

Notes on the Psalter, #5

Psalm Sixty-Four

Vs. 1: Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint; preserve my life from dread of the enemy. Note that the psalmist hopes that God will *hear* (shamah) his *voice* (qol). He wisely takes this approach in that the more impersonal and therefore impartial voice should have greater influence upon God. The word *complaint* can also translate as *meditation*, syach. “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is *musings* or he has gone aside or he is on a journey” [1Kg 18.27].

The psalmist also wishes his *life* (chay, i.e., not just his soul as often the case) to be *preserved*, natsar, a verb implying watchfulness as well as besieging. “For they *observed* your word and kept your covenant” [Dt 33.9]. This natsar is directly related to *dread* or pachad of the enemy, a word which means fear or trembling.

Vs. 2: Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the scheming of evildoers. The *wicked* or rahah (singular) may be taken as the above mentioned enemy. They are responsible for the following malicious actions against the psalmist which continue through vs. 6:

1) *secret plots* or sod from which the psalmist requests to be *concealed*, satar. Note similar sounding words within the context of this verse. Sod can also mean a familiar gathering, not necessarily for wicked purposes: “Pour it out upon the children in the street and upon the *gatherings* of young men also” [Jer 6.11].

2) “*scheming* of evildoers,” rigshah, from the verbal root ragash, *to rage*. “Why do the nations *conspire*, and the peoples plot in vain” [Ps 2.1]? Such rigshah is in conjunction with ‘awen, scheming, or more precisely, *vanity*.

3) *whet* or *sharpen*, shanan, as in Ps 45.5: “Your arrows are *sharp* in the heart of the king’s enemies.”

4) *aim* or darak, in the sense of making way with regard to a (in the Hebrew text) “*bitter word*” (davar, singular).

5) *shoot* or yarah from ambush. “Then the archer *shot* at your servants from the wall” [2 Sam 11.24]. This verb also means *to lay foundations*, *to sprinkle*. The enemy aims for the *blameless*, tam, or those persons who are morally upright. “And that man (Job) was *blameless* and upright, one who feared God, and turned away from evil” [Job 1.1]. In vs. 4, this shooting is done *suddenly* (pit’om) and without *fear* (yare’). Note the similarity in sound between yarah and yare’. Perhaps it could be said that fear requires a temporal gap as in “The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” [Prov 1.7].

6) *hold fast* or chazaq to (in the Hebrew text) “*evil word*,” davar.

7) *lay snares* or (in the Hebrew text) “*commune* of laying snares,” saphar, which as noted in other places implies the act of writing. The psalmist’s foes do this with secret intent and pose the questions (in Hebrew, “who can see them?”), i.e., “who can see them ‘writing’ these secret snares?”

8) *search out* iniquities or chaphas which also means *to feign*. “So Saul *disguised* himself and put on other garments” [1 Sam 28.8].

9) *accomplish a diligent search* where chaphas is used twice. The reason for this chaphas is because both the human *inward* (qerev) and heart is *deep* (hamoq). “The purpose in a man’s mind is like *deep* water” [Prov 20.5].

Vs. 7: But God will shoot his arrow at them; they will be wounded suddenly. Now God will deal with the psalmist’s enemies more or less according to the way they treated the psalmist:

1) *shoot* or yarah arrows to complement vs. 4.

2) *wound* makah, not necessarily slay enemies. “There is no soundness in it, but *bruises* and sores and bleeding wounds” [Is 1.6].

3) the Hebrew text reads for vs. 8: “They will bring him to ruin, their tongue being against them.” Perhaps the divine arrows and wounds will effect this ruin.

4) for the second part of vs. 8 the Hebrew text reads: “All who see him will flee.” Here the plural foes of the psalmist are perceived as a singular as if these ills became embodied in one person.

Vs. 9: Then all men will fear; they will tell what God has wrought and ponder what he has done. Here men will *fear* or *yare'*, the future tense being used because the above noted divine retribution has not yet occurred. The Hebrew text reads "every *man*," 'adam.

Such *yare'* has a two-fold effect:

1) *tell* or *nagad*, from which the preposition *before* is derived. I.e., *yare'* leads to a full and thorough manifestation...a putting *before*...of God's *deeds*, *pahal* being the verbal root which pertains more to creating something.

2) *ponder* or *sakal* which suggests a beholding and being prudent. "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and *understanding*" [Dan 9.22]. The object of *sakal* is *mahaseh*, from the verbal root *hasah* which pertains more to production by manual labor.

Vs. 10: Let the righteous rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him! Let all the upright in heart glory! Two types of people, *righteous* (*tsadyq*, singular) and *upright* *yishrey*, plural, in *heart*). The former *rejoices* or *samach* in YHWH and *take refuge* or *chasah*; note the preposition *b-* for *in*, signifying thorough penetration into God. The latter *glory* or *halal* which implies giving praise. The plural *upright* and singular *heart* implies unity of spirit regarding the *heart* or *lev*.

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Psalm Sixty-Five

Vs. 1: Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed. A psalm in conjunction with a successful harvest. The Hebrew text of this verse's opening words reads "Praise *waits* for you...", *damah*, with multiple meanings such as *to be like*, *remember*, *be silent*. Perhaps we may say that *praise* or *tehilah* *resembles* God; not just God but God with a specific place, *Zion*, and by association, Jerusalem and the temple (*Zion* being south of the temple area). "Solomon assembled the people of Israel...to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is *Zion*" [1 Kg 8.1].

In addition to *tehilah*, there are *vows* or *neder* (singular in the Hebrew text); such a *neder* is *performed*, *shalam* (*shalom*) which is not specified but the singular noun suggests consecration of Israel as a whole. Again, refer to 1 Kg 8.1, i.e., Israel gathered for Solomon's dedication of the temple. Also note the association of the proper name Solomon (*Shelomah*) with *peace*, *shalom*.

Vs. 2: O you who hear prayer! To you shall all flesh come. The first sentence completes the one begun in the previous verse, and the second sentence continues into the next verse. Note the association of the *hearing* (*shamah*) of *tephilah* with the locality of *Zion* and the further association with King *Solomon* (*Shelomah*).

Upon completion of the temple's dedication which we may associate with this verse, consider Solomon's prayer as a whole in 1 Kg 8. In the psalm verse it is not so much prayers which come to God as "all *flesh*," *basar*; cf. Ps 16.9 with this verbal root's alternate meaning *to bring good tidings*. Thus physical human nature "brings good tidings" not so much to the temple (in this context) as "to you," *l-*.

Vs. 3: On account of sins. When our transgressions prevail over us, you forgive them. The completion of vs. 3 runs in Hebrew, "*affairs* of iniquities," *divrey* (from the verbal root *davar*, *to speak*); this noun can have a wide variety of meanings.

Prevail or *gavar*, whose verbal root implies strength. "He shall *confirm* a covenant with many" [Dt 9.27]. In the Hebrew text, the object is not the first person plural but first person singular, *me*. With this in mind, we may say that the psalmist as this first person singular beseeches God for *forgiveness*, *kaphar* being the verb which basically means *to cover*. "So shall you *make atonement* for the temple" [Ezk 45.20].

Vs. 4: Blessed is he whom you choose and bring near to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the

goodness of your house, your holy temple! Note the use of *blessed*, 'ashry, which begins the first verse of the first psalm; cf. that section for details. The psalmist acknowledges two actions on the part of God with respect to 'ashry: *choose* or bachar and *bring near* or qarav, in that order; the latter verb being used in Ps 27.2: "When evildoers *assail* me," i.e., draw close. In the verse at hand, the qarav is in reference to divine *courts*, chatser (singular); the plural is used which is reminiscent of Jn 14.2: "In my Father's house are many rooms." Another example of chatser: "You shall make the *court* of the tabernacle" [Ex 27.9].

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple! The 'ashry can apply to the person chosen and brought near to God's courts; the first person plural (*we*) can be taken as a group...Israel...who enjoys *satiety*, savah: "My soul is *feasted* as with marrow" [Ps 63.5]. Savah is found in two places which shares one entity, divine *goodness* or tov: 1) God's *house* or byth and 2) his "holy *temple*," heykal, the latter being more specifically a place of worship. The former can suggest familiarity and the latter reverence.

Vs. 5: By dread deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation, who are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas. The Hebrew text reads, "(By) terrible things in righteousness will you answer us, O God of our salvation." The word nora'oth or *terrible things* derives from the verbal root yare', *to fear*; although not specified, they may allude to the marvels at the Red Sea when Israel was delivered from the Egyptians. *Righteousness* or tsedek is something which God speaks: "I declare *righteousness*" [Is 45.19]. In the context of vs. 5, God *answers*, hanah, that is to say, he gives a response although Ps 65 does not explicitly request a response from him. Note that the psalmist calls God "O God of our *salvation*" (yeshah, 'Jesus') who responds with this same "Jesus."

Who are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas. The *us* and *deliverance/salvation* ("Jesus") may apply to Israel, whereas *hope* or mitvach (from the verb batach) may apply to the Gentiles. Note that such hope is not concentrated, as it were, in Israel but tends to reach to two points: 1) "*ends* of the earth," qets (singular). For another use of this word: "For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the *end*—it will not lie" [Hab 2.3]. 2) "*farthest seas*" or in Hebrew, "those *far off* the sea," rechoqym. i.e., persons living at the other end of the Mediterranean such as Tarshish, the intended destination of Jonah (cf. Jon 1.3).

Vs. 6: Who by your strength have established the mountains, being girded with might. The mountains are now contrasted with the sea of the last verse which God has *established*, kun. "Their children shall be as they were of old, and their congregation shall be *established* before me" [Jer 30.20]. Such kun has as its agent divine *strength*, kocha. Note the play on words here. To be *girded*, 'azar, suggests God endowing mountains as warriors. "The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble *gird* on strength" [1 Sam 2.4]. *Might* or givarah also has military connotations. "I have counsel and sound wisdom, I have insight, I have *strength*" [Prov 8.14].

Vs. 7: Who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples. A change back to references pertaining to the ocean. The verb *to still*, shavach, can apply to anger: "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man *quietly* holds it back" [Prov 29.11]. Cf. Ps 63.3 for an alternate use of this verb: "My lips will *praise* you." Shavach is applied to three things: 1) "*roaring* (she'on) of the seas." "Ah, the *roar* of the nations, they *roar* like the *roaring* of might waters" [Is 17.12]. 2) the she'on of waves and 3) "*tumult* (hamon) of peoples." Thus she'on is symbolic of human commotion.

Vs. 8: So that those who dwell at earth's farthest bounds are afraid at your signs; you make the outgoings of the morning and the evening to shout for joy. Compare these words with those of vs. 5, "ends of the earth" and "farthest seas." This time we have mention of persons who live in these remote regions, better, *farthest bounds*, qitswah (feminine plural) which is akin to qets of vs. 5. Only two other instances occur, Ps 39.4 and Is 26.15: "You have enlarged all the *borders* of the land." If this verse is true, then it is easy to see how those living in the qitswah could behold God's *signs*, 'oth (singular); this term often signifies something which will take place in the future: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are *signs* and portents in Israel" [Is 8.18]. Such signs are not specified in vs. 8 but may imply Israel's Exodus from Egypt, the nation's definitive act of deliverance.

You make the outgoings of the morning and the evening to shout for joy. One word, *outgoings* or *motsa'* (singular), pertaining to two extremes of the day; the fundamental meaning is that of a source: "I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land *springs* of water" [Is 41.18]. On one hand we have the *motsa'* of *morning* (*boqer*) and on the other, of *evening* (*herev*). The former may pertain to the sun's course to evening and the latter to night's course to morning (i.e., the moon and stars). Despite their differences, both *shout for joy*, *ranan*. "And my mouth praises you with *joyful* lips" Ps 63.5].

Vs. 9: You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. Now attention switches to God's care for creation which is summed up by his *visit* or *paqad*. "At the end of seventy years, the Lord will *visit* Tyre" [Is 23.17]. Again, "Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who *care* for my people" [Jer 23.2]. Within the context of Ps 65, *paqad* is associated with two actions: 1) *watering*, *shaqaq*. "Or as when a *thirsty* man dreams he is drinking" [Is 29.8]. 2) *enriching* or *hashar*. "I have *made* Abram *rich*" [Gen 14.23].

The river of God is full of water. The source for such *hashar* is that God's *river* or *peleg* contains abundant water as already noted in Ps 46.4: "There is a river whose *streams* make glad the city of God." As stated there, *peleg* means a small channel of water. Perhaps the psalmist had in mind the river flowing from the temple which started out small but expanded: "And behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east" [Ezk 47.1]. Also, cf. Rev 22.1: "Then he showed me the *river* of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb."

You provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. *Grain* or *dagan* is a natural offshoot of the water just mentioned and often refers to corn. "May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of *grain* and wine" [Gen 27.28]. *Kun* alternately means *to provide* and *to prepare*; in the first case God offers it (present tense) for people, and in the second case he has given it (past tense).

Vs. 10: You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers and blessings its growth. A continuation of divine care (*paqad*) which continues through vs. 13, the end of the psalm which may be outlined as follows:

1) *water abundantly* or *raweh* implies satiety much like *savah* and is often associated with drink. "For I will satisfy the weary soul and every languishing soul I will *replenish*" [Jer 31.25]. In the verse at hand, *raweh* applies to *furrows* or *telem* (singular). "If my land has cried out against me, and its *furrows* have wept together" [Job 31.38].

2) *settling* or *nachat* which fundamentally means *to descend*, here it is associated with *ridges*, *gedud* (singular).

3) *softening* or *mug* which implies flowing down or melting. "The mountains shall *drip* sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it" [Am 9.13]. *Showers* or *revyvym*, used in the plural as in Dt 32.2: "May my teaching drop as the *rain*, my speech distill as the dew."

4) *blessing* or *barak* as applied to the earth's *growth*, *tsemach*, or *sprouting*. "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous *Branch*" [Jer 23.7].

5) vs. 11: *crown* or *hatar*, perhaps suggesting the completion of the year with a harvest as suggested by *bounty*, *tov*. The second part of vs. 11 reads in Hebrew, "Your paths drop fatness." *Paths* or *mahegal* (singular) signify the ruts in which a cart revolve and can be taken in a negative sense: "and her (i.e., the loose woman) paths to the shades" [Prov 2.18]. In the verse at hand, *mahegal* can refer to God riding a chariot from which he drops *fatness*, *dagan*, a word used in vs. 9, *grain*. Such tracks *drop* or *rahaph* this *dagan* much as dew: "The clouds *drop* down dew" [Prov 3.20].

6) vs. 12: *rahaph* is used here again, this time concerning the "*pastures* of the wilderness;" *naweh*, from the verbal root *nawah*, *to be becoming*, thus implying the full flowering of fields. "Sharon shall become a *pasture* for flocks" [Is 65.10]. Also in vs. 12 hills *gird* themselves, *chagar*, with *joy* (*gyl*), as noted in other places, implies a round dance). *Chagar* can imply preparation for battle: "And David *girded* his sword over his armor" [1 Sam 17.39].

7) vs. 13: *meadows* or *kar* (singular) can also mean *lamb*. "Send the *lamb* to the ruler of the land" [Is 16.1]. *Lavash* is the common word for *to clothe*; it can apply to moral conduct: "I have *put on* righteousness,

and it has put me on" [Job 29.14].

8) valleys *deck* themselves, hataph, which implies covering or hiding: "If he *covers* himself in the south" [Job 23.9]. *Grain* or bar refers more to corn; an alternate meaning is *beloved*: "My dove, my perfect one, is only one, the *darling* of her mother" [Sg 6.9].

9) pastures, hills, meadows and valleys which have been mentioned a) *shout*; rahah; an alternate meaning is *to be evil*, implying that a loud noise is associated with this quality. B) *sing for joy* or shur which basically means *to go around, to lie in wait*. "They lurk like fowlers *lying in wait*" [Jer 5.28].

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Psalm Sixty-Six

Vs. 1: Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth. A short exclamation to viewed in conjunction with the verse that follows. Ruah for *make a joyful noise* can also mean *to be evil*; this verbal root is akin to rahah as found above in Ps 65.13, "they *shout* and sing together for joy." In the verse and hand, ruah is the first of several exhortations, this one being directed "to all the *earth*," 'eretz, the natural environment.

Vs. 2: Sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! Consider references elsewhere pertaining to zamar, *to sing*; this second command switches from 'eretz to God's *name* (shem), rather, the *glory* (kavod) thereof. The fundamental meaning of zamar is *to prune*; i.e., it is a verb associated with cultivation of the *earth* ('eretz) and can be applied to a divine, transcendental nature. Note that the injunction *to sing* has kavod as a direct object, i.e., not "*to his name*;" thus there is a direct association between the two.

Give to him glorious praise! The third command aimed directly to God. The Hebrew reads more precisely, "Make his praise *glorious*," again, kavod, with reference to divine tehilat. God's tehilat requires no amplification in and by itself, but here the affiliation with kavod covers it, as it were, with a radiant cloak.

Vs. 3: Say to God, "How terrible are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. An injunction the psalmist entrusts to his listeners and which continues into the next verse. The perception of divine deeds are *terrible*, from the verbal root yare' which has been noted elsewhere. "Who is like you, majestic in holiness, *terrible* in glorious deeds, doing wonders" [Ex 15.11]? Here in Moses' song of deliverance at the Exodus yare' is joined with the adjective kavod, the two describing an extraordinary event.

Those enemies who *cringe* (kachash) before God may be applied the Egyptians, but note that in their arrogance they pursued Israel into the Red Sea and were drowned. This verb suggests feigning or lying. "Foreigners came *cringing* to me" [Ps 18.44]; thus kachash does not necessarily mean death or destruction. In the context of the psalm at hand, kachash is effected by divine hoz, *power*.

Vs. 4: "All the earth worships you; they sing praises to you; sing praises to your name." Selah. The psalmist moves from an injunction in vs. 3 to a two-fold statement in vs. 4 with regards to the *earth*, 'eretz, already noted in the opening verse:

1) Physical reality (and by implication, its inhabitants) is presented as *worshipping* (shachah, which implies submission) God, almost as if it did this regardless of the inhabitants' awareness. "Abraham rose and *bowed* to the Hittites" [Gen 23.7].

2) The *they* which *sings praises* to God (zamar) as noted in vs. 2, clearly refers to the inhabitants of 'eretz. It is as though they were "pruning" the earth. Here zamar has the preposition *to* (l-) prefixed to *you*, God. The same applies to God's *name*, shem. Compare the direct action of zamar in vs. 2 which lacks a preposition.

Selah or *pause* (another occurs at the end of vs. 7) is inserted after the initial exhortations of this psalm; it acts a transition point to a fuller statement of divine deeds through vs. 7.

Vs. 5: Come and see what God has done: he is terrible in his deeds among men. Another command or

invitation which is not in quotation marks as vss. 3-4, i.e., following selah. *Come* implies the psalmist's audience being at a distance; once they do, they automatically *see* (as the Hebrew text reads) "God's *deeds*," *miphaloth*, from the verbal root *pahal* which connotes fabrication and therefore careful thought put into these (divine) accomplishments.

The object of *miphaloth* contains the following:

- 1) *terrible* or *nora'* (from *yare'*) in the sense of causing fear through divine *deeds* or *halylah* (singular). Such deeds are related to people in that they are *on* (*hal*) the "sons of men;" i.e., pressing on them as a weight.
- 2) vs. 6: *turns* or *haphak*, clearly here a reference to Ex 14.22; *haphak* is used in conjunction with *river*, *nahar*, which is distinct from the sea of Exodus. "A *river* flowed out from Eden to water the garden" [Gen 2.10]. The second sentence of vs. 6 reads, "*There* (*sham*) did we rejoice in him." That is to say, in the midst of the *nahar*.

Vs. 7: Who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations—let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah. A continuation of the previous verse. *Might* or *givorah* implies military virtue, keeping in tune with the Exodus theme. "Do you think that mere words are strategy and *power* for war" [Is 36.5]? Such power does not last simply for the duration of the Exodus event but is *forever*, *holam*. "Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from *of old*" [Ps 25.6].

Closely associated with this continuance of past *givorah* into the future are the divine eyes which *keep watch* or *tsaphah*; cf. remarks under Ps 5.3 with this word intimating brightness. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place *keeping watch* on the evil and the good" [Prov 15.3]. In the context of the psalm at hand, this *tsaphah* applies to nations or those who are "the evil and the good."

Vs. 7 concludes with a warning to the *rebellious*, from the verbal root *sasar* which connotes stubbornness. "And they turned a *stubborn* shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey" [Neh 9.29]. To *exalt* or *rum* obviously means setting oneself on high and is the natural consequence of *sasar*. "Then your heart be *lifted up*, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt" [Dt 8.14].

Selah or *pause* provides an interlude to consider this rebellious attitude as depicted in Israel's history and as an occasion not to pursue its disastrous consequences.

Vs. 8: Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard. Barak, the common term for *bless*, from which is derived the noun *knee*; the obvious connotation is bending the knee as in submission. The command to barak is addressed to people or *hamym* as opposed to *goyim* or those not associated with Israel. *Hamym* can apply to various tribes or races whereas *goyim* usually connotes those in distinction to Israel's role as chosen people.

The second command is not so much for God's praise to be *heard* (*shamah*) but its *sound* or *qol* which also means *voice*; this term implies human origin as opposed to various types of noise and is fittingly united with *praise*, *tehilat*.

Vs. 9: Who has kept us among the living and has not let our feet slip. This verse continues from the previous one and states the reason for blessing God. The Hebrew text reads, "who holds our *soul* in life," *nepesh*; note use of singular in conjunction with the plural we which is further associated with the similarly plural *living*, *chayim*. This *keeping* or *sum* implies continuation in existence; the *slipping* of feet (*mut*) suggests falling away from *chayim* as into a pit. "Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be *moved*" [Ps 16.8].

Vs. 10: For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. This verse begins a series of proving by God which may be outlined as follows through vs. 12:

- 1) The first part of this verse deals with divine *testing* (*bachan*) in general, as it were; this verb implies a watching (cf. Ps 7.9). The second part of vs. 10 shifts to a more specific *bachan*, if you will, *tsaraph*, which

clearly means *to refine*. Cf. Ps 26.2: "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; *test* my heart and my mind." The object of tsaraph is *silver*; keseph. "Behold, I have refined you but not like *silver*" [Is 48.10].

2) vs. 11: "brought us (i.e., Israel) into the *net*," matsod, which comes from the same verbal root as *fortress*, metsodah, the two signify different realities: one capture and the other fortification yet both have in common the notion of confinement.

2) "placed affliction on our *loins*," matnaym (plural form always used), whose verbal root signifies strength as situated in the lower back. "In this manner you shall eat it (passover): your *loins* girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand" [Ex 12.11].

3) vs. 12: "men *rode over* our heads," rakav, appropriate for a chariot. "We will *ride* upon swift steeds" [Is 30.16].

4) "went through fire and through water:" "When you pass through the *waters* I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through *fire* you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you" [Is 43.2].

Despite the trials just outlined, the psalmist concludes vs. 12 with "Yet you have brought us forth to a *wealthy* place," rawah being the verbal root, to *saturate* in the sense of filling with water. "You *anoint* my head with oil" [Ps 23.5]. Perhaps reference is made to the promised land after the Exodus.

Vs. 13: I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will pay you my vows. Now the psalmist gives thanks through vs. 15 (which concludes with selah) by offering *burning offerings*, holah (singular); cf. notes under Ps 20.3 where the verbal root halah means *to ascend*, thus connoting the rising of smoke from such offerings. *House* or byth of course stands for the temple at Jerusalem in which sacrifices were made.

In addition to holah, the psalmist *pays...shalam* (shalom) *vows* or *neder* (singular) which are often associated with sacrifice the following verse shows: "But if the *sacrifice* of his offering is a votive offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice" [Lev 7.16].

Vs. 14: That which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. A continuation of the previous verse and a description of the psalmist's vows: 1) *uttered* or patsah which means *to open* in the sense of tearing. "*Open* your mouth and eat what I give you" [Ezk 2.8]. In this verse, patsah pertains to Ezekiel's eating of the scroll. 2) *promise* or in the Hebrew text, "my mouth has *spoken*," davar, which is specified as when the psalmist was in *distress* or tsar, as in Ps 25.22: "Redeem Israel, O God, from all his *troubles*."

Vs. 15: I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatlings, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah. A description of the holah mentioned in vs. 13:

1) *fatlings* or meach (singular), more specifically a *sheep*; from the verbal root machach, *to be fat*. "Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture, *fatlings* and kids shall feed among the ruins" [Is 5.17].

2) *rams* or 'ayl (singular); can also mean stag as in Sg 2.9: "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young *stag*."

3) *bulls* or baqar (singular). "Take a *bull* calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without blemish, and offer them before the Lord" [Lev 9.2].

The verse concludes with selah or *pause* as if the psalmist were taking a rest after making his sacrifices and before proclaiming God's deeds done on his behalf which now follow.

Vs. 16: Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me. Compare the opening words with those of vs. 5, "Come and see" which follow the first selah of this psalm; here the difference lies in *hearing* (shamah) where the psalmist begins his narration of divine deeds and after his sacrifice and vows. This shamah is directed towards persons who *fear* (yare') God. Such yare' belongs to listeners, i.e., those who are the object of the psalmist's *telling*, saphar, a verb which as noted elsewhere implies writing. Thus we may posit the sequence of this vs.: come, hear, tell (write).

Vs. 17: I cried aloud to him, and he was extolled with my tongue. Qara' for *to cry* in the sense of calling with

urgency and in a vocal manner; the Hebrew text reads “mouth” and begins this verse as “to him my mouth I cried.” The second have of vs. 17 is passive, that is, God *was extolled*, *rum* being the verb. Such *rum* may be contrasted with that of vs. 7, “let not the rebellious *exalt* themselves.” The agent for *rum* is the psalmist’s *tongue* or *leshon*; the Hebrew text uses the proposition *tachath* with the alternate meaning of *under* in the sense of being a support or foundation. Thus *tongue* has, as it were, a function independent of the psalmist.

Vs. 18: If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. *Iniquity* or ‘*awen* connotes *vanity* as in Ps 41.6: “And when one comes to see me, he utters *empty* words.” Note that the verse at hand reads in Hebrew, “If I had *seen...*,” *ra’ah*. The psalmist sees in his *heart*, *lev*, his inmost being which is not a physical type of seeing but a moral awareness. Concomitant with this human seeing is divine *listening*, *shamah*; cf. notes above concerning vss. 5 and 16, “come and see,” “come and hear.”

Vs. 19: But truly God has listened; he has given heed to the voice of my prayer. An acknowledgment of divine *listening* (*shamah*) to the psalmist’s *listening* as well as his command to do the same in vs. 16. Not only has God listened but has *given heed* or *qashav* which is a more intense form of *shamah* in the sense of attending to something. “Making your ear *attentive* to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding” [Prov 2.2]. In the verse at hand, *qashav* is directed more to the psalmist’s *voice* or *qol* which, in turn, is dependent upon his *prayer*, *tepilah*.

Vs. 20: Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer nor removed his steadfast love from me! *Blessed* or *barak* in thanksgiving to God for not *rejecting* the psalmist’s *tepilah*, *sur*, which fundamentally means a turning aside in the sense of passing by. Another meaning of *sur* is *to drawn near*: “I will *turn aside* and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt” [Ex 3.3].

In addition to God not rejecting prayer, he has not rejected his *chesed* or *steadfast love* which in the psalmist’s view, is of crucial importance. This significance is noted by the preposition *min* joined to *me*.

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Psalm Sixty-Seven

Vs. 1: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us. Selah. A psalm for a good harvest similar to Num 6.25: “The Lord make his face to *shine* (‘or) upon you and be gracious to you.” The theme wished by the psalmist is three-fold: 1) for God to be *gracious*, *chanan*; the object of this verb may be taken as Israel. 2) to *bless* or *barak* (Israel) and 3) for him to make his face *shine* or ‘or. “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to *give* them *light*.” The verse at hand is specific with regard to this light, namely, that it comes from God’s *face*, *paney*. This triple wish requires a *pause*, *selah*, to contemplate divine goodness, and is the first of two instances, the second being after vs. 4.

Vs. 2: That your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations. The psalmist’s attention shifts, as it were, from Israel to 1) *earth* or ‘*eret*, the physical environment and to 2) *nations* or *goyim*, the term referring to peoples other than the nation of Israel. This word implies their religious beliefs not in accord with the revelation bestowed upon Israel. Both elements have God’s *way* or *derek* and *saving power* or *yeshuah* (i.e., his “Jesus”) *known*, *yadah*. “My heart shall rejoice in your *salvation*” [Ps 35.9].

Vs. 3: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! As a result of the two-fold *knowledge* (*yadah*) in the previous verse, the psalmist wishes *peoples* to praise God; note that the word here is *ham* (singular) not *goyim*, and *peoples* here are not necessarily foreign to knowledge of Israel’s revelation. This would make sense in that *peoples* engage in *praise* (*yadah*) of God, a verb implying thanksgiving and confession or acknowledgment. Also note the distinction between *peoples* and “*all the peoples*,” both engage in *yadah*.

Vs. 4: Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah. Here *nations* or *le’om* (singular) is in accord with Ps 7.7 a generic term for races opposed to Israel and

is a population grouping larger than either *ham* or *goyim*. This more encompassing unit is urged to 1) *be glad* or *samach* and 2) *sing for joy*, *ranan*; the two verbs were noted and discussed elsewhere. In this instance, they result from God's *judgment*, *shaphat* (verb). This verse is reminiscent of Rev 20.13, the final judgment: "And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were *judged* by what they had done."

Shaphat has two qualities: 1) it has *equity* or *mishur*, from *yashar*, implying straightness. "Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become *level*, and the rough places a plain" [Is 40.4]. 2) *guide* or *nachah* which can also imply a return. "He spreads out the nations and *leads* them *back*" [Job 12.23]. Such *nachah* is in conjunction with nations, *le'om*; with the sense of this word in mind as noted just above, the nations are lead *back* to God.

Because several terms concerning the earth's inhabitants are involved, at this juncture a *selah* is helpful to contemplate how they relate to God, that is, with their different types of acknowledgment of him.

Vs. 5: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! A verse identical to that of vs. 3 and is used as a refrain.

Vs. 6: The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us. A clear reference to harvest, *increase* or *yevul*; from the verbal root *yaval*, *to flow*. "Then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its *increase*" [Lev 26.3]. The psalmist attributes this *yevul* directly to God who has *blessed* (*barak*) Israel. Note he first posits *God* ('*elohym*) then "*our God*," as if to emphasize the connection between God being responsible for earth's *yevul* as well as the *yevul* of Israel.

Vs. 7: God has blessed us; let all the ends of the earth fear him! Yet another exclamation of divine *barak*, this time in conjunction with the "*ends of the earth*" or '*ephes* (singular). Cf. Ps 2.8: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the *ends of the earth* your possession." The verse at hand has a distinction between *us* (Israel) and the '*ephes*; the latter are exhorted to *fear* (*yare'*) God situated as they are at the earth's four cardinal points. Such fear may be perceived as filling in the temporal distances between themselves and Israel. In light of this, cf. Mt 28.19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

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Psalm Sixty-Eight

Vs. 1: Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him! "This is the most difficult of the psalms to interpret, and there is no general agreement either as to its meaning as a whole or in many of its details. Some scholars regard it as merely a collection of unrelated fragments."¹

This psalm begins with a wish for God to *arise* or *qum*, that is, to take an elevated position above human affairs. The other two wishes are: 1) for God's enemies...and therefore Israel's...to be *scattered*, *puts*. "Therefore they (shepherds) have not prospered, and all their flock is *scattered*" [Jer 10.21]. 2) for them to flee, *nus*. "He who *flees* at the sound of the terror shall fall into the pit" [Is 24.18]. The preposition *before* or *mipaney* suggests in this context a sudden appearance of God, of his *qum*.

Vs. 2: As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before fire, let the wicked perish before God! More details with regard to the enemies' scattering, that is, they are *driven away* or *nadaph*. "He makes them like dust with his sword, like *driven* stubble with his bow" [Is 41.2]. Contrast this dispersal of *smoke* (*hashan*) with its coming in Sg 3.6: "What is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of *smoke*?"

The second detail with regard to this scattering is likening enemies to *wax*, *donag*. "And the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will be cleft, like *wax* before the fire" [Mic 1.4].

¹Note on p. 704 of **The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha**.

This two-fold wish culminates in a desire for the wicked to perish *before* God, mipanay, a preposition noted in the previous verse.

Vs. 3: But let the righteous be joyful; let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy! A shift from wicked men to a three-fold desire for the *righteous*, tsadyq (singular):

- 1) samach; cf. elsewhere for comments.
- 2) halats with respect to *before* God, mipanay, in contrast to the enemies perishing *before* him in vs. 2. "I will be *glad* (samach) and *exult* (halats) in you" [Ps 9.2].
- 3) being *jubilant* or sus which is intensified by another use of samach, joy. "I will *rejoice* in Jerusalem and be glad in my people" [Is 65.19].

Vs. 4: Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds; his name is the Lord, exult before him! Three commands as opposed to exhortations of the previous verses:

- 1) *sing* or shyr *to* (l-) God or 'elohym.
- 2) zamar (cf. the alternate sense of *to prune*) which lacks a preposition; i.e., a direct connection between zamar and *name*, shem.
- 3) The Hebrew text reads for "lift up a song," "*cast up* a highway for him who rides upon the heavens," the verb being salal. "*Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way*" [Is 57.14]. This building up is with reference to *heavens* or haravah (singular); the fundamental meaning of this word is a *plain*. "Moses went up from the *plains* of Moab" [Dt 34.1]. Since it is God who *rides* (rakav) on these heavens, the salal involved is not a physical construction but a spiritual preparation. "This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" [Acts 1.11]. With Christ's ascension in mind, human salal may be said to consist in waiting.

The last part of this verse reads in Hebrew "by his name JAH," an abbreviated form of YHWH. It is in this name that the psalmist bids his listeners to *exult*, halaz. For a negative use, "You will no more *exult*, O oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon" [Is 23.12].

Vs. 5: Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. Two qualities of God:

- 1) acts as father towards *fatherless* or yatom. "You shall not afflict any widow or *orphan*" [Ex 22.22].
- 2) is *protector* or dayan, another term for *judge*, this with regard to widows. "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world" [Jms 1.27].

God does not act in the human way described by St. James; rather, he does so directly by extending this protection from his "holy *habitation*," mahon, which can refer to the temple or heaven. "O Lord, I love the *habitation* of your house and the place where your glory dwells" [Ps 26.8]. For an alternate meaning, cf. Nah 2.12: "(the lion) filled his caves with prey and his *dens* with torn flesh."

Vs. 6: God gives the desolate a home to dwell in; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a parched land. Compare the *house* or bayth with habitation of the previous verse; it is as though God settles such unfortunates in his own house or temple. They are called *desolate*, yachyd (singular) which can refer to an *only* child: "Take your son, your *only son* Isaac, whom you love" [Gen 22.2].

Similarly, God leads out *prisoners* or those who are *bound*, 'asar: "Paul, a *prisoner* for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles" [Eph 3.1].

In contrast to divine bounty are the *rebellious* or those who are sarar as in Ps 66.7. Note the similar sound yet different means between this group, sorarym and the *prisoners*, 'asyrym. The latter must live in a *parched land*, tsechychah, from the verbal root tsachach which implies brightness or exposure. "For the blood she has

shed is still in the midst of her; she put it on the *bare rock*" [Ezk 24.7].

Vs. 7: O God, when you went forth before your people, when you marched through the wilderness. Selah.

This verse continues into the next one and is punctuated by *selah* to get attention to divine intervention. A clear reference to the Exodus with emphasis on *before* or *lipney*, for example, Ex 14.19: "Then the angel of God who went *before* the host of Israel moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them." Not only does the psalmist recall this decisive event, he is mindful that God *marched* (*tsahad*) with the Israelites in the person of Moses. "Then Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea" [Ex 15.22]. Cf. Ps 18.36: "You gave a wide place for my *steps* under me." These steps imply a road or path in the *wilderness*, *yeshymon*, a word only found here as well as in Pss 78.39 and 106.13.

Vs. 8: The earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, at the presence of God; yon Sinai quaked at the presence of God, the God of Israel. God's going forth produces these two natural phenomena:

1) earth *quaked* or *rahash* as in Ps 18.7: "Then the earth reeled and *rocked*."

2) heavens *poured down rain* or *nataph*. "I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands *dripped* with myrrh" [Sg 5.5]. Both phenomena occurred at God's *presence*, *mipany*, literally, "before his face."

Now the location shifts from God bringing Israel out of Egypt to *Sinai* where he gave the Torah. "On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings, 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]. Note the second use of *mipany*; "God of Israel" may be taken as reassurance to the people that the dramatic events at Sinai were not coming from an alien or hostile divinity. The Hebrew text lacks "quaked;" i.e., it has no verb. The immediacy of Sinai and *mipany* regarding God can be taken as displaying the importance of this encounter.

Vs. 9: Rain in abundance, O God, you did shed abroad; you restored your heritage as it languished. Such *rain* or *geshem* is of the heavy variety as opposed to showers. "And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great *rain*" [1 Kg 18.45]. Note that the psalmist says that God *shed* (this rain) *abroad*, *nuph*, which fundamentally means a waving motion usually in connection with sacrifice. "And Aaron shall *wave* the offering" [Num 8.11].

Such *nuph* may be taken as a *restoration* or confirmation of God's heritage, *kun*. "The city of God which God *establishes* forever" [Ps 48.8]. In the verse at hand, *kun* is simultaneous with Israel-as-*heritage* (*nachalah*) in a state of *languishing*, *la'ah*. "I am *weary* of bearing them" [Is 1.14].

Vs. 10: Your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy. The Hebrew reads, "Your people has dwelt therein." The exact nature of this *dwelling* (*yashav*) is unclear; it could refer to *heritage* of the last verse which implies the encounter with God at Sinai. *Flock* or *chayah* can refer to man or beast; from the verbal root *to be alive*. "Bring forth with you every *living thing* that is with you of all flesh" [Gen 8.18].

The *poor* or *hany* derives from *hanah* which as noted elsewhere (cf. Ps 18.27) has multiple means such as *to sing*, *to answer*, *to be poor*. Note the use of *kun* for *to provide* as in vs. 9.

Vs. 11: The Lord gives the command; great is the host of those who bore the tidings. Here the Lord is presented as a military leader who gives a *command* or 'omer, literally, *word*. Its fulfillment is expressed by the *host* or *tsava'*. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of *hosts*" [Is 6.3]. Such *host* is identical with bears of *tidings* or those who engage in *basar*. "O Zion, herald of *good tidings*" [Is 40.9]. The New Testament fulfillment of *basar* is the birth of Jesus Christ; note that *flesh* comes from the same verbal root. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly *host* praising God" [Lk 2.13].

Vs. 12: "The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!" The women at home divide the spoil. Such is the *basar* of the previous verse. These kings are heads of *hosts*, *tsava'* (singular). On the other hand, the divine *tsava'* exclaim their *flight*, *nadad* being the verb which also means *to wander*. "Like a bird that *strays* from its nest is

a man who *strays* from his home” [Prov 27.8].

The women at home divide the spoil. I.e., presumably referring to the warriors’ wives who *remain* at home or nawah. “And you, O seacoast, shall be *pastures*, meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks” [Zeph 2.6]. Their task is to *divide* (chalaq) spoil. “Ahaz *despoiled* the house of God, the house of the king and the princes” [2 Chron 28.21]. In a sense, the verse under consideration is reminiscent of Mary: When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him while Mary sat in the house “[Jn 11.20].

Vs. 13: Though they stay among the sheepfolds—the wings of a dove covered with silver, its pinions with green gold. The only other reference to *sheepfolds* or shephataym is Ezk 40.43: “And *hooks*, a handbreadth long, were fastened round about within (the temple).” This refers to stalls for the sacrificial victims.

The second part of vs. 13 may refer to a precious object discovered amid the spoil; attention is brought to the *dove’s* (yonah) *wings* or kanaph (singular), from a verbal root meaning *to hide*. “Hide me in the shadow of your *wings*” [Ps 17.8]. Here we have a play on words: kanaph and chaphah, *to cover*, as well as their respective meanings. Such wings are adorned with *silver*; its *pinions* (‘ever, singular) refer more to feathers. “They shall mount up with *wings* like eagles” [Is 40.31]. *Green gold* or yeraqraq is their adornment; this word occurs only two other times (Lev 13.49 and 14.37) and suggests the color of leprosy. Such yeraqraq are joined with the word charuts, more specifically, *gold* itself; from a verbal root implying sharpness. “Behold, I will make of you a threshing sledge, new, *sharp* and having teeth” [Is 41.15].

Vs. 14: When the Almighty scattered kings there, snow fell on Zalmon. *There* (bah) reads as “in it,” denoting an unrecorded event and place. *To scatter* or paras can also refer to the spreading of wings: “The cherubim shall *spread out* their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings” [Ex 25.20]. With the dove mentioned in the previous verse, perhaps the *Almighty* or Shaday can be perceived as endowed with wings which effect this scattering of kings or foes opposed to him.

For the only two other references to *Zalmon*, cf. Jdg 9.48 and 2 Sam 23.28. *Snow* or sheleg as used here may refer to the snowiness of bodies, as it were, which resulted from their being scattered.

Vs. 15: O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan; O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan! Reference to that area east of the Sea of Galilee. The Hebrew reads “The hill of God as the hill of Bashan; a high hill as the hill of Bashan.” Here is a certain equality between the *hill* (har; better, *mountain*) of God (implying Zion) and that of Bashan. Most likely the latter was used as a place of pagan worship as well as a people hostile towards Israel. “After he (Moses) had defeated Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of *Bashan*” [Dt. 1.4]. Also cf. Ps 135.11: “Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of *Bashan*, and all the kingdoms of Canaan.”

Vs. 16: Why look with envy, O many-peaked mountain, at the mount which God desired for his abode, yes, where the Lord will dwell forever? Here the scene shifts from one of equality (previous verse) to superiority of the implied Zion, object of divine *desire*, chamad, a verb which connotes yearning (cf. Ps 19.10). Despite Bashan being many-peaked, i.e., a *mountain* (har) which has gavnunym or a plurality of *summits*, the singular mountain of Zion may be perceived as representative of the singular Lord (YHWH) of Israel. It is on this singular mountain that the Lord *dwells*, shakan, which is a continuous presence. “And let them make me a sanctuary that I may *dwell* in their midst” [Ex 25.8]. Compare this verb with the verb (Hebrew text) *abode* or shavath, from which is derived *sabbath*. The noun netsach, *forever*, suggests perpetuity (cf. Ps 9.18).

Vs. 17: With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place. Compare this verse with Sg 3.6-7: “What is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon! About it are sixty mighty men of Israel.” Rekev for *chariot* is a military term. “I compare you, my love, to a mare of Pharaoh’s *chariots*” [Sg 1.9]. In the verse at hand, *thousand* or ‘eleph does not necessarily connote a specific number but an indefinitely large one. “About six hundred *thousand* on foot” [Ex 12.37]. With this in mind, the divine rekev shows God accompanied by heavenly hosts as he makes his way from *Sinai* (place of divine revelation) to the *holy place* (qodesh). This

place is none other than the Jerusalem Temple which is the new Sinai or place where God reveals not so much his divine name as to Moses but as now “wrapped in smoke” [Ex 19.18], symbolic of divine transcendence.

The last words of this verse read in Hebrew, “The Lord among them Sinai in the holy place,” and show this close connection not only between the two (mountains) but God’s presence in his people, *vam*, “in them.”

Vs. 18: You did ascend the high mount, leading captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell there. A verse partly used in Eph 4.8: “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” In the latter, St. Paul refers to Christ’s resurrection and ascension; the gifts are roles in the Church such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (cf. vs. 11).

The *high mount* or *marom* has been used several times thus far as in Ps 7.7: “and over it take your seat *on high*.” In vs. 18 this term continues with the theme of God’s passage from Mount Sinai to the Jerusalem Temple which is the true *marom* for Israel. *Halah* or *ascend* implies a descent or passing from a lower spot to a higher one; the former may be Sinai which despite it being physically higher than the temple, is lower by reason of theological implications. An illustration of this point: Ps 119 speaks in detail of the divine Torah (which was given to Israel). After this psalm come the “psalms of ascent” (120 through 134) used by pilgrims going to Jerusalem which can reflect in human pilgrimage God’s ascent in vs. 18.

God is also viewed as a victorious king returning home, for “you lead captivity captive” (according to the Hebrew text), *shavytha shevy*. A play on words: *to take captive* or *shavah* and *captive shevy*, from the same verbal root. Note the lack of reference to actual prisoners; since God is engaged in this action, he has the power to bind captivity itself. This divine activity is complemented by his giving *gifts*, *matanah* (singular), which implies tribute; it is done literally “in (b-) men” as if to stress by such gifts the full abolition of captivity. In addition to captivity, the psalmist adds the *rebellious* or those who are *sarar*, *stubborn* (cf. vs. 6).

That the Lord God may dwell there. While this verse began with God’s ascent of the high mount and follows with his subjection of enemies, it concludes with his *dwelling* or *shakan*. Note that the Hebrew lacks “there,” i.e., just a simple *shakan*. Cf. Ps 110.1: “The Lord says to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’” The *sitting* or *yashav* is akin to the *shakan* of the psalm under discussion.

Vs. 19: Blessed be the Lord who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. Selah. In light of God having ascended the high mount, this *bearing up* or *hamas* may be said to take place there. The verb implies the carrying of a load: “These things you *carry* are loaded as burdens on weary beasts” [Is 46.1]. Cf. Lk 15.4-5: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.” Consider this amplified notion of *hamas* in light of God as *salvation*, *yeshuhat*, or “Jesus.”

Daily or *yom yom* (“day day”) represents extension of divine presence within the human sphere; this expression may be taken as a *kairos* or special event.

The juxtaposition of these two words calls for a time to reflect upon their meaning, i.e., a *selah* or *pause*.

Vs. 20: Our God is a God of salvation; and to God, the Lord, belongs escape from death. A repeat, more or less, by way of affirmation of God as the God of “Jesus,” *moshahoth*, the only occurrence of this word, feminine plural, which is related to the common verbal root *yashah*. Perhaps the plural form suggests not just one manifestation of “Jesus” but an indefinite number of them.

Because the act of “Jesus-ing” is so crucial in the Psalter, the author adds that it is comparable to release from death, more precisely, *escapes* or *totsa’ah* (singular), which is in the plural. The constancy of God symbolized by the plural form is represented by “to God, the Lord.”

Vs. 21: But God will shatter the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways. In

contrast to the “Jesus-ing” above, God *shatters* his enemies’ heads, machats, a verb suggesting violent shaking. “By his wisdom he *smites* its (sea) pride” [Job 26.12]. In addition to the general designation enemies, the psalmist adds a person advancing (according to the Hebrew) in his *trespasses* or ‘asham (singular). Such a person (again, singular) is described as qadqad, literally, the *top of the head*; it implies old age. “The Lord will smite with a scab the *crown of the head*” [Is 3.17]. Also, qadqad can signify a person in his or her totality which in light of the verse at hand, means someone permeated by ‘asham.

Vs. 22: The Lord said, “I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea.” This verse continues into the next one and has God himself speaking. God is engaged in two types of *bringing back* or shuv; cf. Ps 14.7: “When the Lord *restores* the fortunes of his people:” 1) from *Bashan*; cf. vs. 15, a place of captivity and 2) “*depths of the sea*,” metsulah (singular) as in Jon 2.3: “For you did cast me into the *deep*, into the heart of the seas, and the flood was round about me.” Another similar word (metsolah) is used in conjunction with the demise of Egyptians at the Red Sea: “They sank into the *bottom* of the sea.” Thus vs. 22 is associated with Israel’s deliverance or Exodus.

Vs. 23: “That you may bathe your feet in blood, that the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from the foe.” Such is the purpose of God bringing Israel from Bashan and the depths of the sea as just delineated. I.e., it is for the purpose of taking vengeance.

Vs. 24: Your solemn processions are seen, O God, the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary. The Hebrew text puts this verse in the past tense, “they have seen,” without clearly identifying the observers; perhaps it may refer in part to God’s enemies in the previous verse before they have been slain. Again, the Hebrew has for “solemn processions” the term *goings*, halykah (singular), from the common word halak. While it most likely designates a religious procession, it specifically refers to God’s halykah, not a human one. Vs. 24 mentions it twice, the second time calling God a *king* (melek). This perception of God as a ruler entering a temple is a familiar one to ancient peoples and can serve as an analogy to the approach of his divine presence. *Sanctuary* or qodesh is the holy place or temple in general.

Vs. 25: The singers in front, the minstrels last, between them maidens playing timbrels. Three orders to the human procession which imitates the divine halykah of the previous verse: 1) *singers* or shyr (singular) whose sounds announce the procession, 2) *maidens* or halmah (singular), girls of a marriageable age. They play *timbrels*, toph (singular). “Then Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a *timbrel* in her hand, and all the women went out after her with *timbrels* and dancing” [Ex 15.20]. 3) *minstrels* or negen (singular), those expert in stringed instruments. “A man who is skillful in playing the *lyre*” [1 Sam 16.16], referring to David whose playing soothed King Saul.

Vs. 26: “Bless God in the great congregation, the Lord, O you who are of Israel’s fountain!” Words uttered by the three-fold procession above; strictly speaking, minstrels and maidens play musical instruments while only singers utter words. Thus the command to *bless* (barak) can be seen as one that is sung as well as accompanied by instruments. Note the specific place of such barak, which in Hebrew reads as the *congregations*, qahal (singular). “In the midst of the *congregation* I will praise you” [Ps 22.22]. The verse at hand has qahal in the plural suggesting that not only Israel is included but the goym, *nations*. Israel can take this position with confidence because the psalmist posits the nation as source or *fountain* maqor of the nations. “Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and who came forth from the *loins* (literally, *fountains*) of Judah” [Is 48.1].

Vs. 27: There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead, the princes of Judah in their throng, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali. It is uncertain why these tribes were singled out from the twelve, but *Benjamin* as *least* or tsahyr hearkens back to the patriarch Jacob. At the time his other son, Joseph, was prince in Egypt and held his brothers captive; Joseph requested the presence of his youngest brother, Benjamin, whom he loved more than the others (cf. Gen 43.30). Thus in Joseph’s eyes, Benjamin was “in the *lead*,” radah, a verb signifying rule or possession. “And *have dominion* over the fishes of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” [Gen 1.28].

Three other *princes* or *saray* (singular) follow after Benjamin: 1) *Judah* as *throng* (rigmah, the only instance of this word; from a verbal root meaning *to bring together, to heap up*), 2) *princes of Zebulun* and 3) *Naphtali*. “The land of *Zebulun* and the land of *Naphtali*, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light”: Is 9.1-2 quoted in Mt 4.15-6 with reference to the birth of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 28: Summon your might, O God; show your strength, O God, you who have wrought for us. This two-fold desire for God to *summon* or *tsawah* makes more sense in light of the quote from Is 9.1-2 and Mt 4.15-6 just above, namely, Jesus Christ as divine *might* (hoz) and strength (the Hebrew reads “and *strengthen...*”, verbal root for hoz). This double hoz manifested through the birth of Jesus Christ is what God has “*wrought* for us,” *pahal*, in the sense of fabricating something, for example, the physical nature of Christ.

Vs. 29: Because of your temple at Jerusalem kings bear gifts to you. Continuing the theme of the last two verses, these *kings* may be perceived as the three wise men who brought *gifts* (*shay*, singular; from the little used verbal root *shaya'*, *to bring*), that is of gold, frankincense and myrrh (cf. Mt 2.11). In the verse at hand, the reason for such gifts is “*because of your temple*,” the word for *temple* here is the common *heykal*. “The Lord is in his holy *temple*, the Lord’s throne is in heaven” [Ps 11.4]. When the wise men approached Christ, he was with “*Mary his mother*” (Mt 2.11); thus *Mary* in light of tradition may be taken as this *heykal*.

Vs. 30: Rebuke the beasts that dwell among the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples. Trample under foot those who lust after tribute; scatter the peoples who delight in war. Three requests directed towards God by the psalmist:

1) *rebuke* or *gahar* which implies restraint, not necessarily harm to God’s enemies. Cf. Ps 18.16 with regard to the Red Sea; also cf. Mal 2.3: “Behold, I will *rebuke* your offspring.” Such *gahar* has two objects: *beast* or *chayath* (singular in Hebrew) which is not specific but its location in reeds suggests Egypt: “Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams” [Ezk 29.2]. The second object is *bulls* or *‘abyr* (singular) which also means someone powerful. “Yet God prolongs the life of the *mighty* by his power” [Job 24.22]. They do not act alone but are accompanied by “*calves of the peoples*,” *haglah* (singular), a term used for such a beast unaccustomed by the yoke or not broken in; hence, the *peoples* (*hamym*) are similar to this animal.

2) *trample under foot* or *raphas*. “Like a muddied spring or a *polluted* fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked” [Prov 25.26]. This verb is used with reference to those who *lust after* (*ruts*) as in Ps 59.4: “For no fault of mine, they *run* and make ready.” Thus the fundamental meaning is *to run*, and in the verse at hand it is in conjunction with *tribute*, *keseph*, or better, *silver*.

3) *scatter* or *bazar*, the only other instance being Dan 11.24: “*scattering* among them plunder, spoil and goods.” Such *bazar* is done to those who *delight* or *chaphats* in war, this verb signifying total enjoyment. “Their souls *delight* in their abominations” [Is 66.3].

Vs. 31: Let bronze be brought from Egypt; let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out her hands to God. *Bronze* or *chashmanym* is associated with those who are fat; it is the only instance of this word in the Bible. Its association with *Egypt* implies the bringing of captives from there; can be suggestive of Israel’s Exodus. Cf. their despoiling of the Egyptians: “For they had asked of the Egyptians jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing” [Ex 12.35].

Ethiopia or *Kush* lies south of *Egypt*, another source of wealth: “The wealth of *Egypt* and the merchandise of *Ethiopia*, and the Sabaeans, men of stature, shall come over to you and be yours” [Is 45.14]. Thus *Ethiopia* and these other peoples do not simply submit to God but *hasten* to do so, *ruts*, which as noted in vs. 30 above means *to run*.

Vs. 32: Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth; sing praises to the Lord. Selah. Note mention of *kingdoms* after the more specific nations of vs. 31; the verse at hand contains two types of *singing*, *shyr* and *zamar*; for notes

on these verbs, cf. Ps 21.13 respectively: “We will *sing* and *praise* your power.” Vs. 32 contains two titles of the divinity: *God* or ‘elohym and *Lord* or ‘adonay. The drama of God taking vengeance upon his foes and the acknowledgment of God by nations from vs. 20 through vs. 32 requires a *pause*, *selah*, for consideration. The previous *selah* occurred at the conclusion of vs. 20.

Vs. 33: To him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; lo, he sends forth his voice, his mighty voice.

The first part of this verse continues from the preceding one with *selah* as an interlude. It is to God described as *riding* or *rakav* that the verbs *shyr* and *zamar* apply, clearly a military term which can also be associated with the sun’s progress from east to west. Cf. Ps 33.4: “In your majesty *ride forth* victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right.” The psalmist first mentions *heavens* or *shamaym* and quickly adds the adjective *ancient*, *qedem*, i.e., those heavens which were *before* anything else was created. Cf. Ps 18.10–3 which also contains the verb *rakav*.

This two-fold mention of *shamaym* is balanced by a similar two-fold mention of God’s *voice* or *qol* which is identified as being *mighty*, *hoz*. Such *hoz* harkens back to the “Spirit (Ruach) of God moving over the face of the waters” [Gen 1.2].

Vs. 34: Ascribe power to God whose majesty is over Israel, and his power is in the skies. The issuing forth of God’s *mighty* (*hoz*) voice effects the response of ascribing *power* or *hoz* to him which, as it were, effects a balance. Such *hoz* is indirectly associated with the nation of *Israel* over which lies divine *majesty*, *ga’on*, which can also mean *pride* (cf. Ps 31.18). Note that *ga’on* lies *above* Israel (*hal*) as a protective blanket or shield, again harkening back to the Spirit of Gen 1.2 mentioned just above. In addition to *hoz* being ascribed to God, it lies in the *skies*, *shachaq* (singular), more accurately, *clouds*, which act as a protective shield between the divine and human realms.

Vs. 35: Terrible is God in his sanctuary, the God of Israel, he gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God! This psalm concludes with the just delineated transcendent God as present in his *sanctuary*, *miqdash*, from the verbal root *qadash*, *to be holy*. God (i.e., of *Israel*) is present as being *terrible* or *nora’*, from the verbal root *yare’*, *to be afraid*. The bridge between the divine and human spheres is bridged by God bestowing that same *hoz* already noted to Israel; here *hoz* is coupled with *strength* or *tahatsmoth*, the only occurrence of this verb, from the root *hatsam*, *to be strong*. The psalmist ends with an exclamation of *blessing*, *barak*, which respectively acknowledges God as being terrible not only in his sanctuary but in the heavens (vs. 33).

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Psalm Sixty-Nine

Vs. 1: Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. This psalm begins with a plea to be “Jesus-ed,” *yashah*, with the context of waters reaching the psalmist’s *neck* or in Hebrew, his *soul*, *nephesh*. “For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood was round about me” [Jon 2.3]. *Waters* are representative of chaos: “and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen 1.2).

Vs. 2: I sink in deep mire where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. While the waters rise in the previous verse, the psalmist is *sinking*, *tavah*. “Your trusted friends have deceived you and prevailed against you; now that your feet are *sunk* in the mire, they turn away from you” [Jer 38.22]. While *mire* is used here, it is a different word (*bots*; the only instance of this word; cf. *bitsah*, *marsh*) from that of the psalm at hand, *yawan*, used with reference to *clay*. “Just as you saw iron mixed with the *miry clay*” [Dan 2.41]. No *foothold* or *mahamad*, the only instance of this word in the Bible.

In addition to this semi-firm circumstance, the psalmist says that he has come into “*deep waters*,” *hamaq* being the verbal root from which is derived *valley*. This term serves to make the psalmist more vulnerable to *floods* or *shiboleth* (singular). “In that day from the *river* Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the Lord will thresh out the grain, and you will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel” [Is 27.12]. Note that *shiboleth* can also mean an ear of corn. “And behold, seven *ears of grain*, plump and good, were growing on one stalk” [Gen

41.5]. For such water to *sweep over* (shataph) someone means to overwhelm as in Jer 47:2: “Behold, waters are rising out of the north and shall become an *overflowing* torrent.”

Vs. 3: I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. Three further complaints resulting from the psalmist’s predicament:

1) *weary* or yagah, a word which implies overwork, here with regard to *crying*, qara’, which also meaning *calling*.. “For you are *wearied* of me, O Israel” [Is 43.22].

2) his throat is *parched* or charar. “He shall dwell in the *parched* places of the wilderness” [Jer 17.6]. It can also refer to being *angry*: “My mother’s sons were *angry* with me” [Sg 1.6]. Note that this verse takes place within the context of the bride being *scorched* (shazaph).

3) the psalmist’s eyes *grow dim* or kalah, a verb which implies languishing. “If I have withheld anything that the poor desired or have caused the eyes of the widow *to fail*” [Job 31.16]. In the verse at hand, kalah is in conjunction with *waiting* or yachal. Note the play on words in vs. 3 between the two forms, kalu and meyachel. Such waiting is with respect *to* (l-) God, i.e., in-the-direction.

Vs. 4: More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore? Contrast “hairs of my head” with Mt 10.30: “But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.” Such foes are marked by the following: 1) hate him *without cause* or chinan as in Prov 1.17: “For *in vain* is a net spread in the sight of any bird.” 2) intend to *destroy* or tsamath whose fundamental meaning is *to be silent*. 3) attack with *lies* or sheqer, which connotes deception. “You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor *lie* to one another” [Lev 19.11].

The psalmist perceives that his assailants are after him because he had *stolen* (gagal) something and has to *restore* (shuv) what he does not have.

Vs. 5: O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you. Despite his laments about being falsely accused, nevertheless the psalmist admits that before God he is guilty of *folly*, ‘iweleth, a word frequently used in Proverbs such as 5.23: “and because of his great *folly* he is lost.” Compare with the hevel or *vanity* of Ecclesiastes; the former implies impiety and the latter, emptiness.

Wrongs or ‘ashmah (singular) can also refer to an offering: “and give it to him whom it belongs on the day of his *guilt offering*” [Lev 5.24]. Such an ‘ashmah by its nature is public, and the psalmist is correct to say that it cannot remain *hidden*, kichad, a verbal root which implies disowning something.

Vs. 6: Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord God of hosts; let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. Two earnest wishes:

1) for a person not to be *shamed* or bosh. “In that day you shall not be *ashamed*” [Zeph 3.11]. In the verse at hand, such shame is contrasted with *hope* or qawah not so much in God but in the psalmist who seems to be a representative of the people. “Let none that *wait for* you be put to shame” [Ps 25.3], words similar to vs. 6. The Hebrew preposition for *through* is b-, literally, *in*. This first wish is addressed to the “Lord God of *hosts*,” tseva’oth. “The Lord of *hosts* is his name” [Jer 32.18], signifying authority over angelic beings.

2) for a person not to be *dishonored*, kalam. “They are *ashamed* and confounded and cover their heads” [Jer 14.3]; note the second use of the preposition b- with regard to this verb. Here dishonor is contrasted with *seeking* God, baqash. “Upon my bed by night I *sought* him whom my soul loves” [Sg 3.1]. This second wish is addressed to the “God of *Israel*,” that is, the human nation chosen by God which forms a type of *host* or joins in the angelic choirs about God.

Vs. 7: For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that shame has covered my face. Words reminiscent of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (cf. Is 42.1-4) and Jesus Christ and his passion; these verses are quoted in Mt 12.18+. Two injustices borne by the psalmist: 1) *reproach* or cherpah, that is, for God: “It is for your sake that I have suffered *rebuke*” [Jer 15.15]. 2) *shame* or kilmah: “I hid not my face from *shame* and spitting” [Is 50.6]. “That the Christ must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead,, he would proclaim light both

to the people and to the Gentiles” [Acts 26.23].

Vs. 8: I have become a stranger to my brethren, an alien to my mother’s son. Two forms of estrangement: 1) *stranger* or *zor* which implies adultery: “For I have loved *strangers*, and after them I will go” [Jer 2.25]. This is made especially poignant because being a *zor* is associated with *brethren*, those member of the household of Israel. 2) *alien* or *nakry*, with regard to “mother’s son,” implying the psalmist’s own son and hence his inability to pass on his inheritance. “I am an *alien* in their sight” [Job 19.15]. Thus *son* and *brethren* are perceived as one and the same reality.

Vs. 9: For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. A verse quoted in Jn 2.17 with respect to Jesus Christ after he cleansed the Jerusalem temple of merchants. *Zeal* or *qin’ath* implies jealousy which can apply to God: “The *zeal* of the Lord of hosts will do this” [Is 9.7], i.e., cleanse the temple. ‘Akal is the common verb for *to eat*. “He may *eat* the bread of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy things” [Lev 21.22]. Such zeal for things divine has negative ramifications for the psalmist who suffers *insults* or *cheraph* (singular) as described in vs. 7. Such a *cherpah* initially directed towards God indirectly falls upon the psalmist; again, refer this to Jesus Christ.

Vs. 10: When I humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. The Hebrew text reads, “I made my soul mourn with fasting.” A unity between soul (*nephesh*) and fasting (*tson*). “When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you *fasted*” [Zech 7.5]? Because *nephesh* is not physical, the fasting of which the psalmist speaks is of the spiritual order. Despite this invisibility, it was recognized by those afflicting the psalmist because his soul’s fasting became a *reproach*, *cheraph*.

Vs. 11: When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. *Sackcloth* or *saq* is a traditional sign of mourning or affliction. “Lament like a virgin girded with *sackcloth* for the bridegroom of her youth” [Jl 1.8]. Putting on this garment automatically, as it were, made the psalmist a *byword*, *mashal*, which also means a proverb. “I will open my mouth in a *parable*” [Ps 78.2]. Thus he becomes a saying known among people, a fact which emphasizes his affliction resulting from zeal for God’s house (cf. vs. 9).

Vs. 12: I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me. *Talk* is a verb in the Hebrew text, *syach*, which can also apply to things divine: “I will *meditate* on your precepts, and fix my eyes on your ways” [Ps 119.15]. From this verbal root is derived the word *plant*: “when no *plant* of the field was yet in the earth” [Gen 2.5]. This *syach* is characteristic of people sitting in the *gate*, *shahar*, where people exit and enter a (fortified) city. “So they took Jesus, and he went out (i.e., the gate), bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull” [Jn 19.17].

Drunkards or in Hebrew, “*drinkers* (*shatah*) of *strong drink* (*shekar*).” In vs. 12, note the words containing the letters *sh* and *s*: *syach*, *yashav*, *shahar*, *shatah*, *shekar*. These letters serve to emphasize the psalmist’s contempt for his detractors.

Vs. 13: But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me. With your faithful help. The psalmist’s *prayer* (*tephilah*) is directly *to* the Lord, *l-*, that is while his detractors mock him. He is quick to add a *time* (*’eth*) which is *acceptable* (*ratson*), that is, a *kairos* (in the LXX) which is specified as being one of *favor*, according to the Hebrew text. “O Naphtali, satisfied with *favor* and full of the blessings of the Lord” [Dt 33.23]. During this *kairos* the psalmist wishes an *answer* from God, *hanah* being the verbal root (cf. Ps 4.1 for details). Furthermore, *hanah* is situated within God’s *steadfast love* or *chesed*; not just *chesed* plain and simple but in its *abundance* (*rav*).

This verse has the beginning of vs. 14 which speaks of *yeshah* or “Jesus” which is characterized as being *faithful* or in the Hebrew text, “in *truth* (of your salvation),” ‘*emeth*.

Vs. 14: Rescue me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. The need to be *rescued* (*natsal*) is a secondary feature, as it were, of “Jesus” mentioned in vs. 13; here it applies

to the psalmist being in *mire* or *tyt* which according to Ps 18.43, is in the streets, a worse condition than that mire at the bottom of a well in that people and animals trample on it. The Hebrew lacks *sinking*.

Again the psalmist uses the verb *natsal*, this time concerning his *enemies* and “*deep waters*,” the former may be identified with the latter in that they produce chaos, *hamaq* being the verbal root. “The words of a man’s mouth are *deep waters*” [Prov 18.4].

Vs. 15: Let not the flood sweep over me or the deep swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me. A continuation of the psalmist’s petition to God that he not be overwhelmed by foes articulated within the context of troubled water. Three parts are obvious:

1) *flood* or *shibolet* (cf. vs. 2) which can *sweep over* the psalmist, *shataph*, again as in vs. 2.

2) *deep* or *metsulah* as in Ps 68.22: “I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the *depths* of the sea.” Such deep threatens to *swallow up* the psalmist, *balah*. Ps 21.9 uses this verb with respect to enemies of God: “The Lord will *swallow* them *up* in his wrath.”

3) *pit* or *be’er*; a related word is *bor* into which Joseph was thrown by his brothers (Cf. Gen 37.22). The former usually implies a fountain and the latter a cistern. In the verse at hand, the psalmist fears that such a *be’er* will *shut* its mouth over him, *‘atar*, in the sense of binding. “Among all these were seven hundred picked men who were *left-handed*” [i.e., “bound,” Judg 20.16].

Vs. 16: Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.

Another request to be *answered* (*hanah*, cf. vs. 13) in accord with divine *chesed*, also in vs. 13. Compare it being *good* (*tov*) here and in that verse, *rav* or *great*. In addition to a desire for *hanah*, the psalmist beseeches that God *turn* to him, *panah*, as in Ps 25.16: “*Turn* to me and be gracious to me.” In the verse at hand, *panah* is associated with *racham*, *mercy*, which is similarly *abundant* (*rav*). *Racham* is the verbal root for *womb*; the plural form (*rachamym*) is frequently used.

Vs. 17: Hide not your face from your servant; for I am in distress, make haste to answer me. In the first part of this verse the psalmist speaks as though he were another person (*servant*, *heved*). Such a request regarding the divine *face* (*paney*) is reminiscent of Ex 33.20: “But you cannot see my *face*; for man shall not see me and live.” With this in mind, the hiding of God’s face which the psalmist dreads can turn out to be a benefit. On the other hand, if God conceals his face, the psalmist would remain in *distress* or *tsar*. Cf. Ps 25.17: “Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my *distresses*.” The request to be *heard* (*hanah*) is the same verb as in vss. 13 & 16 above).

Vs. 18: Draw near to me, redeem me, set me free because of my enemies! Three supplications:

1) *draw near* or *qarav*; the noun *qerev* means the interior of a thing: “Their *heart* is destruction” [Ps 5.10]. In the verse under consideration, this verb is used with regard to the Hebrew text’s use of *nephesh* (*soul*).

2) *redeem* or *ga’al*; it can mean the opposite as in Mal 1.7: “By offering *polluted* food upon my altar.”

3) *set free* or *padah* in the sense of paying a price. “Every firstling of an ass you shall *redeem* with a lamb” [Ex 13.13]. All three supplications are because of the psalmist’s *enemies*, *‘oyev* (singular).

Vs. 19: You know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. The first sentence is active, i.e., God *knows* (*yadah*) three secrets of the psalmist: *reproach* (*cherphah*), *shame* (*besheth*) and *dishonor* (*kelimah*). These issue from his *foes* or *tsarar* (singular) which in the Hebrew text are “*before* you,” the preposition *neged* being a type of knowledge. Such divine awareness does not directly intervene on the psalmist’s behalf but serves to introduce his list of woes and cures which follow from this verse through vs. 28. They may be outlined as follows, keeping in mind that God’s *yahah* is operative throughout:

- insults break the psalmist’s heart
- he lacks pity and comforters
- receives poison and vinegar to consume

The psalmist now (vs. 22) states a number of curses intended for his assailants:

- table (of foes) a snare

- feasts a trap

- eyes be darkened

- loins tremble

- divine indignation on them

- divine burning anger

- (foes') camp be desolate. This and the next curse are quoted in Acts 1.20. The New Testament reference to Judas helps situate this list of curses and personal woes of the psalmist. Note that Acts quotes it *after* the Ascension and *before* Pentecost and within the context of choosing a successor to Judas, i.e., Matthias (cf. vs. 26).

- their tents lack inhabitants

- (foes) persecute and afflict (Hebrew reads, "recount the pain of") those persons (Hebrew, plural) whom God has smitten and wounded. I.e., human foes intensify the divinely afflicted pain, presumably from disobedience.

- punishment upon punishment, i.e., to the psalmist's foes

- no acquittal

- blotted out from book of living

- not enrolled among righteous

Vs. 29: But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high! Note the similar sounding words, 'any (*i*) and hany (*afflicted*, from hanah), as if to show the intensity of the psalmist's sufferings. He also is in *pain*, ka'av, which implies sorrow: "If I speak, my *pain* is not assuaged" [Job 16.6].

Despite the intensity of suffering, the psalmist calls upon God's "Jesus" or yeshuah which is equivalent to being *set on high*, sagav. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is *safe*" [Prov 18.10].

Vs. 30: I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. Most likely this *praise* (halal) issues from being in that tower of Proverbs just above; i.e., the psalmist is now sagav. Note that praise is not directly towards God but his shem which can be taken as his yeshuah; *song* is associated with this "Jesus," shyr. Also note the similarity of sound between shem and shyr (and hence, "Jesus").

Furthermore, the psalmist *magnifies* this shem, gadal, a word suggestive of his condition of being sagav. The medium of such glorification is *thanksgiving*, todah, which is the very summit of his safe place.

Vs. 31: This will please the Lord more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. "This will please" is the verb yatav from which comes the common adjective *good*. The psalmist refers to his todah of the previous verse which is more excellent than sacrificial animals; note that *bull* or par is specified by *horns* and *hoofs*, two of its chief characteristics, thereby contributing to this animal's superiority and heightening the psalmist's value of thanksgiving. "Let him (priest) offer for the sin which he has committed a *young bull* without blemish to the Lord for a sin offering" [Lev 4.3].

Vs. 32: Let the oppressed see it and be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. The *oppressed* or hanawym as noted earlier (Ps 25.9, twice mentioned) are traditionally favored by God. They both *see* (ra'ah) and are *glad* (samach), the latter deriving from their vision of the psalmist's praise and magnifying of vs. 30. Since he is located in a high place as was intimated in that verse, the hanawym may be situated in a lower place and participate in his loftiness by their vision.

The second class of people sharing in the psalmist's exultation or those who *seek* (darash) God; their aspiration results in their hearts being *revived*, lavav, from which derives the noun *heart*. This verb also means *to ravish*: "You have *ravished my heart*, my sister, my bride, you have *ravished my heart* with a glance of your eyes, with

one jewel of your necklace” [Sg. 4.9].

Vs. 33: For the Lord hears the need and does not despise his own that are in bonds. Another reference to those (*needy*, ‘eveyon, singular) who are akin to the hanawym of vs. 32. “You shall open wise your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the *poor*, in the land” [Dt 15.11]. Note that the Lord *hears* (shamah) such ‘eveyon, whereas the hanawym above *see*. In addition to this hearing, God does not *despise* (boz)—according to the Hebrew text—*prisoners* (‘asyr, singular) which implies persons who are *bound* (‘asar). “If I met you outside, I would kiss you, and none would *despise* me” [Sg 8.1]. “Return to your stronghold, O *prisoners* of hope” [Zech 9.12].

Vs. 34: Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves therein. In vs. 30 the psalmist *praises* (halal) God; here he invites four elements of creation to join in the chorus: heaven, earth, seas and which *moves* in it, ramash. This verb basically means to crawl. “Let them have dominion...over every *creeping thing* that *creeps* upon the earth” [Gen 1.26].

Vs. 35: For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah; and his servants shall dwell there and possess it. The word *for* (k-) seems to join creation just mentioned with the more particular *Zion* and *cities of Judah*. The first is the object of divine *salvation* or “Jesus,” yashah, and the latter of (in Hebrew) *building*, banah. Cf. Ps 51.18: “Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; *rebuild* (again in Hebrew, *build*) the walls of Jerusalem.”

The Hebrew text lacks “servants” and reads “that they may dwell...”, implying both Zion and Judah’s cities. Note that *dwelling* (yashav) comes first followed by *possessing* (yarash) it; the singular intimates Zion as opposed to the plural cities of Judah. Yarash also means *to inherit*; with this in mind, there must be something for future generations to acquire, hence the priority for yashav.

Vs. 36: The children of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it. This psalm closes with assurance of an *inheritance*, nachal being the verb, which is related to *possess* of the previous verse. The object of nachal is *Zion* (singular as opposed to plural *cities*); those who obtain this inheritance—for it implies the Jerusalem temple—are *children* or zerah, and whose alternate meaning is *seed*. “Great triumphs he gives to his king and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his *descendants* forever” [Ps 18.50].

Again the psalmist mentions the divine *name*, shem (cf. remarks above regarding “Jesus”). Here *dwelling* (shakan) and *loving* (‘ahav) are two aspects of the same inheritance or “seed.” Compare shakan with yashav of vs. 35; the former means an more permanent abiding whereas the latter seems to refer more to sitting. “For the upright will *inhabit* (shakan) the land, and men of integrity will remain in it” [Prov 2.21].

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Psalm Seventy

Vs. 1: Be pleased, O God, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me! Note the use of *God* (‘elohym) and *Lord* (YHWH) in these two brief sentences. The Hebrew text lacks “be pleased” and reads “God, to *deliver* me,” natsal. The psalmist’s desire for the Lord to *help* him (hazar) is more urgent in that it is associated with the verb *to hasten*, chush, and is used frequently in the psalter.

Vs. 2: Let them be put to shame and confusion who seek my life! The first of three “lets” directed against the psalmist’s foes (vss. 2-3):

- 1) shame and confusion
- 2) turn back and brought to dishonor
- 3) be appalled due to their shame

Vs. 4: May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, “God is great!” This verse contains three “mays” to counter the just mentioned three “lets;” the former pertains to

the psalmist's adversaries, whereas the latter to those persons who love God: *Rejoice* (sus) and *be glad* (samach) are the first two and are dependent upon the person *seeking* (baqash) God. Baqash here counters that of vs. 2, those persons seeking the psalmist's life.

The third "may" is related to "Jesus," yeshuah, *salvation*, which is the object of love or 'ahav. The adverb tamyd (*evermore*) implies continuance. "They will set apart men to pass through the land *continually* and bury those remaining upon the face of the land" [Ezk 39.14].

Vs. 5: But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not tarry! Here the psalmist contrasts himself with those persons engaged in seeking God as just mentioned. He identifies himself as both hany and 'evyon, two words considered earlier (Ps 69.29 & 33). Because of this he begs God to hasten, another instance of chush as in vs. 1.

Compare chush with a similar request, for God not to *tarry* or 'achar. "I have sojourned with Laban and *stayed* until now" [Gen 32.4]. The psalmist appeals to the Lord as his *help* (heser) and *deliverer* (mepalat), two functions which may be applied to the more basic one of God as "Jesus."

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Psalm Seventy-One

Vs. 1: In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame! From this verse through verse four we have a series of requests from God:

- 1) The first verse has two opposing forces, *taking refuge* (chasah) and being *put to shame* (bush). The former is not so much a request as a statement of something already accomplished. The latter is *never* or leholam, implying remembrance of such bush to future generations, not so much as with regard to God. The verb chasah also means *to trust*: "And they shall *trust* in your name" [Zeph 3.12].
- 2) *Deliver* (natsal) me.
- 3) *Rescue* (palat) me. Note the similarity between the two which were often encountered earlier; natsal implies a pulling away or out from a dangerous situation whereas palat implies slipperiness and hence a more stealthy way of accomplishing release.
- 4) *Incline* (natah) with reference to the divine ear; this verb connotes a stretching forth, almost as though God's ear were physically elongated.
- 5) *Save* (yashah) or "Jesus" me.
- 6) *Rescue* (palat) me, this time with regard not so much as the wicked himself but his hand or yad which signifies negative activity as opposed to the positive kind of palat. This verb has another object, *grasp* or kaph which signifies hand in its entirety and which is a fuller apprehension than one by yad.

Vs. 5: For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Two titles attributed to the Lord which correspond to the series of requests just enumerated: *hope* (tiqwah) which applies to the future or an yet unrealized state and *trust* (mibtach) which applies to the present or an ongoing situation. Both have been operative for some time, namely, from the psalmist's *youth* or nehorym. "And I have walked before you from my *youth* until this day" [1 Sam 12.2].

Vs. 6: Upon you I have leaned from my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you. In the previous birth youth was mentioned with regard to hope and trust. Here the psalmist speaks of his *birth* or beten, which more precisely means *womb*. "Two nations are in your *womb*" [Gen 25.23]. Thus the psalmist's *leaning* (samak, often noted earlier) can apply to both before and after birth. "When the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my *womb* leaped for joy" [Lk 1.44]. Here John the Baptist recognizes the Virgin Mary's voice in his mother's womb; i.e., a womb-to-womb contact, as it were.

The second part of vs. 6 more specifically refers to *womb* or mehah which can also mean *heart* in the sense of one's inmost being: "My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my *heart* was thrilled within me" [Sg 5.4].

Note that the verb *gazah*, *to take*, is the only instance in the Bible.

Because of this two fold dependance upon divine assistance before and after birth, the psalmist recognizes that it is a *continuous* activity, *tamyd*, which demands an equally continuous *praise* or *tehilat*.

Vs. 7: I have been as a portent to many; but you are my strong refuge. This being a *portent* or *mopheth* implies wonder in the sense of a miracle: “My *wonders* accomplished in the land of Egypt” [Ex 7.3]. With mention of John the Baptist in the previous verse, we may say that he was a *mopheth* in the desert announcing the coming of Jesus Christ. The second part of vs. 7—God as *strong refuge* (*machasy-hoz*) where the noun’s verbal root is *chasah*, *to hide*—intimates that being a *mopheth* is fraught with danger and misunderstanding, also applicable to John as well as Christ.

Vs. 8: My mouth is filled with your praise and with your glory all the day. Given the earlier allusions to birth and youth, this verse may be said to be an extension or progression of vs. 6’s “My praise is continually of you.” The psalmist’s mouth is filled with two things: *praise* or *tehilat* and *glory* or *tiphe’arah* “all the day” signifying that these two acknowledgments of God occurs during the daytime as opposed to the night, that is, with respect to the psalmist’s mouth. The latter also means *beauty*: “And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for *beauty*” [Ex 28.2]. *Glory’s* verbal root *pa’ar* implies adornment in the sense of being beautiful: “The shoot of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be *glorified*” [Is 60.14], that is, that God might be *adorned*.

Vs. 9: Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent. Here the psalmist implies that old age will not be a time for praise of God, i.e., the “continually” and “all the day” might not apply at this *time* (*heth*, LXX, *kairos*). Hence his request not to be *cast off* (*shalak*, base meaning is *to send*) during old age or *ziquenah*. “Even to your *old age* I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you” [Is 46.4].

There is a play on words, “when my strength is spent,” *kikloth kochy*; the former is the verbal root *kalah* which also implies completion: “When Solomon had *finished* the building” [1 Kg 9.1]. Once *strength* or *koach* is spent, the psalmist wishes that God do not *forsake* (*hazav*) him in the sense of abandoning him. Cf. Ps 22.1 which has the same verb and is put on Christ’s mouth at his crucifixion (cf. Mt 27.46).

Vs. 10: For my enemies speak concerning me, those who watch for my life consult together. This verse continues into the next and can apply to Christ’s passion and crucifixion. It can be divided into speakers and watchers, the latter scrutinizing every step of the psalmist (*shamar*, which can also mean *to protect*). The object of *shamar* here is his *life*, *nephesh*, which also translates as *soul*. Such watching alternates with consulting, *yahats*. For a positive sense of this word, cf. Is 9.5: “His name shall be called Wonderful *Counselor*.”

Vs. 11 opens with *say* which was attributed to the psalmist’s enemies in vs. 10, *speak* (*amar*), and contains the actual words they uttered in their consultation. Note their observation that God has *forsaken* (*hazav*) the psalmist as in vs. 9. As a result of this *hazav*, the conspirators, in their confidence that there is no *natsal* or *deliverance* for the psalmist, feel free to *pursue* (*radaph*) and to *seize* (*taphas*) him. “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, *save yourself*” [Mt 27.40]! Perhaps *natsal* may apply here; note its use with reference to “Jesus,” the verbal root of which is *yashah*.

Vs. 12: O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! To be *far off* or *rachaq* implies spiritual distance experienced by the psalmist as he undergoes his enemies’ taunts just described and is emphasized by the preposition *from*, *min*. “We look for...salvation but it is *far from us*” [Is 55.11]. The desire to *make haste* or *chush* implies taking flight and is used frequently with regard to God in the Psalter (22.20, 38.23, 40.14, 70.1 & 6, 141.1). In this instance, *chush* is bound up with *help*, *natsal*, and counters the enemies’ belief that no such help is available, vs. 11.

Vs. 13: May my accusers be put to shame and consumed; with scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt. The word for *accuser* or *satan* comes from the same verbal root as *Satan* noted in the first chapter of Job. “And in the reign of Ahasuerus, they wrote an *accusation* against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem” [Ezra 4.6]. After the psalmist’s wish for his adversaries to be *put to shame* (*yavash*), he wishes

them to be *consumed* or kalah as in vs. 9, “when my strength is *spent*.” The Hebrew text situates such accusers in relation to the psalmist’s *soul* or nephesh.

For the accusers to be *covered* (hatah) implies making them visible for everyone to see; such “clothing” is *scorn* and *disgrace*. “You have *covered* him with shame” [Ps 89.45].

Vs. 14: But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. “But” connotes a change of mind by the psalmist while still undergoing the torments described above and expressed in term of *hope*, yachal. Cf. Ps 38.18, “Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who *hope* in his steadfast love.” Note the indefinite period of duration, tamyd, and compare with *praise* (halal) which increases, i.e., *more and more*. This phrase is a verb in Hebrew, yasaph, which fundamentally means *to increase*. Thus hope may be said to last for an undetermined period of time whereas praise increases without limit or bounds.

Vs. 15: My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. Since praise comes from the mouth, it may be allied with the *telling* saphar (note play on words with yasaph). The psalmist’s impersonal mouth is the agent doing this saphar and is done with regard to divine *righteousness* (tsedaqah, in Hebrew) and *deeds of salvation* (teshuhah, *salvation* in Hebrew, another reference to “Jesus”). “And my *salvation* shall not tarry” [Is 46.13]. Note the duration of teshuhah, “all the day,” during which time their *number* (saphar is the verbal root with its implication of writing something down). Thus we have two instances in one verse of the same verb, *tell* and *number*. A paradox exists with regard to the second saphar: the psalmist “writes down” that which he does not *know*, yadah, the verb being used in the Hebrew text.

Vs. 16: With the mighty deeds of the Lord God I will come, I will praise your righteousness, yours alone. No direction is specified regarding this coming, presumably to offer sacrifice at the Jerusalem temple. Note the Hebrew: “*in* (b-) the *mighty deeds*” as though the psalmist were entering these gevorah (singular). Such accomplishments are attributed to God, perhaps with indirect reference to the Exodus event. The psalmist is clear to praise or in Hebrew, to *remember* (zakar) divine righteousness, this word (as noted elsewhere) being the verbal root for male which implies the propagation of such righteousness. He is clear to point out that such an attribute belongs *only* to God, lavad.

Vs. 17: O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. Such *teaching* (lamad) means more the inner appropriation of a doctrine in the sense of becoming a disciple which a similar noun means in Syriac. The psalmist points out a time span: from his youth (nehorym) to what may be supposed as maturity, *still*, or had-henah, the point at which he is uttering these words. The verb nagad (*to proclaim*) is related to the preposition neged (*before*) suggesting that this lamad is being placed *before* his audience only with regard to God’s *wondrous deeds*, nipel’oth.

Vs. 18: So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, till I proclaim your might to all the generations to come. Your power. Another mention of *old age*, ziqenah, as in vs. 9, only here emphasized by *gray hairs*, sevah. “As for yourself [Abraham], you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good *old age*” [Gen 15.15]. The psalmist begs God not to *forsake* (hazav) him in both descriptions of the same time period. In brief, he doesn’t want his enemies’ wish for this same hazav in vs. 11 to come true with respect to God himself.

The word *till* (had) can intimate that is acceptable for God to forsake the psalmist; had serves as a transition to *proclaiming* (nagad again with its inference of the preposition *before*) divine *might* or zeroah which also means *arm*. “O Lord, be gracious to us; we wait for you. Be our *arm* every morning” [Is 33.2]. Such before-ness extends to future *generations*, dor (singular). Such indefinite temporal extension is a ruse, so to speak, to forestall God forsaking the psalmist. The Hebrew reads, “to a generation, to all that come.”

Vs. 18 ends with “your *power*,” gevorah (as in vs. 16), in which the psalmist will come; it continues into the following verse.

Vs. 19: And your righteousness, O God, reach the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who

is like you? Such *righteousness* (tsedaqah) is allied with *gevorah* at the very end of vs. 18. The Hebrew text reads “Your righteousness, O God is *very high* (marom),” suggesting that this divine quality is situation up in the heavens, God’s proper dwelling place. Despite such loftiness, the doing of *great things* is effected with regards to earth below or the realm of human affairs, hence the concluding exclamation.

Vs. 20: You who have made me see many sore troubles will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. This “causing to *see* (ra’ah)” is indirect and leads to inquire about the agent between God and the psalmist or the manner by which such ra’ah is effected. Such a view enables the psalmist not to be caught up by *sore troubles*, tsarah, as in Ps 34.6: “This poor man, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his *troubles*.” After this indirect seeing God will *revive* him, action occurring in the future. The Hebrew reads “return to life” as if the period of troubles and hence the implied indirect ra’ah were a training period.

“*Depths* of the earth” (tehom) is the same term used for the matrix from which God made creation: “Darkness was upon the face of the *deep*” [Gen 1.2]. Tehom is the same word used for the Red Sea’s waters which covered the Egyptian army: “The *floods* cover them; they went down into the depths like a stone” [Ex 15.5]. With regard to the Genesis reference, the psalmist is situating himself in the raw context before God’s creativity goes to work and is ready to become a new creation. “You will bring me up *again*,” here a verb in the Hebrew text is used, shuv, to return; it is the second instance in this verse, the first being “will revive me *again*.”

Vs. 21: You will increase my honor and comfort me again. Implied here is that the psalmist already had *honor* or greatness, godel, only in the new creation (cf. last verse) it will be *increased*, ravah, which may be taken as increasing according to the six days of creation depicted in Genesis. “I will *multiply* your [Abraham] seed exceedingly” [Gen 16.10]. In addition to this previous godel, the psalmist once enjoyed divine comfort, nacham. Note the English preposition *again* which in Hebrew is the verb similar to shuv, savav, which implies being surrounded on every side. The verb nacham can also mean *to take vengeance, to lament*.

Vs. 22: I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O holy One of Israel. Two different forms of the verb *to praise* perhaps within a liturgical context, the first being yadah which is in connection with the *harp* (nevel) or more specifically, *instrument* (kely) of the harp. A kely traditionally had twelve strings; verbal root naval means *to be foolish*, perhaps suggesting that the music so produced has the capacity to make a person go out of his mind. The object of praise in the first part of vs. 22 is divine *faithfulness* (‘emeth) which implies truthfulness.

In the second part of this verse, the act of praising God is more specific, “*holy One* (Qedosh) of Israel;” the verb used is zamar, and for reference, cf. Ps 8.17 which notes this verb as meaning *to prune*. The instrument by which such zamar is effected is a *lyre* or kinor which may be struck either with a plectrum or hand. “And whenever the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the *lyre* and played it with his hand” [1 Sam 16.23]. Thus we have a type of “pruning” on this musical instrument.

Vs. 23: My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to you; my soul also which you have rescued. Two types of activity which work together in the physical sense: *shouting for joy* (verbally) or ranan and *singing praise*—i.e., the “pruning” again—or zamar (physically, with the hands). In conjunction with this bodily form of praise to God the psalmist’s nephesh (which is immaterial) is implied as engaging in the same activity. Nephesh can do this because it has been *rescued*, padah, which fundamentally means being set loose from bonds. Shall I *redeem* them from death” [Hos 13.14]?

Vs. 24: And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long, for they have been put to shame and disgraced who sought to do me hurt. Mention of the “impersonal” agent of tongue as opposed, so to speak, to the psalmist and which function during the day as opposed to the night. Its function here is to *talk* or hagah which means more to murmur (softly) yet be applied to a loud noise: “As a lion or a young lion *growls* over his praise” [Is 31.4]. The object of this hagah is God’s *righteousness*, “help” not being used in the Hebrew text.

Note the play on words, *to shame* (bosh) and *to seek* (baqash).

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Psalm Seventy-Two

Vs. 1: Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! Note that this psalm has as its inscription, “A Psalm of Solomon.” In light of this inscription, the king in mind is David, Solomon’s father, and the psalmist attributes “your” or divine *justice*, mishpat, the act of judging, to Solomon. On the other hand, he asks that *righteousness*, tsedaqah or that from which judgment flows, be bestowed to the “royal son” or Solomon’s son. The intent is to carry on David’s favor with God to royal descendants. In a sense this desire for continued lineage endorsed by God is a continuation of Solomon’s prayer for understanding which God answered in abundance. “But have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right...I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you shall arise after you” [1 Kg 3.11-12].

Vs. 2: May he judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice! This verse begins a series of wishes by the psalmist as noted by the English “may” right through verse 11 and continued between vs. 15 and 17. In the verse at hand a distinction between people in general and the *poor*, hanawym (cf. Ps 22.26); the former receive the more universal form of tsedek whereas the latter, mishpat or applied justice.

Vs. 3: May the mountains bear prosperity for the people and the hills in righteousness! A verse reminiscent of Ezk 34.14: “I will feed them with good pasture and upon the *mountain* heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on fat pasture they shall feed on the *mountains* of Israel.” Note the distinction between (large) *mountains* or harym and (small) *hills* or gevahoth. The *prosperity* of the former is shalom whose basic meaning is peace, and the hills *bear* (nasa’) in the sense of conveying, tsedaqah. This verse may apply to Jerusalem surrounded as it is by both mountains and hills.

Vs. 4: May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy and crush the oppressor! This verse continues the numerous aspirations which may be attributed to Solomon’s father, King David, as he should ideally act through his successors; it is not difficult to attribute these aspirations to Jesus Christ. The verb *defend* is shaphat, more specifically meaning *to judge* which has as its direct object “*poor* (hanawym) of the people,” not their “cause.”

The next desire is for *delivering* (yashah, “Jesus”) the needy or “sons of the *needy*,” implying not so much the ‘evyon proper but their descendants. Thus “Jesus” will extend through succeeding generations.

The *oppressor* or hosheq (singular) is set up as an adversary to the king. “Do justice and righteousness and deliver from the hand of the *oppressor* him who has been robbed” [Jer 22.3].

Vs. 5: May he live while the sun endures and as long as the moon throughout all generations! The Hebrew text reads “They shall *fear* you,” yare’, pertaining to either/or the king and God. Note the preposition him, *with*: i.e., “*with* the sun” or during the day. The second half of vs. 5 intimates night by mentioning moon; the Hebrew literally reads, “before the moon.” This natural alternation of day and night is reflected by successive human *generations*, dor (singular). “My deliverance will be forever and my salvation to all *generations*” [Is 51.8].

Vs. 6: May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth! This verse is somewhat reminiscent of the prophet Elijah who was responsible for causing rain to fall after a severe drought (cf. 1 Kg 18.41+). The distinction regarding the verse at hand is that drought is intimated by the term *mown grass*, gez. This word also refers to shorn wool of a sheep or fleece: “The first of the *fleece* of your sheep you shall give him” [Dt 18.4]. *Rain* (matar) is a general term; *showers* (revyvym, plural used) are a gentler type of rainfall: “Dew from the Lord, like *showers* upon the grass” [Mic 5.7]. Their action is characterized by *watering*, zarzyph, the only occurrence of this term. The object of such watering is the earth as a whole as opposed to the more specific mown grass.

Vs. 7: In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound until the moon be no more! *Righteousness* (tsadyq) flourishes or parach, from which is derived the noun *blossom*: “And their blossom go up like dust” [Is 5.24]. Similarly, *peace* (shalom) abounds or ravav. Note the parallel these two qualities have with the lunar calendar, that is, they will endure until the moon ceases to exist, referring to the changing of its phases.

Vs. 8: May he have dominion from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth! Israel is thus situated between these two seas, Mediterranean and what is now the Persian Gulf. Note that *to have dominion*, yarach, is the same verbal root for *moon* and *month*, yareach, noted in the last verse. In addition to the two seas, this yarach extends to the *River* (nahar) or the Euphrates. “Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the *Euphrates* to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt” [1 Kg 4.21/5.1]. From this point—the Euphrates empties into the Persian Gulf or the other “sea”—which in turn touches the “*ends of the earth*,” ‘ephes (singular). Here was the limit of the known world beyond which Solomon’s rule did not extend.

Vs. 9: May his foes bow down before him and his enemies lick the dust! The Hebrew reads for “foes,” “those who dwell in the *wilderness*,” tsyym. “*Wild* beasts shall dwell with hyenas in Babylon” [Jer 50.39]. Such tsyym may be equated with those outside the realm of Solomon or beyond the “ends of the earth” of vs. 8. The dust which they shall lick may be that of Israel’s earth by which they will acknowledge his sovereignty.

Vs. 10: May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! Tarshish is modern Spain and the isles are most likely the islands in the Mediterranean Sea, a westerly direction from Israel. *Tribute* or minchah can also mean a gift or sacrifice which isn’t bloody as opposed to a zevach. “Whenever anyone brings a cereal *offering*...his *offering* shall be of fine flour” [Lev 2.1]. In addition to these nations west of Israel, vs. 10 mentions Sheba and Seba which are located in south Arabia. Note the use of “kings” in comparison with the queen of Sheba as in 1 Kg 10. Since Ps 72 is dedicated to Solomon, perhaps these kings are her successors who also come to him seeking wisdom. Along with them are included the kings of Seba. “I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and *Seba* in exchange for you” [Is 43.3]. Here gift is ‘eshkar as in Ezk 27.15: “Many coastlands were your own special markets, they brought you in *payment* ivory tusks and ebony.” The verb to bring, qarav, fundamentally means *to draw near* (as to offer such gifts or sacrifices).

Vs. 11: May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him! To conclude this section of “mays” the psalmist enthusiastically includes rulers of the entire earth or those yet unknown to Solomon. The act of *falling down* (shachah) and *servicing* (havar) can also apply to worship of God. “And the people bowed their heads and *worshiped*” [Ex 12.27].

Vs. 12: For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. Despite the extensive rule of Solomon, he pays attention to those who are less fortunate: the ‘evyon as in vs. 4 whom he delivers (natsal), the hanawym and anyone lacking a *helper* or hozer. This verse is reminiscent of Is 42.3: “A bruised reed he will not break.”

Vs. 13: He has pity on the weak and the needy and saves the lives of the needy. The *weak* or dal derives from the verbal root dalal, *to hang down*; cf. Ps 41.1: “Blessed is he who considers the *poor* (or weak).” Such dal is the object of royal *pity* or chus which connotes sparing: “*Spare* them not” [Dt 7.16]. Similarly, the *needy* or ‘evyon are the object of this chus, more specifically their *souls*, nephesh (singular). This word is mentioned yet again with respect to *saving* or “Jesus” (yashah).

Vs. 14: From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight. Another use of nephesh for *life* which is the object of royal *redemption*, galal. Almost in contrast to this redemption the psalmist states that such unfortunates have been most likely slain, the reason for the second half of this verse. “She (wisdom) is more *precious* (yaqar) than rubies” [Prov 3.15].

Vs. 15: Long may he live, may gold of Sheba be given to him! May prayer be made for him continually and blessings invoked for him all the day! The Hebrew reads “May he live” or continue in existence. King Solomon had received gold from the queen of Sheba (cf. 1 Kg 10.2) in exchange for his wisdom. Lack of her name in this

verse implies that her successors will similarly seek Solomon's wisdom. He is also the object of two wishes resulting from his beneficence described in vss. 12-14: *prayer* (palal) and *blessings* (barak) or in Hebrew, "daily shall he be blessed." The time for such activity is "day" or those occasions when sacrifices were offered in the Jerusalem temple.

Vs. 16: May their be abundance of grain in the land; on the tops of the mountains may it wave; may its fruit be like Lebanon; and may men blossom forth from the cities like the grass of the field! *Abundance* or *pisah* can also mean *handful* and thus a meager amount of grain; the only occurrence of this word in the Bible. Perhaps the psalmist has in mind Elijah's miracle for the widow: "The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth" [1 Kg 17.14]. I.e., this small amount of meal and oil will be as a spring providing ample food and drink.

The location of this "spring" is on the mountain tops where it *waves*, *rahash*, from which is derived the noun *tumult*: "At the *noise* of the stamping of the hoofs of his stallions" [Jer 47.3]. Another indication that such a small amount of grain has the capacity to do great things or feed a multitude. The same applies for the *fruit* of this grain which is compared to Lebanon's, noted for abundance of produce. "My (King Hiram) servants shall bring it (cedar) down to the sea from *Lebanon*" [1 Kg 5.9].

The last part of vs. 16 is the end result of grain being planted on the mountain tops; i.e., it "flows down" to the field where men live, causing them to flourish. This is suggestive of Sg 6.11: "I went down to the nut orchard, to look at the blossoms of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded, whether the pomegranates were in bloom."

Vs. 17: May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May men bless themselves by him, all nations call him blessed! The Hebrew lacks "endure" and has the simple verb "to be." It also reads for "fame" *name* (shem), so this verse contains two references to the royal name Solomon to which the Song of Songs is attributed. Fame seems less enduring, that is, *lasting* (nun; only reference in the Bible) as long as the sun.

The wish for men to be associated with King Solomon (*bless*, barak) hearkens back to his wisdom as noted earlier but also can refer to his name being associated with the Song. On the other hand, nations 'ashar Solomon, the first word opening the Psalter; cf. Ps 1.1 for remarks.

Vs. 18: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. While King Solomon may be *blessed* or barak, it is more important for God to be so acknowledged. *Alone* or *levad* in the Hebrew text is at the end of this verse to emphasize his primacy in all things.

Vs. 19: Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth! Amen and amen! A distinction between God as object of barak in vs. 18 and here his "glorious *name*" or shem. While the adjective *kevod* applies to the divine name, this same *kavod* radiates outward to creation in concurrence with the extension of Solomon's dominion "from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" [vs. 8].

Vs. 20: The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended. While Psalm 72 may apply to Solomon, those psalms thus far belong to King David, the true source of Solomon's rule and wisdom. *Kalah* for *to end* signifies conclusion or consummation.

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Psalm Seventy-Three

Vs. 1: Truly God is good to the upright, to those who are pure in heart. The Hebrew text reads, "Truly God is good to Israel," that is, as a nation, and then mentions those *pure* (bar) of heart. It does not read "upright." Cf. Ps 19.8: "The commandment of the Lord is *pure*, enlightening the eyes." "Blessed are the *pure* of heart, for they shall see God" [Mt 5.8]. Thus vision and purity are one and the same. Note that bar can mean *son*.

Vs. 2: But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had well night slipped. Note the distinction between *feet* (regel, singular) and *steps* ('ashur, singular): The former are the physical limbs whereas the latter are the actual movement of these limbs. 'Ashur derives from the verbal root 'ashar from which comes 'ashry, *blessed*, the first word of the Psalter, "*Blessed* is the man." That is to say, such 'ashuray came close (to alter Ps 1.1) to having "walked in the counsel the wicked, stood in the way of sinners and sat in the seat of scoffers." The verb shaphak for *to slip* fundamentally means *to pour out*. "I am poured out like water" [Ps 22.15], i.e., my steps almost assumed the rapid flow of water in following evil.

Vs. 3: For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. The psalmist describes the character of the *arrogant* which derives from the verbal root halal meaning *to praise*, perhaps alluding to the effusive loquaciousness of an arrogant person and which superficially resembles the effusiveness of (verbal) praise. Such arrogant persons may be characterized as follows:

- 1) vs. 4: have no pangs
- 2) sound and sleek bodies
- 3) vs. 5: untroubled as others
- 4) not stricken as others
- 5) vs. 6: pride is their necklace
- 6) violence covers them as a garment
- 7) vs. 7: eyes swell with fatness
- 8) hearts overflow with follies
- 9) vs. 8: scoff
- 10) speak with malice
- 11) threaten oppression
- 12) vs. 9: set mouths against the heavens
- 13) tongue struts through earth
- 14) vs. 10: people return (praise, English)
- 15) people don't find fault with them
- 16) vs. 11: people question God's reliability
- 17) vs. 12: wicked at ease
- 18) wealth of wicked increases

Vs. 13: All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. After the enumeration above, the psalmist turns to question his practice of virtue when confronted with such arrogant persons. This verse can apply to ritual cleansing; what seems difficult for the psalmist is that he had kept his heart pure or in Hebrew, "cleansed my *heart*," rachats. "When the Lord shall have *washed away* the filth of the daughters of Zion" [Is 4.4].

Vs. 14: For all the day long I have been stricken and chastened every morning. These words—beginning in vs. 13 and continuing through vs. 16—are reminiscent of the prophet Isaiah's Servant Songs, 42.1-4, 49.1-6, 50.4.11 and 52.13-53.12.

Vs. 17: Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end. As noted with regard to vs. 14, the psalmist's afflictions have an affinity with Isaiah's Servant Songs and hence Jesus Christ. The suffering may be applied to Christ's passion and death; the verse at hand may apply to the moment of his death when he return to the Father or entered the *sanctuary*, miqdash. "Then the nations will know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my *sanctuary* is in the midst of them forevermore" [Ezk 37.28]. Upon entering this miqdash, the psalmist perceives (byn) their *end* or 'acharyth. Such byn as noted regarding Ps 5.1. is a type of "getting *in between*" something in order to understand it. Being present in the sanctuary is withdrawing from the common experience of space and time with all its vicissitudes and hence a prime location to see them in light of being in this sanctuary.

Vs. 18: Truly you have set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. Because the psalmist is in the

sanctuary which is in a higher location, his oppressors attempt to assault this fortified area. Such “slippery places” are the ramparts leading up to the miqdash. Because the sanctuary is a meeting place with God and point of contact between heaven and earth, it may be considered as an expression of heavenly reality made visible by a physical structure. For this reason the psalmist may rightly call his foes phantoms (vs. 20) which disappear when he awakes.

Vs. 21: When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart. Lev or *heart* is the Hebrew text for “soul.” Compare it with nephesh (*soul*) mentioned earlier, the former being a more central and therefore physical organ. To be *embittered* or chamats means to suffer violence; note that a noun, chamets, means anything *leavened*: “If anyone eats what is *leavened*, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel” [Ex 12.15]. In addition to this inner torment, the psalmist is *pricked*, shanan, which implies something sharpened. This second affliction is with regards to his *heart*, kilyah (singular), or better, kidneys (reins), signifying the inmost mind or seat of desires and affections. “God tries the *reins* and the heart” [Jer 11.20].

Vs. 22: I was stupid and ignorant, I was like a beast toward you. A continuation of vs. 21, the result of having been embittered (soul) and pricked (heart), but leading to a positive realization of divine supremacy. The two qualities attributed to a beast, *stupid* (bahar) and *ignorant* (yadah, i.e., not having knowledge) are a midway point, so to speak, between the psalmist’s afflicted state and his knowledge or true yadah of God. The verb bahar means to consume: “I (Moses) will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not *burnt*” [Ex 3.3]. Note that being like a beast is “*toward* (him = *with*) you.” Perhaps this beast-like presence may be associated with Christ’s relationship to his followers as sheep, i.e., implying the similar ignorant presence of these animals.

Vs. 23: Nevertheless I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. This being with God *continually* or tamyd implies an uninterrupted “*with-ness*” (him) but one akin to animals being with their master. “The sheep hear his voice” [Jn 10.3]. Note that God holds the psalmist’s right hand as opposed to his left, symbolic of salvation: “Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed’” [Mt 25.41].

Vs. 24: You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Once the psalmist is with God as noted in the last verse, he is not standing still but is *guided*, nachah, as in Ps 23.3: “He *leads* me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” Instead of a rod and staff (cf. vs. 4) leading, the verse at hand has divine *counsel* or hetsah. “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom...and *counsel*” [Is 11.2]. Such leading is a midway point, as it were, for God receives the psalmist with *glory*, kavod, similar to his own kavod: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his *glory*” [Is 6.3].

Vs. 25: Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides you. The first statement identifies *heaven* (shamyam) with God himself, excluding the presence of other divine beings such as angels. Despite this supreme transcendence, the psalmist claims that the same type of (heavenly) presence is accessible on *earth*, ‘eretz. Note that the preposition *besides* (him) can also mean *with*; it is associated with the verb chaphats, *desire*, as noted with regard to Ps 18.19: “He delivered me because he *delighted* in me.”

Vs. 26: My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. This *failing* or kalah as noted regarding Ps 72.20 implies an end or completion. Applied to the verse at hand, kalah suggests that two aspects of the psalmist’s constitution, flesh and heart, may find “completion.” Then he implies immortality to his heart or lavav by mentioning it alone in reference to God as *strength* or tsarar which can also mean *rock* in the sense of a stronghold. It is though the psalmist substituted flesh for *portion*, cheleq, which also means *smoothness*: “Among the *smooth* stones of the valley is your portion” [Is 57.6]. The most basic meaning of this verbal root is to divide, especially by lot: “The people of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses; they *allotted* the land” [Jos 14.5].

Vs. 27: For lo, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to those who are false to you. Such distance (rachaq being the verbal root) is contrasted in the next verse with the psalmist’s closeness

to God. Compare rachaq with his expression of divine transcendence and presence, heaven and earth, vs. 25. In the verse at hand, distance is equated with alienation and death, *perish* or *'avad*. Even more abominable are persons *false* to God, *zanah*, a verbal root which means *to commit fornication*. This crime is even "more distant" (*rachaq*) from God and merits being *put to an end*, *tsamath*, as in Ps 54.5: "In your faithfulness, *put an end* to them."

Vs. 28: But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works. Such *nearness* (*qarav*; a noun means *the interior of anything* as Is 5.25, '*among the Canaanites*'). This verb can apply to the making of an offering: "Let him *offer* a male without blemish" [Lev 1.3]. Thus for the psalmist being near to God and offering sacrifice to him are one and the same.

This notion of an offering leads to the psalmist claiming God as his *refuge*, *machseh*, from the verbal root *chasah*, *to trust*. "The rock in whom they *trusted*" [Dt 33.37]. Note the importance of the transitional preposition *l-* (*that*) which gives the true purpose to the psalmist (or King Solomon) being near to God: *saphar*, *to tell* in the sense of enumerating divine works: "Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than could be *numbered*" [Ps 40.5]. *Mela'kah* or work implies property, especially cattle: "I will lead on slowly, according to the pace of the *cattle* which are before me" [Gen 33.14].

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Psalm Seventy-Four

Vs. 1: O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture! A psalm similar to Forty-Four. To be *cast off* or *zanach* as in Ps 43.2: "Why have you *cast me off*?", only in vs. 1 *zanach* refers to Israel as a nation, "us." The image of *smoke* or *hashan* is reminiscent of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: "And lo, the *smoke* of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace" [Gen 19.28]. Here the word used is *qytur* from the verbal root to burn incense as if these two cities were an offering to God. *Hashan* is applied to the theophany at Mt. Sinai: "And Mount Sinai was wrapped in *smoke* because the Lord descended upon it in fire" [Ex 19.18].

An alternate meaning for *anger* ('aph) is *nostrils*: "And the Lord God breathed into his *nostrils*" [Gen 2.7]. The object of this wrath is "sheep of your pasture," as if to make a distinction between the animals and the land which they occupy.

Vs. 2: Remember your congregation which you have gotten of old, which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage! Remember Mount Zion where you have dwelt. The Hebrew text has *remember* (*zakar*) only once which as noted in other places is derived the noun *male* and which implies the continuance of the *congregation* (*hadah*). "That there be no wrath against the *congregation*" [Num 1.53]. *Of old* or *qedem* suggests priority and hearkens back to God's favor towards Israel under the bondage of Egypt. Note the transition from *hadah* to *shvet*, *tribe* or *rod*. "And he shall smite the earth with the *rod* of his mouth" [Is 11.4]. There is a relationship between *zakar*, the desire for God to *remember* and Israel as *heritage*, *nachalah* which intimates something possessed. "But the Lord has taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own *possession*, as at this day" [Dt 4.20]. A derivative from the verbal root *ga'al* (*to redeem*) is *relative*: "And now it is true that I am a near *kinsman*, yet there is a *kinsman* nearer than I" [Rt 3.12].

In addition to asking God to remember his congregation, the psalmist makes special appeal to remember Mount Zion, notably as the place where God has *dwelt*, *shakan* in the sense of having settled down permanently. This dwelling is further stressed by the preposition *b-*, "*in it*."

Vs. 3: Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins; the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary!

The verb *to direct* connotes a lifting up, rum. It usually has a positive sense and can apply to the offering of sacrifice: “An *offering* by fire, a pleasing odor to the Lord” [Lev 2.9]. Compare *steps*, paham (singular), which refers more to the act of treading with ‘ashur, whose verbal root is noted regarding Ps 1.1. It is as though the psalmist wishes God to tread over to “perpetual ruins” which can apply to Jerusalem. *Perpetual* or netsach has the sense of completeness or absolute ruin, not necessarily temporal extension.

The *enemy* (‘oyev) is can refer to the Babylonian invasion of 587 B.C. who is singled out for condemnation because of having laid waste the sanctuary, more specifically, *in* the *sanctuary* or qodesh. The implication is that this qodesh was spared for their profane use. The Hebrew text reads, “The enemy has done wickedly in the sanctuary.”

Vs. 4: Your foes have roared in the midst of your holy place; they set up their own signs for signs. Verses 4-8 describe the Babylonian enemy’s destruction of the Jerusalem temple which may be outline as follows:

- 1) *roared* (sha’ag) in the sense of a lion: “Their *roaring* is like a lion” [Is 5.29], a frightening image not only with regard to the holy place (mohed, more specifically, a *set time*) but in its *midst* (qerev) or very center of the implied congregation.
- 2) *signs* (‘oth) which can be of a military nature. An alternate meaning: “Let them be for *signs* and for season and for days” [Gen 1.14].
- 3) vs.5: *upper entrance*: This verse is uncertain in the Hebrew and may be read as “A (man) was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick tree.”
- 4) vs. 6: destroyed *carved wood* (pituach) or something engraved: “As a jeweler *engraves* signets, so shall you *engrave* the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel” [Ex 28.11].
- 5) vs. 7: set fire to the *sanctuary* (miqdash), literally *threw* (shalach) fire.
- 6) *desecrated* (chalal), a verbal root meaning *to pierce through*. “My heart is *stricken* within me” [Ps 109.22]. Note this desecration is with regard to the “dwelling place of your *name* (shem)”, another way of indicating the divine presence in the Jerusalem temple.
- 7) vs. 8: intention to *subdue* (yanah) the Israelites. “Woe to her that is rebellious and *defiled*, the oppressed city” [Zeph 3.1]!
- 8) the foes burn God’s *meetings places* (mohed, singular, as in vs. 1), again signifying places where Israelites gather to worship.

Vs. 9: We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long. Th distress Israel feels is sought to be relieved by three means: 1) *signs* or ‘oth (used negatively as in vs. 4), 2) *prophet* or navy’: “And the *prophets*, do they live forever” [Zec 1.5]?, 3) *how long* (had-mah), that is, the duration of Israel’s distress. Cf. 1 Sam 3.20: “And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was *established* as a prophet of the Lord.” Note the word *established*, ‘aman (from which ‘amen’ is derived). Thus in vs. 9 the people may be said to be looking for a person in whom to put their “amen” or trust.

Vs. 10: How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever? Now *how long* (had-mah) is addressed directly to God instead of with regard to a person as in vs. 9. Now God is confronted with the same distress as Israel: scoffing foe and an enemy reviling his name.

Vs. 11: Why do you hold back your hand, why do you keep your right hand in your bosom? The first question pertains to the divine hand in general, that is, left or right. The second question reads in Hebrew, “Why do you consume your right hand?” The *right hand* (yamyn) is one traditionally associated with favor as opposed to the left. “Length of days is in her right hand” [Prov 3.16]. “And he

will place the sheep at his *right hand*, but the goats at the left" [Mt 25.33].

The verb kalah (*keep*) has the fundamental meaning of bringing something to completion, even in the sense of ravaging it. It causes Israel great distress to see why God does not reveal this yamyn to rescue her; again, a sign, prophet or one with knowledge seems to be the only hope.

Vs. 12: Yet God my King is from old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. This change in attitude—from one of distress to one of hope—implies no need of a sign, prophet or a person with knowledge. It shifts from outward manifestations to a realization that *salvation* (yeshuhoth, "Jesus") is in the process of formation present yet invisible or "in the *midst* of the earth," qerev, from which is derived qureban, *offering*. I.e., "Jesus" is in the hidden process of making an offering, an act which transcends Israel's current torment.

Vs. 13: You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons on the waters. The first part of this verse is a clear reference to the Exodus. Since vs. 12 says that "Jesus" is in the earth's midst or very center, presumably this marvel has occurred not so much from above but from below, that is, God reaching up (as it were) from beneath the earth to divide the Red Sea. *Might* or hoz is thus a manifestation of "Jesus."

The *dragons* (tanyn, singular) original signify the monster of chaos, Leviathan or Rahab (cf. Job 3.8, Is 27.1); here this primeval menace may be identified with the Egyptian army.

Vs. 14: You crushed the heads of Leviathan, you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. *Leviathan* as chief monster, so to speak, may be taken in the context of vs. 13 as the Egyptian Pharaoh who pursued Israel. His multiple heads may signify the various forces at his disposal. Note that Leviathan is a sea monster; here God gives his body to land animals signified by *wilderness*, tsyym; the noun tsyy can also refer to any wild beast: "But *wild beasts* will lie down there" [Is 13.21].

Vs. 15: You cleaved open springs and brooks; you dried up ever flowing streams. Since Leviathan is a sea animal, this verse may be viewed as an attempt by God to flush him out of his natural habitat. He does this by three means:

- 1) *cleaves* (baqar, as a cloven footed animal breaks open the soil). "O Lord, in the *morning* you hear my voice" [Ps 5.3]. I.e., he morning "cleaves open" daylight. The two objects of baqar are: *springs* (mahyan) or more specifically places irrigated by fountains. The proper word for *fountain* is hayn. "His *fountain* shall dry up, his spring shall be parched" [Hos 13.15].
- 2) *brooks* (nachal) are similarly the object of baqar. It implies a moving body of water issuing from a fountain; the fundamental meaning of its verbal root is *to inherit*. Nachalah is a related term meaning *valley* (where streams are located): "I went down to the nut orchard, to look at the blossoms of the *valley*" [Sg 6.10].
- 3) dried up *streams* or nehar (singular) whose verbal root also means *to shine*: "Then you shall see and be *radiant*" [Is 60.5]. The term for *ever flowing* is 'eytan and implies strength: "His bow will remain *firm*" [Gen 49.24].

Vs. 16: Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the luminaries and the sun. The first part of this verse has echoes in Ps 139.12: "Even the darkness is not dark for you, the night is bright as the day; for darkness is as light with you." Here we have a verse similar to the creation in Genesis: "Let there be light.' and there was light" [1.3]; "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night" [1.14].

Vs. 17 continues this creation theme by stating that God fixed earth's bounds and made summer and

winter. The verb *yatsar* for *to make* suggests a fashioning as by a craftsman.

Vs. 18: Remember this, O Lord, how the enemy scoffs, and an impious people reviles your name. This verse resumes the thrust of Ps 74, prayer for deliverance from enemies threatening the state of Israel. Note that the psalmist bids God to *remember* the enemies' taunts and abuse of his divine name. The verb here is *zakar*; cf. remarks with regard to Ps 6.5. The preceding verses functioned as an interlude or indirect means of getting God to take action by bringing to his attention his past saving deeds and act of creation which to the psalmist are one. This singular work is implied as being operative in Israel's favor.

Vs. 19: Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts; do not forget the life of your poor forever. Israel is viewed here as *dove* or *tor*, from a verbal root meaning to search out. "The land through which we have gone, to *spy* it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants" [Num 13.32]. *Tor* is also used as a term for a beloved female: "The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land" [Sg 2.12]. Note that this same word is used in 1.10 with a different meaning: "We will make you *ornaments* of gold, studded with silver." The Torah is also akin to these words; one gets the impression the a reader of the Torah coos like a dove or *tor* while reading it. Note that the verse at hand speaks of the dove's *soul* or *nephesh* which is immaterial. Thus the *wild beasts* (*chayah*, singular) may be taken as immaterial and hence an image for evil powers.

"*Life of the poor*" or *chayah* used in a different sense, namely, as associated with God's hanawym who have traditionally come under his protection. *To forget* (*shakach*) may be taken in an indefinite sense with a little or greater amount of time; to associate this disregard *forever* or *netsach* is to be deprived of divine knowledge, *yadah* (verb).

Vs. 20: Have regard for your covenant; for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence. The verb for *regard* is the simple *navat* which implies a sense of respect. "And the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not *look upon*" [Am 5.22]. The divine *covenant* (*beryth*) is intended to be observed "out in the open" or in full view of God and Israel. Compare this openness with *dark places* or *machshak* (singular), from the verbal root *chashak*. "Woe to those who hide deep from the Lord their counsel, whose deeds are in the *dark*" [Is 29.15]. Such caves are places to hatch plots where the *habitations* (rather, those who live there) or *nawah* reside. This word generally has a positive sense as pasture, for example. "Then I will gather the remnant of my flock...and I will bring them back to the their *fold*" [Jer 23.3].

Vs. 21: Let not the downtrodden be put to shame; let the poor and need praise your name. Here are three similar categories of people who are vulnerable to that violence hatched in secret places just mentioned: *downtrodden* (*dak*, implies being crushed), *poor* (*hany*), *needy* (*'evyon*). The first are singled out for not being *shamed* or *bosh*; it is as though the other two groups were to praise (*halal*) God's name because of this.

Vs. 22: Arise, O God, plead your cause; remember how the impious scoff at you all the day! The bidding of God to *arise* or *qum* is as though the psalmist wanted him to be with the three groups mentioned above; they are trampled "down" and to have this rising movement present with them with its divine source is his earnest desire. Also such *qum* associated with *ryv*, *please cause*, connotes a lawyer standing up to defend a client. "Defend the fatherless, *plead* for the widow" [Is 1.17].

The second part of vs. 22 has the "impious" or better in the Hebrew, *fool* (*naval*) *scoff* (*patah*) God, a verb implying persuasion or to be enticed. "O Lord, you have *deceived* me, and I was *deceived*" [Jer 20.7]. In a sense, such scoffing is innocent as implied by the noun and verb. Also, the psalmist suggests an identity between God and the afflicted of vs. 22 by his plea for him to *remember* (*zakar*).

Vs. 23: Do not forget the clamor of your foes, the uproar of your adversaries which goes up continually! The plea for God not to *forget* (shakach) corresponds to the one in vs. 22 for him to remember. This extension of *zakar*, as it were, pertains to *foes* and *adversaries*; the latter derives from the verbal root *qum*, *to arise*, as noted in the previous verse and may be contrasted with it. Such clamor *goes up*, *halah*, another upward motion. Psalm 74 concludes on this desperate note, especially the last word, *continually*, *tamyd*.

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Psalm Seventy-Five

Vs. 1: We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks; we call on your name and recount your wondrous deeds. This double note of *giving thanks* (*yadah*) seems to make up for the urgency of the preceding psalm. The second part reads in Hebrew, “For your name is near; they recount your wondrous works.” Note the presence of *shem*, name, which is *qerev* (*near*); cf. Ps 74.12: “Working salvation in the *midst* of the earth.” The “they” who recount or *saphar* (in the sense of writing down divine deeds) may be the three groups of afflicted persons mentioned in Ps 74.21, the downtrodden, poor and need.

Vs. 2: At the set time which I appoint I will judge with equity. This *mohed* was noted in Ps 74.4, *holy place*, and in the verse at hand has a temporal meaning, and the Septuagint translates it as *kairos*. The Hebrew reads, “When I shall receive the congregation.” In light of this, it seems that God passes judgment (*shaphat*, verb) only upon having received this *mohed* of Israel and is present in it.

Vs. 3: When the earth totters and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. Selah. God is the speaker from vs. 3 through vs. 5. The *tottering* (*mog*) implies an earthquake and can be associated with the *kairos* of judgment just noted. The *pillars* or *hamod* (singular) were thought to be the foundation of the earth on the chaos of those waters mentioned in Genesis. I.e., such pillars are based on the unstable base of primeval waters. *Hamod* is used in reference to God’s presence: “The *pillar* of the cloud went from before them” [Ex 14.19].

Selah or *pause* is the first instance of this word since Ps 68.32, implying that Psalm 75 is a liturgical act.

Vs. 4: I say to the boastful, “Do not boast,” and to the wicked, “Do not lift up your horn. The boastful and wicked persons may be seen as the antithesis of the pillars; their pomp is founded on the primeval waters or better, are an extension of them. Note that the verb *halal* (*to boast*) also means *to praise*. *Horn* or *qeren* is an image of power and can have a positive meaning: “The *horn* of my salvation” [Ps 18.2]. In vs. 4 *qeren* may be taken, like the boastful, as another extension the waters of chaos.

Vs. 5 continues this theme of boastful exultation by again mentioning *qeren*; another related image is “*insolent neck*,” from the verbal root *hataq*, to be stricken. It is as those persons who engage in this insolence are “stricken” by their own pride. This verse concludes God as speaker and Ps 75 resumes with the psalmist speaking.

Vs. 6: For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up. These two directions (as opposed to north and south) signify the rising and setting of the sun which perhaps was considered as a god. Note that this lateral direction differs from the vertical direction alluded to in the last few verses. In addition to them the psalmist adds the *wilderness*, *midbar* (cf. Ps 29.8). This verse has a parallel with John the Baptist in the same *midbar* who “was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light” [Jn 1.8].

Here *lifting up* or *rum* is a vertical movement, a liberation from the cycle of day and night implied by

east and west.

Vs. 7: But it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. *Judgment* or *shaphat* (verb) directed towards two vertical actions: *shaphal* and *rum*. Note the use of *rum* in the last verse with respect to *lifting up*.

Vs. 8: For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed; and he will pour a draught from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs. For another reference of *cup* (*kus*), cf. Is 51.22: "Behold, I have taken from your hand the *cup* of staggering." For this wine to be foaming or *chamar* implies that it is boiling, the meaning of this verbal root. Another noun is *chemar*, *bitumen*: "And they had brick for stone, and *bitumen* for mortar" [Gen 11.3]. *Mesek* (*well mixed*) is the only occurrence of this word.

The act of pouring a draught implies that the wicked are viewing this deliberate action which strikes them with terror. The Hebrew here reads "But the dregs all the wicked of the earth shall wring out and drink."

Vs. 9: But I will rejoice forever, I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. The Hebrew for "rejoice" is *declare* (*nagad*) from which the preposition *before* (*neged*) is derived. Thus "I will 'be before' forever." This before-ness allows the psalmist to *sing* (*zamar*, cf. references re. *to prune* as in Ps 8.17). Reference to Jacob may be situated within the context of this patriarch's wrestling with an angel, Gen 32.13+.

Vs. 10: All the horns of the wicked he will cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted. *Qeren* or *horn* was noted in vs. 4 as a symbol of arrogant exultation but can be positively ascribed to the *righteous*, *tsadyq*, the singular being used here, who apparently has multiple horns which are *exalted*, another use of *rum*. For a comparison of the two different horns, cf. Rev 5.6: "A Lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven *horns* and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." And Rev 12.3, "Behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten *horns* and seven diadems upon his heads."

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Psalm Seventy-Six

Vs. 1: In Judah God is known, his name is great in Israel. This psalm is reminiscent of Ps 46. Two traditional divisions of the descendants of Abraham: first God is *known* (*yadah*) in Judah and his name is *great* (*gadol*) in Israel. It seems as though divine revelation commences in Judah and then passes on into Israel. "For it is evident that our Lord was descended from *Judah*" [Heb 7.14].

Vs. 2: His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion. *Salem* is akin to *shalom* (*peace*) and is a poetical name for Jerusalem. "And Melchizedek king of *Salem* brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High" [Gen 14.18]. This mention of monotheistic priesthood in conjunction with Abraham shows the connection between the beginning of Israel's history and the temple at Jerusalem.

Note the two types of habitations for God: *abode* or *sukah* which is more properly a booth from which derives the Jewish celebration of Succoth. "You shall keep the feast of *booths* seven days when you make your ingathering from your threshing floor and your wine press" [Dt 15.13]. *Dwelling place* or *mahon* which refers more to the temple. "O Lord, I love the *habitation* of your house and the place where your glory dwells" [Ps 26.8]. The first is a temporary dwelling and the second is permanent.

Vs. 3: There he broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword and the weapons of war. Selah. *There* (shamah) can refer to the two divine presences just mentioned, abode and dwelling place. This verse speaks of a siege either of a historical or eschatological nature. At the end of vs. 3 we have the first of two selahs showing that Ps 76 is liturgical by nature.

Vs. 4: Glorious are you, more majestic than the everlasting mountains. *Glorious* derives from the verbal root 'or, *to be light* which here is associated with the similar *majestic* or 'adyr. "But there the Lord in *majesty* will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams" [Is 33.21]. A similar word with the same spelling is a *shepherd*: "Wail, you *shepherds*, and cry" [Jer 25.34]. The comparison in vs. 4 is between God and in Hebrew "mountains of *prey*," tareph. Perhaps this refers to the mountains surrounding Jerusalem on which her enemies were situated and seemed to those in the besieged city as birds of prey.

Vs. 5: The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil; they sank into sleep; all the men of war were unable to use their hands. Two groups of warriors who may be situated on the "mountains of prey" about Jerusalem: *stouthearted* or 'avyr (singular) can refer to a *bull*: "Why did not your *bull* stand? Because the Lord thrust him down" [Jer 46.15]. Their falling asleep ("They have slept their sleep," Hebrew) suggests that such "bulls" were not slain but were put to sleep by God's intervention, a type of paralysis with regard to their hands which wielded weapons.

Vs. 6: At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse lay stunned. Another reference to God and Jacob (cf. Ps 75.9 above) which again continues the theme of Jerusalem besieged or can also harken back to Egypt's defeat at the Red Sea. A *rebuke* (mighereth) is usually fatal to mortals: "The Lord will send upon you cures, confusion and *frustration* in all that you undertake to do" [Dt 28.20].

Vs. 7: But you, terrible are you! Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused? Terrible (nora') derives from yare', *to fear*, with a different meaning than Prov 1.7: "The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." In vs. 7 note the two "yous," one before nora' and another after it in order to emphasize this fearfulness. The act of standing is a common image of defiance, and one who dares to so is knocked down before God's anger. The Hebrew here reads "when you are angry," the preposition liphany (*before*) more specifically means "in the presence of."

Vs. 8: From the heavens you did utter judgment; the earth feared and was still. *Heavens* (shamym) is the traditional dwelling of God, and in the context of this psalm may be seen as one looking down from this height. The Hebrew reads "you caused judgment to be heard:" not direct impartation of mishpat but indirectly. However, *earth* ('erets) was able to recognize this "causing to be heard." First it *feared* (yare') and then became *still* (shaqatah). "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in *quietness* and in trust shall be your strength" [Is 35.15].

Vs. 9: When God arose to establish judgment to save all the oppressed of the earth. Selah. This verse is part of the previous one and shows the reason why the earth became still. Note that here God (in the Hebrew) "arises to *judgment*" (mishpat), the same judgment he uttered from heaven in vs. 8; thus there is a gap between its utterance and fulfilment of its execution. The image here is one of a judge or lawyer standing up to pronounce a verdict. In the verse at hand, the verdict is in favor of the *oppressed* or hanawym who are special objects of divine "Jesus" or yashah. At this instance a selah is appropriate with respect to the verb *arise* or qum, for it suggests anticipation.

Vs. 10: Surely the wrath of men shall praise you; the residue of wrath you will gird upon yourself. Two opposites which serve a higher end: *wrath* (chamath) and *praise* (yadah). The second sentence suggests that such chamath becomes a piece of armament for God. "*Gird* (chagar) your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one, in your glory and majesty" [Ps 45.3]! Note the distinction between "wrath of men" and "*residue* of wrath:" she'eryth, a term suggesting survivors. "And none of them shall be *left*" [Jer 11.23].

Vs. 11: Make your vows to the Lord your God and perform them; let all around him brings gifts to him who is to be feared. A distinction between the making of *vows* (nadar) and their fulfillment, shalom. As the well know second word intimates, the person making vows is bidden to live in peace. Those *all around* or savyv may apply to either (or) those watching the ceremony of making vows are those who have surrounded Jerusalem depicted earlier in this psalm. The act of *bringing gifts* or yaval fundamentally means to flow and has a poetic sense of walking as to offer a sacrifice in the sense used here. “Like a lamb that is *led* to the slaughter” [Is 53.7]. Vs. 11 contains yet another instance of the verb yare’, *to fear*, which has been fairly common in this psalm.

Vs. 12: Who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is terrible to the kings of the earth. The *spirit* (ruach) here may be in reference to these princes as inspiring their troops as expressed in the following sentiment: “Take courage and acquit yourselves like men, O Philistines” [1 Sam 4.9]. *Prince* (nagyd) is related to the preposition before and perhaps alludes to their being before their masters or kings. The reach of divine fear extends not only to such princes but upwards to “kings of the earth” or every sovereignty. “For in him all things were created...whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities” [Col 1.16].

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Psalm Seventy-Seven

Vs. 1: I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, that he may hear me. The previous psalm dealt with the threat of enemies to Israel as a nation, whereas the current psalm is one of deliverance from personal trouble. The Hebrew reads, “I *cried* to God with my voice,” tsaahq. It can also meaning a summoning: “And the men of Israel were *called out* from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manaseh, and they pursued after Midian” [Jud 7.23]. Perhaps the psalmist uses the impersonal *voice* or qol in the hope that this entity (which could be termed as more impartial) will move him to act. “That he may give hear” is the Hebrew rendering.

Vs. 2: In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted. *Day* is a type of kairos and can include an indefinite period of time whether referring to good or evil. At the same time, daylight is explicit as opposed to night when any searching is much easier. Darash is the verb *to seek*; cf. Ps 9.10. Then the psalmist shifts to night, a type of darash but different in that such *stretching* or nagar; it also means *to flow*: “My eyes will *flow* without ceasing, without respite” [Lam 3.49], a meaning consistent with the psalmist’s condition. The basic meaning for verb for *to weary* (pug) is interesting, *to be cold*. He concludes vs. 2 by mentioning nephesh, *soul*, his essential being, which itself is moved by distressed.

Vs. 3: I think of God, and I moan; I mediate, and my spirit faints. Selah. The Hebrew for “think” here is zakar, *to remember* (that is, better times). Zakar causes *moaning*, hamah. “My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was *thrilled* within me” [Sg 5.4]. The second part of vs. 3 deals with the psalmist’s *spirit* or ruach which *faints* (hataph): “From the end of the earth I call you when my heart is *faint*” [Ps 61.2]. Such collapse follows upon *meditating* (syach) which basically means to talk and in this instance, to talk with oneself aloud. Although Ps 77 is for personal deliverance, selah (here the first of three) is often associated with psalms of a liturgical and therefore a public nature. Perhaps the psalmist may be taken as representative of Israel as a whole where the individuality of a person was not distinct.

Vs. 4: You hold my eyelids from closing; I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Here God is held responsible for the psalmist’s inability to sleep. *Eyelids* (shimrah, singular) derive from the verb shamar, *to keep watch*. Such lack of sleep *troubles* him, paham; the noun footstep is derived form this verbal

root. It is as though the psalmist were troubled by hearing “footsteps” at night which kept him awake.

Vs. 5: I consider the days of old, I remember the years long ago. For another meaning of consider (chashav), cf. Ps 21.11: “If they *plan* evil against you, if they devise mischief, they will not succeed.” Here the same mentality of scheming is implied when the psalmist woefully considers “days *before*,” qedem, the literal Hebrew reading. The second object of chashav (“remember” is lacking in the Hebrew) is *years long ago* (holamym), a term connoting eternity: “Blessed be the name of God *forever and ever*” [Dan 2.20].

Vs. 6: I commune with my heart in the night; I meditate and search my spirit. The Hebrew reads for the first part of this verse, “I *remember* my song at night,” zakar, implying that the psalmist had played this negynah (music of a stringed instrument) at other times. Perhaps the melody produced by it came to his memory much more clearly at night than in the day, a time more sensitive for such recollections. “The old men have quit the city gate, the young men their *music*” [Lam 5.15].

In addition to *meditating* or syach (cf. vs. 3), the psalmist *searches* (chaphas) his ruach. The Hebrew reads, “My spirit made diligent search,” that is, actively engages in this chaphas. “If you seek it (wisdom) like silver and *search* for it as for hidden treasures” [Prov 2.4]. The object of chaphas in vs. 6 is his immaterial self or *spirit*. This corresponds to the Ruach or Holy Spirit: “For the Spirit *searches* everything, even the depths of God” [1 Cor 2.10].

Vs. 7: “Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable? The first of five questions through vs. 9 and asked at night (cf. previous verse). The verb zanach (*to spurn*) harkens back to Ps 74.1, “O God, why do you *cast us off* forever?” That is, not to be *favorable* or ratsah. “Let him be the *favorite* of his brothers” [Dt 33.24].

The second question in vs. 8 concerns divine chesed or *steadfast love*; compare chesed with *never*, nestach, its exact opposite.

The third question (vs. 8) concerns divine *promises* or ‘omer (singular in Hebrew); compare ‘omer with “all time” or in Hebrew, *from generation to generation*, another instance of its exact opposite.

The fourth question (vs. 9) concerns divine *graciousness* or chanan; compare chanan with *forget*, its opposite.

The fifth question (vs. 9) concerns divine *compassion* or rechem, a term referring to the womb; compare rechem with *shut up*, its opposite and implying not giving birth.

After posing these five questions comes selah to give pause or consideration with regard to this abandonment by God.

Vs. 10: And I say, “It is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed.” Chalah or *grief* implies illness; the Hebrew reads, “This has made me sick,” that is, the consequences of the questions he posed in the last few verses. Furthermore, the Hebrew reads “The years of the right hand” and lacks the verb “change.” Perhaps the years can apply to liturgical celebrations commemorating the various saving divine events which are lost once the Jerusalem temple is destroyed as described in Ps 74. Also implied is that the Most High has decided to use his left hand instead of his right.

Vs. 11: I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. Zakar or *calling to mind* brings attention to the liturgical commemorations mentioned in the last verse; i.e., the psalmist will “beget” (the implication of zakar) divine deeds. He restates his intention to do so by

another use of *zakar*, *remember*, this time concerning God's *wonders* which are more imposing than deeds, i.e., *mahalal* vs. *pele'*, the latter being *of old* or at the beginning of Israel's relationship with God, notably the prophets.

Vs. 12: I will meditate on all your work and muse on your mighty deeds. God's *work* or *pohal* (singular; the word is more or less generic regarding things accomplished) is the object of the psalmist's *meditation*, *hagah*, which as noted in Ps 71.24 implies a murmuring action with the lips. Thus his *hagah* is done softly or in the presence of a congregation at worship. *Mighty deeds* (*halylah*, singular) derives from *halal* which has multiple meanings such as to drink, glean, to thrust. "Declare his *deeds* among the people" [Is 12.4]. A *halylah* therefore is of greater importance than a *pohal*; in vs. 12 they are the object of the psalmist's *musings*, *syach* (cf. vs. 3).

Vs. 13: Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? God's *way* (*derek*) is manifest through the deeds, wonders and work noted in vs. 12. Implied here is that *holiness* (*qodesh*, adjective) is the guiding force through these visible accomplishments. Note the contrast between *god* ('el) and *God* ('Elohim).

Vs. 14: You are the God who works wonders, who has manifested your might among the peoples. *Pele'* or *wonder* continues the theme discussed in the last few verses and was mentioned in vs. 11 as being "of old." Here emphasis is upon the same wonders being done in the present. *Might* (*hoz*) is related to *pele'* but seems a more dramatic form so people other than Israel may behold them.

Vs. 15: You redeemed with your arm your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. Now the psalmist points more explicitly to Israel's defining moment of redemption, the Exodus from Egypt. *Ga'al* for to redeem (cf. Ps 74.2) identifies God's people with the persons of Jacob (cf. Gen 32.13+; also his blessing in 48 suggests Israel's new life after leaving Egypt) and Joseph; the latter requested that his bones be brought from Egypt: "And Moses took the bones of *Joseph* with him; for *Joseph* had solemnly sworn the people OF Israel saying, 'god will visit you; then you must carry my bones with you from here'" [Ex 13.19].

Vs. 16: When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid, yes, the deep trembled. The remaining verses (through 18) have natural phenomena assume a personal presence. These elements may be outlined as follows:

- 1) waters = see
- 2) waters = afraid
- 3) *deep* (*tehom* or primeval chaos, Gen 1.1) = trembled
- 4) vs. 17: clouds produce water and 5) skies thunder, both of which = God's arrows
- 6) vs. 18: crash of thunder
- 7) lightnings
- 8) earth trembled and shook

Vs. 19: Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen. Three terms used to show God's progression which can refer to either or the Red Sea or creative presence in Genesis: *way* (*derek*); *path* (*shevyl*) which is used only one other instance, Jer 28.25: "My people...have gone into *bypaths*, not the highway" [Jer 18.15]; and *footprints* (*haqev*, singular) or more specifically the heel. "If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the *tracks* of the flock" [Sg 1.8]...for these tracks will teach the bride the redemptive action of God. The Hebrew for "not seen" is *yadah*, *to know*.

Vs. 20: You did lead your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron

(especially the former) was familiar with God's unknowability through the theophany on Mt. Sinai; therefore he could perceive the unseen footprints noted in vs. 19 and direct Israel in them. It was Moses and Aaron who were the bride bidden to follow these tracks of the flock as in Sg 1.8.

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