from the fourfold commands of the previous verse. The queen's *beauty* or yephey, whose root as noted elsewhere in these **Notes** means *to shine, be bright*. Such is the object of the king's *desire*, 'awah: "You have given him his heart's *desire*" [Ps 21.2].

The second sentence depicts the queen's submission, *bow* or shachah which can apply to divine worship. "I (Abraham) and the lad will go yonder and *worship*" [Gen 22.5].

Vs. 12: The people of Tyre will sue your favor with gifts, the richest of the people with all kinds of wealth. The Hebrew reads "*daughter* of Tyre," a city on the seacoast and whose king was Hiram who furnished King David with supplies for building the Jerusalem temple. "And Hiram king of *Tyre* had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress timber and gold, as much as he desired" [1 Kg 9.11]. Such are the *gifts* given to David.

The second part of vs. 12 continues into vs. 13; "richest of the people" can refer to Tyre as well as other lands acknowledging the construction of the Jerusalem temple. The Hebrew has *face* (panym) for "favor," this word signifying the fuller sense of the king's presence.

Vs. 13: The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes. The Hebrew reads: "All *glorious* (kavod being the verbal root) is the king's daughter within, gold embroidery is her clothing." *Within* or peneymah refers to the walls of a house or court which is opposite the door and the first room you enter. The king's daughter thus awaits her bridegroom; her kavod may be taken to be a participation in the divine kavod: "for the *glory* of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" [1 Kg 8.11]. "Behold, its blood (sin offering) was not brought into the *inner part* of the sanctuary" [Lev 10.18].

The "gold-woven robes," mishbetsoth, can also mean *sockets* (for precious stones): "As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel; you shall enclose them in *settings* of gold filigree" [Ex 28.11]. This engraving is reminiscent of the heavenly Jerusalem: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations and on them the twelve names of the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" [Rev 21.14].

Vs. 14: In many-colored robes she is led to the king with her virgin companions, her escort in her train. The Hebrew reads "in *raiment of needlework*," riqmah being the word used which signifies a type of embroidery. Note that riqmah is used several times in Ezk 16 & 17 where God adorns his

unfaithful wife, Jerusalem, for example, 16.10: “I clothed you also with *embroidered cloth* and shod you with leather, I washed you in fine linen and covered you with silk.”

Not only is the princess so bedecked, she is accompanied by a virgin train or as the Hebrew text reads, “the virgins, her companions, that follow her shall be brought to you.” For an example (and definition) of *virgin* or *betulah*, cf. Gen 24.16 with reference to Rebekah: “The maiden was very fair to look upon, a *virgin*, whom no man had known.” Such virgins are *companions* or *rehah* (plural form); the verbal root is *rahah*, *to pasture*, from which is derived *shepherd* as in Ps 23.1: “The Lord is my *shepherd*.”

Vs. 15: With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king. Note the passive form of the verb *to lead*; it is not specified who does the leading, but it is done in *joy* (*semachah*) and *gladness* (*gyl*), both verbs prefixed by the preposition *in*, b- as “*in* the place.” The word here is *heykal* (cf. vs. 8, “ivory *palaces*”) which as noted, can refer to God’s temple. “For the *palace* will not be for man but for the Lord God” [1 Chron 29.1].

Vs. 16: Instead of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. Mention of *fathers* implies that the princess has relinquished her inheritance in favor of the king, her husband, a fact emphasized by the possessive pronoun *your*. Apparently the princess has the capacity to appoint rulers worldwide, “in all the earth.” While not kings, such sons are *princes*, *sar* (singular), which can also apply to a military leader. For this term as evocative of the spiritual realm, cf. Dan 8.25: “Without warning he shall even rise up against the *Prince of princes*; but by no human hand he shall be broken.”

Vs. 17: I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations; therefore the peoples will praise you forever and ever. Unlike here, usually the male ruler is *celebrated* as opposed to the female; the verb is *zakar*, *to remember*, a noun from this verbal root being *male*. I.e., there is close association with such remembrance and the princess’ (unidentified) *name*, *shem*. Another noun is *zikaron*, *memorial*: “So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a *memorial* forever” [Jos 4.7]. The *generations* or *dor* may apply to “in all the earth” of the previous verse, a term often associated with the keeping of divine commandments or covenant. Note how the following verse combines *zikaron* with *dor*: “This day shall be for you a *memorial* day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your *generations* you shall observe it as an ordinance forever” [Ex 12.14].

Therefore the peoples will praise you forever and ever. *Peoples* (*hamym*) may include nations other than Israel who have received the princes of vs. 16, i.e., those “in all the earth.” While the princess may be dead, her *zikaron* or *memorial* will endure, signifying her identity with future descendants.