

Notes on the Psalter, #4

Psalm Forty-Six

Vs. 1: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The Hebrew wording has “God to us...”, no verb is present, even the simple “to be,” as if to show his identity with *refuge* (machaseh) and *strength* (hoz), two military terms signifying a lofty position capable of being defended; the former has for a verbal root chasah, *to hide*. Another reference with these two words: “But the Lord is a *refuge* to his people, a *stronghold* to the people of Israel” [Jol 3.16].

In addition to God being a machaseh and hoz, he is *help* or hezrah, from the verbal root hazar. “To whom will you flee for *help*” [Is 10.3]? Note that *trouble* or tsarah derives from a verbal root with an alternate meaning tsur or *rock* which can also signify a defensive position. “He is the *rock*, his work is perfect” [Dt 32.4].

The Hebrew has *exceedingly found* for “very present help,” nimtsa’ me’od, signifying a certain identity between trouble and divine presence.

Vs. 2: Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea. Both *earth* and *mountains* signify stability and are a traditional image of divine eternity. The former is subject to *change* or mur and the latter to *shaking* or mut furthermore they are capable of being uplifted and cast into the *sea*. Note two plurals in the Hebrew text: *mountains* and *waters*. “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the *sea*” [Mt 18.6].

Vs. 3: Though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah. Another mention of enduring features of creation which can resemble that which is divine. Both verbs associated with *waters*, hamah and chamar, can signify human emotions respectively; chamar implies a swelling or boiling. “Though they *roar* (waves), they cannot pass over it” [Jer 5.22]. “My face is *red* with weeping” [Job 16.16].

Tumult or ge’oth derives from ga’ah, *to lift up*; it suggests pride and arrogance of which mountains are symbolic. Another noun derived from this verb is ga’on, *majesty*, as applied to God. “In the greatness of your *majesty* you overthrew your adversaries” [Ex 15.7].

The conclusion of vs. 3 contains selah, *pause*, the first of three such words.

Vs. 4: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. Another mention of water, this time as a *river* and *streams*, not the symbolic waters of the previous verse. Peleg is the latter, being a small channel of the larger river. “He is like a tree planted by *streams* of water” [Ps 1.3]; cf. that verse for more information. In vs. 4 the peleg are plural, that is, they have the function to “*gladden* (samach) the city of God,” Jerusalem. While Jerusalem is the goal, it is more general; *habitation* or mishkan being more specific which signifies God’s dwelling or tabernacle. “According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the *tabernacle* and of all its furniture, so you shall make it” [Ex 25.9].

Vs. 5: God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God will help her right early. Mention here is made of *midst*, qerev, which can represent the mishkan, spiritual and cultural center of Jerusalem. Qerev signifies the very interior of a physical place or building as well as the human *heart*: “For there is no truth in their mouth; their *heart* is destruction” [Ps 5.10]. Thus this word implies hiddenness as applied to God. “The Lord has set the sun in the heavens, but has said that he would dwell in thick darkness” [1 Kg 8.12], words applying to God’s habitation of the newly dedicated temple. Despite the manmade building, it is not subject to *moving*, mut, a word noted in vs. 2: “though the mountains *shake* in the heart of the sea.”

God will help her right early. A specific time of day, *right* or *lipnoth* more suggestive of something before, in the presence of; it is combined with the word for *morning*, *boqer*, or the time of daybreak. The word for ox or bull is derived from the same verbal root (*baqar*, *to cleave open*) implying that the sun's rising is a process of cleaving open light from darkness.

Vs. 6: The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. It seems that nations *rage* (*hamah*) and kingdoms *totter* (*mut*), two words examined in vs. 3 above with respect to waters and mountains; such tumult serves to activate God's voice (Hebrew, "gives his voice") resulting in a *melting* or *mug* of the earth. "The mountains quake before him, the hills *melt*; the earth is laid waste before him, the world and all that dwell therein" [Nah 1.5]. The following demonstrates the power of the divine voice, "The Lord will cause his majestic *voice* to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen" [Is 30.30].

Vs. 7: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. This verse does not speak of the *Lord* or YHWH by himself but as with his *hosts*, *tseva'oth*, accompanied by divine beings or angels who form the divine court. "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the *host* of heaven standing beside him" [1 Kg 22.19]. In the dramatic context of Ps 46, these hosts serve to enhance God's majesty.

Vs. 7 next shifts from an exalted picture of the Lord to a more humble, earthly one, where he is associated with *Jacob*, a fact carried over into the New Testament: "The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of *Jacob*...glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate" [Acts 3.13]. This more accessible association of God with humanity is termed a *refuge*, *misgav*, which implies a lofty place or rock. "And the high *fortifications* of his walls he will bring down" [Is 25.12].

Third mention of *selah* or *pause*, most likely to give the reader a chance to absorb the dramatic nature of this psalm.

Vs. 8: Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has wrought desolations in the earth. Such *works* or *miphal* (singular) manifest God. "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his *acts* of old" [Prov 8.22]. Prior to *beholding* or *chazah*, a verb often associated with prophetic vision ("the burden which Habakkuk *saw*," Hab 1.1), the psalmist says *come* as if to invite people who are not aware of God's works.

Next this verse associates God's *miphal* with *desolations*, *shamah* (singular), which can also mean astonishment: "I mourn, and *dismay* has taken hold on me" [Jer 8.21]. In vs. 8 the plural *shamoth* is preceded by a word which rhymes with it, *sam*, *to wrought* in the sense of setting it in place.

Vs. 9: He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire! The first word of vs. 9 carries over the rhyming of *shamoth* and *sam* just mentioned through the word *mashbyth*, from *shavath*, *cause to cease* in the sense of bringing rest. This verb is the root for *sabbath*, thus implying that the divine sabbath extends "to the end of the earth," not just the earth but its *end* or *qetseh*: "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the *ends* of the earth" [Is 40.28]. Note the plural use of *qetseh* here with the singular of vs. 9.

The psalmist expands on the military tone of vs. nine by describing how God extends his "sabbath:" 1) breaks bow, 2) shatters spear and 3) burns chariots.

Vs. 10: "Be still and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth!" Here God speaks for the first and only time in Ps 46. He presents the gate to *knowledge*, *yadah* (verb), through the command *be still* or *raphah* which implies a casting down; it can also refer to cessation of any activity and therefore relaxation. "*Refrain* from anger and forsake wrath" [Ps 37.8]. And, "I held him and *would not let him go*" [Sg 3.4]. Such *raphah* is all the more meaningful in the dramatic context of Ps 46 which deals with extraordinary events.

In contrast to the "downward" motion of *raphah*, vs. 10 continues with the "upward" motion of divine *exultation* or *rum* (verb); it also applies to the offering of a sacrifice. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne,

high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” [Is 6.1]. Such rum is twofold in the context of vs. 10: “*in* (b-) the nations” and “*in* the earth;” such “in-ness” implies that both nations and earth share in God’s rum by participation.

Vs. 11: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*. A refrain to conclude this psalm; the same words as in vs. 8. After the “in-ness” as delineated in vs. 10 (nations and earth), we have “with-ness” which enhances God’s presence.

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Psalm Forty-Seven

Vs. 1: Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! This psalm continues the theme of divine exultation described in the previous one. The psalmist gives two commands:

1) “*clap* hands” or taqah which has liturgical connotations; this verb can also mean *to fasten*: “And I will *fasten* him like a peg in a sure place” [Is 22.13]. Taqah means *to pledge*: “A man without sense *gives a pledge*.” With this latter sense in mind, the act of clapping can suggest the making of a commitment with God. Note that taqah applies to “all peoples,” not just Israel.

2) *shout* or ruah, another liturgical word and can be associated with a trumpet blast: “And when both are *blown*, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the entrance of the tent of meeting” [Num 10.3]. In the context of vs. 1, ruah is combined with rinah, *shout of joy*. “But *joy* comes with the morning” [Ps 30.6].

Vs. 2: For the Lord, the Most High, is terrible, a great king over all the earth. Here we have the reason for the clapping and shouting: YHWH as *Most High* or Helyon (cf. Ps 46.10 above, “I am *exalted*”); compare the verbal root of this divine name, halah, with *exalted*, rum. In vs. 2, YHWH is *terrible* or yara’ (verb) in the sense of being an object of fear; yara’ may be better understood in conjunction with raphah of Ps 46.10, *Be still*. Furthermore such fear belongs to God as a *king*, melek, “*on* all the earth” in the sense of pressing down *on* (hal-) the earth.

Vs. 3: He subdued peoples under us and nations under our feet. Here the verb for *to subdue* is davar, which fundamentally means *to speak*; i.e., God accomplishes acquiescence through speaking. “There is no speech nor are there *words*; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth” [Ps 19.3-4]. Such davar-as-*subduing* can apply to the apostolic message: “And you shall be my witnesses (i.e., the task of a witness is to *speak*) in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and to the end of the earth” [Acts 1.8].

In addition to this special character of davar related to *peoples* (ham), vs. 3 continues with *nations* (le’om) who have a different position, “under our feet,” that is davar here assumes a role of conquering, of bringing nations into defeat.

Vs. 4: He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. Selah. Note the identity between *heritage* (nachalah) and *pride* (ge’on). While the latter can mean arrogance, here it implies majesty. “In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the *pride* and glory of the survivors of Israel” [Is 4.2]. Applied to *Jacob*, ge’on may be seen in light of the blessing of his twelve sons who formed the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Gen 49). Vs. 4 concludes with *selah*; i.e., it offers a *pause* as to contemplate the relationship between this human association with God and his majesty as depicted in vss. 1-3.

Vs. 5: God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. There is no (spacial) location mentioned to where God has *ascended*, halah, presumably means to heaven; note use of past tense. However, his halah occurs “*with* (b-, *in*) a *shout*,” teruhah; i.e., this shout contains (b-) God. Teruhah is a loud noise whether of joy or of battle; it comes from ruah, the verbal root already examined, Ps 47.1. “So Israel

brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with *shouting*" [1 Chron 15.28]. The Church has traditionally ascribed the words of vs. 5 to Christ's ascension, Acts 1.

Often the Psalter interchanges *God* and *Lord* as in the second half of this verse. In this half God has ascended "with the sound (voice) of a *trumpet*," shophar, whose verbal root (shaphar) means *to be beautiful*. "On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightening, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud *trumpet* blast" [Ex 19.16]. Note that in this context God *descends* from Mount Sinai as opposed to his ascent in vs. 5.

Vs. 6: Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! Four commands to zamar, another liturgical term. They are directed to God as *king*, a common designation of the divinity. The first two words literally read "sing, God, sing," i.e., a close identity between the act of zamar and God. The second use of zamar has the preposition *l-* prefixed to king which is an attribute of God as opposed to God in himself.

Vs. 7: For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! Here *king* and *earth* are identified which could be termed divine immanence as opposed to transcendence. Again zamar is used for *sing praises*; this time it is more specific in reference to a *psalm* or maskyl whose verbal root sakal means *to behold, to be prudent*. "If they were *wise*, they would understand this" [Dt 32.29].

Vs. 8: God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. The verb here is malak (*to reign*) from which melek (last verse) is derived; it is used with reference to *nations* or goym which as noted earlier, applies to those peoples not belonging to Israel. The site of such malak is God's "holy *throne*," kise'; verbal root is kasah, *to cover*, signifying that this throne has a canopy. Thus kise' may be associated with mitah or *litter* which was used when the king is traveling: "Behold, it is the *litter* of Solomon" [Sg 3.7]! In vs. 8, such a throne is *holy*, standing apart from all other thrones; the basic notion of qadesh means to be apart.

Vs. 9: The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted! After mention of God as king, we have *princes* or nadyv (singular), who form the divine retinue. This word also means an (free will) *offering*: "Take from among you an *offering* to the Lord" [Ex 35.5].

The second half of this first sentence to vs. 9 literally reads "the people of God of Abraham;" Abraham may be taken as Israel's first nadyv—for he *offered* his son Isaac (cf. Gen 22.9-14)—"and his descendants will be multiplied exceedingly" [Gen 17.2].

For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted! *Shields* or magen (singular) is another term for earthly rulers and imply defense. These shields may be found in God's trophy room, as it were: "There hang a thousand bucklers, all of them *shields* of warriors" [Sg 4.4]. God as being "highly *exalted*," halah, is akin to the "tower of David" in Sg 4.4.

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Psalm Forty-Eight

Vs. 1: Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain. "Greatly to be praised" or me'od in the sense of being excessive. Such *greatness* (gadol, adjective) has a specific location, *city*, which is presumably Jerusalem. "And I saw no temple in the *city*, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" [Rev 21.22].

His holy mountain. This phrase begins a sentence which continues into vs. 2, and it can be taken as Mount Zion. The Hebrew text reads, "mountain of *his holiness*," qadshu.; contrast the third person singular pronoun with the second person plural pronoun, "our God."

Vs. 2: Beautiful in elevation is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King. The Hebrew for *elevation* is *nuph*, from the verbal root meaning *to wave* in the sense of a presenting an offering: “He shall bring with his own hands the offerings by fire to the Lord; he shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast *may be waved* as a *wave offering* before the Lord” [Lev 7.30]. Thus vs. 2 can imply the sacrificial offerings which take place in the temple.

Zion is the mesus of “all the earth,” whose verbal root implies leaping up and down, the response all other nations have with respect to Zion being *nuph*.

Note the locale of Zion which in Hebrew is “(on) the sides of the north,” the word “on” being omitted in the original text. In a footnote to this phrase, the RSV says, “A curious phrase which apparently identifies the Israelite holy mountains with the Canaanite mountain of the gods (called Zaphon or ‘North’ in the Ras Shamra tablets).”¹ The word for *north* is *tsaphon* which derives from a verb meaning to view as a watchman.

The “great king” can refer to David or Solomon, perhaps the latter who constructed the temple to which the psalmist is referring.

Vs. 3: Within her citadels God has shown himself a sure defense. In addition to being a place of worship, Zion is a fortification, *citadels* (‘*armon*, singular), which can also mean a palace. Most references to ‘*armon* are negative in that they are symbolic of pride due to their loftiness: “He has swallowed up all her *palaces*” [Lam 2.5].

Within the citadels we read that “God has shown himself” or better, *has made himself known*, from the verb *yadah*. Note that the act of indirectly making himself known is favored over a direct way; it is as though Zion itself is a living place or organism which presents this *yadah*. The verb’s object is *sure defense* or *misgav*, as in Ps 18.2: “The Lord is my rock and my *fortress*.”

Vs. 4: For lo, the kings assembled, they came on together. This verse begins with an expression signifying wonder, *hineh*, as if the kings, symbolic of the world’s nations, approached Zion suddenly. First such kings *assembled* or *yahad* which means *to meet* at an appointed time. “There I will *meet* with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you” [Ex 25.22].

After presenting themselves at the temple, the kings “*came on together*,” *havar*, in the more accurate sense of *having passed by*. This verb signifies being in a state of transition, of motion from one place to another with little or no pause. It makes more sense when seen in the context of the next verse.

Vs. 5: As soon as they saw it, they were astounded, they were in panic, they took to flight. The object of vision here (by the kings) are the *citadels* of vs. 3 but citadels as a *sure defense*. We have here a threefold result:

1) *astonishment* or *tamah* follows seeing; the verb can imply terror: “For when dreams increase, empty words grow many, but you must *fear* God” [Eccl 5.7].

2) *panic* or *bahal*, which connotes trepidation: “Then the men of Israel turned, and the men of Benjamin were *dismayed*, for they saw that disaster was close upon them” [Jud 20.41].

3) *took flight* or *chaphaz*: “In this manner you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it *in haste*” [Ex 12.11].

Vs. 6: Trembling took hold of them there, anguish as of a woman in travail. *There* being Mount Zion; *trembling* or *rahadah*. “The leaders of Moab, *trembling* seizes them” [Ex 15.15], in reference to the Exodus. ‘*Achaz* is the verb *to take hold of* in the sense of completely engulfing the kings. “A ram *caught* in the thicket by its horns” [Gen 22.13].

¹The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (New York, 1965), p.692.

Such fear is more specific in that it is akin to a woman in labor or *travail*, chyl, which fundamentally means strength or might. “The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the *host* of Pharaoh” [Ex 14.28]. Note that the comparison is to a yoledah, one about to give birth which can have a positive meaning in that the kings *give birth* to submission.

Vs. 7: By the east wind you did shatter the ships of Tarshish. Cf. 1 Kg 10.22: “For the king had a fleet of ships of *Tarshish* at sea with the fleet of Hiram” [1 Kg 10.22]. Tarshish (modern Spain) was also the destination of Jonah the prophet in his attempt to flee the Lord (cf. Jon 1.3). Given the position of Israel on the west side of the Mediterranean Sea, the *east wind* blows any naval assault away from their territory.

Vs. 8: As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God, which God establishes forever. Selah. This verse may be applied to the Israelites within Mount Zion who have witnessed the kings’ dismay from a fortified place (i.e., its citadels of vs. 3). Note that hearing precedes seeing; the sequence of this order is denoted by *as...so*, k-...ken. Thus seeing follows the same pattern as hearing in that it is a fuller perception.

The pattern just delineated occurs “in the *city*,” hyr, which is identified by “*Lord of hosts*” and “*our God*,” YHWH and ‘Eleh. This reference to Jerusalem is “*established forever*,” kun, which also implies planning for the future: “I (King David) had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord...and I *made preparations* for building” [1 Chron 28.2]. As opposed to the kings’ terror in this psalm, consider the positive nature of the heavenly Jerusalem: “and the *kings* of the earth shall bring their glory into it” [Rev 21.24].

As a result of this kun which is *forever*, there is reason for *pause* in order to contemplate what had just transpired, hence the liturgical selah.

Vs. 9: We have thought of your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. The verb *to think*, damah, also means *to be like*, from which is derived the noun *likeness*: “Let us make man in our image and our *likeness*” [Gen 1.26]. With this in mind, the act of damah with regard to God’s *steadfast love* or chesed implies a resemblance to him. Damah has a specific location, “in the *midst* of your temple,” qerev, meaning the temple’s very heart or holy of holies.

Vs. 10: As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with victory. Another instance of *as...so* (k-...ken) as in vs. 8, this time in conjunction with the divine *name* and *praise*, shem and tehilat. Both reach (the Hebrew lacks a verb) the earth’s *ends* or qatseh (singular) which may be seen as the four cardinal directions: north, south, east, west. Qatseh is derived from a verbal root meaning *to cut off*. “He will raise a signal for a nation afar off and whistle for it from the *ends* of the earth” [Is 5.26]. Such praise in its extent is not specific; it may include humanity and inanimate creation.

Your right hand is filled with victory. God’s *right hand* or yemyn is an extension of his name; it is symbolic of action which in this verse is to effect victory or in Hebrew, *righteousness*, tsedek. Such yemyn is symbolic of divine favor as opposed to the left: “Your *right hand*, O Lord, is glorious in power” [Ex 15.6]. With this reference in mind, the tsedek it brings about is Israel’s exodus from Egypt.

Vs. 11: Let Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments! Zion is *glad* or samach as a result of the divine right hand’s victory. Here as in the second sentence of the same verse the psalmist posits samach as an exhortation, a celebration of Israel’s Exodus. Furthermore, he asks the “daughters of Judah” to *rejoice* or gyl, that is, celebrate by engaging in a (round) dance which is what this verb implies. “And I will *rejoice* in Jerusalem” [Is 65.19]. Compare this samach with that of Miriam immediately after the Exodus: “And all the women went out after her with timbrels and *dancing*” [Ex 15.20], the word being mecholah which also designates a round dance. In vs. 11 the reason for gyl is because of God’s *judgments*, mishpat. Note that *daughter* is used in the Song with reference to Jerusalem, cf. 1.5; 2.7; 3.5, 10; 5.8; 16; 8.4.

Vs. 12: Walk about Zion, go round about her, number her towers. This and the next verse contain a total of five commands which have a liturgical connotation with regard to Zion:

1) *walk about* or *savav*: in the sense of making a circle. “The watchmen that *go about* the city” [Sg 3.3].

2) *go round about* or *naqaph*: another verse related to going in a circle as *gyl* above; it implies a fastening together. “You shall march around the city, all the men of war *going around* the city once. Thus shall you do for six days” [Jos 6.3].

3) *number* or *saphar*: this verb fundamentally means *to write* or *to inscribe* in the sense of counting. “Look now toward heaven and *count* the stars” [Gen 15.5]. The object of *saphar* in this psalm is *towers* or *migdal* (singular). “Your neck is like the *tower* of David” [Sg 4.4].

4) *consider well* (vs. 13) or *shyth*: note that the Hebrew has a location for this putting, *lev* or *heart*, to absorb the view at hand. “*Apply* your heart to my knowledge” [Prov 22.17]. The object of *shyth* in the psalm is Zion’s *ramparts* or *cheyl* (singular) whose verbal root suggests power and as well as uprightness. “And now, my daughter, do not fear, I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are woman of *worth*” [Rt 3.11].

5) *go through* or *pasag*: the only occurrence of this verb from which is derived Mount Pisgah from which Moses viewed “all the land” [Dt 34.1] without his entering it. At the base of Pisgah Moses was buried “but no man knows the place of his burial to this day” [vs. 6]. The object of *pasag* in the psalm is *citadels* or *‘armon* (singular) which can also mean a palace. Usually references to this word are negative in that an *‘armon* represents pride. “Because the *palaces* shall be forsaken” [Is 32.14].

That you may tell the next generation. The second part of vs. 13 which sums up the five commands above. They all hinge on *that* or *lemahan* which here serves to express purpose. It is oriented towards the future or *telling*, *saphar*, which as noted above means *to write* (inscribe). I.e., the five commands are a type of inscribing or living memorial for “the next *generation*,” *dor*. This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future *generations*” [Gen 9.12].

Vs. 14: That this is God, our God forever and ever. He will be our guide forever. The end result of what was stated above is vss. 12-3. Note “*this* is God,” namely, his association with Zion, towers, ramparts, citadels and the next generation. Implied here is the culmination of *saphar* which participates in God’s eternity, *holam wahed*.

Furthermore, God is a *guide*, *nahag* being the verbal root which can apply to a shepherd and his flock. “I would *lead* you and bring you into the house of my mother and into the chamber of her that conceived me” [Sg. 8.2]. The Hebrew for “forever” is “unto death.”

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Psalm Forty-Nine

Vs. 1: Hear this, all peoples! Give ear, all inhabitants of the world. A call to attention by *kol-hahamym*, an all inclusive phrase, through *hearing*, *shamah*. “*Hear*, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” [Dt 6.4]. The *this* has as its object the psalmist’s mouth of vs.3.

The “giving ear” represents a more attentive focus of *shamah* which is directed towards *inhabitants*, *yashav* being the verbal root. Note the absence of *goyim* or *nations* which specifies political and social groupings distinct from Israel. *World* or *chedel* is the only time this word is used; from the verbal root *chadal*, *to cease*.

Vs. 2: Both low and high, rich and poor together! These words specify the peoples and inhabitants above; the psalmist’s words are intended to cut across all social classes. The connecting word between then is *together*, *yachad*, which in this instance can reflect the divine unity, *‘echad*, as noted in the Deuteronomy quote above (“...is *one* Lord”).

Vs. 3: My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding. Note that the psalmist speaks of his mouth as an independent entity which is associated with *wisdom*, chakmoth, which speaks or *davar*. Contrast it with the *crying aloud* or *ranah* of chakmoth personified in Prov 1.20: “Wisdom *cries aloud* in the street.”

The second half of vs. 3 speaks of the psalmist’s *meditation* or *hegeh*, from a verbal root which means *to murmur*. “Like a swallow or a crane I clamor, I *moan* like a dove” [Is 38.14]. Again, the impersonal side is featured as if such *hegeh* were independent of the psalmist: “of my *heart*,” *lev*. This *hegeh* is *meditation*, *tevunoth*, which more specifically means understanding. “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and *understanding*” [Prov 2.6]. In vs. 3 there is no verb but it is implied, a fact which intimates close identity between *hegeh* and *tevunoth*.

Vs. 4: I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre. Such *inclining* or *natah* alludes to a deliberate consent on the psalmist’s part; its object is a *proverb*, *mashal*, whose verbal root means *to make like*; i.e., a *mashal* is like what it represents. “To understand a *proverb* and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles” [Prov 1.6]. By so inclining to a proverb, the psalmist intends to *become like* what he hears.

I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre. A *riddle* or *chydah* can also mean an oracle or vision: “With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in *dark speech*; and he beholds the form of the Lord” [Num 12.8]. In light of this, we may say that the psalmist *solves* or *patach* (*to open*) his riddle through this “mouth to mouth” contact with God which Moses enjoyed. Vs. 4 puts *chydah* in the context of a *lyre*, *kinor*, a stringed instrument which he becomes to receive divine communication on behalf of the Israelites.

Vs. 5: Why should I fear in times of trouble when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me. The first part of a question which continues into the next verse. The fact that the psalmist questions himself shows that he is afraid. The phrase “*times of trouble*” in Hebrew is *days*, i.e., *kairoi* or events which prove decisive. The word for *persecutors* is *haqev* (singular), from a verbal root meaning *to come from behind, to take hold of*; an alternate noun is *footprint*: “Follow in the *tracks* of the flock” [Sg 1.8]. The psalmist does not wish to follow in the *haqevay* (plural) of persecutors but prefers to obey the maidens’ bidding in the Song. These “footprints” *surround* the psalmist, *savav*, much like besieging a city.

Vs. 6: Men who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? The conclusion of the psalmist’s question; we could compare these words with Job in his afflictions. Such words may also be uttered by Lazarus who was “full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table” [Lk 16.20-1]. Note that vs. 6 literally reads “*on* (hal-) *wealth*” and “*in* (b-) *the abundance*” as if to stress the complete dependence of these persons upon their own resources.

Vs. 7: Truly no man can ransom himself or give to God the price of his life. Here the notion of *ransoming* or *padah* has the connotation of setting free: “Zion shall be *redeemed* by justice and those in her who repent, by righteousness” [Is 1.27]. Clearly the biblical sense of *padah* is divine. The Hebrew reads “his brother” for *himself*. The same divine power applies to a “*price of his life*,” *kaphar* being the verbal root which fundamentally means *to cover*; also means *to pardon*. “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin *forgiven*” [Is 6.7]. *Kaphar* is also the root for *atonement*: “And you shall do no work on this same day, for it is a day of *atonement*” [Lev 23.28].

Vs. 8: For the ransom of his life is costly and can never suffice. The same verbal root is used, *padah*, for the noun *ransom* (*pidyon*) which here applies to a person’s life or *soul*, *nephesh*, which is plural here (i.e., “their soul”). *Yaqar* is the adjective whose basic idea is that of heaviness and can apply to precious stones. “The fleet of Hiram...brought from Ophir a very great amount of almug wood and *precious stones*” [1 Kg 10.11]. Thus *nephesh* may be said as endowed with a certain “heaviness.”

The second part of vs. 8 in Hebrew reads “and it ceases forever,” that is, the *pidyon* with regard to a

person's nephesh.

Vs. 9: That he should continue to live on forever and never see the Pit. *On forever* or *hod lanetsach* suggests completion or perfection; the same word (netsach; minus hod and l-) means *glory*: "The *Glory* of Israel will not lie or repent; for he is not a man that he should repent" [1 Sam 15.29].

Pit or *shachath* is symbolic of corruption, of hell; its verbal root means to destroy as well as *to be corrupted*: "Now the earth was *corrupt* in God's sight and the earth was filled with violence" [Gen 6.11]. Thus the earth may be seen as a huge pit to receive the deluge from which Noah was to be saved.

Vs. 10: Yes, he shall see that even the wise die, the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. A statement reminiscent of Ecclesiastes' reflections on the transitory nature of life. For example, "For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow" [6.12]? The psalmist includes three classes: wise, fool, stupid. Note that common to all three groups is *wealth* or *chyl* which, as observed elsewhere, connotes strength and might.

Vs. 11: Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they named lands their own. A extension of the "Ecclesiastes theme" which continues into the next few verses. Here the psalmist contrasts graves with the process of *naming*, *shem*, which represents an attempt to extend one's life into the future. Cf. references on *zakar*, *to remember*, elsewhere in this document which deals with this issue.

Vs. 12: Man cannot abide in his pomp; he is like the beasts that perish. *Pomp* or *yeqar* as noted comes from a verbal root intimating something precious. Contrast the use of this word in vs. 12 with Ps 45.9: "Daughters of kings are among your lades of *honor*." The condition of a such person *resembles* (*damah*) beasts, perhaps intimating the wide varied of animals and their various colorful hides and skins.

Vs. 13: This is the fate of those who have foolish confidence, the end of those who are pleased with their portion. Selah. The word for *fate* in Hebrew here is *way*, *derek*, in the sense of a path, and its negative sense applies to "foolish confidence" or in Hebrew *folly*, *kesel*. "And to know the *folly* and the foolishness which is madness" [Eccl 7.25]. The verbal root of this word implies a certain languor or inertness; an alternate noun is *flank* or *loins*: "For my *loins* are filled with burning" [Ps 38.7].

The second half of vs. 13 in Hebrew reads "yet their posterity *approves* their sayings," the verb being *ratsah* which connotes the taking of delight.

Following this verse is *selah* or *pause*, the next one situated two verses later; it is as though the psalmist wishes his listeners to pause and absorb the fate of self-confident persons.

Vs. 14: Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd; straight to the grave they descend, and their form shall waste away; Sheol shall be their home. Contrast the pastoral imagery here with that of Ps 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd").

The second half of vs. 15 in Hebrew is somewhat uncertain; the **RSV** gives an alternate reading as "the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning." This *dominion* derives from the verbal root *yarad* which fundamentally means *to descend*; in this verse it implies a trampling down of adversaries. *Yarad* takes place in the *morning* or *boqer*, from the verbal root meaning *to cleave*; implication is that morning cleaves open the dawn.

The words "Sheol shall be their home" are uncertain in the Hebrew text.

Vs. 15: But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. *Selah*. Another reference to Sheol, abode of the dead, from which the psalmist expects God to *ransom* him (rather his nephesh), *padah* (cf. vs. 7). "Shall I *ransom* them from the power of Sheol" [Hos 13.14]? Such words can be applied to Jesus Christ: "He (David) foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not

abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” [Acts 2.31].

Here *selah* can imply taking time to reflect upon this verse’s association with the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 16: Be not afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases. The words *rich* (*hashar*) and *one* or *man* (*‘ysh*) in Hebrew are similar in sound, signifying their association. Another reference but with a positive side to it: “*Riches* and honor are with me (Wisdom personified), enduring wealth and prosperity” [Prov 18]. *Glory* or *kavod* in this verse applies to material wealth as signified by *house*, byth.

Vs. 17: For when he died he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him. Another reference to *kavod* as material wealth; here it assumes a reality independent of the person possessing it. This verse suggests that *glory* will continue in existence independently of the man who *goes down* (*yarad*) to Sheol (implied).

Vs. 18: Though while he lives, he counts himself happy, and though a man gets praise when he does well for himself. The Hebrew reads for the first words “Though while he lived, he blessed his *soul* (*nephesh*).” A type of self-reflexive gesture, as if the wealthy person worshiped (in an inappropriate fashion) his *nephesh*, principle of life. The act of *blessing*, *barak*, applies to God only or to those persons blessed in his name, for example, Gen 47.7: “And Jacob *blessed* Pharaoh.” The same insight applies to the rest of vs. 18.

Vs. 19: He will go to the generation of his fathers who will never more see the light. Here we have a connection between those in the present and the past, “*generation* of his fathers,” *dor*; mention of this word shows the binding nature of this relationship which was so important for ancient peoples. If past generations did not see the *light* (*‘or*) which implies God, so will the rich man. Note the play on words, *dor* and *‘or*. This affiliation across temporal boundaries is seen in divine curses: “Not one of these men of this evil *generation* shall see the good land which I swore to give to your fathers” [Dt 1.35].

Vs. 20: Man cannot abide in his pomp, he is like the beasts that perish. The concluding words of Ps 49 which end on a negative note. *Pomp* or *yaqar* connotes beauty; here the word *‘adam* is used for *man* as opposed to *‘ysh*, the latter being in distinction to a woman. Thus *‘adam* whose verbal root means *to be red* (as the earth’s soil) implies mortality and fits in well with this psalm’s emphasis upon death and Sheol. Note that *to be like*, *damah*, means *to think* as in Ps 48.9. Since Adam was made in this divine likeness or demuth (cf. Gen 1.26), it is perverted by being a desire for material gain and is thus shifted to an association with beasts.

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Psalm Fifty

Vs. 1: The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. A psalm focusing upon divine judgment which is fitting after the previous one dealing with the transience of life and material wealth. For this verse, the Hebrew opens with “The mighty God, the Lord,” *‘el* *elohym* *YHWH*, as if to make certain that listeners pay close attention. Associated with such an eloquent statement of transcendence is added the fact that God *speaks* (*davar*) and *summons* (*qara*’); the first is to get attention and the second to actually bring them forth.

The object of *davar* and *qara*’ is the *earth*, *‘erets*, which here means the world in its entirety. This is reinforced by mention of the sun’s *rising* (*mizrach*) and *setting* (*mevbo*’); note that it does not include the period from the sun’s setting to its rising or the time of night. *Mizrach* more properly means the *east*. “So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the *rising* of the sun” [Is 59.19].

Vs. 2: Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. God’s *shining forth* or *yaphah* (cf. Ps 45.2, “You are the *fairest* of the sons of men”) is analogous to the sun’s *mizrach* of vs. 1. Note its origin (not the east nor any other cardinal point of the compass), *Zion*, the source of four spiritual cardinal points, as it

were. “To comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth” [Eph 3.18].

Zion is the “*perfection of beauty*,” miklal, from kalal, which means to be complete. “You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and *perfect in beauty*” [Ezk 28.12]. This verse intimates that miklal is related to our being made in God’s image and likeness. The word for *beauty* is yaphah which is derived from yaphah, thereby showing a similarity between the two.

Vs. 3: Our God comes, he does not keep silence, before him is a devouring fire, round about him a mighty tempest. God’s *coming* (yava’) reveals that his yaphah or *shining forth* has a particular direction, that is, to his people. Furthermore, this coming makes a noise, as it were, and is not *silent*, charash, a verb which also has the alternate meanings *to plow, to be deaf, to engrave*. “As a jeweler *engraves* signets, so shall you *engrave* the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel” [Ex 28.11].

Preceding this “engraving” by God there is a “devouring fire” or in Hebrew, “a fire shall devour before him.” Similarly, vs. 3 contains a “mighty tempest” or in Hebrew, “it will be very *tempestuous* round about him,” sahar, which also means *to shudder*. “But the king of the north shall rush upon him like a *whirlwind*” [Dan 11.40].

Compare vs. 3 with God’s manifestation on Mount Sinai: “On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightening, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled” [Ex 19.16].

Vs. 4: He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people. From yaphah (vs. 2) to yava’ (vs 3) and now to God’s *calling* or qara’, we have the consummation of God’s initial *speaking* and *summoning* of vs. 1. This sequence ends in his *judgment*, dyn. Note that *heavens* and *earth* serve as witnesses, that is, what is both above and below.

Vs. 5: “Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!” This command seems directed to God’s *people*, ham, of vs. 4, who are to do the *gathering* or ‘asaph. “Go and *gather* the elders of Israel” [Ex 3.16]. Such ‘asaph is a preliminary gesture usually in preparation for an address of some kind. Note the distinction between ham and *faithful ones*, chasyd, those who practice chesed. This distinction is made on the basis of a *covenant* or beryth of a more specific kind, one with *sacrifice*, zavach. It seems that either beryth or zavach are not acceptable to God, for the Bible contains numerous instances when both have been broken. Only those who practice chesed can unite the two.

Vs. 6: The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge! Selah. A shift away from divine intervention on behalf of his people towards the *heavens*, shamaym; compare its *declaring* or nagad from which is derived the preposition *before, in the presence of* with the speaking, summoning, not keeping silence and calling, all verbal actions done by God in the previous verses. So far this psalm may be viewed as a law court (God as *judge*, shophet) in which shamaym are witnesses, for they declare divine *righteousness* or tsedeq.

The insertion of selah, the only instance in this psalm, is important in that it gives reason to *pause* to consider the gravity of the situation.

Vs. 7: “Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. The beginning verse of God as speaking (vs. 6 being an interlude) which continues to the end of the psalm, vs. 23. The divine command to *hear* (shamah) is directed towards “*my people*” and *Israel*; both are the same yet the former by mention of the personal pronoun implies greater intimacy and responsibility to this shamah. Compare with Ps 49.1, “*Hear* this, all peoples!” which is a more universal command; the shamah of vs. 7 here continues this intimacy by adding the fact that God will do two things: *speak* or davar and *testify* or hud. A negative result is implied by *against*, b-. The twofold mention of God or ‘eloheym serves to get Israel’s attention and foreshadows the expected (negative) speaking and testifying by him.

Vs. 8: I do not reprove you for your sacrifices; your burnt offerings are continually before me. The *sacrifices* here are not the same as those belonging to the chasyd of vs. 5 (as related to covenant) but belong to

my people of vs. 7. The reason for *reproof*, yakach, is spelled out later in the psalm, from vs. 16 onwards. “*Rebuke* a wise man and he will love you” [Prov 9.8].

God continues to speak about sacrifices which are *continually* (tamyd) before him which does not necessarily mean perpetually but in the sense of an unbroken period of time. The reason for not accepting such sacrifices is laid out in the next few verses as follows:

- 1) vs. 9: accept no bull
- 2) accept no he-goat
- 3) vs. 10: every beast belongs to God
- 4) cattle on hills
- 5) vs. 11: God knows birds
- 6) God knows that which move in fields

Vs. 12: “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world and all that is in it is mine. An indirect derision of idols which is common among the prophets. “To whom then will you liken God or what likeness compare with him” [Is 40.18]? *World* or tevel refers more specifically to the inhabited earth. “For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and on them he has set the *world*” [1 Sam 2.8].

Vs. 14: Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Here the psalmist specifies the right type of *sacrifice* or zavach, *thanksgiving* (todah) which stands in sharp contrast to those animal sacrifices just enumerated. Todah intimates recollection of past sacred events which begets gratitude. It has a communal feature as a noun derived from todah reveals: “Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall and appointed two great *companies* which gave thanks and went in procession” [Neh 12.31].

Vows neder (singular) imply voluntary obedience and are rightly associated with todah; they are *paid* or shalam, the verbal root for shalom. Cf. Ps 22.26: “My vows I will *pay* before those who fear him.”

Vs. 15: And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” “*Day* of trouble,” yom, is a particular occasion or kairos event as noted several times earlier. There is a close unity between addressing God (*calling*, qara’) and *trouble*, tsarah. “To the God who answered me in the *day* of my *distress*” [Gen 35.3]. On this say day God *delivers* his suppliant, chalats, a verb which also means *to despoil*. Another use: “*Gird up* your loins like a man” [Job 38.3]. The end result of such chalats is the giving of *glory* to God, kavod. Usually this verb signifies action from God but here it is directed towards him which is appropriate for a kairos (yom) event.

Vs. 16: But to the wicked God says, “What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? Although the preceding words were a rebuke, they were not necessarily directed towards wicked persons as now in this verse. To *recite* something or saphar means *to inscribe* which in this instance refers to *statutes*, qoch (singular) which suggests an appointed time. “Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond *measure*” [Is 5.14]. In addition to inscribing, God questions the wicked with regard to his covenant “on your lips” or as the Hebrew reads, *mouth*.

The *wicked* persons (rashah, singular) are condemned for the following:

- 1) vs. 17: hate discipline
- 2) cast God’s words behind him
- 3) vs. 18: friend of thief
- 4) associate with adulterers
- 5) vs. 19: speak evil freely
- 6) tongues utters deceit
- 7) vs. 20: malign your brother
- 8) slander your mother’s son

Vs. 21: These things you have done and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. God has remained *silent* (charash, cf. vs. 3) while the wicked man has committed these eight evils. During this silence the wicked person *thought* God to be like himself, the verb being *damah* which also means *to be like*. This perverted insight with respect God stems from recitation of divine statutes and speaking of the covenant (vs. 16) without being *like...damah...them*.

Vs. 22: “Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I rend and there be none to deliver! Mark in the send of *to understand*, *byn*, that is, the evil behavior listed above which are here identified with *forgetfulness* of God, *shakach*. In biblical eyes, to be forgetful of things divine is perhaps the root of all evil: “Take heed to yourselves, lest you *forget* the covenant of the Lord your God...and make a graven image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you” [Dt 4.23].

The ultimate divine penalty for intentional *shakach* is *rending*, *taraph*, the action of a wild beast. “Lest like a lion they *rend* me” [Ps 7.2]. The failure to be *delivered* (*natsal*) by God is the ultimate fate awaiting the impious. “Behold, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help *to be delivered* from the king of Assyria” [Is 20.6]!

Vs. 23: He who brings thanksgiving as his sacrifice honors me; to him who orders his way aright I will show the salvation of God!” This sentence which refers to the “*Jesus* (*yashah*) of God” is uttered by God as his concluding utterance begun in vs. 7; it seems to present God as speaking objectively about himself by the last few words.

The verse stresses the importance of *thanksgiving*, *todah*, as noted in vs. 14, and which bestows proper *kavod* or *glory* upon God. “I am the Lord, that is my name; my *glory* I give to no other” [Is 42.8].

Note the connection between “*Jesus*” and the person who “orders his *way*” (“*aright*” is not in the Hebrew), *derek*, to conform to Christ as “the *way*, and the truth and the life” [Jn 14.6].

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Psalm Fifty-One

Vs. 1: Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. The famous *Miserere* psalm which begins with an appeal for God to *have mercy*, *chanan*, which implies graciousness. “Grant them *graciously* to us” [Jud 21.22]. The psalmist situates such *chanan* in terms of God’s *steadfast love* or *chesed*, the two words being similar in meaning.

Similarly the psalmist makes appeal to divine “abundant *mercy*,” *racham* being the verbal root from which is derived the noun *womb*. “Do not, O Lord, withhold your *mercy* from me” [Ps 40.11]. Thus he appeals to God’s “womb” or *rechem*: “before I formed you in the *womb* I knew you” [Jer 1.5]. Its function is to *machah* one’s transgressions, which fundamentally means to *wipe off*. “But now, if you will forgive their sin—and if not, *blot* me, I pray, out of your book which you have written” [Ex 32.32].

Vs. 2: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin! Two desires:

1) to be *washed* or *kavas* is a more graphic explanation with regard to *iniquity*, *hawon*. *Kavas* applies to a fuller: “Though you *wash* yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me” [Jer 2.22].

2) to be *cleansed* or *tahar* in the verbal root’s original sense of making one *to shine*, and this with regard to *sin chete*, whose verbal root (*chata*) means *to miss the mark* as in shooting an arrow.

Vs. 3: For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. *Yadah* as *to know* suggests intimate familiarity from which the psalmist wishes to be delivered, namely, his *transgressions* or *peshah*, the verbal root meaning *to fall away*. “We have *transgressed* and rebelled, and you have not forgiven” [Lam 3.42]. With regard to *sin*, *chate*, it is (as *ever*, *tamyd*, missing the mark) similar to *peshah* in that both actions fail to

achieve their intended goals.

Vs. 4: Against you, you only, have I sinned and have done that which is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless in your judgment. The *only* (levad) with reference to God reinforces the psalmist's pangs of guilt by his *sin* (chata') and *evil* (harah), the latter being more visible or in God's *sight* which in Hebrew is *eyes*, hayn (singular).

Divine *justification* (tsadaq being the verbal root) has two features: the *sentence* which God passes is daver, from the verbal root davar, to speak. 2) God is *blameless* or zakah in the sense of being pure. "Who can say, 'I have made my heart *clean*, I am pure from my sin'" [Prov 20.9]?

Vs. 5: Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. The *behold*, hen, is intended to get God's attention turned to the psalmist in a favorable manner; in a sense, it is a continuation or amplification of the *only* (levad) of the previous verse. The *iniquity* or hawon in which the psalmist was born implies guilt: "visiting the *iniquity* of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me" [Ex 20.5]. Such hawon may ultimately be traced to the "fall" of our first parents who trespassed God's command not to eat fruit from the tree at the garden's center (cf. Gen 3.1-7).

The *sin* or chete' in which the psalmist's mother conceived him is thus common to humanity. "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain" [Gen 4.1], that is, Eve bore Cain outside the garden of Eden. Yacham for *to conceive* implies being hot, to have sexual intercourse.

Vs. 6: Behold, you desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Another *behold* or hen, this time directed towards *truth* or 'emeth not in an abstract fashion but located within tuchoth, the only other reference being Job 38.36: "Put wisdom in the *inward parts*."

The Hebrew for the second part of this verse is "you will make me to *know* wisdom," the verb being yadah with its connotation of giving birth. Yadah is in the future tense suggesting that it follows from an implantation of *truth*, 'emeth. The object of yadah is chakmah which implies skilfulness. "To understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the *wise* and their riddles" [Prov 1.6]. Its location: the psalmist's satam, a verb indicating something shut up. "And shall fell every good tree and *stop up* all springs of water" [2 Kg 3.19].

Vs. 7: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. The psalmist expresses two desire to be purified:

1) *to purge* or chata', the same verb from which the opposite meaning is derived, *to sin*. "Thus on the seventh day he shall *cleanse* him" [Num 19.19]. Chata' is effected with *hyssop* or 'ezov. "Take a bunch of *hyssop* and dip it in the blood which is in the basin and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood which is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning" [Ex 12.22]. The result is *cleanliness*, whose verbal root tahar and implies brightness; i.e., assuming divine radiance.

2) a desire *to be washed* or kavas as in vs. 2 resulting in being *white* or lavan from which is derived Lebanon due to its snowy mountains. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as *white* as snow" [Is 1.18]. Note that while the color of sin is changed, no reference is made to altering its essence. Sheleg is the word for *snow*. "Drought and heat snatch away the *snow* waters" [Job 24.19]. The psalmist realizes that as a result of divine kavas, his whiteness will transcend this natural color. "His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as *snow*" [Mt 28.3].

Vs. 8: Fill me with joy and gladness; let the bones which you have broken rejoice. The Hebrew reads for "fill" "make me to *hear*," shamah, that is, *joy* or seson and *gladness* or simchah. Note the "sh" sound of all three words which reinforces the sense of joy.

This twofold joy has its effect in the psalmist's very structure, his *bones*, in that they *rejoice* or gyl, engage in a round dance which is the basic meaning of this verb. *To crush* or daka' can also mean *to trample*.

“What do you mean by *crushing* my people, by grinding the face of the poor” [Is 3.13]? Vs. 8 is suggestive of the Exodus sacrificial victim: “and you shall not *break* (shavar) a bone of it” [Ex 12.46]. This passage applies to the crucified Christ: “they did not *break* his legs” [Jn 19.33].

Vs. 9: Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. The psalmist expresses two wishes:

1) *To hide* or satar as noted in Ps 44.24, “Why do you *hide* your face?” Only in vs. 9 the psalmist wishes God’s *face* or paney not to behold his sins. Compare this wish for concealment with its opposite as expressed by Moses: “I pray you, show me your glory” [Ex 33.18]. Moses does not wish to see God’s face only his *glory* or *ways* (cf. vs. 13). It was God who says that a human being cannot see his face (cf. vs. 23).

2) a desire to have his *iniquities* (hawon) *blotted out*, machah, as in vs. 1 with regard to the his transgressions.

Vs. 10: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. This desire for *creating*, bara’, implies the establishment of something entirely new. Bara’ fundamentally means *to cut*; cf. the first chapter of Genesis which makes frequent reference to this verb; it is as though God were “cutting” various aspects of creation from a preexisting fabric. With regard to the psalmist, the object of bara’ is a “*clean heart*,” tahar being the verbal root; cf. vs. 7.

The Hebrew reads, “*renew* or chadash a right spirit (*spirit*, ruach) within me.” This notion of repair, of fixing what is essentially present, can apply to a person being made in God’s image and likeness (cf. Gen 1.26). Note the location of ruach, qerev, *within* in the sense of a person’s inmost being.

Vs. 11: Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your holy Spirit from me. *Presence* or lepaney is the word *face*, paney, prefixed with the preposition l-, *to*, *towards*. The psalmist wishes to reverse our parents’ expulsion from Eden, “He *drove out* (garash as opposed to the shalach or vs. 11) the man” [Gen 3.24].

It seems that the psalmist can accept this shalach—it implies more a sending, not as harsh as Genesis’ garash—yet he cannot live without God’s *Spirit* or Ruach; cf. this word in the previous verse. It is almost as though Ruach were more real than the divine lepaney; this is emphasized by “*from me*,” min implying full separation.

Vs. 12: Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. *Restore* or shuv denotes a turning back (to where one was originally); it is opposite to the *casting* or shalach of vs. 11. “*Return, return*, O Shulammite, *return, return*, that we may look upon you” [Sg. 6.13]. In the psalm, shuv pertains more to *joy* or seson (“fill me with *joy* and gladness”) which belongs to “Jesus” or yashah.

The second restoration which the psalmist requests from God is to be *upheld* or samak: “For they call themselves after the holy city, and *stay* themselves on the God if Israel” [Is 48.2]. In vs. 12, samak is attached to a “*willing spirit*,” that is, a ruach which is nadyv. “Take from among you an offering to the Lord; whoever is of a *generous* heart, let him bring the Lord’s offering” [Ex 35.5].

Vs. 13: Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Upon receiving God’s “Jesus” and “willing ruach” as stated above, the psalmist is endowed with the ability to lamad—from which is derived *Talmud*—sinners in this special way, derek, which is affiliated with the Talmud. Note that derek is plural, signifying that lamad has numerous avenues to God. Pashah is the verbal root for transgressors; cf. Ps 32.5.

Once transgressors have become acquainted with the “Talmud,” *sinners* or those who chata’ automatically *return* or shuv to God; most likely they follow the psalmist in vs. 12, “*restore* to me the joy of your ‘Jesus.’” “If they again *turn* to you, and acknowledge your name and pray and make supplication to you in this house” [1 Kg 8.33].

Vs. 14: Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, you the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance. Compare *deliver* with *salvation*, *natsal* and *teshuah* ("Jesus"), the former being a feature of the latter; i.e., the person *Jesus* has as his chief function the capacity to *deliver*. More specifically, the psalmist addresses the "God of my 'Jesus,'" which may be taken as God the Father.

Blood guiltiness is the same word as *blood* or *dam* which in this verse refers to its shedding as with regard to murder. The first biblical recording of a murder is that of Abel by his brother Cain: "the voice of your brother's *blood* is crying to me from the ground" [Gen 4.10]. Compare with Pontius Pilate in Mt 27.24: "I am innocent of this man's *blood*."

As a result of "Jesus" effecting *natsal*, the psalmist (future tense, not yet accomplished) will *sing* or *ranan*, a verb which suggests joy. "Praise his people, O you nations; for he avenges the *blood* of his servants" [Dt 32.43; note connection of *ranan* with *dam*]. We may say that *teshuah* assumes a more specific manifestation here, *deliverance* or *tsedaqah*, which better translates as *righteousness*.

Vs. 15: O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth your praise. In vs. 14 tongue is mentioned; here we have lips and mouth. All three vocal functions focus upon divine *praise*, *tehilah* more specifically, *nagad* from which is derived the preposition *before* (*neged*). Thus the psalmist proclaims...shows *before*...God's *tehilah*.

Vs. 16: For you have no delight in sacrifice; where I to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. *Sacrifice* or *zevach* contrasts with the *nagad* of God's praise of the previous verse. Compare Is 1.11: "I *delight* not in the blood of bullocks." That is, to say, God finds no *chaphats*; he prefers *chesed*: "For I *desire steadfast love* and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" [Hos 6.6].

Compare *chaphats* with *ratsah*, *to please*, or a *delight*: "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem...that her iniquity is *pardoned*" [Is 40.2]. In vs. 16 the object of *ratsah* is *holah*, from the verb meaning *to go up* as sacrificial smoke. An example of a favorable *holah*: "Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered *burnt offerings* on the altar" [Gen 8.20].

Vs. 17: The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. The Hebrew reads, "My sacrifices" (plural) in conjunction with "broken spirit" (singular) as if to show that it took the psalmist many sacrifices ordained by the Torah to attain this state of submission to God. Now his *ruach* is *shavar*, *broken*, usually in a negative sense with regard to a haughty attitude. "Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been *broken*; wail for her" [Jer 51.8]! Because *ruach* by its definition is *spirit-ual*, it cannot be broken in a physical sense.

A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. The psalmist reiterates *shavar* in conjunction with his heart which is *contrite*, *daka'*, a word similar in meaning but suggesting something that has been trampled. "To *crush* under foot all the prisoners of the earth" [Lam 3.34]. *God* is used as an interjection in the midst of this humiliation, and he is implored not *to despise* the psalmist in this condition, *bazah*. "Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply *despised*" [Is 49.7].

Vs. 18: Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Words reminiscent of Nehemiah: "I inspected the *walls* of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which had been destroyed by fire" [Neh 2.13]. *Good pleasure* or *retson* is the object of the psalmist's appeal which has as its physical result this rebuilding or in Hebrew, *build* or *banah* (as opposed to constructing something which had been destroyed). Nehemiah again: "Now when the wall had been *built* and I had set up the doors and the gatekeepers, the singers and the Levites had been appointed" [7.1]. Chapter seven continues with a list of returning exiles followed by a reading of the Law (cf. 8.2-3) which may be considered as a process of building something spiritual.

Rev 21.17 has a curious observation about the heavenly Jerusalem's walls: "He also measured its *wall*, a

hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's." Perhaps this identity between a man and an angel show that the heavenly Jerusalem is a habitation for both material and spiritual beings.

Vs. 19: Then you will delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar. After deriding sacrifices through much of this psalm, the author concludes with the fact that such offerings are acceptable. He shows this by the key word *then*, 'az.

Note the four types of offerings in which God *delights*, chaphats; this word may sum up the intent of Psalm Fifty-One:

- 1) *right sacrifices*, a zevach consisting of the noun *righteousness*, tsedaqah, which can apply to both material and immaterial sacrifices.
- 2) *burnt offerings* or holah which strictly speaking are physical.
- 3) *whole burnt offerings* or kaly (singular) where the entire animal is offered. "They shall put incense before you and *whole burnt offerings* upon your altar" [Dt 33.10]. Note the play on words in Hebrew: *yahalu/hal* (offered"/on").
- 4) *bulls* or parah (singular), from the verbal root meaning *to increase*. Note that this animal is a sign of reconciliation: "The *cow* and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together" [Is 11.7].

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Psalm Fifty-Two

Vs. 1: Why do you boast, O mighty man, of mischief done against the godly? All the day. The second sentence continues into verse two. Note that the comments under this section extend through verse eight.

The object of *boast* (halal, also means *to praise*) is the *godly* or chesed; the Hebrew text reads, "chesed of God." This bragging sets the tone for Ps 52 and may be outlined as follows starting with halal:

- 1) vs. 2: mischief against kindness of God
- 2) tongue like razor = worker of treachery
- 3) vs. 3: love evil more than good
- 4) love lying more than speaking truth
(selah or *pause* at end of vs. 3)
- 5) vs. 4: love words that devour

Because of these five evils, in vs. 5 God effects three punishments:

- 1) *breaks* the *mighty man* (gibor, vs. 1), natats, usually used with regard to physical structures. "And he shall *break down* the house, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house" [Lev 14.45, in reference to leprosy].
- 2) *snatch* and *tear* (chatah and nasach) with regard to the gibor's tent; former has the sense of confounding. "He will not fail you or forsake you; do not fear or be *dismayed*" [Dt 31.8]. The latter verb has the sense of expulsion. "And you shall be *plucked off* the land which you are entering to take possession of it" [Dt 28.63].
- 3) *uproot* or sharash, better, *to root*. This verb which has positive in meaning is reverse which makes its sense that much worse; for example, sharash is used with the preposition min, *from*, with respect to "*land of the living*." In Hebrew, 'eret is often the sacred land of Israel, so this political entity assumes divine association.

After these three evils the psalm introduces a second selah.

Verses six and seven contain the three fold response of the *righteous* or those who practice tsedaqah:

- 1) *see* or *ra'ah*; it is not that specific as to what is seen (except the "deceitful tongue" of vs. 4).
- 2) *fear* or *yare'*; the form here is *yiya'u* whose form is somewhat akin to that of *to see* as used here, *yire'u*. I.e., the essence of seeing and fearing can be interchanged, for them both imply vision.
- 3) *laugh* or *sachaq* which can have a positive sense: "And the women sang to one another as they *made merry*" [1 Sam 18.7].

Both *ra'ah* and *yare'* are directed towards the man who fails to take God as a *refuge* or *mahoz* which is a fortified (high) position. "In those times a branch from her roots shall arise in his place; he shall come against the army and enter the *fortress* of the king of the north" [Dan 11.7].

Instead of making God a *mahoz*, the psalmist rails against the man who 1) trusts in his own *wealth*, *hoshar* and 2) who *takes refuge* or *huz* (a word related to *mahoz*) in, as the Hebrew reads, *in his destruction*, *behawatu*. Perhaps the psalmist is referring to a tendency towards self-destruction or even suicide.

Vs. 8: But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. The psalmist's *but* (*wa-*, more commonly as *and*) counters the *wa-* of vs. 7, "*but* trusted in the abundance of his riches." Here it serves as a transition to him being a *green olive tree*: this type of tree (*zayth*) is of great importance in the Mediterranean world, being a source of nourishment as well as fuel. "His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the *olive* and his fragrance like Lebanon" [Hos 14.6]. *Rahnan* is the word for *green*. "He is like a tree planted by water...for its leaves remain *green*" [Jer 17.8]. Note the location of this *zayth*, God's *house*, *byth*, which signifies his temple. Perhaps *zayth* as a means for fueling the temple's lamp may be symbolic of one of the psalmist's functions there.

God's *chesed* or *steadfast love* is the object of the psalmist's trust, *batach*; here *batach* can refer to the stability or rootedness of the *zayth*.

Vs. 9: I will thank you forever because you have done it. I will proclaim your name for it is good in the presence of the godly. *Thankfulness* or *yadah* is the prime function of the psalmist-as-olive tree in God's house and is his activity because God has effected this planting. "I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land which I have given them" [Am 9.15].

The Hebrew text reads for the opening words of the second sentence, "I will *await*," *qawah*, whose verbal root fundamentally means being strong. The object of *qawah* is God's *name*, *shem*, which in light of the New Testament may be seen as Jesus Christ. Note the psalmist as olive tree as situated *before* (*neged*) the *godly* or those who practice *chesed*. We may call him a priest performing sacrifice in the temple. "Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw *near* (cf. the psalm's *neged*) with a true heart in full assurance of faith" [Heb 10.21].

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Psalm Fifty-Three

Vs. 1: The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none that does good. This psalm is almost identical with Psalm 14; former uses the divine name YHWH and the latter, 'Elohim. Because both psalms cover the same theme, an explanation of the Ps 53 will highlight several additional themes.

Cf. *fool* or *naval* which is in conjunction with words denying God's existence. Note use of *heart*, *lev*, which implies that he utters these words secretly to himself and not to others.

The second sentence of vs. 1 shifts from the singular (*fool*) to the plural *corrupt* or *shachat* which also means *to destroy*. "The Lord determined to *lay in ruins* the wall of the daughter of Zion" [Lam 2.8]. Thus the inner denial of God, while secret, leads to an external action which is damaging. *Tahav* for *to abominate* is joined with *havel* or *iniquity*. "Because of your sins in which you acted more *abominably* than they" [Ezk

16.52]. This shift from singular *fool* to plural *corrupt* may be taken as a shift from the single-mindedness of evil intent to its plural iniquitous results.

Vs. 5: There they are, in great terror, in terror such as has not been! For God will scatter the bones of the ungodly; they will be put to shame, for God has rejected them. This is the only verse which differs significantly from Ps 14.5: "There they shall be in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous." Pachad is the word for *terror* which in vs. 5 has not existed previously; pachad is mentioned a second time as though to reinforce its impact.

Pachad has the ability to *scatter* or pazar the bones of the *ungodly* or as according to the Hebrew text, "him who *encamps* against you," chanah. For another meaning of pazar, cf. Prov 11.24: "One man *gives freely* yet grows all the richer."

Compare pazar with divine *rejection*, ma'as. "Because you (Saul) have *rejected* the word of the Lord, he has also *rejected* you from being king" [1 Sam 15.23]. I.e., the latter is a result of the former.

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Psalm Fifty-Four

Vs. 1: Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your might. Two requests, the second being dependent upon the first:

1) "Jesus" for the psalmist's requested to be saved, yashah, only here it is in conjunction with God's *name*, shem.

2) *vindication* or dyn which also means *to judge*. "How long before you will *judge* and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth" [Rev 6.10]? The agent which accomplishes divine dyn is *might* or gevorah. "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and *might*, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" [Is 11.2]. Perhaps the psalmist has in mind these other aspects of the divine ruach.

Vs. 2: Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. After requesting to be "Jesus-ed," it is certain that the psalmist will have his prayer answered (*hear* or shamah). There seems to be a distinction between this prayer and the *giving ear* to his words, 'azan from which the noun *ear* is derived. For another use of this verb, cf. Eccl 12.9: "Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, *weighing* and studying and arranging proverbs with great care."

Vs. 3: For insolent men have risen against me, ruthless men seek my life; they do not set God before them. Selah. The psalmist lists two foes:

1) *insolent* men, from the verbal root zur from which is derived *stranger*. "*Strangers* devour it in your presence" [Is 1.7]. Their *rising* or qum is *against*, hal-, connoting *on-ness*, that is, a thorough conquest of the defenseless psalmist.

2) *ruthless* men, harats being the verbal root *to be fierce*. "Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you, the most *terrible* of the nations" [Ezk 28.7].

Both two classes of wicked persons have in common the fact that they disregard God: do not *set* (sum) him *before* (neged) them, that is, to be consciously aware of his presence. Compare sum with qum, the latter being the former's antithesis.

Selah or *pause*, the only instance in this psalm; it serves as a point of transition because the second half expresses the psalmist's trust in God to deliver him.

Vs. 4: Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life. *Behold* or *hineh* serves to introduce the second half of this psalm; the psalmist seems to utter it just as much for his own benefit as well as that of others. He claims God as his *helper*, *hozer*; note the separate word *ly, to me*; usually this preposition is attached to the verb and here it emphasizes that God is indeed his *hozer*.

Furthermore, God is the psalmist's *upholder* or in the Hebrew text, "The Lord is with those who *uphold* my life," *samak*. "The Lord *sustains* me" [Ps 3.5]. More specifically, we may say that those who practice *chesed* (cf. Ps 52.8) are the persons who are with God; by extension, they sustain his *life* or *nephesh* (or better, *soul*). In brief, we have here an instance of corporate identity so important among ancient peoples.

Vs. 5: He will requite my enemies with evil; in your faithfulness put an end to them. A close association between *enemies* and *evil*; *sharah* is the former's verbal root which means *to twist*; in this case it is from *harah*. It is as though such evil entwines itself about the psalmist like a vine and chokes him. When he bids God to *put an end* to them or *tsamath*, he wants them *to be silent* which is the meaning of this verb. *Faithfulness* or *'emeth* (also, *truth*) is the agent here.

Vs. 6: With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good. *Freewill offering* is one word in Hebrew, *nedavah*, whose verbal root *nadav* (cf. Ps 47.9) implies a definite spontaneity. "And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides *freewill offerings* for the house of God which is in Jerusalem" [Ezr 1.4].

In addition to such *nedavah*, the psalmist thanks God's *shem* or *name*, not necessarily God himself. Perhaps the secondary nation of *nedavah* is more in line with the similar secondary character of the divine *shem*; i.e., both pertain to realities which are not God himself.

Vs. 7: For you have delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies. *Natsal* is the verb used for *to deliver* which as noted above in Ps 51.14, is a feature of "Jesus" (*yashah*). The *trouble* or *tsarah* implies being in a constricted or confined space. "The children born in the time of your bereavement will yet say in your ears, "The place is too *narrow* for me" [Is 49.20]. In vs. 7, *tsarah* is implied as coming from the psalmist's *enemies*, *'ayv* (singular). Here is not intimation of "looking on in triumph;" the Hebrew simply says, "my eyes have seen my enemies."

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Psalm Fifty-Five

Vs. 1: Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my supplication! The first few words are often encountered in the Psalter, especially at the beginning of a psalm. The request for God to *give ear*, *'azan*, is a desire for divine revelation as opposed to the psalmist's desire for God not to *hide*, *halam*. "You shall not see your brother's ass or his ox fallen down by the way, and *withhold* (i.e., hide) your help from them" [Dt 22.4]. *Techanah* or *supplication* is what the psalmist wants disclosed and not withheld. Perhaps he had in mind the following alternate meaning of this word: "It was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts...that they should receive no *mercy* but be exterminated, as the Lord commanded Moses" [Jos 11.20].

Vs. 2: Attend to me and answer me; I am overcome by my trouble. I am distraught. (Note that the second sentence continues into verse three). *Attend* and *answer*, *qashav* and *hanah*, are other introductory words found in the Psalter though not as common as the "give ear" of vs. 1.

Qashav is rejected in the following verse; see its close connection with the divine Law or Torah: "Our kings, princes, priests and our fathers have not kept your law or *heeded* your commandments and your warnings which you gave them" [Neh 9.34]. In this same book of Nehemiah, cf. 8.3: "And he read from it facing the square...in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law."

For the multiple meanings of *hanah*, cf. Ps 4.1; for an alternate use of this word: “All of them will *speak* and say to you” [Is 14.10]. Thus *hanah* has a more “active” meaning, that is, it can be used as a verb taking the initiative or as responding.

I am overcome by my trouble. I am distraught. The verb here is *rod* which more specifically means *to mourn*; it also means *to go unbridled*: “Why then do my people say, ‘We are *free*, we will come no more to you” [Jer 2.31]? I.e., the psalmist acknowledges that he has wandered or broken his relationship with God and has *trouble*, *sych*, which can also mean *to quarrel*: “I have been speaking about my great anxiety and *vexation*” [1 Sam 1.16].

The psalmist also claims to be *distraught* or *hamah*; for an alternate use, cf. Is 16.11: “My soul *moans* like a lyre for Moab.”

Vs. 3: By the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they bring trouble upon me, and in anger they cherish enmity against me. *Hamah* of vs. 2 is effected by two factors:

1) the enemy’s *noise*, *qol*, which is usually translated as *voice*; implied is a battle cry from a camp: When the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. And when the Philistines heard the *noise* of the shouting...” [1 Sam 4.5-6].

2) *oppression* or *haqah*, the only instance of this form, from the verbal root *huq*, the only other reference being Am 2.13: “*pressed*, full of sheaves.” This second phrase is prefixed by the preposition *mipeney*, *from the face of*.

The *they* in this verse created two afflictions for the psalmist:

1) *bring trouble* or *mut* which basically means *to shake*: “The earth is *moved* exceedingly” [Is 24.19]². With this notion of tottering in mind (it connotes something under one’s feet that is tottering), we may say that the psalmist’s enemy is especially cunning in that he brings *mut* *upon* him, *hal*, that is, from above as opposed to from below.

2) *cherish enmity*: the Hebrew reads “in wrath they hate me,” the verb being *satam* which implies laying in wait. “It may be that Joseph will *hate* us and pay us back for all the evil which we did to him” [Gen 50.15]. *Satam* is cognate to *satan*, *adversary*, from which is derived the proper name Satan.

Vs. 4: My heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death have fallen upon me. The psalmist’s heart is in *anguish*, *chul*, or “twisted;” another use of this verb as *to be strong* in the sense of flourishing: “His ways *prosper* at all times” [Ps 10.5]. Use of the preposition “*within* me” or *qerev* suggests the centrality of *heart* (*lev*); by reason of this central position, its various moods emanate throughout the psalmist’s body and affect it equally. “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” [1 Cor 12.12].

While *chul* is within, death’s *terrors* (*eymah*, singular) are without, that is, *on* (*hal*) the psalmist. For an alternate use of this word: “For it is a land of images, and they are mad over *idols*” [Jer 50.38].

Vs. 5: Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. Three more exterior reasons for consternation as opposed to coming from *within* (*qerev*):

1) *fear* or *yir’ah*. “And the men were seized with great *fear*” [Jon 1.10], another example of external terror.

2) *trembling* or *rahad*. Verbal roots beginning with *rah-* are usually associated with evil or a threatening situation. “And the people sat in the open square before the house of God, *trembling* because of this matter and because of the heavy rain” [Ezra 10.9].

3) *horror* or *palatsoth*, whose verbal root means *to trample*. “My mind reels, *horror* has appalled me”

²In this verse the verb *mut* is used twice in different forms for emphasis.

[Is 21.4]. Note that palatsoth has a more vigorous action as opposed to fear and trembling, for it *overwhelms* the psalmist, kasa', a verb which fundamentally means *to cover*.

Vs. 6: And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Note present tense, *I say*, 'omar; the words which follow into the next verse indicate the psalmist's condition with regard to his afflictions stated in vss. 1-5. The present tense alludes that he is still in the midst of adversity; his statements concerning them in 1-5 are also in the present as opposed to expressing a past experience. The wish is to have *wings*, 'ever (singular); they are associated with those belonging to a *dove*, yonah (proper name for Jonah as the prophet). For another use regarding *wings*: "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles" [Is 40.31]. Contrast the psalm's use of dove with eagle, two very different types of birds.

I would fly away and be at rest. Here the psalmist gives a two-fold expression should he be endowed with dove's wings (keeping in mind that this is an aspiration): to *fly away* or huph. For a negative meaning: Ephraim's glory shall *fly away* like a bird—no birth, no pregnancy, no conception" [Hos 9.11]! However, the psalm's use of huph combines a positive and negative sense of the word: first to escape affliction and then to *rest* or shakan which implies a laying down; the latter certainly includes repose from the former but involves a dwelling or abiding presence. And let them make me a sanctuary that I may *dwell* in their midst" [Ex 25.8], words reminiscent of Christ's abiding presence with his followers as expressed in John 17-8.

Vs. 7: Yes, I would wander afar, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. Yes or hineh is similar to *I say* of the previous verse in that it expresses the psalmist's resolve which assumes two forms:

1) Here he desires to *wander* or rachaq, a word often with negative connotations: "They have *gone far* from me" [Jer 2.5]. Rachaq is a word suggesting removal on the ground as opposed to in the air like the dove of vs. 6; it is as though the psalmist has changed form from being a dove. The spacial quality of this verb is emphasized by *afar* which is also a verb, nadad. "And there was none that *moved* a wing" [Is 10.14].

2) *to lodge* or lun which more specifically means to spend the night which in this instance is in the midbar (cf. Ps 29.8). Two examples come to mind: 1) "So he (Jacob) *lodged* there that night," the place where he wrestled with a mysterious being [Gen 32.13]. 2) John the Baptist who similarly lodged or took up residence in the desert. "The voice of one crying in the *wilderness*: 'Prepare the way of the Lord'" [Mt 3.3 quoting Is 40.3].

Selah or *pause* is inserted to contemplate the psalmist's longing; the second instance of this word is in vs, 19.

Vs. 8: I would haste to find me a shelter from the raging wind and tempest." A conclusion of the quotation or thinking out loud begun in vs. 6, after which the psalmist moves onto cursing his foes. Vs. 8 is the third form of that *yes*, hineh, in the previous verse. The Hebrew reads "I would hasten my escape:" the verb chush is used in the Psalter with regard to divine help as in Pss 22.19, 38.22, 40.13, 70.1, 141.1. Keep in mind that chush continues to describe that "undove-like" movement begun with Vs. 7's "wander far away." Here it is with respect to *shelter* or miplat, the only instance of this particular word which derives from palat; it connotes smoothness, and with this sense in mind, a covert escape. "They growl and seize their prey, they carry it off, and none can *rescue*" [Is 5.29].

The psalmist's miplat is from two dangers:

- 1) "*raging wind*" or that ruach which is soah, the only occurrence of this word in the Bible.
- 2) *tempest* or sahar as in Jon 1.4: "But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty *tempest* on the sea." With this second reference in mind, we may say that the psalmist resembles Jonah who ended up by having his miplat in the belly of a whale.

Vs. 9: Destroy their plans, O Lord, confuse their tongues; for I see violence and strife in the city. Two

wishes with regard to the enemy first stated in vs. 3:

1) *destroy* or *balah* which connotes swallowing or devouring. “Like Sheol let us *swallow* them alive and whole, like those who go down to the Pit” [Prov 1.12]. The Hebrew text lacks “plans.”

2) *confuse* or *palag* from which comes the noun *river* because it is *divided*. “My eyes flow with *rivers* of tears because of the destruction of the daughter of my people” [Lam 3.48]. The psalm’s reference brings to mind the tower of Babel: “Come, let us go down and there confuse their language that they may not understand one another’s speech” [Gen 11.7].

The reason for the above mentioned condemnations result from *violence* (*chamas*) and *strife* (*ryv*); note their location, *city*, which may refer to Jerusalem.

Vs. 10: Day and night they go around it on its walls; and mischief and trouble are within it. Contrast the first words of this verse with Sg 3.3: “The watchmen found me as they went about in the city.” This verse and the next (11) refer to the destructive activity of the enemy as follows:

1) *mischief* or *‘awen* which also means *vanity*. “Behold, they are all a *delusion*; their works are nothing” [Is 41.29].

2) *trouble* or *hamal* from which also is derived *labor*. “What has a man from all the *toil* and strain with which he toils beneath the sun” [Eccl 2.22]?

3) vs. 11: *ruin* or *hauah*, from the verbal root *hawah*, *to breathe*. Thus *hauah* implies something upon one’s breath.

4) *oppression* or *tok*, the only other two references being Pss 10.7 & 72.14.

5) *fraud* or *mirmah*, from *ramah*, *to deceive*. Cf. Pss 10.7 & 35.20. These last two negative qualities are specified as being in the *market place*, *rechov*, that is, places where items are bought and sold. “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?’ But you have made it a den of robbers” [Mk 11.17].

Vs. 12: It is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. The psalmist restates the nature of his true opponent (*enemy*, ‘oyev of vs. 3) by saying something indirectly positive about him: *taunts* and *deals insolently*, two types of behavior he could escape or *hide*, *satar*. Presumably this enemy makes himself known in city, walls, city midst and market place of the previous verses; by so doing, he is easily identified and can be dealt with.

On the other hand, vs. 13 identifies the true enemy in three ways, all of which are intimate:

1) *equal* or as in Hebrew, “man my equal,” *herek*, which denotes *order*; i.e., the adversary presumes to assume the same order as the psalmist and thus to share the same divine *cause* (another meaning).

2) *companion* or *‘aluph*; for another meaning, cf. Jer 11.19: “But I was like a *gentle* lamb led to the slaughter.”

3) *familiar friend* or *meyudah* whose verbal root is *yadah*, *to know*.

Vs. 14: We used to hold sweet converse together; within God’s house we walked in fellowship. Here the psalmist recalls the joy shared with the above mentioned equal, companion and familiar friend, memory of which reinforces his condemnation in the verses which follow. *Sweet* (*mataq*) is often used as *pleasant*. “The wise of heart is called a man of discernment, and *pleasant* speech increases persuasiveness” [Prov 16.21]. *Sod* or *converse* implies a sitting together, and in the context of vs. 14 (God’s house), suggests the psalmist and his former friend turned enemy as sitting in the temple discussing things spiritual: “She (Anna the prophetess) did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day” [Lk 2.37].

In addition to spiritual conversation, the psalmist has enjoyed *fellowship*, *geresh*, whose verbal root implies plundering and expelling. “But the wicked are like the *tossing* sea, for it cannot rest” [Is 57.20]. With this in mind, perhaps the psalmist foresaw his friend’s treachery which is intensified by occurring “within God’s house.”

Vs. 15: Let death come upon them; let them go down to Sheol alive; let them go away in terror into their graves. In vs. 13 the psalmist's friend turned enemy is singular and is carried over into the next verse. On the other hand here we have the plural *them* towards whom three curses are directed. Perhaps the psalmist's anger is so intense that it elicits the following denunciations:

- 1) Death is wished as *coming upon* his plural foes, *halah*, which fundamentally means *to go up*. In vs. 15 death, as it were, ascends from the bottom upwards and then downwards upon the foes.
- 2) these enemies are condemned *to go down* (*yarad*) to Sheol; this verb is opposite in meaning to *halah*. The horror of such descent is heightened by their being *alive*, *chayym*.
- 3) The Hebrew text reads, "Evils are in their habitation, in their midst." *Habitation* or *megor* also means *wandering*: "And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of your *sojournings*" [Gen 17.8]. Not only are (plural) evils in this *megor*, they are in their *midst* or *qerev* which signifies their very being or essence.

Vs. 16: But I call upon God; and the Lord will save me. *But* is a key word, for it sets the psalmist apart from the traitor(s) in his midst. While lacking in the Hebrew, the original expresses this separation by saying "I to God...": 'any, 'el, 'elohym. Note the three alephs and similar sounding words; a fourth may be included by I will call, 'eqera'. The result of such *qara'* is the psalmist being saved or "Jesus," *yashah*.

Vs. 17: Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he will hear my voice. This verse delineates more clearly the three times when the psalmist calls to God (vs. 16); such calling assumes two forms, uttering of a *complaint* or *syach* which implies meditating as well as singing. "One generation shall laud your works to another and shall *declare* your mighty acts" [Ps 145.4]. The second form is moaning or *hamah* and can refer to the sound of a harp. "Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, the sound of your *harps*" [Is 14.11]. Both *syach* and *hamah* may be designated as *kairoi* or special occasions. Such *kairoi* are structured around three times of the day and do not mention night. The psalmist is confident that God will hear not him but his *voice*, *qol*:

- 1) *evening* or *herev* which is usually the time of sacrifice: "One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the *evening*" [Ex 29.39].
- 2) *morning* or *boqer* which more specifically refers to daybreak (cf. Ps 46.5) and as the Exodus verse in #1 shows, can also be a time for offering sacrifice.
- 3) *noon* or *tsahoraym* (dual) whose verbal root *tsahar* means *to shine*. "Prepare war against her; up, and let us attack at *noon*" [Jer 6.4]!

Vs. 18: He will deliver my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me. In light of evening, morning and noon we may say that these are the times (i.e., the entire daylight period) when the psalmist is waging a *battle* or *qerav*; it derives from the same verbal root as the *midst* of something or someone. The notion is that such battle is at close quarters. The intensity of this *qerav* is described by those *arrayed* against him, *hamad*, literally, *to stand* as in battle array. *Hamad* also connotes a collective presence before a king or God. "The angel of the Lord *stood by*" [Zec 3.5].

The psalmist is confident of a future divine action, *deliver* or *padah*. "The Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt and *redeemed* you out of the house of bondage" [Dt 13.6]. Most likely the psalmist had in mind the great deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Note only does he express confidence in God's *padah* but qualifies it the word *safety*, *shalom* (*peace*), and this with respect to his *nephesh* or *soul*. Implied here is that the psalmist may undergo physical death at the hands of his foes but his *nephesh* will not.

Vs. 19: God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old; because they keep no law, and do not fear God. Selah. *Them* is not exactly certain; it can refer to the foes of the previous verse, for despite their punishment by God, he will rescue them. God will *hear* or *shamah* just like he heard the psalmist's voice in vs. 17. This also occurs with respect to the verb *hanah*, *to humble*, which has the alternate meaning of *to sing*. "Is not this David of whom they *sing* to one another in dances" [1 Sam 29.5]?

This giving ear and humbling has a location, the divine throne or as the text has it, *enthroned* (yashav, a verb) which also means *to sit*. Furthermore, such yashav is qedem, *of old*, which is a preposition also meaning *before*; in this context it can mean prior to creation as well as the actualization of evil-doing as delineated in this psalm. Qedem can also refer to being in the presence of a king: "Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be brought. Then they brought these men *before* the king" [Dan 3.13].

In the Hebrew text, *selah* or *pause* is inserted after the first half of vs. 19.

The evil against which the psalmist protests has its roots in that his foes "keep no law" or as the Hebrew reads, "they do not *change*," chalaph, which connotes repentance. "But they who wait for the Lord shall *renew* their strength" [Is 40.31]. Also, this failure to chalaph results in a failure to *fear* God, yare'. "Now I know that you fear God" [Gen 22.12].

Vs. 20: My companion stretched out his hand against his friends, he violated his covenant. The Hebrew text lacks "my companion" and instead reads *he*; note the third person singular after the psalmist has spoken of his (plural) foes. Again, according to the Hebrew it reads, "His hand is *stretched* (shalach) against the one at *peace*," shalom. In addition to this infraction, the adversary *violates* a covenant, chalal, which can refer to profaning God's sanctuary. "And everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has *profaned* a holy thing of the Lord" [Lev 19.8]. In the verse under consideration, such chalal refers to beryth, *covenant*; here the covenant may refer not so much as to God's but to an agreement with a binding responsibility, for example: "Let there be a *covenant* between my father and your father" [1 Kg 15.19].

Vs. 21: His speech was smoother than butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. The Hebrew reads for "speech" *mouth*, implying a more comprehensive fulness of deceit; such mouth is compared with *butter*, chem'ah, which more properly means curdled milk and cheese. "And because of the abundance of milk which they give, he will eat *curds*; for every one that is left in the land will eat *curds* and honey" [Is 7.22]; such chem'ah is *smooth*, chalaq, which implies deceit. "For there shall be no more false vision or *flattering* divination within the house of Israel" [Ezk 12.24].

Perhaps the psalmist's companion (cf. vs. 20) who has his mouth entirely full with deceit springs from *war* or qerav in his heart or inmost being. Cf. vs. 18, "The *battle* that I wage."

In addition to the analogy with butter, the psalmist mentions the more specific *words*, devrah (singular). They are compared with two opposites, *oil* (shemen) and *drawn swords*, patach being the verbal root and "swords" not mentioned but implied in the text. For an opposite meaning, cf. Sg 3.8: "All girt with swords and expert in war, each with his sword at his thigh." Here sword or cherev is explicitly mentioned.

Vs. 22: Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. Now the psalmist turns attention away from his foes and counsels his listeners to trust in God. "Burden" reads in Hebrew "what he has given you," yehavka, as one were advised to return something given earlier. This object, as it were, may be seen in terms of reflecting the divine image and likeness which here is *cast*, shalach, or directed towards God with force. Note its direction, "*on* the Lord," hal, from a position above to one below. The result of this shalach is *sustenance*, kul, which intimates containing or embracing an object. "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot *contain* you" [2 Chron 6.18].

He will never permit the righteous to be moved. Such *moving* or mut is a tottering much as in an earthquake. "If your brother *becomes poor* (i.e., totters) and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall maintain him" [Lev 25.35]. The person to whom the psalmist is *righteous* (note singular), tsadyq, this quality serves to stabilize him in a situation which causes mut.

Vs. 23: But you, O God, will cast them down into the lowest pit; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you. In this concluding verse the psalmist has the last word with

regard to the fate of his enemies. Their location: “lowest pit” or in Hebrew, “pit of *destruction*,” shachath, implying Sheol. Be’er is more a well than a spring; here it has gone dry (shachath, as it were). The low-ness of this be’er is emphasized by God’s *casting* or yarad.

Presumably those in the pit are of two types: damym and mirmah, *blood* and *treachery*; note the similar sound of both words. While these persons are following their lives’ course, rather, not completing it, the psalmist expresses his *trust* or batach in God. Thus batach has the quality of temporal extension.

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Psalm Fifty-Six

Vs. 1: Be gracious to me, O God, for men trample upon me; all day long my foes oppress me. Another instance of the psalmist’s wish for chanan, the same word which opens Ps 5. In this psalm chanan is situated in two contexts:

1) in conjunction with men *trampling* upon him, sha’aph, which implies a panting after. “Oh, you who *swallow up* the needy” [Am 8.4]. The Hebrew reads *man* (singular) or ‘enush, which can also mean people as a whole.

2) The psalmist suffers *oppression*, lachats, which fundamentally means *to squeeze*. “You shall not *oppress* a stranger...for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” [Ex 23.9]. The ‘enush who is imposing this affliction similarly *fight*s against the psalmist, lacham, the common verb for *to fight* (also means *to eat*). Note the similar sounding words, lachats, lacham, which heightens the tension of this verse.

Vs. 2: My enemies trample upon me all day long, for many fight against me proudly. Another group of adversaries, *enemies*, sharar, being the verbal root, *to twist, to press together*; cf. Ps 54.5. They *trample* upon the psalmist, another instance of sha’aph as in vs. 1. Note that vs. One and two have *all the day long*, kal-hayom, this period of time being a negative kairos event. Refer to the “suffering servant” song in Isaiah 53. It is not clear that the *many* are additional foes or just another reference to those who lacham against the psalmist. Here lacham is more specific, as it were, by the addition of the preposition, ly, *against me*.

Vs. 3: When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. Such assaults as just described are reason for *fear*, yare’, but this is overcome by *trust* (batach) in God. Note present tense of yare’ and future tense of batach; in a sense, we may say that batach is lacking or is not in the psalmist’s awareness when he is not threatened by foes.

Vs. 4: In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust without a fear. What can flesh do to me? An amplification of the short, heart-felt sentiment expressed in the previous verse. The object of *praise* (halal) is not God but his (singular) *word*, devar, which in the context of the New Testament can refer to Jesus Christ as Logos. Note two-fold use of “*in God*,” b-, where the devar dwells.

Also consider the different phrasing of the same terms—*trust* or batach and *fear* or yare’—as opposed to vs. 3, “When I am *afraid*, I put my *trust* in you.”

As a result of batach in God, the psalmist obtains perspective on his situation by calling his foes *flesh*, basar. Cf. Ps 40.9. “I have determined to make an end of all *flesh*, for the earth is filled with violence” [Gen 6.13].

Vs. 5: All the day long they seek to injure my cause; all their thoughts are against me for evil. Now that the psalmist has perceived his foes as basar, *flesh*, he can resume his laments but with this important difference in mind. He repeats for the third time the phrase, *all the day long*, kal-hayom, i.e., a negative kairos situation.

The opening words in the Hebrew text read, “every day they wrest my *words*,” devar being used here

as in vs. 4 when it referred to God's devar. The psalmist's enemies cause *grief* or hatsav with respect to his devar, a (plural) reflection of the divine (singular) devar. Due to this affiliation, perhaps the psalmist has in mind Gen 6.6: "And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved* him to his heart."

All their thoughts are against me for evil. Note the order of this verse: first comes *seeking* followed by *thoughts*, machashavah (singular), from the verbal root chashav, *to consider*. An alternate meaning: "to *devise* artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and bronze" [Ex 31.4; also, cf. Ps 40.17]. In the verse at hand, thoughts are "devised"...in the sense of fashion...*evil* or rah.

Vs. 6: They band themselves together, they lurk, they watch my steps. As they have waited for my life. Three actions by the psalmist's foes:

1) gor is the verb for *to band* which has the connotation of tarrying or sojourning. "Is this your exultant city...whose feet carried her to *settle afar*" [Is 23.7]? Thus the enemy may be seen as attempting to send the psalmist into exile away from his native land.

2) tsaphan or *to lurk*; also means *to store up, to hide*. "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us wantonly *ambush* the innocent" [Prov 1.11].

3) shamar or *to watch* which in the positive sense is often used with observing the Torah. "So shall I *keep* your law" [Ps 119.44]. In the psalm under consideration, shamar is directed towards the psalmist's *steps*, haqev, or more accurately, *heel*. "And you shall bruise his *heel*" [Gen 3.15], i.e., with reference to Eve and the serpent.

As they have waited for my life. These words begin the next verse; qawah is the verb here. The psalmist's enemies are like the serpent in Genesis whose qawah is directed towards deceiving Adam and Eve, i.e., the *soul* or nephesh of the psalmist.

Vs. 7: So recompense them for their crime; in wrath cast down the peoples, O God! The Hebrew has for the first half of this verse "on account of malice, deliver us." *Malice* or 'awen connotes vanity, often related to idols. "Behold, they are all a delusion; their works are *nothing*" [Is 41.29]. It is precisely from such idolatry that the psalmist wishes *deliverance*, palat.

Peoples or hamym are not necessarily *foreigners*, goym, as noted elsewhere; supposedly they are located on a high place which can also be a metaphor for a haughty spirit from which the psalmist bids God to *cast* them *down*, yarad. "Then the fire of God *came down* from heaven and consumed him and his fifty" [2 Kg 1.15].

Vs. 8: You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle! Are they not in your book? The only other reference to the word nod (singular) or *tossings* is a proper noun: "And Cain...dwelt in the land of *Nod*" [Gen 4.16]. The verbal root nadad means *to wander*; hence Cain who slew his brother Abel, wandered the earth after having committed this crime. In the context of the psalm, God saphar...*writes*...these wanderings; i.e., he keeps an inscribed record of them.

Put my tears in your bottle! N'od is a container, often used for wine. "And Jesse took an ass laden with bread and as *skin* of wine and a kid, and sent them by David his son to Saul" [1 Sam 16.20]. While the verbal root is unused, the noun bears resemblance to *tossings*, nod. We may say that God "bottles" the psalmist's "wanderings."

Are they not in your book? *Book* or sepher is from the same root as saphar above. In them God keeps both the psalmist's *tossings* and *tears*, dimhah (singular). "My eyes are spent with *weeping*, my soul is in tumult" [Lam 2.11].

Vs. 9: Then my enemies will be turned back in the day when I call. This I know, that God is for me. *Then* or 'az represents the importance of the psalmist's *call* or qara' upon God which results in the *turning back* of shuv of his foes, not necessarily their destruction. This verb can represent a conversion to God: "Afterward the children of Israel shall *return* and seek the Lord their God" [Hos 3.5]. Note the association

between *shuv* and *day, yom*, a *kairos* event, as opposed to chronological time.

This I know, that God is for me. The object of the verb *yadah* is direct in Hebrew, *God to me*, 'elohym ly. Such knowledge results from the psalmist's *calling* as well as his *saphar* or *inscribing* of vs. 8.

Vs. 10: In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise. This verse continues into the next one, forming a complete sentence. Compare 'elohym ly just above with "*in God*," *be'hoym*.; such in-ness is the location of the divine *daver* (*logos*) or *word*, object of the psalmist's *halal*.

The psalmist emphasizes this in-ness by saying "*in the Lord*," *baYHWH*, i.e., his uses the proper name for God. To YHWH belongs the *devar*, object of praise, which has greater distinctiveness.

Vs. 11: In God I trust without a fear. What can man do to me? The first sentence contrasts *batach* or *trust* with the verb (in Hebrew) *yara'* or *fear*, another instance of that divine in-ness mentioned just above. Such presence is heightened by the confidence that *man* ('adam) is powerless to harm him who has *batach*. 'Adam is often used to denote the human race as well as the creatureliness of individual persons. "Then the Lord God formed *man* of dust from the *ground*" [Gen 2.7].

Vs. 12: My vows to you I must perform, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. Such *vows* or *neder* (singular; cf. Ps 50.14) result from the special trust briefly mentioned in the last verse and often are associated with sacrifice. "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and *made vows*" [Jon 1.16].

United with *neder* is the *rendering* (*shalom*... "making peace") of *today* which can also mean a *choir*: "Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall and appointed two great *companies* which gave thanks and went in procession" [Neh 12.31].

Vs. 13: For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life. Here we have two reasons for the *neder* of vs. 12:

1) *deliverance* or *natsal* with respect to the psalmist's *nephesh*, not necessarily his physical body; the verb implies a pulling out and hence suddenness of deliverance. *Natsal* can mean a removal in the sense of despoiling: "Therefore the people of Israel *stripped* themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward" [Ex 33.6].

2) *falling* or *dachah* with respect to feet; this verb suggests a thrusting away. "Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord *driving* them *on*" [Ps 35.5].

The divine *natsal* has for its purpose the ability to *walk* (*halak*) according to a special mode, "*before God*," *liphny*, which literally reads "to the face," implying visual perception of God. In addition to such before-ness, the psalmist has another example of in-ness, "*in the light* ('or) of life." We may say that the visual perception of God produces such 'or. "The people of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone" [Ex 34.35].

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Psalm Fifty-Seven

Vs. 1: Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. An invocation for *chanaan*, *mercy*, a common introductory appeal in the Psalter; note here that *God* or 'elohym is sandwiched in between two requests for this *chanaan*, as if to make him respond that much more quickly. Although the psalmist makes petition, he is emboldened to say that his *soul* or *nephesh* (no mention of his physical body) *takes refuge* in God, *chasah*. "The righteous finds *refuge* through his integrity" [Prov 14.32]. Such *chasah* has a location, the *shadow* of God's *wings*; the term for the former is *tsel*. "For you have been...a *shade* from the heat" [Is 25.4].

The latter term is *kanaph* whose verbal root means *to cover*. Thus we have a two-fold shelter within God, something reminiscent of the Holy of Holies within the Jerusalem temple.

The second part of this verse is a rewording of the first part; in the latter we have the first person singular, *I*, who (in the future) *will take refuge*, *chasah*. It seems as though the first person singular is concerned with the passing by of *storms of destruction* or *hauah* (singular). The word *desire* comes from the same verbal root; the general notion is a breathing or longing after. "O that my vexation were weighed, and all my *calamity* laid in the balances" [Job 6.2]!

Vs. 2: I cry to God Most High, to God who fulfils his purpose for me. A use of *qara'* for *to cry*, a familiar term in the psalter; a sense of urgency is implied by calling *God* ('*elohym*) the *Most High*, *Helyon*. The first mention of this term is Gen 4.18: "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God *Most High*." The psalmist's urgency is carried over by another mention of God, '*el*. With these three names of the divinity, he is confident of receiving an answer or *fulfilment*, *gamar* (cf. Ps 7.9) which is directed *for* (*hal*, *toward*) the psalmist.

Vs. 3: He will send from heaven and save me, he will put to shame those who trample upon me. Selah. God will send forth is steadfast love and his faithfulness! Three forms of sending:

- 1) The first has no specific mention is made of what is sent, just the fact that it will come from *heaven*, *shamym*, God's dwelling place. In fact, for the psalmist, it makes no difference as long as he is *saved* or *yashah* ("Jesus"). Apply this sending or *shalach* with the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Virgin Mary (cf. Lk 1.35).
- 2) With this request for "Jesus" in mind, there is good reason to *pause*, *selah*, after which another object of divine *sending* or *shalach*, *steadfast love* or *chesed*.
- 3) The final *shalach* is *faithfulness* or '*emeth*.

Vs. 4: I lie in the midst of lions that greedily devour the sons of men; their teeth are spears and arrows, their tongues sharp swords. The first part of this verse is reminiscent of Daniel: "My God has sent his angel and shut the *lions'* mouths, and they have not hurt me because I was found blameless before him" [Dan 6.22].

Vs. 5: Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth! Consider this exclamation in light of King Darius' gladness over Daniel being saved from the lions: "He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in *heaven* and on earth" [Dan 6.27]. The *heavens* or *shamym* were thought to be the furthest point of creation away from earth and the closest to God who is *above* them, *hal*, or *on* them. The verb *ramah* implies this transcendence.

In addition to this divine exultation, the psalmist wishes God's *glory* (*kavod*) to be a bit closer, as it were, or "*over* all the earth," *hal*. *Kavod* has traditionally been conceived as an emanation or manifestation of God which is closer to human perception. Consider this in light of the two uses of *hal* just mentioned.

Vs. 6: They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah. Vs. 5 is a note of exultant praise to God which occurs in between this one and vs. 4. Refer back to vs. 5 with its use of words connoting that which is on high: "Be exalted," "above the heavens," "glory be over." In contrast to such above-ness, consider the below-ness of vss. 4 & 6: "I lie (down)," "set a net," "soul bowed down," "dug a pit," "fallen into it." The insertion of *selah* or *pause* at this point suggests the need to contemplate the two extremes.

Vs. 7: My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast! I will sing and make melody! This verse evidently occurs at night (*awake, dawn*). With this assumption in mind, we may say that the psalmist's *heart* or *lev* resembles that of the Song's bride: "I slept, but my *heart* was awake" [Sg 5.2]. Compare the two conditions of heart: the psalmist's is *steadfast* or *nakon*, from the verbal root *kun*. "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be *established* as the highest of the mountains" [Is 2.2]. The bride's heart is *awake* or *her*, from the verbal root *hur* with its multiple meanings *to be hot*, *to raise up*, *to be naked*, *to dig*.

The psalmist is quick, almost anxious, to proclaim to God that his heart is *nakon*, which accounts for his two-fold utterance. By reason of this steadfastness, he is able to both *sing* (*shyr*) and *make melody* (*zamar*). The former usually vocal, and the latter with instrumental music. Cf. Ps 7.17 re. *zamar*. Again, both *shyr* and *zamar* presumably take place at night.

Vs. 8: Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! Here the psalmist cites three occasions to be watchful or *awake*, *hur*, as noted with regard to Sg 5.2 just above. The first instance is with regard to the psalmist's *soul*, *nepshesh*, which was asleep; again, cf. Sg 5.2. Subsequently we have two musical instruments, *harp* (*nevel*) and *lyre* (*kinor*), both of which will rouse the *dawn*, *shachar*, whose verbal root implies *seeking*: "My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly *seeks* you" [Is 26.9].

Vs. 9: I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. Because vs. 8 transpires during the night or during the predawn hours, we may say that this verse expresses *thanks* (*yadah*) after daybreak. It occurs *among the peoples*, *vahamym*, literally, *in* (b- or v-) them. Such in-ness can be taken as not necessarily being physically among peoples but having an awareness of participating in their lives while at the same time remaining within the Jerusalem temple. Note that the psalmist continues this theme by singing (*zamar*) among *nations*.

Vs. 10: For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Vs. 9 speaks of the peoples among which the psalmist gives God thanks which may be perceived as a horizontal or outward flowing gesture. Now vs. 10 implies a vertical or upward flowing gesture in recognition of God's *chesed*; it originates on earth and is *great* (*gadol*..extending upwards) *had* or *to* the heavens, that is, *chesed's* point of rest. Furthermore, divine *faithfulness* ('*emeth*) reaches to *clouds*, *shachaq* (singular) which are lower than heavens and not as penetrating as *chesed*.

Vs. 11: Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth! Cf. vs. 5 which is identical. This wish for God's *kavod* to extend over the earth is the theme of Ps 57 and concludes with the desire for divine transcendence to be recognized by people everywhere.

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Psalm Fifty-Eight

Vs. 1: Do you indeed decree what is right, you gods? Do you judge the sons of men uprightly? The theme of this psalm is to curse enemies whom the psalmist identifies as *gods* which the Hebrew reads as *silence*, '*elem*: "Do you indeed speak out of the *silence* of justice?" This word is difficult to understand; it can also mean *rams* but can be taken metaphorically as *leader* (of the people); their "silence" may be understood as a kind of dumbness or inability *to decree* (*davar*, *to speak*, in contrast to their dumbness) *tsedeq*. Such *tsedeq* is complemented by a question regarding their upright *judgment*, *shaphat* (verb).

The conduct of such '*elem* in this psalm may be outlined as follows after the psalmist questions their ability to judge:

- 1) vs. 3: devise wrongs
- 2) deal out violence
- 3) go astray from the womb
- 4) err from birth
- 5) speak lies
- 6) vs. 4: have venom like a serpent
- 7) vs. 5: they do not hear charmers or enchanters

Then in vss. 6-9 the psalmist applies the following seven curses:

- 1) vs. 6: break their teeth

- 2) tear out the fangs of young lions
- 3) vs. 7: vanish like water
- 4) wither like grass
- 5) vs. 8: be like a snail dissolving into slime
- 6) be like an untimely birth
- 7) be swept away whether green or ablaze

Vs. 10: The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. As opposed to the wicked persons delineated in this psalm, the *righteous* or tsadyq *will rejoice*, samach (note future tense), upon seeing divine *vengeance*, naqam. “For the Lord has a day of *vengeance*” [Is 34.8]. Note that *day* can represent a kairos event, applicable to the psalm verse in its entirety.

For an example of the *bathing* of feet, rachats, cf. Gen 18.4: “Let a little water be brought, and *wash* your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.” The psalmist transfers this imagery to the tsadyq, only with *blood* (dam).

Vs. 11: Men will say, “Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth.” The *men* involved are more or less onlookers at what has happened in vs. 10 and causes them to speak. They have two observations, each beginning with *surely* or ‘ak, for emphasis:

- 1) The *reward* or pery also means *fruit*. “In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the *fruit* of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel” [Is 4.2].
- 2) God *judges* or shaphat; note the location, “*on* (b-) the earth.” Compare the with Acts 1.11 which speaks of Jesus Christ coming on earth: “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

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Psalm Fifty-Nine

Vs. 1: Deliver me from my enemies, O my God, protect me from those who rise up against me. A cry for natsal, *deliverance*, this time from *enemies* or ‘oyev. “And your descendants shall possess the gate of their *enemies*” [Gen 22.17]. Such ‘oyev are in contrast or in addition to those who *rise up against* the psalmist (qum) from who he beseeches *protection*, sagav; this verbal root implies loftiness. “And the Lord alone will be *exalted* in that day” [Is 2.11].

Vs. 2: Deliver me from those who work evil, and save me from bloodthirsty men. A second appeal for natsal with respect to two threats:

- 1) those devising *evil* against the psalmist, ‘awen, more specifically, *vanity*. “An evildoer listens to *wicked* lips; and a liar gives heed to a mischievous tongue” [Prov 17.4].
- 2) This second request involves the verb yashah, “*Jesus*,” it is with respect to *bloodthirsty* men, or in Hebrew, “*bloody* men.” “And now you (Cain) are cursed from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s *blood* from your hand” [Gen 4.11].

Vs. 3: For, lo, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men band themselves against me. For no transgression or sin of mine, O Lord. Note that this sentence continues into the next verse. Use of *lo* or hineh serves to heighten the psalmist’s plight. *They* may refer to the already mentioned bloodthirsty men who *lie in wait*, ‘arav, in the sense of setting an ambush. “And Saul came to the city of Amalek and *lay in wait* in the valley” [1 Sam 15.5].

In addition to such adversaries are *fierce men*, haz, which fundamentally means *strong*. They form *bands* or gur, a word which suggests waiting and can easily be associated with ‘arav just mentioned. For another use of this word, cf. Jer 30.23: “Wrath has gone forth, a *whirling* tempest” [Jer 30.23].

The psalmist is quick to protest his innocence by saying that he has not committed any *transgression* (peshah) or *sin* (chatah); the former is stronger than the latter as shown by the following: "For he adds *rebellion* to his *sin*" [Job 34.37].

Vs. 4: For no fault of mine, they run and make ready. Rouse yourself, come to my help, and see! The psalmist continues to advocate his innocence, claiming that he has no *fault*, haon, or guilt which would cause his enemies to both *run* (ruts) and *make ready* (kun). Reference is presumably to accuse the psalmist of a crime of which they are guilty.

In light of this injustice, the psalmist requests three things of God:

- 1) *rouse* himself or hur as in Ps 57.8: "Awake, O harp and lyre! I will *awake* the dawn!"
- 2) come to his *help* or as the Hebrew text reads, "for my *encounter*" as in Ps 35.2: "And rise for my *help!*," liqra'ty.
- 3) see or ra'ah his situation.

Vs. 5: You, Lord God of hosts, are God of Israel. Awake to punish all the nations; spare none of those who treacherously plot evil. Selah. The psalmist appeals to God's relationship with the nation of Israel by calling him "Lord God of *hosts*," that is, accompanied with tseva'oth or armed guard. "Behold, the Lord, the Lord of *hosts* will lop the boughs with terrifying power" [Is 10.33]. Such tseva'oth are bidden to *awake* or quts; alternate meaning is *to cut*; a noun derived from this verbal root is *thorn*. The purpose of this awakening is to *punish* nations, paqad, which fundamentally means to visit with the sense of preparing (as for war). "I will *punish* the world for its evil" [Is 13.11]. In the context of Ps 59, this punishment is directed towards the goym or *nations* in the sense of being distinct and even opposed to Israel; hence the heightened meaning of "God of Israel."

In distinction to the goym or included along with them are those who "treacherously plot *evil*," 'awen, which as in vs. 2 implies vanity. Selah (first of two instances) is introduced as a reference point for considering the conflict between Israel and the goym.

Vs. 6: Each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city. The enemy at hand may be the goym of the previous verse; the *city* may be taken as Jerusalem or the psalmist himself of which he is a symbol. *Evening* (herev) is a time of vulnerability when darkness is about to fall. "At *evening time*, behold, terror" [Is 17.14]! Such goym (if we follow this lead) resemble *dogs*, kelev (singular). "Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the *dogs* shall eat" [1 Kg 14.11].

Vs. 7 says that such dogs are marked by the following three qualities:

- 1) bellowing with their mouths
- 2) snarling with their lips, or as the Hebrew reads, "swords in their lips" and 3) enemies act without anyone else knowing about their behavior ("Who will hear us?")

Vs. 8: But you, O Lord, laugh at them; you hold all the nations in derision. Such *laughing* or sachaq is a manifestation of divine transcendence which serves to put the *nations* (goyim) in proper perspective, notably for the psalmist's benefit. This verb conveys a sense of contempt. "Call Samson that he *make sport* for us" [Jud 16.7]. *Derision* or lahag implies imitation as well as speaking a strange language. "No, but by men of strange lips and with an *alien tongue* the Lord will speak to this people" [Is 28.11]. This is reminiscent of God's attitude towards the tower of Babel: "Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language" [Gen 11.7].

Vs. 9: O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress. Here God is addressed as *Strength* (Huz), proper noun, as though he were a fortified place. Such an image may relate to the psalmist as city in vs. 7 and is reinforced by God as *fortress*, misgav, which connotes a lofty place much as huz. "And the high *fortifications* of his walls he will bring down" [Is 25.11].

The Hebrew text of the opening words to this verse read “His strength will I *wait upon*,” the verb being *shamar*, which fits in with the two words *huz* and *misgav*, that is, waiting as a watchman on the city walls. “The *watchmen* found me as they went about in the city” [Sg 3.3].

Vs. 10: My God in his steadfast love will meet me; my God will let me look in triumph on my enemies. *Steadfast love* or *chesed* acts like an escort for God coming to the psalmist (in the city), rather, *meeting* him, *qadam*. This verb from which *east* is derived (we may say the direction from which God comes) implies the bringing of aid or a gift. “With what shall I *come before* the Lord and bow myself before God on high” [Mic 6.6]?

The Hebrew text for the second part of this verse reads, “God shall let me *see* upon my enemies;” the object of *seeing* (*ra’ah*), a result of this divine *qadam*, is not stated. The preposition *in* (*b-*) is used, literally, “*in* my enemies,” which suggests a frontal or face to face vision. Compare this notion with the similar frontal vision of God who *meets*...*qadam*...the psalmist. The verbal root for *enemies* is *sharar* as in Ps 56.2.

Vs. 11: Slay them not, lest my people forget; make them totter by your power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield! This earnest request is not to *slay* the enemy, *harag*, nor is it explicitly made for their repentance. “Will not the coast lands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when *slaughter* is made in your midst” [Ezk 26.15]? Their continued existence appears to be a lesson for the *people* (Israel) or more precisely, that they may continue faithful to God. Hence, the reason for them not to *forget*, *shakach*: “Yet my people have *forgotten* me days without number” [Jer 2.32].

Instead of slaying Israel’s foes, the psalmist wishes God to have them *totter*, *nuah*, a verb which also means *to wander*: “And he made them *wander* in the wilderness forty years” [Num 32.13]. The agent for this is divine *power* (*chyl*) responsible for *bringing them down* or *yarad* (necessarily imply destruction), is perceived as a *shield* or *magen*. “Fear not, Abram, I am your *shield*; your reward shall be very great” [Gen 15.1].

Vs. 12: For the sin of their mouths, the words of their lips, let them be trapped in their pride. For the cursing and lies which they utter. This verse continues into the next one and specifies the enemy’s actions:

- 1) *sin* or *chata’th* which is spoken (mouth).
- 2) *words* or *devar* (singular) are more the fruition of sin; although in the mouth, they have not yet come forth into speech as signified by *lips*. “So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great forest is set ablaze by a small fire” [Jms 3.5]! As a result of this deadly mental and verbal intent, the psalmist wishes their *pride* or *ga’on*, which also means an *ornament*, to be destroyed. “Your *pomp* is brought down to Sheol, the sound of your harps” [Is 14.11].

The last sentence flows into vs. 13; *cursing* (*alah*, also means an oath) and *lies* (*kachash*) are not simply spoken but *uttered*, *saphar*, literally, *written down* with an intended permanency.

Vs. 13: Consume them in your wrath, consume them till they are no more, that men may know that God rules over Jacob to the ends of the earth. Selah. This verse is a continuation of the previous one and expresses a desire for God to destroy or *consume* (*kalah*) them because of the *curses* and *lies* which the psalmist is undergoing. “The famine will *consume* the land” [Gen 41.30]. An alternate meaning is *to finish* in the sense of being completed. “Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was *finished*” [Ex 39.32]. Note that the psalm has *kalah* twice and as tied in with God’s *wrath*, *chemah*, which is similar in sound. The verb *chemah* is related to anything warm and can apply to the sun: “and the light of the *sun* will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days” [Is 30.26].

In this first part of vs. 13, *kalah* is (as noted) connected with divine wrath; the second *kalah* is more thorough, till *they are no more*, *eynemu*, an utter destruction of their being.

That men may know that God rules over Jacob to the ends of the earth. *Selah*. While the psalmist’s enemies are being (twice) consumed, the real intent of such punishment is that men *know* (*yadah*) divine

sovereignty as consisting of two parts, the first local and the second universal:

- 1) “*over* Jacob” or *in* (b-) him in the sense of being-with
- 2) “*to the ends of the earth*,” l- as implying extension from Jacob into this all-inclusive area. A *pause* or *selah* is inserted to contemplate this bridging of what is limited and what is universal.

Vs. 14: Each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city. Despite the experience of having been consumed, the psalmist’s enemies come back to life, as it were, or better, were not fully destroyed. Their time of *return* (shuv) is a safe time of day when it is difficult to discern objects, *evening* or *herev*. More fierce than the *evening* wolves” [Hab 1.8]. Again, keep in mind that the psalmist may be equated to a city. Furthermore, consider the fall of Babylon in Revelation 18, which prefigures the advent of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Vs. 15 completes the description of these dogs: *roam about* (nuah) and *growl* (lun), both actions as a result of not being fed. Nuah implies a moving to and fro: “Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips *moved*, and her voice was not heard” [1 Sam 1.13]. Note that lun can also mean *to spend the night*; this definition fits in well with that of growling when describing the dogs. “*Lodge* here this night, and I will bring back word to you, as the Lord speaks to me” (Balak, Num 22.8).

Vs. 16: But I will sing of your might; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. *But* or *wa-* (*and*) is a small but important word in that it signals a contrast of the evil described above with the psalmist’s faith in God. Such faith is expressed by two types of *singing*: *shyr* and *ranan*; the latter implies shouting: “*Praise* his people, O you nations” [Dt 32.43]; former is concerned with God’s *might* or *huz*, and the latter with his *steadfast love* or *chesed*. Both are different yet complementary features of God’s relationship with the psalmist and hence his people. In the verse at hand, note the time of day, *morning* or *boqer* (cf. Ps 55.17). With the notion of this word’s verbal root in mind (*to plow*), we may say that the psalmist “*plows*” right through the evils which his enemies inflict upon him.

In the verses just prior to this one, it was noted that the psalmist may be taken as a besieged city; while in this city, he perceives God as both a *fortress* (*misgav*, cf. vs. 9) and *refuge* (*manus*). For the latter, cf. Job 11.20: “But the eyes of the wicked will fail; all way of *escape* will be lost to them.” These two modes of protection are located in a *kairos*, *day*, or one of *distress*, *tsar*, from whose verbal root comes *rock* (*tsur*) and is a term suggesting refuge.

Vs. 17: O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love. The second time the psalmist addressed God as *Strength* or *huz* (cf. vs. 9), and which continues the theme of a city besieged and delivered. We have another type of *singing*, *zamar*, with its connotation of dancing (and pruning), the latter as noted in Ps 7.17 and elsewhere. Similarly, God is a *fortress*, *misgav*, as in the last verse; this repetition brings home the dreadful experience of enemies who have surrounded the psalmist (as city). This is emphasized even further by calling God (according to the Hebrew text) the “God of my *chesed*.” Contrast the gentle nature of *chesed* with the more “harder” terms as *huz* and *misgav*, etc.

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Psalm Sixty

Vs. 1: O God, you have rejected us, broken our defenses; you have been angry; oh, restore us. The first part of this verse is a statement of fact, that God has done three things:

- 1) *rejected* (the *us* implies Israel) or *zanach* which implies something disgusting. “O Samaria, you calf is an *abominable* thing” [Hos 8.5; also cf. Ps 43.2].
- 2) *broken* or *parats* (in the sense of scattering; *defenses* is lacking in Hebrew). “The Lord has *broken*

through my enemies before me like a bursting flood" [2 Sam 5.20].

3) has been *angry* ('anaph) which implies a breathing after. "The Lord was *angry* with me on your account" [Dt 1.37].

The final part of vs. 1 contains a heart-felt desire for *restoration*, shuv, implying that God has been with us earlier but is not so at the present moment. This shuv can also apply to Israel as a nation: "When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will *return* to the Lord your God" [Dt 4.30].

Vs. 2: You have made the land to quake, you have rent it open; repair its breaches, for it totters.

Rahash is the verb here (cf. Ps 18.7), obviously connoting an earthquake; a noun derived from the same root can apply to battle: "at the *rushing* of his chariots" [Jer 47.3]. In addition to this quaking, God *rents* it, patsam, this being the only occurrence of this word. Because the earth itself has been so rent, the psalmist bids God to *repair* it, rapha', a word connoting healing: "And the Lord will smite Egypt, smiting and *healing*, and they will return to the Lord" [Is 19.22]. Such rapha' pertains to the earth's *breaches*, shever, or fractures whose verbal root implies breaking: "This iniquity shall be to you like a *break* in a high wall" [Is 30.13]. In addition to quaking, the earth *totters*, mut, as in Ps 55.22, where reference was made to a righteous person who does not suffer this fate.

Vs. 3: You have made your people suffer hard things; you have given us wine to drink that made us reel. Refer to Edom, vs. 9, for the verse under consideration refers to a humiliating defeat suffered at their hands. The Hebrew text of the opening words reads, "You have *shown* your people *hard things*," ra'ah and qashah. The exact nature of these difficulties are not explained. Cf. qashah as *servitude*: "and made their lives bitter with *hard service*" [Ex 1.14].

The drink of *wine*, yayn, makes the people *reel* or rahal. "Lo, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of *reeling* to all the peoples round about" [Zech 12.2]. Although wine is not specified here, we may presume it is the cup's contents.

Vs. 4: You have set up a banner for those who fear you, to rally to it from the bow. Selah. This *banner* or nes is of the military variety, often set upon a mountain for better visibility. "So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a *pole*" [Num 21.8]. In this instance, nes serves as a means to cure the people from snake bite; it, as vs. 4 indicates, is only for people who *fear* or yare' God.

The second part of vs. reads in Hebrew, "that it (the banner) may be displayed because of the *truth*." The only other instance of qeshet is Prov 22.21: "that you may give a *true* answer to those who sent you." In the psalm, this banner is *displayed* or nasas, the verbal root for nes, *banner*, already mentioned. Selah or *pause* (the only instance in this psalm) may be taken as an opportunity to consider the significance of this banner.

Vs. 5: That you beloved may be delivered, give victory by your right hand and answer us! The *beloved* or dod is not specified; it can refer to either the king of Israel as a people. Dod (from which the proper name *David* is derived) is frequently used of the male companion as well as the noun *love* in the Song of Songs, for example, "For your *love* is better than wine" [1.2]. In the psalm, dod is connected with the *banner* of the previous verse, i.e., it is set up for his *deliverance*, chalats (cf. Ps 6.4).

Also, the psalmist beseeches God for two things:

1) *victory* or yashah, another instance of the verbal root for Jesus. Note its location, at God's *right hand*, yemyneka. Cf. Ps 110.1: "Sit at my *right hand*, till I make your enemies your footstool."

2) that he may *answer* or hanah us, i.e., the people as a whole. Although "Jesus" may be granted, nevertheless it attains fulfillment in this hanah. "For my eyes have seen your salvation (Jesus) which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples" [Lk 2.30-1, quoted from Isaiah].

Vs. 6: God has spoken in his sanctuary: "With exultation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the

Vale of Succoth.” The place-where to which the psalmist has directed his above mentioned petition is the (Jerusalem temple) *sanctuary*, qadesh. Note the association of this place with God’s *speaking*, davar, from the noun devyr, a term for the “holy of holies,” which may be taken as the “place of *speaking*” (cf. Ps 20.2).

These words by God speak of conquering and extending divine rule over neighboring areas; note that they are they done with *exultation*, halaz, which implies jumping up and down. “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will *joy* in the God of my salvation” [Hab 3.18]. Such halaz continues through vs. 8 and may be outlined as follows by mentioned nine geographical locations:

- 1) Shechem: God *divides* it, chalaq, a word which can apply to the dividing of booty
- 2) Vale of Succoth: God *portions* it, madad, in the sense of measuring it
- 3) vs. 7: Gilead and Manasseh belong to God
- 4) Ephraim is God’s helmet
- 5) Judah is God’s scepter
- 6) vs. 8: Moab is God’s wash basin
- 7) God casts his shoe over Edom
- 8) God shouts in triumph over Philistia

Vs. 9: Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom? Two questions the psalmist asks himself: 1) the *fortified* city could be Sela, Edom’s capitol. The adjective matsur is related to tsur, *rock* (cf. Ps 59.16). An alternate reading is distress: “in the *distress* with which your enemies shall *distress* you” [Dt 28.53]. Also Matsur is the proper name for *Egypt*. 2) If the matsur is Sela, *Edom* can be taken as the general area or entire country. “They shall put forth their hand against *Edom* and Moab” [Is 11.14].

Vs. 10: Have you not rejected us, O God? You did not go forth, O God, with our armies. Two complaints addressed to God:

- 1) *rejection* or zanach; cf. Ps 60.1: “You have *rejected* us.”
- 2) God did not *go forth* or yatsa’ with Israel’s *armies*, tsava’. Perhaps the psalmist had in mind the association of God with his *hosts*, tseva’oth, as noted regarding Ps 59.5, “You, Lord God of *hosts*.”

Vs. 11: O grant us help against the foe, for vain is the help of man! The *help* or hezrath (plural) may be paralleled with the divine tseva’oth just mentioned; this request for hazar (verb) is frequently mentioned in the Psalter, and here it is with reference to the *foe* or tsar; cf. tsur re. vs. 9 and Ps 59.16. The psalmist exclaims that human *help* (teshuhath, again, “Jesus”) is *vain* or shawe’. Often this word is used with worthless visions from prophets, for example: “Your prophets have seen *vain* and foolish things” [Lam 2.14].

Vs. 12: With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes. *Valiantly* or chyl has a location, “*in* God,” be’lohyim, and may be contrasted with the shawe’ of the previous verse situated “*in* man.” Such chyl has a function: it enables Israel to trample its *foes*, tsar (cf. vs. 11). “Together they shall be like mighty men in battle, *trampling* (bus) the foe in the mud of the streets” [Zech 10.5].

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Psalm Sixty-One

Vs. 1: Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer. The psalmist wishes God to:

- 1) *hear* (shamah) his *cry*, rinah, which can also mean a shout for joy: “Weeping may tarry for the night, but *joy* comes with the morning.”
- 2) to *listen* qashav his *prayer*, tephilah. “Let him *listen diligently*, very *diligently*” [Is 21.7].

Vs. 2: From the end of the earth I call you when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Presumably, the psalmist does not utter this statement when his heart is not *faint*; the verbal root for

this adjective is *hataph*, *to cover*, *to languish*. “When my soul *fainted* within me, I remembered the Lord” [Jon 2.7]. The psalmist faints (rather, his *nepshesh*) only at the earth’s *end*, *qatseh*, which can apply to the furthest known extend of land. Compare this *qatseh* with the similar one of Jonah when he was languishing at the extreme end of the ocean floor. Note use of *qara’* (*to call*) in vs. 2 and Jon 2.1, “I *called* to the Lord out of my distress.”

The “high *rock*,” *tsur*, is like an island, given the situation of Jonah in the ocean’s bottom.

Vs. 3: For you are my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy. This verse continues with analogies pertaining to divine protection which had started with the *tsur* of vs. 2. The other two names the psalmist applies to God:

1) *refuge* or *machseh*; the Hebrew reads “to me” as though this place were aimed in the direction of the psalmist (Jonah, under water).

2) “strong *tower*” or *migdal* directed against the *enemy* (*oyev*) in an offensive sense, not simply for taking refuge.

Vs. 4: Let me dwell in your tent forever! Oh to be safe under the shelter of your wings! Selah.

Although the psalmist calls God a refuge and strong tower, he prefers not to dwell there—for they are defensive positions—but to *dwell* (*gur*; this verb implies sojourning as opposed to permanency) in God’s *tent*, *’ohel*. The duration for this dwelling, actually has no duration, *forever* (*holamym*); this implies being in an eternal state of transition.

The second sentence of this verse reads in Hebrew, “I will *trust* in the shelter...”, *chasah*, or more accurately, *to flee* or to pass from a dangerous situation to this secure one, the divine *shelter*, *seter*, or more specifically, that *seter* belonging to God’s *wings*, *kanaph* (singular). “In the *secret places* of the stairs” [Sg 2.14].

This expression or longing for safety is marked by a *pause* or *selah*.

Vs. 5: For you, O God, have heard my vows, you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name. The *vows* (*neder*, cf. Ps 56.12) are not specified but God has *heard* them, *shamah* (cf. vs. 1 regarding his prayer). However, they are related to a special type of *heritage*, *yerushah*, as pertaining to fear of the divine *name*, *shem*, that is, as opposed to God himself. *Yerushah* is often taken as the promised land: “In the *inheritance* which you will hold in the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess” [Dt 19.14]. However, this is not the inheritance implied in the verse at hand; it refers more to God himself. It may be said that to such persons governed by divine *fear*, *yare’*, belongs the temple’s sanctuary: “Your holy people *possessed* (*yarash*) your sanctuary a little while” [Is 63.18].

Vs. 6: Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations! Here is a certain identity or affiliation between the king and “all *generations*,” *dor*; note the inclusiveness of this temporal extension of human life which can include peoples outside the nation of Israel. “They shall possess it (divine lot) forever, from *generation* to *generation* they shall dwell in it” [Is 34.17]. Perhaps this wish to have the king’s life *prolonged*, *yasaph*, refers to David or Solomon (i.e., his wisdom) as related to the Jewish expectation of the Messiah. Note the two-fold distinction here: *life* (Hebrew: “days on days,” or *kairoi*) and *years* (*shanah*, singular).

Vs. 7: May he be enthroned forever before God; bid steadfast love and faithfulness watch over him!

The temporal endurance of Israel’s king mentioned in vs. 6 is extended through his rule *forever*. It has a specific location, “*before God*,” *lipeny*, which implies being before God’s face. To be *enthroned*, *yashav*, means sitting in the sense of actually ruling. “The Lord says to my lord (i.e., the king), ‘*Sit* at my right hand” [Ps 110.1].

By requesting *chesed* and *’emeth* to guard the king, the psalmist wishes these two divine qualities as incarnated by Kings David and Solomon to be *enthroned*, *yashav*. The verb showing the endurance of such qualities is *natsar*, which connotes vigilance. “He *kept* him as the apple of his eye” [Dt 32.10].

Vs. 8: So will I ever sing praises to your name, as I pay my vows day after day. Two actions which are concomitant: *singing* of praises (*zamar*) and paying of *vows* (*neder*); again, the exact nature of such vows is unspecified but may be related to the divine *name*, *shem*, and thus singing. Note the temporal extension, *yom yom*, literally, “day day.” Such vows are paid, *shalam*, the verbal root to *shalom*, i.e., “made peace(ful).” This verb connotes bringing to an end or completion as well as a work in progress. “And the days of your mourning shall be *ended*” [Is 60.20].

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Psalm Sixty-Two

Vs. 1: For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. The Hebrew text lacks “alone;” has *truly*, *‘ak*, to emphasize the psalmist’s confidence. “For (*to*) God” reads as *‘el-‘elohym*; note the two “els” which shows the intent of this *waiting*, *damah*, a verb suggesting silence as well as continuous activity. “My eyes are poured out in tears, day and night, and they do not *cease*” [Jer 14.17]. The same verb means *to be like*: “*Be like* a hart, my love” [Sg 2.17]. *Damah* is used in conjunction with the psalmist’s soul or *nephesh* which is *like* God (cf. Gen 1.26).

The reason for keeping silent is expectation of divine *salvation* or *yeshuhah*, “Jesus.” For while *gentle silence* (*hesuchou siges*) enveloped all things...your all powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne” [Wisdom of Solomon, 18.14-5].

Vs. 2: He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly moved. Three appellations of God, all of which have been noted in other places: *rock* (*tsur*), *salvation* (*yeshuhah* or “Jesus”) and *fortress* (*misgav*). Observe the central location of “Jesus” between two nouns designating a fortified place. Such “Jesus” bestows stability or enabling the psalmist not to be *moved*, *mut*, a word signifying an earthquake (cf. Ps 60.2). The addition of *greatly* (*rabah*) does not mean total stability or freedom from shaking, only that it is significantly reduced.

Vs. 3: How long will you set upon a man to shatter him, all of you, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence? This and the next verse have the psalmist’s enemies viewing him as in a besieged city or fortress (cf. vs. 2 and Ps 61.3). The Hebrew text reads, “How long will you *imagine* mischief?,” *hawah*, a verb which connotes breathing and intense longing. “The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the *craving* of the wicked” [Prov 10.3]. Such extreme desire is aimed at *shattering* the psalmist-as-fortress, *ratsach*. “Righteousness lodged in her but now *murderers*” [Is 21.6].

The enemy’s assaults are aimed at two points:

1) the psalmist’s *wall*, *qyr*, which similarly implies a fortified place which is also a propr noun: “Because *Kir* is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone” [Is 15.1].

2) his *fence* or *gader* which can also apply to a stronghold not just a less significant fence. “To set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us a *protection* in Judea and Jerusalem” [Ezra 9.9].

Vs. 4: They only plan to thrust him down from his eminence. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths but inwardly they curse. *Selah*. Now the psalmist’s position is made more specific, an *eminence* or *se’ath*, from the verb *nasa’*. “By reason of his *highness* I could not endure” [Job 31.23]. While situated there, his enemies 1) take pleasure or *ratsah* in falsehood and 2) curse, not simply this but *inwardly*, *qerev*, which as a noun can also mean the *heart* as in this sentence similar to vs. 4: “There is no truth in their mouth; their *heart* is destruction” [Ps 5.9].

Reflection or *pause* (*selah*) is needed with regard to this duplicity so as not to be overwhelmed.

Vs. 5: For God alone my soul waits in silence, my hope is from him. The Hebrew text lacks both

“alone” and “silence;” the verb *to wait* is *dum* (cf. Ps 30.12); consider the similar verbal root *damah* in vs. 1 to which these words are parallel. “Sit in *silence* and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans” [Is 47.5]. In light of the terrors delineated in the last two verses—which would be difficult to bear under any condition—the psalmist can turn towards God, more specifically, his *nephesh* or *soul*. In distinction from *nephesh* being associated with *dum*, the second half of vs. 4 has “*my hope*.” The Hebrew for this noun is *tiqwah*; note the alternate use as line as in Jos 2.18: “you will bind this *cord* of scarlet thread in the window.” With this in mind, we may say that the psalmist slides down this *tiqwah* through his *hope*.

Vs. 6: He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. Three familiar words commonly associated with God throughout the Psalter: *rock* (*tsur*), *salvation* (*yeshuah* or “Jesus”) and *fortress* (*misgav*). With these in mind, the psalmist confidently declares that he shall not suffer being *shaken*, *mut*, as in Ps 60.2.

Vs. 7: On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Note use of the preposition *hal*, *on*, with regard to the psalmist’s *deliverance* and *honor*. The first word, *yeshah*, derives from a verbal root meaning *to be spacious, to aid*, and is akin to *yashah* (“Jesus”). “I will *save* my flock, they shall no longer be a prey” [Ezk 34.22]. The second word, *kavod*, fundamentally means *glory* which is a kind of radiance from *yeshah* or “Jesus.”

The psalmist adds two more qualities to God but they lack the preposition *hal*: “mighty *rock*” (*tsur*) and *refuge* (*machseh*, cf. Ps 46.2). Note that instead of *hal*, these two nouns are related to God as *b-*, *in*.

Vs. 8: Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. **Selah.** Note the similarity between *times* (*heth*, singular) and *people* (*ham*); it is as though people or Israel were a manifestation of time in which they are urged to *trust* God, *batach*. The psalmist urges the people a second time to *pour out* or *shaphak* as in Ps 42.4 where the psalmist does this with regard to his soul, only in vs. 8 it is with regard to heart (plural in the Hebrew text). The direction of *shaphak* here is *before* God, *liphany*. He then concludes by stating that God is a *refuge*, *machseh* as in vs. 7. *Selah* concludes verses 5-8 to consider their positive note as opposed to the distressful verses of the last *selah*, after vs. 4.

Vs. 9: Men of low estate are but a breath, men of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath. Two types of people at opposite ends of the social scale: “low estate” (Hebrew: “sons of men”) or those who consist of *hevel*, *vanity*, the common word used in Ecclesiastes to describe human endeavors. “High estate” is lacking in the Hebrew text which reads simply “sons of men” who are a *delusion*, *kazav*, which also means *lie*. The latter class are more loathsome because while also a *hevel*, they pretend to have existence.

Note the use of *balances*, *mo'zonym*, with respect to non-entities; nevertheless, their weight, as it were, causes the balances to rise; this may be taken as an image of divine judgment where vanity equals weight and humility equals lightness. The verse suggests this by concluding that both categories are (in Hebrew) “from vanity altogether.”

Vs. 10: Put no confidence in extortion, set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them. Two commands contained in this verse:

- 1) *Extortion* or *hosheq* implies violence. “You shall not *oppress* your neighbor or rob him” [Lev 19.13].
- 2) *robbery* or *gazel*, from a verbal root meaning to pluck off. “They *pluck* the orphan from the mother’s breast” [Job 24.9]. In the first instance the psalmist counsels his listeners not to have *confidence* or *batach*; in the second, not to have *vain hope* or in Hebrew, “become not vain,” *havel* (cf. *hevel*, vs. 9).

The final exhortation concerns with wealth but not necessarily what has been gained illegally and at the expense of other persons. The verb *to set* (*shyth*) implies a setting in order, here with respect to one’s *heart*, *lev*.

Vs. 11: Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God. This verse continues

into the next. Note that the divine unity (*once*, 'achath) is expressed through his *speaking* or *davar*. Human multiplicity is expressed through *hearing* (*shamah*) or *twice*, *shetaym*. Vs. 11 reveals the first *shamah*, namely, the relationship between *God* and *power*, *hoz*. "Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your *might*" [Ps 132.8].

Vs. 12: And that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you requite a man according to his work. Here is the second *shamah* continued from the previous verse: *chesed* is proper to the Lord; both *chesed* and *hoz* are prefixed to God/Lord by the preposition *l-*, *to*, which can signify direction-towards-which. The act of divine *requiting*, *shalam* (*shalom*, noun) is in proportion to a man's *work*; another use of the preposition *l-*. "For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judge, and the measure you give will be the measure you get" [Mt 7.2].

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Psalm Sixty-Three

Vs. 1: O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where no water is. The address to God, 'elohym 'ely indicates the intensity of the psalmist's *thirst* for his presence, *tsama'*, reminiscent of a hart in Ps 42.2: "My soul *thirsts* for God, for the living God." *Seeking* God (*shachar*) is put on the same level as this *thirst*, more specifically, by the psalmist's *nephesh* or *soul* which is incorporeal and therefore invisible. Note that the noun *dawn* derives from this verb, implying a search during this time of day.

In addition to this spiritual nature the psalmist mentions his *flesh* or *basar* (cf. Ps 16.9) which *faints* for God, *kamah*, the only use of this verb in the Bible. The psalmist's corporeal nature has a location, a land which is both *dry* (*tsyah*) and *weary* (*hayeph*), words reminiscent of a desert (i.e., no *water*, *maym*). "The wilderness and the *dry land* shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and bloom" [Is 35.1]. "This is rest, give rest to the *weary*" [Is 28.12].

Vs. 2: So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. The thirsting and fainting of vs. 1 are satisfied by a *looking* or *chazah* which more aptly implies a beholding. "And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they *beheld* God and ate and drank" [Ex 24.11]. This *chazah* takes place *in* (b-) the *sanctuary* (Jerusalem temple) or *qodesh*, *holy* place where such a gaze and the *qodesh* are one and the same. Within this sanctuary the psalmist *beholds* (*ra'ah*) two divine characteristics, *power* (*hoz*) and *glory* (*kavod*), both of which are the complete opposite of vs. 1's dry and weary land.

Vs. 3: Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. The divine sanctuary contains God's *chesed* which transcends (biological) *life*, "*from* (min-) *life*." The result of this surpassing love is that the psalmist's physical lips will *praise* God, *shavach*; the verbal root implies soothing or stillness. "When its waves rise, you *still* them" [Ps 89.9]. Note that this *shavach* takes place in the future, perhaps implying the separation of body from soul.

Vs. 4: So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name. This act of *blessing*, *barak*, has duration, that is, during the psalmist's *life* or as the Hebrew text reads, "*in* (b-) *my life*," and most likely is effected by the lips. In addition to this vocal blessing, the psalmist *will lift up* his hands, *nasa'*. Note future tense; the Hebrew text lacks "calls on your name." The location for such lifting of hands is "*in* (b-) *your name*," *shem*, as opposed to God himself. This can infer being within the sanctuary of vs. 2.

Vs. 5: My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips. The psalmist's *soul* or *nephesh* is *feasted*, *savah*, a word which connotes physical satiety and here is applied to an immaterial entity. "And they have eaten and are *full* and grown fat" [Dt 31.20]. This *savah* results from (rather, *as*; the psalmist wishes to make an analogy) *marrow* and *fat*, *chelev* and *deshen*. The former refers to that which is most excellent. "And you shall eat the *fat* of the land" [Gen 45.18]. The latter implies fertility. "Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in *fatness*" [Is 55.2].

As a result of this satiety, the psalmist's mouth *praises* (halal) God with *joyful* lips, the verbal root being ranan which connotes shouting (cf. Ps 59.16). "They shall come and *sing aloud* on the height of Zion" [Jer 31.12]. Thus the physical mouth echos the spiritual soul.

Vs. 6: When I think of you upon my bed and mediate on you in the watches of the night. Here is when we see the precise time of the psalmist's feasting and praising of the previous verse: "*on* (hal) his bed" and "*in* (b-) watches of the night." The word for *bed* is yatsuah whose verbal root may be found in 1 Kg 6.5: "He (Solomon) built a structure against the wall of the house, *running* round the walls of the house." This verb means a spreading out: "and to *spread* sackcloth and ashes under him" [Is 58.5]. It is upon such a bed that the psalmist *thinks* of God, zakar, which implies recollection and the setting up of a memorial as noted elsewhere. "I *remember* the devotion of your youth" [Jer 2.2].

And meditate on you in the watches of the night. In addition to zakar...bringing to *memory*...the psalmist *mediates* or hagah which implies murmuring. Cf. Ps 35.28: "Then my tongue shall *tell* of your righteousness." This hagah has a specific time, "*watches* of the night," 'ashmurah (singular), which has military implications. "So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle *watch*" [Jud 7.19]. This military association applied to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt: "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 them" [Ex 14.24]. "Morning watch" most likely means that watch prior to dawn, at the end of the night vigil.

Vs. 7: For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. This verse states something that has happened in the definite past and gives reason for the psalmist's meditating and watching of the previous verse. He is mindful of God having been his *help* or hesrath, from the verbal root hazar. "To whom will you flee for *help*, and where will you leave your wealth" [Is 10.2]?

The psalmist next moves on to the present where he *sings for joy*, ranan (cf. vs. 5). He does so for having taken refuge in God's wings, better, the *shadow* of his wings, as in Ps 57.1, tsel. Another instance is Num 14.9: "And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their *protection* is removed from them."

Vs. 8: My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. Note that it is the psalmist's nephesh which does the *clinging*, davaq, as in Gen 2.24 which Jesus cites (cf. Mt 19.5): "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and *cleaves* to his wife, and they become one flesh." Perhaps the psalmist has in mind the second part of this verse, the becoming *one* ('echad) flesh.

While davaq represents a special union with God, the psalmist is aware that his right hand *upholds* him, tamak, which also implies a taking possession. "Behold, my servant, whom I *uphold*" [Is 42.1]. I.e., tamak is the divine response to the human davaq.

Vs. 9: But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth. Tamak as noted in the previous verse can imply a lifting up (from down below), so the "*depths* of the earth" represent the opposite place-where, tachath, which is akin to the preposition *under*. The verb *destroy* or shawa' also means *vanity*. "If I have walked with *falsehood*, and my foot has hastened to deceit" [Job 31.5]. Perhaps implied in vs. 9 is that the psalmist's foes seek his life in vain.

Vs. 10: They shall be given over to the power of the sword, they shall be prey for jackals. This verse states two additional prospects for the psalmist's enemies: "*power* of the sword," literally *hand*, yad; "*prey* of jackals," menath, or *portion*. "To gather into them the *portion* required by the law for the priests and for the Levites" [Neh 12.44]. Shuhal for *jackal* can also mean a *fox*. "Catch us the *foxes*, the little *foxes*, that spoil the vineyards" [Sg 2.15].

Vs. 11: But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by him shall glory; for the mouths of liars will be stopped. The *king* may be David or Solomon as noted several times above; his *rejoicing* (samach) takes place

not in the present but in the future which is consistent with the future tense of the psalmist's enemies depicted just above. Actually this is the first and only instance when king is mentioned in Ps 63. He is the embodiment of Israel and requires *swearing* of allegiance, shavah. "I *adjure* you, O daughters of Jerusalem...that you stir not up nor awaken love until it please" [Sg 2.7]. From this verbal root derives the number seven, perhaps considered a number with special significance. For example, see chapter six of Joshua where this number occurs frequently, that is, with regard to the fall of Jericho.

The consequence of this shavah is *glory* or giving of *praise*, halal, presumably to God. Halal implies giving voice, and with this in mind, the concluding sentence of this psalm makes more sense because lying mouths *will be stopped*, sakar, which also means *to deliver over*: "I will *give over* the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master" [Is 19.4].

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