

Notes on the Psalter, #6

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,” *tsahaq*. It can also mean 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 meditate, 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 from 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 pahal (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 pahal; 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.

+

Psalm Seventy-Eight

Vs. 1: Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! Two commands which the psalmist enjoins so his audience may make present again (re-present) God's divine actions on their behalf: *give ear* ('azan), a verbal root from which *utensil* ('azen) is derived implying that paying attention makes one a vessel for divine service. Thus *teaching* or torah is a utensil.

The second command is *to incline* (natah; fundamental meaning is to stretch) one's 'azen or *ear*, that is, to make this "utensil" receptive of God's words.

Vs. 2: I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old. The psalmist assumes the role of King Solomon in the Book of Proverbs (vs. 1), more precisely, the person of Wisdom in 8.1: "Does not wisdom call, does not understanding raise her voice?" A *parable* or mashal, as the verbal root intimates, draws comparisons in short, easy to remember expressions which is essentially the composition of Ps 78. *Dark sayings* or chydah (singular) also suggests a song: "I will incline my ear to a *proverb*; I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre" [Ps 49.5]. Chydah also means an *oracle*: "With him (Moses) I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in *dark speech*; and he beholds the form of the Lord" [Num 12.8]. Such indirect speech is needed for the people in general who are insensitive to a divine revelation similar to Moses.

Vs. 3: Things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. The dynamics of tradition in a nutshell: *hear* (shamah), *make known* (yadah), both of which are preceded by *telling* (saphar, basic meaning is to write) from earlier generations. Thus knowledge comes from hearing...and that comes from telling.

Vs. 4: We will not hide them from their children but tell them to the coming generation, the glorious deeds of the Lord and his might and the wonders which he has wrought. Such manifestation (kachad, *to deny*, a more profound disavowal) is reminiscent of Jacob's blessing to his twelve sons and by implication the future twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Gen 49). The objective of not denying is a *telling* as in vs. 3, saphar, and is threefold: divine *glorious deeds* (tehilah, the only other reference being Ex 15.11: 'terrible in *glorious deeds*, doing wonders'), *might* (hesuz, similar to hoz in Ps 77.14) and *wonders* (pele', singular, as in Ps 77.14).

Vs. 5: He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children. Another instance of that familiar pair, Jacob and Israel. The former has God's *testimony* or *heduth*, the same term pertaining to the ark of covenant and which specifically refers to the decalogue. "You shall put into the ark the *testimony* that shall give you" [Ex 25.16]. The latter has God's *law* or *Torah*. The *heduth* was written by God himself on Mt. Sinai whereas the *Torah* was not which gives the law more flexibility, as it were, to be handed down or taught or in Hebrew, *made known*, *yadah*, which has broader application than the acquisition of knowledge.

Vs. 6: That the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children. A continuation of *yadah*; also implied are unborn children or those still in the womb. "And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb" [Lk 1.41]. Here John the Baptist was not yet born, as well as Jesus Christ, and may be said to be a type of fulfillment of this *yadah* mentioned in these verses. The importance of succeeding generations may be found in the genealogy at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel.

Vs. 7: So that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments. The "they" here are the children of vs. 5 and the next generation of vs. 6 who carry out this threefold task of *yadah*:

- 1) of keeping *hope* (*kesel*). "Is not your fear of God your confidence and the integrity of your ways your *hope*" [Job 4.6]? *Kesel* also means loins: "And the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the *loins*" [Lev 3.4].
- 2) remember or put negatively, not *forget* (*shakach*) God's *works* (*mahalal*, singular) which signify more deeds of a distinguished kind.
- 3) *keep* (*natsar*) in the sense of watching as implied in Ps 12.7: "*Guard* us ever from this generation." In the psalm at hand the object of *natsar* is God's *commandments* or *mitswah* (singular). "You shall be careful to do the *commandment*, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command you this day" [Dt 7.11]. Not the singular *mitswah* and other two terms in the plural.

Vs. 8: That they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God. This verse introduces details or consequences of what divine *yadah* is not. The psalmist says that their fathers—both immediate and earlier—have four qualities opposite to *yadah*: 1) *stubborn* (*sorer*), 2) *rebellious* (*morer*), 3) not *steadfast* (*hekyn*: with regard to *heart*, *lev*) and 4) not *faithful* (lacking *ne'emnah* with regard to *spirit*, *ruach*).

The verses thus far are an introduction to Israel's historical relationship with God beginning with the Exodus and ending with King David. Thus the audience may be situated during or after the reign of King David. Vs. 9 begins with mention of Ephraimites, an uncertain incident mentioned by the psalmist. Because Psalm 78 is essentially an outline of these events, key points will be delineated instead of verse by verse details. Most of these details consists of the Israel's infidelities when confronted with God's faithfulness.

- vs. 10: did not keep God's covenant, refused to follow God's law
- vs. 11: forgot his deeds and miracles
- vs. 17: continued to sin against God, rebelled against him
- vs. 18: tested God
- vs. 19: spoke against God
- vs. 22: had not faith in God nor in his saving power
- vs. 32: continued to sin and not believe
- vs. 36: flattered God and lied
- vs. 37: hearts were not steadfast nor were they true to God's covenant
- vs. 40: rebelled against God and grieved him
- vs. 41: tested God and provoked him
- vs. 42: did not remember God's power nor the day he saved them from the foe
- vs. 56: tested and rebelled against God and failed to observe his testimonies

vs. 57: turned away and behaved treacherously

vs. 58: provoked Go to anger and made him jealous with their graven images

Verses 67 through 72 end on a positive note, that is, they briefly recount how God established his dwelling in Zion and showed favor to King David by the following:

vs. 68: God built his sanctuary

vs. 70: chose David

vs. 71: made David shepherd of the people

vs. 72: David as king governed his people with uprightness and skill

It is interesting to consider that despite these infidelities, God continued to show interest in his people. See those references pertaining to the verb to lead:

vs. 14: In the daytime he *led* them with a cloud and all the night with a fiery light.

vs. 52: Then he *led forth* his people like sheep and *guided* them in the wilderness like a flock.

vs. 54: And he *brought* them to his holy land, to the place which his right hand had won.

+

Psalm Seventy-Nine

Verses 1-4 describe the inflictions wrought by Israel's enemies and is reminiscent of Ps 74:

- 1) *heathen* (goyim) entered God's *inheritance* (nachlah)
- 2) heathen have defiled God's holy *temple* (heykal)
- 3) heathen gave bodies of God's servants to birds and beasts to be devoured
- 4) heathen poured out their blood around Jerusalem
- 5) Israel became a taunt and object of derision

Vs. 5: How long, O Lord? Will you be angry forever? Will your jealous wrath burn like fire? These three questions may be put into the mouths of survivors or those gone into hiding. Note the simple *how long*, had-mah, which forms a question by itself. The enemy's waste of Israel is attributed to God in terms of his *anger* ('anaph) and (in Hebrew) *jealousy* (qin'ah). The latter implies that God is possessive about his inheritance, hence the reason for the calamities. "The *zeal* of the Lord of hosts will do this" [Is 9.7]. Such qin'ah *burns* or bahar: "Smoke went up from his nostrils and *devouring* fire from his mouth" [Ps 18.8].

Vs. 6: Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not know you, and on the kingdoms that do not call on your name! The psalmist asks God's wrath directed towards the *nations* or goym; cf. the heathen of vs. 1. They lack *knowledge* (yadah, verb) and by reason of this, may be said to be less guilty than *kingdoms* who completely ignore God. Nevertheless, both are objects of divine *wrath*, chamath.

Vs. 7: For they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation. A more personal way of saying that the goym have wasted Israel. The verb for devour is the common 'akal, *to eat*; the goym have also eaten Jacob's *habitation* or naweh which can also pertain to a pasture: "Sharon shall become a *pasture* for flocks" [Is 65.10]. To destroy Jacob's naweh is a more calculated extermination in that it implies eliminating its food supply.

Vs. 8: Do not remember against us the iniquities of our forefathers; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low. An instance where an invasion by foreigners is attributed to Israel's infidelity as outlined in Ps 78. Note the connection between present distress and (according to the Hebrew text) "our *former* iniquities," ri'shon implies wickedness done at the beginning which set in motion other iniquities which may be traced to the fall of our first parents. The Hebrew verb used here is zakar (*to remember*) which as noted elsewhere (cf. Ps 6.5) implies the act of begetting.

The second part of vs. 8 is an entreaty for God's rechem: "Has he in anger shut up his *compassion*" [Ps 77.9]? In the verse at hand, such compassion is begged to *meet* us, qadam, the verbal root for the preposition qedem, *before*; also derived from it is the cardinal direction, *east*, as though the rising sun were God's rechem. The reason for such haste is that Israel is *brought low*, dalah; for a use of this verb in its opposite sense, cf. Ps 30.1: "I will extol you, O Lord, for you have *drawn me up*."

Vs. 9: Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake! Since God is identified with *salvation* (yeshah) or "Jesus," he is bound to respond speedily as requested in vs. 8, that is, manifest hazar or *help*. The reason lies in the psalmist's appeal to divine *glory* or kavod associated with his shem which implies "Jesus." These words are a way of saying that God's honor is at stake. This request also involves an appeal for God to *deliver* (natsal) and *forgive* (kaphar) sins, the latter verb meaning to cover, not necessarily to eliminate them. For a similar idea, cf. Is 1.18: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow." That is, the essence of sin is not destroyed but its color.

Vs. 10: Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of your servants be known among the nations before our eyes! Two further instances when goym are mentioned, *nations*. In light of the last verse, these words may be altered as asking, "Where is their 'Jesus?'" The second sentence begins in Hebrew, "Let him be known among the nations in our sight," the "him" as possibly referring to "Jesus." Once slain, the blood of these servants has the capacity to transmit *knowledge* (yadah, verb) to the goym.

Vs. 11: Let the groans of the prisoners come before you; according to your great power preserve those doomed to die! *Prisoner* ('asyr) is singular and can apply to Israel being led into captivity. In addition to this singular captive are the plural condemned, ben temuthah, used one other occasion in Ps 102.20: "To set free those who were *doomed to die*." Here the psalmist states that God has already "looked down from his holy height and from heaven the Lord looked at the earth" (vs. 19), namely, these two acts of beholding have wrought deliverance and are equivalent with vs. 11's *preserve*, yatar. From this verbal root is derived the noun yeter, *cord*, suggesting that God lets down this cord for the condemned to climb up.

Vs. 12: Return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors the taunts with which they have taunted you, O Lord! The neighbors are *taunting* the Israelites, charaph; cf. Ps 31.11: "I am the *scorn* of all my adversaries." While not necessarily engaged in ravaging Israel, these peoples look with favor upon the goym who are doing this and are urging them on. The psalmist wishes that such taunts be mirrored back across Israel's borders, as it were. *Sevenfold* or shivhatym is a way of expressing extreme vengeance: "Vengeance shall be taken on him (Cain) sevenfold" [Gen 4.15].

Vs. 13: Then we your people, the flock of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praises. This giving of thanks seems directed more against Israel's neighbors mentioned in the last verse, for their charaph is more painful than any invasion by a foe. *Pasture* or marhyth can also mean *flock*: "They have not prospered, and all their *flock* is scattered" [Jer 10.21]. In addition to this praise, future generations will *recount* God's praise, saphar, with its connotation of writing them down in a book.

+

Psalm Eighty

Vs. 1: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth. The psalmist identifies God as a *shepherd*, rehad, a variation of which means *friend*: "Arise, my *love*, my fair one" [Sg 2.13]. Mention of Joseph implies the northern part of Israel as noted in Ps 78.67 ("He rejected the tent of *Joseph*"). Note the verb 'azan, *give hear*, which is a more intense form than the common word shamah, *to hear*. The verb nahag, *to lead*, as in Ps 48.14: "He (God) will be our *guide* forever." "I would *lead* you and bring you into the house of my mother" [Sg 8.2].

The act of leading is effected from a distance, that is, from God's *throne* (yashav, verb). Since it is upon cherubim, these ministers may be said to the one who are physically present to guide Joseph. "He rode on a *cherub* and flew; he was seen upon the wings of the wind" [2 Sam 22.11]. A parallel may be drawn between these cherubim and God's *shining forth*, yaphah. "The Lord came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he *shone forth* from Mount Paran" [Dt 33.2].

Vs. 2: Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh! Stir up your might and come to save us! A continuation of the previous verse containing three other tribes of the Northern Kingdom associated with Joseph before which God's glory is bidden to shine. Perhaps with these added tribes the psalmist is emboldened to as God to *stir up* (hur), a verbal root whose fundamental meaning is to be hot; also implies awaking from sleep. "That you *stir not up* nor awaken love until it please" [Sg 2.7]. Upon waking up, God is to *save* (yashah, "Jesus") us, that is, not just the four tribes (Joseph) but "us" or Israel as a whole.

Vs. 3: Restore us, O God; let your face shine that we may be saved! *To restore* or yashav suggests a sitting down in the sense of being permanently established. The second sentence of vs. 3 has another instance of "Jesus" (yashah) in conjunction with God's *shining* ('or) which, in turn, pertains to his face. "Wisdom makes his face *shine*" [Eccl 8.1]. Such shining is more a simple radiance as opposed to a more active outpouring of light. Compare with the verb yaphah in vs. 1.

Vs. 4: O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? Identification of God with *hosts* (tseba'oth) implies that he is in the company of other spiritual beings much like the cherubim of vs. 1. The psalmist is coy here, indirectly appealing to such hosts who will in turn appeal to God. This is not unlike the bride's companions in the Song of Songs. The verb hashan, *to be angry*, also means *to smoke*. "And Mount Sinai was wrapped in *smoke* because the Lord descended upon it in fire" [Ex 19.18]. Perhaps this latter association with God's revelation connotes a type of incense rising with the people's prayers.

Vs. 5: You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. *Tears* (dimhah) appears here as both solid food and drink, both of which are in *full measure*, shalysh. This term basically means the numeral three and can apply to a military officer. "His chosen *captains* are also drowned" [Ex 14.7].

Vs. 6: You make us the scorn of our neighbors; and our enemies laugh among themselves. Here neighbors (cf. Ps 79.12) and enemies (possibly the invaders of the same psalm) are seen as one and the same. They both cast *scorn*, madon (which implies strife, cf. Prov 15.18), and *laugh* (lahag, which implies mockery, cf. Hos 7.16).

Vs. 7: Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved! A verse identical to vs. 3 except with the addition here of *hosts*, tseba'oth, which was mentioned in vs. 4.

Vs. 8: You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. This verse contains the first of nine actions God performed for Israel as well as pertaining to its later relationship with neighboring lands. These verses use using agricultural imagery beginning with Israel's key redemptive experience at the Red Sea and ending at the River or Euphrates, the furthest extend of its influence:

- 1) brought a vine out of Egypt
- 2) drove out nations
- 3) planted it
- 4) cleared ground
- 5) vine took deep root
- 6) vine filled the land
- 7) mountains were covered with its shade
- 8) cedars were covered with its branches
- 9) vine sent shoots to the River

Vs. 12: Why then have you broken down its walls so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit? Mention of *walls* (gader, singular) continues this theme of Israel as garden. Gader has the alternate meaning: "We will

build *sheepfolds* here for our flocks and cities for our little ones” [Num 32.16]. The second part of this verse reads in Hebrew, “*pluck* her,” ‘arah. “I come to my garden, my sister, my bride, I *gather* my myrrh with my spice” [Sg 5.1]. This verse has a parallel with Christ on the cross who was subject to mockery by people passing by. It may be said that such persons are welcome to pluck his fruit in contrast to vs. 12’ lamentation.

Vs. 13: The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it. A verse reminiscent of Sg 2.15: “Catch the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.” This verse contains the only reference to *boar*, chazyr.

Vs. 14: Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven and see; have regard for this vine. The desire for God to *turn* (shuv)—for the last time he had turned (*again*, -na) was Ps 69.16. Then the verb was panah from which is derived the noun *face*. In the verse at hand, another indirect reference is made to the hosts having influence to bear upon God to effect a shuv.

Three act of beholding connected with shuv: 1) *look down* or navat as in Ps 33.13: “The Lord *looks down* from heaven” and describes a vertical type of vision from up to down. 2) *see* or ra’ah and 3) *have regard* or paqad as in Ps 31.5: “You have *redeemed* me, O Lord.” Paqad has military implications as in the mustering of troops.

Vs. 15: The stock which your right hand planted. This verse has as its object the threefold beholding of vs. 14. The Hebrew reads, “Planted and upon the son whom you have reared for yourself.” Thus Israel-as-vine develops more into God’s *son* (ben) whom he has *reared*, ‘amats, a verb implying courage. “Be strong and very *courageous*” [Jos 1.7].

Vs. 16: They have burned it with fire, they have cut it down; may they perish at the rebuke of your countenance! The order here is burn followed by cutting down which is inverse to the order you would expect. Perhaps implied is that the Jerusalem temple was burned to a ruin and was then pulled down. This view may situated the third part of the verse, God’s *countenance* (paney) which rises unexpectedly from the temple to destroy Israel’s foes. Note that a *rebuke* (geharah) causes death. “I wise son hears his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to *rebuke*” [Prov 13.1].

Vs. 17: But let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself! Here the indefinite hand (left or right) of God is directed upon a man of his *right hand*, yamyn, which as noted in Ps 74.11 designates favor. This yamyn is further specified as a “son of man,” a title of special favor to a prophet (cf. Ezekiel) and later to Jesus Christ (Mk 8.31). After being called, this person requires *strengthening*, ‘amats, as in vs. 15.

Vs. 18: Then we will never turn back from you; give us life and we will call on your name! Sug or *to turn back* has the alternate meaning of *to hedge about*: “Your belly is a heap of wheat *encircled* with lilies” [Sg 7.2]. Thus sug can involve taking a defensive posture against God as well as withdrawing from him; Israel will never create a fortified position against God.

The psalmist closely bound together *life* (chyym) and calling upon God’s shem which may be seen as Jesus Christ.

Vs. 19: Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let your face shine that we may be saved! A verse identical to vss. 3 and 7 only here with the addition of *Lord* (YHWH), the proper name for God. Also note the further use of yashah, “Jesus.”

+

Psalm Eighty-One

(

Vs. 1: Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! The exhortation *to sing* or ranan occurs frequently in the Psalter (cf. Ps 5.11) as one would expect and is often associated with joy. The reason for such gladness is God as *strength*, hoz. The second exhortation is similar, *shout for joy* or ruah as in Ps

for such gladness is God as *strength*, hoz. The second exhortation is similar, *shout for joy* or ruah as in Ps 20.5; this verb occurs mostly in the Psalter with the exception of Job 38.7 and Jdt 16.11. Mention of the “God of Jacob” can be seen in light of Jacob’s dream when he exclaimed, “Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it” [Gen 28.16].

Vs. 2: Raise a song, sound the timbrel, the sweet lyre with the harp. Zimrah or *song* derives from the often mentioned verbal root zamar, *to prune, to pluck*. Note that the psalmist turns his attention to musicians both here and in the next verse. “Take away from me the noise of your *songs*” [Am 5.23]. As for *timbrel* (toph), cf. Ps 68.25 where is cited Ex 15.20: “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.” The last two instruments are stringed and are mentioned as one: *lyre* (kinor) as in Ps 57.8: “Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and *lyre*! I will awake the dawn!” Such a lyre is *sweet* (naham) or better, pleasant. “Her ways are ways of *pleasantness* and all her paths are peace” [Prov 3.17]. Nevel (*harp*) is also used in Ps 57.8 just cited.

Vs. 3: Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. This verse could refer to the Feast of Booths, Dt 16.13-15. The *trumpet* (shophar) is a horn used to summon the people either as an alarm or for a liturgical function. Note that shophar is used with reference to God’s revelation on Mt. Sinai: “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].

In the verse at hand, *new moon* (chodesh) is the only use of this term in the Psalter. “On the third *new moon* after the people of Israel had gone forth out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai” [Ex 19.1]. *Full moon* (kese’) is the only use of this word in the Bible and is associated with a *feast day*, chag, and can imply a *sacrifice*: “You shall not offer the blood of my *sacrifice* with leavened bread” [Ex 23.18].

Vs. 4: For it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob. Here as well as in the next verse the psalmist situates his earlier exhortations in a historical light, the Exodus. The source for this liturgical gathering comes from a *statute* (choq) and *ordinance* (mispat); the former can refer to an appointed time whereas the latter to judgment as the verbal root suggests.

Vs. 5: He made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over the land of Egypt. I hear a voice I had not known. Refer to Ex 13.19: “And Moses took the bones of *Joseph* with him; for *Joseph* had solemnly sworn the people of Israel (cf. Gen 50.25-6).” Note that this *decree* or heduth (also used with reference to the decalogue, Ex 25.21) was made “*in* (b-) *Joseph*, not just to him. Also note that God “went out *over* (hal-)” Egypt which can refer to not only to the Exodus but to the ten plagues. “And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch forth my hand *upon* (hal) Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them” [Ex 7.5].

The second sentence uses the first person singular as speaker which could refer either to the psalmist or to the officiating priest speaking in God’s name. The *voice* (saphah) suggests lips, an active speaking as opposed to voice as sound. This saphah is not *known* (yadah), reminiscent of Moses’ ignorance of God until he revealed himself (cf. Ex 3).

Vs. 6: “I have relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket. God now speaks from this verse to the conclusion of the psalm. The Hebrew text reads “his” instead of “your.” The *burden* or sevel can refer to the slavery Israel endured in Egypt: “So they made the people of Israel serve with rigor” [Ex 1.13]. For another use of sevel, cf. 1 Kg 11.28: “He (King Solomon) gave him (Jeroboam) charge over all the *forced labor* of the house of Joseph.” *Basket* or dod is from the same verbal root as the proper name David and can refer to the forced labor just noted. “And when she could hide him (Moses) no longer she took for him a *basket* made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch; and she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the river’s edge” [Ex 2.3].

Vs. 7: In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah. The first part of this verse calls to mind Ex 3.7-8: “I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt...and I have come down to *deliver* them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to

bring them up out of that land.” The verb *chalats* is used for *to deliver*. “*Deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love*” [Ps 6.4].

The “*secret place of thunder*” (*seter*) as in “The *secret places of the stairs*” [Sg 2.14]. In the verse at hand, *seter* alludes to Mt. Sinai: “And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him in *thunder*” [Ex 19.19].

The third part of vs. 7 refers to Ex 17.7, temporally prior to the “secret place of thunder:” “And he called the name of the place Massah and *Meribah* because of the fault finding of the children of Israel and because they put the Lord to the proof.”

Clearly such dramatic incidents as these requires time or a *pause* (*selah*) to consider their implications.

Vs. 8: Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me! The first sentence suggests that the people are not paying attention to God while he is *admonishing* (*hod*) them; the same verb means *to testify, bear witness*. God attempts to get their attention by addressing them by their common national title, Israel. Note that *shamah* is used for both *hear* and *listen*.

Vs. 9: There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. One such reference to idolatry within the “Exodus context” of Ps 81: “Up, make us *gods*, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him” [Ex 32.1]. Here the golden calf is not a *foreign* (*zar*) god as the second part of vs. 9 mentions. Thus two types of gods may be posited, native and foreign.

Vs. 10: I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. A familiar refrain as in Jdg 2.1: “I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land which I swore to give to your fathers.” The *opening* of the audience’s collective mouth is more accurately a broadening, the basic meaning of *rachav*. The audience is intended to ingest divine words as nourishment.

Vs. 11: But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would have none of me. A distinction between people and Israel; the former refuses to listen and the latter’s is guilt is greater because it is unwilling. Here *voice* (*qol*) as the intended food is rejected: “*have none of me*” or *avah*; this verb means to desire. “If you show yourselves *willing* and obey” [Prov 1.10].

Vs. 12: So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. Two manifestations of refusing to listen to God: *stubborn*, derived from the verbal root *sharar*, *to twist*, implying that the human heart “twists” all types of perceptions. Note the plural form of this adjective: “Behold, his (behemoth) strength is in his loins and his power in the *muscles* of his belly” [Job 40.16]. This allusion to behemoth shows that a stubborn heart makes one like this primeval sea monster.

The second manifestation is the following of one’s own *counsels* (*mohetsah*, singular) was depicted in Ps 5.10: “Let them fall by their own *counsels*.”

Vs. 13: O that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! Another distinction as in vs. 11 between people and Israel. This verse is more poignant in that God is longing for his people to follow him, that is, to obey the classical injunction “*Hear* (*shamah*), O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” [Dt 6.4]. Such hearing immediately results in action, *walking* (*halak*) not in the physical but divine sense, “my *ways*,” (*derek*, singular). Note the plural form implying multiple means of relating to God from a singular hearing.

Vs. 14: I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. Note the word *soon* or *mehat* which would yield positive results from the “singular” hearing and “multiple” ways with regard to assailants.

Vs. 15: Those who hate the Lord would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. *Cringe* or *kachash* can mean to deny: “But Sarah *denied*, saying, ‘I did not laugh’” [Gen 18.15]. In the verse at hand, note the preposition *l-*; the verb *kachash* is in the direction *towards* God. It continues by saying that such cringing is a

type of *fate* (heth, also *time* which can imply time as kairos) last forever or forever in this “towards” cringing with regard to God.

Vs. 16: I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you. The end of God as speaker which began with vs. 6. The Hebrew has “him” instead of “you.” This verse is reminiscent of God feeding Israel in the Sinai desert, cf. Ex 16.13-36. *Finest* or chelev basically means *fatness* or the best part of anything: “The *fat* of the land, the best of its fruits” [Gen 45.18]. *Devesh* or *honey*: “A land flowing with milk and *honey*” [Ex 13.5]. Note that there is no reference to honey coming from a rock but it can allude to the rewards of inheriting this promised land. Also, the verbs in vss. 12-18 have in English “would” implying that the possibility of fulfillment but they suggest that it did not come about.

+

Psalm Eighty-Two

Vs. 1: God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment. *Council* or *hedah* here refers to the pagan belief that the world is governed by an assembly of gods (cf. Ps 89.7). The superiority of Israel’s God is implied by *qerev*, *in the midst of*, that is, in the center as principle spokesperson or judge.

Vs. 2: “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah. The first of two occasions when God speaks (to vs. 4 and again, vss. 6-7). Here the gods may be the object of question with regards to unjust judgment or an audience on his behalf. The second part of this verse may read in Hebrew, “and accept the persons of the wicked.” These opening harsh words intended to strike fear and respect are emphasized by *selah*.

Vs. 3: Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. This verse and the next contain four exhortations or commands:

- 1) *justice* = *weak* (dal) and *fatherless* (yatom)
- 2) *right* = *afflicted* (hany) and *destitute* (rash)
- 3) vs. 4: *rescue* = *weak* (dal) and *needy* (‘evyon)

Vs. 5: They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. The two requisites for proper judgment are lacking, *knowledge* (yadah) and *understanding* (byn); the Hebrew uses verbs in these instances which implies an active lack of them signified by absence of clarity with regard to their walking in *darkness*, choshek, a symbol of misery. Also choshek as used in Gen 1.2 (“and *darkness* was upon the face of the earth”) can apply here in that lack of knowing and understanding (again, verbal use) resembles being in this primordial chaotic state. This makes better sense when vs. 5 speaks of earth’s foundations being shaken; it is as though Genesis’ choshek applied to unjust judges infiltrated earth’s very core.

Vs. 6: I say, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you. The second time God speaks in Ps 81, through the next verse. Here God reminds those lacking yadah and byn of the previous verse of their sonship with him. “Will you still say, ‘I am a god,’ in the presence of those who slay you, though you are but a man, and no god, in the hands of those who wound you” [Esk 28.9].

Vs. 7: Nevertheless, you shall die like men and fall like any prince.” This verse is reminiscent of Gen 3.19: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust and to dust you shall return.” The second part of vs. 7 reads in Hebrew, “fall as one man, O princes.”

Vs. 8: Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to you belong all the nations! A refrain or acclaim for God as judge when he “has taken his place in the divine council” (vs. 1). Here the psalmist wishes God to *arise*, qum, as if to get above the fray and confusion of the divine council. The Hebrew reads, “for you will inherit all nations.”

+

Psalm Eighty-Three

Vs. 1: O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God! The psalmist’s wish for God not to remain *silent*, damah, suggests that he works more through speaking than by doing. For an alternate use of this verbal root, cf. Ps 4.4: “Commune with your own hearts on your beds and *be silent*.” As noted there, damah can mean *to be like*; the other meaning is *to perish* which is more in line with the verse at hand. “Alas for me, for I *perish*” [Is 6.5]!

Associated with damah are two other reasons why the psalmist wishes God to speak: not *to hold peace* or charash, an alternate meaning being *to devise*. “David knew that Saul was *plotting* evil against him” [1 Sam 23.9]. The third and final wish is for God to be in motion or not keep *still*, shaqat. “Take heed, *be quiet*, do not fear, and do not let your hearts be faint” [Is 7.4]. Note that vs. 1 which begins with *God* (‘Elohyim) ends with *God* (‘El).

Vs. 2: For lo, your enemies are in tumult; those who hate you have raised their heads. To be in *tumult* or hamah “Surely for nought are they in *turmoil*” [Ps 39.6]. This verb connotes plotting as well as being disturbed. The Hebrew text has singular “head” as if to show the single-mindedness of the enemies’ plotting; they raise it as one after having taken consultation together.

Vs. 3: They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your protected ones. The verb haram for *to be crafty* implies being naked; an alternate meaning is *to be high*. “At the blast of your nostrils the waters *piled up*, the floods stood up in a heap” [Ex 15.8]. The *protected ones* comes from the verbal root tsaphan “For he will *hide* me in his shelter in the day of trouble” [Ps 27.5].

Vs. 4: They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no

more! Such is the manifestation of that haram of the last verse. The Hebrew is more drastic, “Let us cut them off from a nation,” that is, for the existence of Israel to cease. Even if that came about, Israel’s name would still exist at least in memory; her enemies wish that also to be blotted out.

Vs. 5: Yes, they conspire with one accord; against you they make a covenant. The Hebrew reads, “with one heart” which demonstrates the intensity of hatred towards Israel. If this were not enough, a *covenant* (beryth) is forged in imitation—rather, in opposition—to the divine covenant with God. Such a covenant includes the following nations traditionally allied against Israel and as depicted in vss. 6-8:

- tents of Edom
- tents of Ishmaelites
- Moab
- the Hagrites
- Gebel
- Ammon
- Amalek
- Philistia
- inhabitants of Tyre
- Assyria who are Lot’s children

Verse 8 concludes with *selah*, giving a chance for the Psalmist’s audience to consider their foes and to take appropriate action either through prayer, military action or both.

Vs. 9: Do to them as you did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon. Refer to chapters 6-8 for Gideon’s victory which was effected by a small army. “With the three hundred men that lapped I will deliver you and give the *Midianites* into your hand” [Jud 7.7].

As for Sisera and Jabin, cf. Judges 4-5, a victory wrought by Deborah, a prophetess. Note that her victories occurred prior to Gideon’s yet are mentioned after them in the psalm verse at hand. Also refer to Jud 4.1, “And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died.” This verse gives the reason for Israel’s afflictions. The word “again” suggests familiarity with this problem of recurring evil by the chosen nation.

As for Oreb and Zeeb (vs. 11), cf. Jud 7.25; Zebah and Zalmunna (vs. 11), cf. Jud 8.21.

All these hostile nations sought the “pastures of God” (vs. 12), *na’ah*, whose verbal root means *to be seemly*. “I am very dark but *comely*, O daughters of Jerusalem” [Sg 1.5].

Vs. 13: O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind. After the enemies have spoken in the last verse, the psalmist resumes again with his earnest requests from God as follows:

- whirling dust (Hebrew, tumbleweed)
- chaff
- forest on fire
- flames on mountains
- pursue enemies with tempest
- terrify enemies with a hurricane
- fill faces with shame
- make them dismayed. Note that these words (vs. 16) are done for a noble purpose, that Israel’s enemies may *seek* (baqash) God’s *shem* or *name*.
- be put to shame

-be dismayed forever
-perish in disgrace

Despite these wishes for vengeance, the psalmist concludes in vs. 18 with the desire for them all to *know* (yadah) that God is “*over* (hal) all the earth.” I.e., knowledge of this pervasive shem is alone sufficient; it can be the place of their destruction.

+

Psalm Eighty-Four

Vs. 1: How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! *Lovely* or yadyd can also mean *beloved*: “Let me sing for my *beloved* a love song concerning his vineyard” [Is 5.1]. Note that the Song’s bridegroom is called (1.13) the beloved, from the same verbal root. *Dwelling place* is in the plural, mishkan (singular), and connotes a tent. “And pasture your kids beside the shepherds’ *tent*” [Sg 1.8]. This plural form reveals that God has more than one dwelling, reminiscent of “In my Father’s house are many *rooms*” [Jn 14.2]. Such plurality is accentuated by *hosts*, tseva’oth.

Vs. 2: My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. The object of the psalmist’s *soul* or nephesh is God’s *courts*, chatser (singular), again in the plural. This term refers to the exterior part of the temple: “You shall make the *court* of the tabernacle” [Ex 27.9], and the psalmist wishes to gain a foothold in it even though it is not within the temple proper.

The courts are the objects of:

- 1) *longing* or kasaph which means *to be pale*, presumably from intense desire. The noun keseph, *silver*, is a derivative.
- 2) The psalmist’s soul also *faints* or kalah which as noted regarding Ps 31.10 involves a sense of completion. I.e., such fainting is in itself a type of fulfillment even though not achieved.

The second part of vs. 2 brings in two other aspects of the psalmist’s constitution, *heart* (lev) and *flesh* (basar), which are more corporeal by nature and which are equally affected by this intense longing for God’s courts. Both *sing* or ranan to the “living God” who is identified with these courts.

Vs. 3: Even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts. *Sparrow* or tsiphor applies to any small bird and is reminiscent of Lk 12.7: “Fear not; you are of more value than many *sparrows*.” A *swallow* or deror also means *freedom*: “To proclaim *liberty* to the captives” [Is 61.1], perhaps alluding to the freedom of flight enjoyed by this bird.

The sparrow obtains a *home* (byth, human dwelling), whereas the swallow obtains a *nest*, qen, a more proper dwelling for a bird. The latter is located closer to the *altars*, mizbeach (singular), or places where sacrifices are offered. Placing her *young* there, ‘ephroach, can connote offering them as sacrifice.

Vs. 4: Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah. A statement which can be viewed in light of the sparrow and swallow of vs. 3; here reference is to those who *dwell* or yashav in God’s byth, *house* (like the sparrow). Such a person is ‘ashry as in Ps.1.1, that is, constantly striving forward. *Ever* or hod also means *again* implying repetition with regard to *praise*, but a repetition which is ever evolving and not the same. The selah here can serve to make a connection between the sparrow and dweller vis-a-vis God’s house.

Vs. 5: Blessed are the men whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. Another instance of 'ashry, this time specified with regard to the Hebrew text's singular *man*, 'adam. Here 'ashry is located with regard to God's hoz or strength which is appropriated by the process of advancement contained within 'ashar, the verbal root to blessed.

In the Hebrew text the second part of vs. 5 lacks *Zion*; *hearts* (lev, singular) are equated with *highways* or *mesilah* (singular), again citing the theme of 'ashry. "And a *highway* shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way" [Is 35.8].

Vs. 6: As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. *Baca* is not known (verbal root means *to weep*) but may be paralleled with "Even though I walk through the *valley* of the shadow of death" of Ps 23.4. In this psalm verse *valley* is gaye' whereas vs. 6 has hemeq; the latter suggests a broad plain as opposed to the former. Note that people *go* or *havar* (better, pass through or over) the hemeq as opposed to *halak* or a simple walking with regard to a gaye'. *Havar* connotes more a passage but a passage which produces *springs* or in the Hebrew text, a singular *mahyan*.

The second part of vs. 6 speaks of *early rain* or *moreh* derives from the verbal root *yarah*, *to sprinkle*, *to cast* (as arrows), so with this in mind, *moreh* can suggest heavy downpours. An alternate noun is *archer*. Such *moreh* produces *pools* or *berekah* (singular); from the same verbal root is derived *blessing*. "Your eyes are *pools* in Heshbon" [Sg 7.4]. Note that the *moreh* covers the valley of *Baca*, the place of weeping, thereby exchanging sorrow with blessing.

Vs. 7: They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion. Such *going* (*halak*) is an intensification of that *going* (*havar*) through the valley of *Baca* (weeping) just noted. This is noted by the steps or stages of *strength*, *chayl*, reminiscent of 2 Cor 3.18: "We are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another." *Chayl* signifies might in the military sense, so the passage through this valley can represent an army on the move resolutely determined to make the trip.

The Hebrew text reads for the second part of vs. 7, "(each one) in Zion appears before God." This can signify attainment of the (military) passage already noted or *Zion's* appearance from a distance which *strengthens* (*chyl*) the soldiers as they move on.

Vs. 8: O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah. Two requests to two different titles concerning God: *hear* (*shamah*) with regard to prayer and *give ear* ('azan). This two-fold petition can be put on one of the "soldiers" in the valley of *Baca*. The *selah* can represent the waiting of a response from God.

Vs. 9: Behold our shield, O God; look upon the face of your anointed! Here the *shield* (*magen*) and *anointed* (*mashyach*) can be seen as one as an object upon which God is petitioned to turn his attention. Note that *behold* (*ra'ah*) is in reference to the shield and *look upon* (*navat*) is in reference to the anointed's face. Cf. Ps 10.14 for the distinction between these two verbs. The anointed can refer to King David or King Solomon at the head of the army making its passage through *Baca*.

Vs. 10: For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. A continuation of words which may be put in the mouths of those "soldiers" in the valley of *Baca* under the anointed's leadership. Here a *day* (*yom*) can be an indefinite time, more like a *kairos*, an insight reenforced by a "thousand elsewhere" which consists of the other form of time, *chronos*. This *yom* is specified as being in the Jerusalem temple's *courts* or *chatser* (singular) which was noted in vs. 2. The former may be said to be before the

passage through Baca when the psalmist got a glimpse of his destination; the latter may be within Baca itself but within sight of his destination.

The Hebrew reads a verb for *doorkeeper*, *saphaph*, the only occurrence in the Bible.

Vs. 11: For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly. God is identified as both *sun* and *shield* (*magen*, cf. vs. 9) as though the two were one and the same, that is, a radiating protection. “He is a *shield* to those who walk in integrity” [Prov 2.7], and if this is so, it is the sun whose radiance shines about this person. The radiance takes the form of *favor* (*chen*) and *honor* (*kavod*, better, *glory*).

The continued theme of *walking* (*halak*) now assumes a moral stance, *uprightly* or *manym*, a word connoting perfection or completion even though this walking continues through the valley of Baca. If divine help were to be *withheld* (*manah*), it could assume the withdrawal of the sun-as-shield.

Vs. 12: O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in you! The psalm concludes with ‘ashry, *blessed*, as noted in vs. 5. Mention of *hosts* or *tseva’oth* refers to those heavenly beings in God’s company which give strength to the psalmist-as-soldier in the valley of Baca. This verse may be paralleled with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemani: “And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him” [Lk 22.43].

+

Psalm Eighty-Five

Vs. 1: Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. The first three verses of this psalm are intended as a reminder to God for past blessings and may be outlined as follows:

- 1) *favorable* or *ratsah* as noted re. Ps 5.12 in conjunction with Is 42.1: “My chosen, in whom my soul *delights*.”
- 2) *restored* or *shuv* with respect to Jacob’s *fortunes* or in Hebrew, “captivity” (*shevyth*).
- 3) vs. 2: *forgive* or *nasa’* the people’s *iniquity* (*hawon*) which implies guilt or the continued memory of this iniquity.
- 4) *pardon* or *kasah* in the sense of covering but not necessarily removing sin.
- 5) vs. 3: *draw out* or ‘*asaph* in the sense of continuing something past into the future with respect to divine *anger* (*charon*). “That the *fierce* anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel” [Num 25.4].

Vs. 4: Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us! *Shuv* as in vs. 1, this time directed to God-as-*salvation* or *yeshah*, “Jesus.” After appealing to “Jesus” the psalmist may confidently ask God’s *indignation* (*kahas*) to be *put away* or *parar*, a term which intimates making void. “Who *frustrates* the omens of liars” [Is 44.25].

Vs. 5: Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? The first question shows the extend of divine anger, literally, “*in* (b-) us.” This presence-in of God’s wrath perhaps leads to the psalmist’s second question. Note that *prolonging* (*mashak*) indicates extension in time whereas *forever* (*leholam*) connotes eternity; this is intensified by mentioning *generations* (*dor*, singular). The verb *mashak* means *to draw*, *to protract*. “Her days shall not be *prolonged*” [Is 13.2].

Vs. 6: Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Compare *revive* with *restore*, vs. 4; this latter verb means a bringing back to life for the purpose of *shamak*, *rejoice*; not just this but

“*in* (b-) you;” contrast with “*in* (b-) us” of vs. 5 with respect to God’s anger.

Vs. 7: Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation. Chesed and yeshah (“Jesus”) are presented as one and the same reality. The first is clearly visible (*show*) whereas the second is not necessarily so.

Vs. 8: Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints, to those who turn to him in their hearts. The Hebrew reads “I will hear” indicating willful listening to God *speaking* (*davar*) which is shalom and has two objects: 1) *people* or *ham* and 2) *saints* or those characterized by chesed. The Hebrew text for the part of this verse reads “but let them not *turn back* (*shuv*; a negative sense compared to vs. 4) to *folly*,” *kesel*. For a discussion of this word, cf. Ps 78.7.

Vs. 9: Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him that glory may dwell in our land. *Salvation* or yeshah (“Jesus”) which is depicted as being *near*, *qerev* (better, *in the midst of*) with respect to fear but with the ultimate reason of *glory* (*kavod*) being present in Israel. Note the lack of definite article, as though *kavod* were a living entity which will give life to “our land.”

Vs. 10: Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Chesed here is united with ‘emeth; the verb is *pegesh* which connotes an attack or assault. “At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and *sought* to kill him” [Ex 5.24]. The second pair is *tsedeq* and *shalom*; the verb is *nashaq* which connotes a setting in order as well as arming oneself. For an alternate use: “Let him *kiss* me with the *kisses* of his mouth” [Sg 1.2].

Vs. 11: Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. ‘Emeth as associated with earth and *tsedeq* with *sky* (*shamym*, heaven), two opposite vertical poles or the dwellings of humans and God respectively. This ‘emeth can be associated with the human sphere and *tsedeq* with the divine.

The first pair *springs up*, *tsamaq*: “Let the earth open, that salvation may *sprout forth*” [Is 45.8]. The second divine characteristic (i.e., not a pair) *looks down*, *shaqaph*: “The Lord *looks down* from heaven” [Ps 14.2].

Vs. 12: Yes, the Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. The *good* (*tov*) is not specified; the divine characteristics delineated in the last few verses may form this good or be associated with it, but the text is not clear. Nevertheless, the end result is found on the *land* (‘erets) and its *increase* (*yevul*). “Then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase” [Lev 26.4].

Vs. 13: Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way. *Righteousness* (*tsedeq* again, cf. vs. 11 and its association with the sky) is here seen as preceding God; this going can be a vertical descent, not necessarily a horizontal movement. *Tsedeq*’s function is to make a *derek* for God’s *footsteps*, *paham* (singular). Cf. Ps 77.19: “Your *way* (*derek*) was through the great waters; yet your *footprints* (*haqev*, the heel proper or back part of the prints) were unseen.” The Ps 77 verse refers to the Exodus through the Red Sea, and vs. 13 may be associated with it but it can also imply that vertical descent from heaven.

Note that vss. 10-13 have all action occurring in the future; i.e., it is not yet realized but desired.

+

Psalm Eighty-Six

-

1

7-

Vs. 1: Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Note the connection between *answer* (hanah) and the psalmist as *poor* (hany), both from the same verbal root. They also stand in close relationship with another verb of hearing, more specifically, the request for God to natah (i.e., literally, to stretch) his ear. It is as though he identified himself as being in a condition ready to answer. The other word he uses is 'evyon as in Ps 72.4: "Give deliverance to the *needy* and crush the oppressor."

Vs. 2: Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God. Shamar for *preserve* connotes guarding and is in relation to the psalmist's nephesh, *soul*. He is confident is asking for this shamar because he claims to be *godly*, chasyd (related to chesed, used regarding divine favor).

The psalmist's second request is for God to *save* or yashah, to "Jesus" him. The concluding statement about God being his makes better sense in light of this request for yashah.

Vs. 3: Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day. This verse follows more or less with the last sentence of the previous one. Chanan for *gracious* is proper response to a chasyd who cries to God all day, that is, as opposed to all night, and can be located in the Jerusalem temple.

Vs. 4: Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. The second part of this verse may be considered first, namely, the psalmist's *lifting up* of his nephesh (cf. vs. 2, life). Such *lifting* or nasa' is a focusing of attention which is articulated in "up" as opposed to "down" terms. By so doing, he expects God to *gladden* (samach) his nephesh, almost as an automatic response to nasa'.

Vs. 5: For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you. *Forgiving* or salach connotes gentleness. "And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be *forgiven*" [Lev 4.20]. *Steadfast love* is chesed with rav (connotes excess), showing the extravagant favor of God.

Vs. 6: Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; hearken to my cry of supplication. Another instance of 'azan, related to the inclining of God's *ear* ('ozen) of vs. 1. Note that the preposition *to* ('el-) is lacking before "prayer;" it is as though the text read, "Give ear, O Lord, my prayer."

The second petition has the preposition b- (*to*) prefixed to the noun *cry* or qol, as though wanting God to be present-in this cry which, in turn, is subordinate to *supplication* (tachanun, from chanan, vs. 3 above).

Vs. 7: In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you answer me. *Day* or yom can be taken in the sense of a kairos event, here associated with *trouble* or tsarah which can also mean a female adversary. "And her (Hannah) rival (Peninnah) used to *provoke* her sorely" [1 Sam 1.6]. Note that in this verse there is a definite response by God, hanah (*to answer*) as compared with the request for such hanah in vs. 1.

Vs. 8: There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. A distinction between YHWH and *gods*, 'elohym; this difference is heightened by works, for example, the prophet Elijah's contest with the prophets of Ba'al on Mount Carmel, 1 Kg 18.20-46.

Vs. 9: All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. Such *nations* or goym are foreign to Israel; perhaps this coming and *bowing* (shatach) can be seen as the antidote to the scattering of peoples at the construction of the tower of Babel, Gen 11.1-9.

The second half of this verse contains a familiar association between kavod (*glory*) and shem (*name*), the two being almost synonymous.

Vs. 10: For you are great and do wondrous things, you alone are God. Note the present tense of *do*, hasah; action is continuous which automatically leads to recognition that God is solely responsible, levad (*alone*).

Vs. 11: Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. After acknowledging God's sovereign power in the last verses, the psalmist wishes to know how they are done, as it were. Hence the request to be *taught* (yarah), the verbal root for Torah which is always the focal point for any teaching with regard to God. The *way* or derek and *truth* ('emeth) are identical and interchangeable.

Yachad for *to unite* can be seen in light of the numeral *one* as used with regard to the first day of creation: "And there was evening and there was morning, *one* day" [Gen 1.5]. The Hebrew expresses it better by saying "day one." In the verse at hand, yachad and *fear* (yare') have the same function of gripping the psalmist's whole attention which is centered upon the divine shem.

Vs. 12: I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. An identity between giving *thanks* (yadah) and giving *glory* (kavod), here with the psalmist's *entire* (kol) heart.

Vs. 13: For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. The reason for thanks and glorification mentioned in vs. 12, that is, because of divine chesed toward, better, *on* (hal-) the psalmist. Natsal is used for *deliver* in the sense of snatching-away as though the psalmist's nephesh were in a storm tossed sea. *Depths* or tachat stresses this downward reach of God.

Vs. 14: O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seek my life, and they do not set you before them. Two types of foes: 1) *insolent* or zed (singular): "All the *insolent* men said to Jeremiah, 'You are telling a lie'" [Jer 43.2]. 2) *ruthless* or haryts (singular), from a verbal root connoting trembling: "Do not *be in dread* or afraid of them" [Dt 1.29]. The act of *setting* (sum) implies stability and constancy of presence which is negated by the act of rising up and seeking the psalmist's nephesh.

Vs. 15: But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Five divine qualities, all of which have been mentioned earlier:

- 1) *merciful* or rachum, from racham
- 2) *gracious* or chanun, from chanan
- 3) "*slow to anger*" or 'erek, from 'arak, *to be long*
- 4) *steadfast love* or chesed
- 5) *faithfulness* or 'emeth

Vs. 16: Turn to me and take pity on me; give your strength to your servant and save the son of your handmaid. Implied in the request for God *to turn* (panah, from which is derived *face*) are the five qualities outlined just above. For the psalmist, *pity* or chanan which was among the five, is the most important and from which the other four flow...from God's "face," so to speak.

Note how the psalmist distinguishes between himself as *servant* (haved) "son of your *handmaid*," 'amah, to which is related mother; the term can also mean *female slave*. "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your *maidservant* (Hannah) and remember me" [1 Sam 1.11]. In the psalm verse

under consideration, *hoz* or *strength* is connected to servant whereas *save* or *yashah* (“Jesus”) is connected to handmaid.

Vs. 17: Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me. A verse reminiscent of Is 7.14 and uses the same term ‘oth or *sign* (of *favor*, *tov*, the common *good*): “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a *sign*.”

The ‘oth consists of a *seeing* (*ra’ah*) and being *shamed* (*yavash*) with respect to enemies as a result of two divine actions towards the psalmist: *help* (*hazar*) and *comfort* (*nacham*).

+

Psalm Eighty-Seven

Vs. 1: On the holy mount stands the city he founded. The Hebrew text has the plural, *mountains* (*harar*, singular), and implies a high elevation as opposed to a mount; applied to Zion (next verse), the *harar* signifies preeminence of places (keep in mind the plural) of worship. “So Abraham called the name of that place ‘The Lord will see (Hebrew, *see*);’ as it is said to this day, ‘On the *mount* of the Lord it shall be seen (Hebrew)’” [Gen 22.14]. For a reference *to found*, *yasad*: “At the cost of his first-born shall he lay its *foundation*” [Jos 6.26]. The foundation of vs. 1 sets the stage for the human building of Zion.

Vs. 2: The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. A quick transition, as it were, from the founding of Zion to its establishment. *Gates* (*shakar*, singular) as an object of love implies those people who go in and out of Zion. “Its *gates* shall never be shut by day” [Rev 21.25]. God prefers them over Jacob’s dwelling *places* (*mishkan*, singular) of Jacob, insinuating that Jacob had dwelt in tents and that at last Israel had a permanent home and place to worship God. “According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the *tabernacle*, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it” [Ex 25.9].

Vs. 3: Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. Selah. *Kavod* is the noun for *glorious*, as though the speaking of them had radiated outwards from Zion to all Israel. The *selah* gives pause to consider the praises sung of this city. For a New Testament fulfillment of this earthly city, cf. Rev 22.5: “And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light.”

Vs. 4: Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia—“This one was born there,” they say. A mention of Israel’s traditional enemies (*Rahab*: poetical name for Egypt). In this verse either God or Zion can be the speaker; the psalmist most likely wishes to show their close affiliation. Those who *know* Zion, *yadah*, are the Israelites themselves; note the connection between them and Israel’s five enemies: God/Zion will *mention* them, *zakar*, more properly, remember in the sense of beget them (cf. Ps 6.5 for this). Such begetting is further stressed by their being *born* in Zion, *yalad*, or to share in Zion’s inheritance of worshiping the living God.

Vs. 5: And of Zion it shall be said, “This one and that one were born in her;” for the Most High himself will establish her. Another reference to the universal preeminence of the true God who resides in Zion; “this one” and “that one” can refer to a broader inclusion not only of Israel’s traditional enemies as noted in vs. 4 but all peoples throughout the world.

Note that vs. 1 had God *founding* (*yasad*) the city; in vs. 5 we have the *Most High* (*Helyon*, to show God’s supreme being over other gods) *establishing* Zion, *kun*. “But *establish* the righteous” [Ps 7.9] which alludes to a more substantial foundation in that it involves persons who constitute the city.

Vs. 6: The Lord records as he registers the peoples, “This one was born there.” Selah. The person uttering the quote can be either the Lord or someone helping him to pick out the peoples already mentioned. God both *records* (saphar) and *registers* (katav), two verbs denoting the act of writing. The former suggests numbering and the latter a writing down of this number. “They (Eldad and Medad) were among those *registered*, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp” [Num 11.26].

Vs. 7: Singers and dancers alike say, “All my springs are in you.” Two groups who form a liturgical event commemorating the divine origins of Zion and who sum up the sentiment of both Israelites and foreigners. The *springs* (mahyan, singular) can refer to the sources of primeval waters upon which the world is established as well as nourished. “On that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth” [Gen 7.11]. This original mahyan is now transferred to the spiritual source of creation, Mount Zion.

+

Psalm Eighty-Eight

Vs. 1: O Lord, my God, I call for help by day; I cry out in the night before you. Despite the desperate situation depicted in this psalm, the author nevertheless refers his plight to God as opposed to doubting his existence. The Hebrew reads, “O Lord God of my *salvation*, yeshuah or “Jesus,” an apt manner to begin a psalm full of desperate entreaties. The psalmist distinguishes between day and night, both occasions (in the sense of a kairos) of *calling*, tsahaq, as in Ps 77.1: “I *cry aloud* to God,” this verb clearly meaning a piercing cry. Note that the last part of vs. 1 reads, “in night before you,” this time being a better one for such “before-ness.”

Vs.2: Let my prayer come before you, incline your ear to my cry! This prayer or tephilah the psalmist wishes to come *before* (lipany) God; compare lipany with the other *before* (neged) of vs. 1, the former word implying the divine face, the both being derived from the same verb. Thus lipany is supposed to lead God to natah or *extend* his ear.

Vs. 3: For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol. Often the two words nephesh (*soul*) and chayym (*life*) are one and the same; the former is immaterial and the latter corporeal. Note that chayym or the physical dimension *draws near* (nagah) to Sheol as if to show the psalmist’s desperate plight that this could happen. “At a time of distress, in the rush of great waters, they shall not *reach* him” [Ps 32.6]. The reason for this possibility is that the immaterial aspect proper of the psalmist (nephesh) is “full of troubles” and thereby spills over into the physical dimension.

Vs. 4: I am reckoned among those who go down to the Pit; I am a man who has no strength. The *Pit* or bor is another name for Sheol and more specifically refers to a cistern. “I will set your captives free from the waterless *pit*” [Zech 9.11]. It seems the psalmist is not alone but has company, intimating that a corporate identity for better or worse. He also describes himself as lacking *strength*, ‘eyal, the only occurrence of this form.

For similar sentiments as well as with regard to the rest of Ps 88, cf. Job 2.

Vs. 5: Like one forsaken among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more. A continuation of the previous verse; the Hebrew text has only one *like* (k-) pertaining to the slain. The first part of vs. 5 is unclear; *forsaken* is from the verbal root chaphash, to search, and in this context can refer to a place of lying down; the psalmist is lying down “*with* (b-

-

2

1-

literally, *in*) the dead.

Those who are *slain* or *chahal* literally are those who have been *pierced*; they are not *remembered* (*zakar*) in the sense of the noun *male* which is derived from this verb; they are not able to continue propagation to future generations.

Vs. 6: You have put me in the depths of the Pit, in the regions dark and deep. Another reference to the *Pit* or *bor*, more specifically, its depths or very bottom. This gives the psalmist reason to call the Pit *dark* (*machshak*, singular) and *deep* (*tsolah*); the former is plural signifying a multitude. For reference to the latter, cf. Is 44.27: “Who says to the *deep*, ‘Be dry, I will dry up your rivers.’”

Vs. 7: Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. Selah. Such divine *wrath* (*chemah*) *presses down* the psalmist, *samak*; note the alternate meaning of this verb: “And *stay* themselves on the God of Israel” [Is 48.2]. Also, God’s waves *overwhelm* the psalmist, *hanah*, a verb with multiple meanings as noted elsewhere.

This verse contains the first of two *selahs*, the second being after vs. 10.

Vs. 8: You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a thing of horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape. The Hebrew text for “to shun” reads *to put far away*, *rachaq*; the term for such *companions* or *meyudahay* derives from the verb *yadah*, to *know*.

A *horror* is *tohevah* or more specifically an abomination, a word referring to that which is impure in a juridical sense as well as anything associated with idols. “You shall not eat any *abominable* thing” [Dt 14.3]. Being condemned as such, the psalmist is hemmed in without escape, possibly in reference to the Pit already noted.

Vs. 9: My eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call upon you, O Lord; I spread out my hands to you. Note the play on words, *eyes* (*heny*) and *sorrow* (*hony*), from the same verbal root, *hanah*. *Da’av* for *to be sorrowful* implies a melting away. “For I will satisfy the weary soul, and every *languishing* soul I will replenish” [Jer 31.25].

The daily calling upon God may apply to the psalmist being in the temple where he *spreads out* (*shatach*) his hands in supplication. “He *enlarges* nations and leads them away” [Job 12.23].

Vs. 10: Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the shades rise up to praise you? Selah. *Pele’* for *wonder* refers to a miracle. “Terrible in glorious deeds, doing *wonders*” [Ex 15.11]. In the verse at hand, the dead are equivalent to *shades* or *repha’ym*: “The earth shall cast out the *dead*” [Is 26.19]. Vs. 10 calls to mind the sorceress summoning up the spirit of Samuel from the dead, cf. 1 Sam 28.8-19. *Selah* is the second of two instances in this psalm, as if to give a pause amid all these questions put to God.

Vs. 11: Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon? *Chesed* and *‘emunath* are two features most characteristic of God and are juxtaposed with their opposites, *grave* and *Abaddon*, the latter being derived from *‘avad*, to *perish*. Note the impersonal proclamation with regard to the two qualities.

Vs. 12: Are your wonders known in the darkness or your saving help in the land of forgetfulness? Another mention of *pele’* (*wonder*), here associated with *darkness* or *cheshek*. Although this is darkness in the negative sense, many divine interventions took place in the dark, the Exodus, for example. Instead of “saving help” the Hebrew reads *righteousness*, *tsedaqah*, whose opposite is *forgetfulness* or *nashyah*,

from the verbal root *nashah* whose alternate meaning is *to lend*. “Every creditor shall release what he has *lent* to his neighbor” [Dt 15.2].

Vs. 13: But I, O Lord, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you. A verse of confidence after a series of questions doubting God’s intentions towards the psalmist. Here the verb *to cry* is *shuah*: “Out of the belly of Sheol I *cried*” [Jon 2.2]. The morning suggests that the psalmist has been in the temple all night without receiving divine help, but this time of day gives him hope. Note morning in conjunction with *qadam*, *to come before*, from which is derived the preposition *before*.

Vs. 14: O Lord, why do you cast me off? Why do you hide your face from me? The Hebrew has for “me” *nephesh*, *soul*, the psalmist’s very source of life which God has *cast off* (*zanach*). “For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you *cast me off*” [Ps 43.2]?

The second question is related, perhaps a refinement of this *zanach*: the *hiding* or *satar* of God’s face is not Moses’ experience as recounted in Exodus 33 when God forbids him to behold it. “Behold, I will set my *face* against you for evil” [Jer 44.11].

Vs. 15: Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless. Four distressful conditions:

- 1) *afflicted*, from *hanah*, with its alternate meaning of *to sing, to answer*.
- 2) *close to death* or *gawah*: “For I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to *destroy* all flesh” [Gen 6.17].
- 3) suffer *terrors* or ‘*eymah* (singular): “*Terror* and dread fall upon them” [Ex 15.16].
- 4) *helpless* or ‘*aphunah*, an uncertain word perhaps related to *wheel*, ‘*ophan*.

Vs. 16: Your wrath has swept over me; your dread assaults destroy me. *Charon* for *wrath* which implies burning heat: “That the *fiere anger* of the Lord may turn away from Israel” [Num 25.4]. The verb associated with this fiery trial, *havar*, suggests the breaking of a wave.

The *dread assaults* or *bihutym* (from *bahath*, *to frighten*) similarly crash over the psalmist, this time as against a fortified city. The verb *samath* for *to destroy* implies a bringing to silence or total extinction.

Vs. 17: They surround me like a flood all the day long; they close in upon me together. A further description of the destructive power from divine wrath and dread assaults of the previous verse. As noted in vs. 13, this verse is reminiscent of Jonah after he had been tossed overboard into the deep. Note the time reference, “all the day long” as opposed to night. Also, God’s wrath *closes in* upon the psalmist, *naqaph*, which suggests the besieging of a city. “Walk about Zion and *go round* her” [Ps 48.13].

Vs. 18: You have caused lover and friend to shun me; my companions are in darkness. *Lover* (‘*ohev*, from ‘*ahav*) and *friend* (*reah*) suggest intimate relationships. For a reference to the latter, cf. Sg 5.16: “This is my beloved and this is my *friend*.” The Hebrew has for “to shun” the verb *rachaq*, *to be far away*.

The psalmist contrasts the two close types of relationships with *companions* or *meyudahay*, from the verb *yadah*, *to know*. Compare the use of *darkness* (*choshek*) with the positive note of Ps 139.13: “Even the *darkness* is not dark for you.” The same term is used with regard to primordial state of being before God’s intervention: “And *darkness* was upon the face of the deep” [Gen 1.2].

+

-

2

3-

Psalm Eighty-Nine

This psalm may be divided into two sections, vss. 1-38, which extols God's blessings, and vss. 39-52, which laments the rejection of the king in battle as well as the divine covenant. Because of this two-fold division, Ps 89 may be outlined accordingly:

- 1) sing of divine *steadfast love* or *chesed*.
- 2) proclaim divine *faithfulness* or 'emunah to future generations.
- 3) vs. 2: this *chesed* is established is (according to the Hebrew text) *built up*, *banah*, much like a building.
- 4) 'emunah is *firm* or *kun* like the heavens or firmament.
- 5) vs. 3: God speaks through the next verse with regard to his *covenant* (*beryth*) with his king or more specifically, David; note the similar sounding words *beryth*, *karath* (literally, *to cut*) and *chosen one* (*bachyr*).
- 6) calls King David his *servant*.
- 7) vs. 4: God establishes David's *descendants* or *zerah*, literally, *seed*.
- 8) builds David's *throne* or *kise'*, implying a canopy; from the same verbal root as the noun *moon*, *kese'*.
- 9) vs. 5: The psalmist resumes speaking. The heavens praise God's *wonders* or *pele'*.
- 10) The heavens also praise his 'emunah which here is situated in the *assembly* (*qahal*) not just of everyone but of holy ones.
- 11) vs. 6: *skies* or *shachaq*, *cloud* or *dust* where the psalmist alludes to heavenly beings dwelling and who cannot be *compared* or *harak* to God, that is, be in the same *order* as him.
- 12) another comparison between "sons of gods" (Hebrew text) and YHWH; the verb here is *damah*, to compare which also means *to be like*.
- 13) vs. 7: God is depicted as in the council of *holy ones*, *qedoshym*; compare with vs. 5 with the same group of people.
- 14) "greatly terrible" in Hebrew and *above* (*hal-*, also, *on*) those around him which can also refer to his council.
- 15) vs. 8: God addressed as being in relationship with his *hosts* (*tseva'oth*) who may be seen as similarly above the council.
- 16) The Lord being surrounded with *faithfulness* or 'emunah, perhaps something like an inner council or all created beings who are apart from his transcendent being.
- 17) vs. 9: God rules sea's *raging* or *ge'uth* which suggests both splendor and pride. "They sing with joy of the *majesty* of the Lord" [Job 37.4].
- 18) God *stills* the rising of waves, *shavach*; the same word can apply to happiness: "And I thought the dead who are already dead more *fortunate* than the living who are still alive" [Eccl 4.1].
- 19) vs. 10: God crushed Rahab, a poetical name for Egypt; cf. Ps 74.12-17. Rahab is also the name of the harlot who gave refuge to Joshua, cf. Gen 2.
- 20) God *scattered* his enemies, *pazar*. Compare another meaning, Ps 112.9: "He has *distributed freely*, he has given to the poor."
- 21) vs. 11: God possesses heavens, earth and the world because he has *founded* them, *yasad*. "For he founded it upon the seas, and *established* it upon the rivers" [Ps 24.2].
- 22) vs. 12: God created north and south; Tabor and Hermon are both north of Israel, so apparently this direction is favored over the south.
- 23) vs. 13: God has a mighty arm, strong hand and *high* right hand, *rum*, in the sense of being lifted up.
- 24) vs. 14: *righteousness* (*tsedeq*) and *justice* (*mishpat*, in the sense of judgment) form the foundation of God's *throne*, *kise'*, as in vs. 4 with respect to David.
- 25) *steadfast love* (*chesed*) and *faithfulness* ('emeth, also *truth*) precede God.

Vss. 15-18 are an interlude, so to speak, after recounting God's graciousness towards his people through the king and before God speaking in vss. 19-37. Their outline of eight elements is as follows:

- 1) vs. 15: people are *blessed* or 'ashry (cf. Ps 1.1) who know the *teruhah* or *shout* often associated with the offering of a sacrifice. "You shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of *trumpets*, a holy convocation" [Lev 23.24].
- 2) Such persons walk in the light of God's countenance which is reminiscent of Moses: "The people of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone; and Moses would put the veil upon his face until he went in to speak with him" [Ex 34.35].
- 3) vs. 16: They *exult* in God's name, *gyl*. "My heart shall *rejoice* in your salvation" [Ps 13.5], this verb implying a round dance.
- 4) They (according to the Hebrew text) "are *exalted* in" God's righteousness, another example of *rum* (cf. vs. 13).
- 5) vs. 17: God is the *glory* or *tiph'arah* of the people's strength, this word applying to an ornament. "Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your *beautiful* garments" [Is 52.1].
- 6) God's *favor* or *retson* *exalts* (*rum*, cf. vss. 13 & 16) the *horn* of the people, *qeren*. "The *horn* of my salvation" [Ps 18.2].
- 7) vs. 18: an identity between YHWH and *shield* (*magen*) as in Ps 84.11: "For the Lord God is a sun and *shield*." Note that vs. 18 has this *magen* *belonging* (l-, *towards*, *to*) to the Lord.
- 8) The same type of belonging applied to the king (l-).

From vs. 19 through vs. 37 God is speaking with regard to his protection of the king. It is prefaced by the psalmist saying that God spoke "of old in a vision" which can refer to the prophet Samuel (cf. 1 Sam 16) and can be outlined as follows:

- 1) vs. 19: God set a "crown" or according to the Hebrew text, *help*, *hezer*.
- 2) vs. 20: God found David through the medium of the prophet Samuel and *anointed* him, *mashach*. "Therefore God, your God, has *anointed* you" [Ps 45.7].
- 3) vs. 21: God's hand *abides* with David, *kun*, which connotes direction. "When he *sets* himself to destroy" [Is 51.13].
- 4) God's arm will *strengthen* David, 'amats. "*Be strong*, let your heart take courage" [Ps 27.14].
- 5) vs. 22: enemy will not outwit David.
- 6) wicked will not humble David.
- 7) vs. 23: God will crush David's foes.
- 8) God will strike down those who hate David.
- 9) vs. 24: Divine *faithfulness* ('emunah) and *steadfast love* (*chesed*) will be with David.
- 10) David's *horn* (*qeren*, cf. vs. 17) will be *exalted* (*rum*, cf. vs. 17) in God's name.
- 11) vs. 25: God will set David's hand on the sea which is towards the west.
- 12) God will set David's right hand on the rivers which are towards the east. Note the preposition *b-* (*on*) which can also mean *in*.
- 13) vs. 26: David will call God "my Father."
- 14) David will call God "my God."
- 15) David will call God "Rock of my *Salvation*," *yeshuah* or "Jesus."
- 16) vs. 27: God will make David first-born. "That he might be the *first-born* among many brethren" [Rom 8.29].
- 17) God will make David *highest* among kings, *helyon*; note that this term can refer to God as *Most High*, cf. Ps 87.5.
- 18) vs. 28: God will keep his *chesed* for David.
- 19) God will make firm his covenant with David.
- 20) vs. 29: God will establish David's *line* or *seed* *zerah*; cf. vs. 4.

- 21) God will make David's throne as the "days of heaven," i.e., as the *kairoi* of heaven.
- 22) vs. 30: reference to David's children; can refer more immediately to Solomon of the people of Israel in conjunction with forsaking God's Torah and *ordinances* (*misphat*, also, *judgment*).
- 23) vs. 31: David's children, that is, if they violate God's statutes.
- 24) David's children, that is, if they fail to keep God's commandments.
- 25) vs. 32: If David's children fail in their responsibility to God, he will punish their transgression.
- 26) God will punish them with scourges.
- 27) vs. 33: However, God will not remove his *chesed* nor his 'emunah.
- 28) vs. 34: God will not *violate* his covenant, *chalal*; *slain* is derived from this same verbal root.
- 29) God will not alter the word he has spoken.
- 30) vs. 35: God has sworn by his *holiness*, *qedesh*.
- 31) God will not lie to David.
- 32) vs. 36: David's *line* or *zarah* will endure as the sun, cf. vs. 29.
- 33) David's throne will last as long as the sun.
- 34) vs. 37: David's line will be *established* (*kun*, cf. vs. 21) forever.
- 35) David's line (according to the Hebrew text) "as a faithful witness in heaven."

Selah or *pause* is appropriate here before moving on to the next and final section of Ps 89 which depicts God's forsaking of the covenant. From vs. 38 to the end or vs. 52 the psalmist depicts this abandonment according to the following outline:

- 1) vs. 38: God has cast off.
- 2) God has rejected.
- 3) Go is full of wrath.
- 4) vs. 39: God has renounced his covenant.
- 5) God has defiled his crown.
- 6) vs. 40: God has breached his walls.
- 7) God has ruined his strongholds.
- 8) vs. 41: Passers-by despoil him.
- 9) Scorn of neighbors.
- 10) vs. 42: God has exalted his foes.
- 11) God has made his enemies rejoice.
- 12) vs. 43: God has turned back David's sword.
- 13) God did not support him in battle.
- 14) vs. 44: God (according to the Hebrew text) "removed (David's) *cleanness*" or *tahar* which can refer to ritual purification: "But if the itch spreads in the skin after his *cleansing*" [Lev 13.35].
- 15) God cast David's throne to the ground.
- 16) vs. 45: God cut short David's youth.
- 17) God covered David with shame.

A *selah* occurs at the end of vs. 45 to give *pause* for considering this rejection and before moving on to the next three verses questioning God's actions:

- 1) vs. 46: How long?
- 2) Will you hide yourself?
- 3) vs. 47: (God) Remember life's measure.
- 4) God created men for *vanity*, *shawe'*, as in Ps 24.4: "I do not sit with *false* men."
- 5) vs. 48: What man can never see death?
- 6) Who can deliver his soul from Sheol?

Another *selah* occurs at the end of vs. 48 to consider the implications of these questions and before Ps 89 concludes with the last four verses begging God to remember David:

- 1) vs. 49: Where is God's chesed?
- 2) vs. 50: The psalmist begs God to see how his servant (David) is scorned and bears the people's insults.
- 3) David's enemies taunt him with such insults.
- 4) David's enemies mock his footsteps, i.e., the places where he goes.

Ps 89 concludes with vs. 52 *blessing* (*barak*) God despite the distress just recounted, hoping for a return of his favor. The double amen is a way of expressing such confidence.

+

Psalm Ninety

The inscription to this psalm is interesting, "A Prayer of Moses, the *Man of God*." Note the title given to Moses in Hebrew, 'y^{sh}-ha'elohym. The hyphen conveys the notion of Moses being "Man-God," not in the sense of partaking in his divinity as understood in the Christian tradition; rather it juxtaposes *man* with *God*.

Vs. 1: Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Another reading of dwelling is *refuge*, *mahon*, signifying a fortified place. "The way of God is the *defense* of the upright" [Prov 10.29]. The Hebrew is more graphic, "dwelling place *to* (l-) us" in the sense of in-the-direction-towards. Similarly, the Hebrew reads "in generation and generation" as though this towards-ness were transferable not only into the past but into the future.

Vs. 2: Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. After speaking of the generations in vs. 1, it may be said that the psalmist wishes to identify or assure the continuity of Israel's existence by associating it with divine eternity. Hence mention of mountains and formation of the *earth* ('erets, physical planet) and *world* (tevel, the inhabited earth), three created elements associated with eternity.

Vs. 3: You turn man back to the dust and say "Turn back, O children of men!" While vs. 1 expressed trust in God, the verse at hand speaks of human mortality. *Dust* or *daka'* derives from a verbal root meaning *to break* (into small pieces) with violence implied in the process. Compare *daka'* with Gen 3.19: "You are *dust*, and to dust you shall return." Here the word is *haphar* which can refer to clay or loam and connotes the origin of man. "And he shall take other *plaster* and *plaster* the house" [Lev 14.42].

God's command to *turn back* or *shuv* means a return to human origins which here is *daka'*. Note the singular man and plural sons.

Vs. 4: For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past or as a watch in the night. The thousand years can symbolize indefinite time on the human scale which does not seem as yesterday prior to it having past. Note this lengthy period of time more or less identified with a night *watch*, 'ashmurah (verbal root, *shamar*). "In the morning *watch* the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians" [Ex 14.24].

Vs. 5: You sweep men away; they are like a dream, like grass which is renewed in the morning. The verb

zaram for *sweep away* connotes a flood. For a noun from this verbal root: “As an desolation of an *inundation*” [Is 1.7].

For “dream” the Hebrew text reads “they are asleep.” Despite the renewal of *grass* (chastyr: “While yet in flower and not cut down, they wither before any other *plant*,” Job 8.12) each morning, the sun dries it up. Implied here is an indefinite cycle of the same process reminiscent of Ecclesiastes. Cf. vs. 5 (as well as the next verse) in light of Mt 13.6: “But when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away.”

Vs. 6: In the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. A further description of the grass of the previous verse, again reminiscent of Mt 13.6: *flourishes* or tsuts which implies a shining and hence a glance: “*Gazing* in at the windows, looking through the lattice” [Sg 2.9]. *Renewed* or chalaph which can also mean a sprouting forth: “But they who wait for the Lord shall *renew* their strength” [Is 40.31]. Both activities take place in the morning.

The two changes which take place in the evening are *fading* or malal; an alternate meaning is to speak: “And she said, ‘Who would have *said* to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children” [Gen 21.7]? *Withering* or yavash which can also mean *shame*: “As a thief is *shamed* when caught, so the house of Israel shall be *shamed*” [Jer 2.26].

Vs. 7: For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed. The human application of that grass of the last two verses: *consumed* or kalah: “And did not turn back until they were *consumed*” Ps 18.37]. *Overwhelmed* or bahal which can also mean *to hasten*: “An inheritance gotten *hastily* in the beginning will in the end not be blessed” [Prov 20.21].

With regard to kalah, it is divine *anger* or ‘aph; with regard to bahal, it is divine *wrath* or chemah which implies a burning.

Vs. 8: You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance. *Iniquities* or hawon (singular), from the verb hanah often mentioned in the Psalter. “*Secret* sins,” the latter which is lacking in the Hebrew text; from the verb halam, *to conceal*. While the latter are manifest in *light* (‘or) of God’s countenance, the former are *before* (neged) God.

Vs. 9: For all our days pass away under your wrath, our years come to an end like a sigh. Compare human days with divine years in vs. 4, two types of time: chronos and kairos respectively. Note that such days *pass away* or better, *turn* (panah) *in* (b-) God’s wrath. Such days refer to the more detailed aspects of human existence whereas human years are longer units of time; these are compared to a *sigh* or hegeh: “And when they say to you, ‘Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and *mutter*” [Is 8.19]. Such a hegeh *ends*, another instance of kalah, vs. 7 above. The Hebrew text of the second half of this verse reads, “We bring our years to an end.”

Vs. 10: The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. Two estimates of human existence, seventy and eighty years respectively, quite long for ancient times.

The second part of vs. 10 reads in Hebrew, “Yet (is) their *strength, labor* and *sorrow*.” 1) rohav, which can imply insolence: “By his *power* he stilled the sea” [Job 26.12]. 2) hamal, which connotes evil: “He has not beheld *misfortune* in Jacob” [Num 23.21]. 3) ‘awen, an alternate meaning which is *vanity*: “For the teraphim utter *nonsense*, and the diviners see lies” [Zech 10.2].

Such human strength is “gone” or in Hebrew, *cut away* (*gazaz*) as the shearing of a flock: “Laban had gone to *shear* his sheep” [Gen 31.19]. Once such strength is shorn, as it were, it *flies away* or *huph*: “He rode on a cherub and *flew*” [Ps 18.10].

Vs. 11: Who considers the power of your anger, and the wrath according to the fear of you? *Yadah* is the verb with respect to anger as in vs. 7, ‘aph. *Hevarah*, from the verbal root *havar* (*to cross*) suggests that such wrath is “crossed over” with respect to divine fear.

Vs. 12: So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. The verb *to teach* here is *yadah* as in vs. 12, in the sense of having intimate knowledge. Such *yadah* is in relationship with human days or that *chronos* type of time; when considered (as implied here) in light of divine *kairos* time, *yadah* has the ability to impart *wisdom*, *chakmah*, but a wisdom with respect to one’s *heart*, *lev*; note the plural “we” which may apply to the nation of Israel. In brief, *yadah* = *chakmah*.

Vs. 13: Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants! Three brief exclamations indicating the psalmist’s intense desire as well as desperation:

1) *Return* or *shuv*; that is, a restoration with respect to Israel’s original relationship with God forged at the Exodus and at Mount Sinai. This *shuv* can be considered with respect to the frequent mention in Ps 90 of human time.

2) *How long* or *had-maty*; usually the act of turning is instantaneous, both humanly and divinely speaking but can be done in degrees in both spheres.

3) The supplication for *pity* or *nacham* as in Ps 23.4: “Your rod and your staff, they *comfort* me.”

Vs. 14: Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Here the psalmist stresses the importance of *morning* or sunrise, *boqer*: “Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the *morning*” [Ps 30.5]; cf. notes with respect to that verse. In the verse at hand, *satisfaction* is sought, *savah*. “In your presence there is *fulness* of joy” [Ps 16.11]. It is associated with *chesed*.

The psalmist has a twofold purpose connected with this satisfaction, 1) *rejoice* or *ranan* and 2) *being glad* or *samach*, two words considered earlier in these Notes. I.e., satisfaction granted by God in the morning is to last “all our days” or through the various *chairoi* of human existence.

Vs. 15: Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil. Note the use of *samach* as in the previous verse, again related to “all our days.” Here *samach* is to equate the times of *affliction*, *hanah* being the verbal root, to balance them out, as it were. Not only does the psalmist seek this balance between affliction and gladness but wishes to extend it to “many years.” Note the play on words: *ra’ynu* (*we have seen*) and *rahah* (*evil*).

Vs. 16: Let your work be manifest to your servants and your glorious power to their children. *Pohal* for *work* is a poetic term; cf. Ps 28.4 regarding two other related terms. *Pohal* can also refer to an evil deed: “Then he declares to them their *work* and their transgression” [Job 36.9]. In the verse at hand, *pohal* is connected with God’s servants whereas *glorious power* or *hadah* is connected with his children. This term can refer to an *ornament*: “And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the *splendor* which I had bestowed upon you” [Ezk 16.14].

Vs. 17: Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us, yes,

the work of our hands establish. The Hebrew text has instead of “favor” *noham* or *beauty* which connotes pleasantness as well as brightness. “I will make all my *goodness* pass before you and will proclaim before you my name “The Lord” [Ex 33.19]. It is as though the psalmist wishes the same divine glory which appeared to Moses not just appear to the people but be *on* (hal-) them.

Once this *noham* is on the people, their work will be *established*, *kun* (cf. Ps 89.21). I.e., there will be a direct correlation between God’s presence and human activity.

+

Psalm Ninety-One

Vs. 1: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty. Two types of residing with respect to God and two titles to the divinity: 1) *shelter* or *seter* as in Ps 18.11: “His *canopy* thick clouds dark with water.” This with respect to the *Most High*, *Halyon*. 2) *Shadow* or *tsel*: “I sat down under his *shadow*” [Sg 2.3]. This with respect to the *Almighty*, *Shaday*.

Compare *dwelling* or *yashav* (implies sitting down) with *abiding* or *lun* which connotes passing the night. “Turn aside, I pray you (the two angels to Abraham), to your servant’s house and *spend the night*” [Gen 19.2].

Vs. 2 Will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.” A continuation of vs. 1 and which implies the person uttering this sentence to be one who is both dwelling and abiding. Here *shelter* and *shadow* are shifted to 1) a *refuge* or *machseh* (from *chasah*). “A *shelter* from the storm and a shade from the heat” [Is 25.4]. 2) A *fortress* or *matsurah* which comes from the same verbal root as *distress*. It can also mean a mound cast up by besiegers: “I will raise *siegeworks* against you” [Is 29.3].

The Hebrew reads for “my God in whom I trust” “my God I will trust *in* him,” b- intimating taking harbor in him.

Vs. 3: For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. Divine *natsal* or *deliver* has two objects: 1) *owler’s snare* or *pach*. “Does a bird fall in a *snare* on the earth when there is no trap for it” [Am 3.5]? 2) *Pestilence* or *dever*, from the root *davar*, *to speak*; such an affliction is *deadly*, *huah*, from the same verbal root (*hawah*) meaning *to desire*. “Their throat is a *open* (or *deadly*) grave” [Ps 5.9].

Vs. 4: He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. God’s act of *covering* or *sakak* suggests a weaving: “You did *knit* me *together* in my mother’s womb” [Ps 139.13]. And, “You clothed me with skin and flesh and *knit* me *together* with bones and sinews” [Job 10.11]. In the verse under consideration such “knitting” is done by God’s *pinions*, ‘ever (singular). “Spreading (an eagle) out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its *pinions*” [Dt 32.11]. Note the distinction between these two parts, wings and pinions.

While God effects *sakak*, the person to whom Ps 91 is addressed takes active *refuge* or *chasah* as noted in vs. 2; in vs. 4 this is effected with respect to God’s *wings*, *kanaph* (singular). “You have seen...how I bore you on eagles’ *wings*” [Ex 19.4]. Since both pinions and wings often refer to an eagle, we might equate this bird as symbolic of God.

Faithfulness (‘emeth): 1) *shield* or *tsinah*, a larger type covering the whole soldier. 2) *buckler* or *socherah*, the only use of this word in the Bible; from *sachar*, *to travel about*.

Vs. 5: You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day. *Terror* or pachad as in Ex 15.16: “*Terror* and dread fall upon them (Egyptians) because of the greatness of your arm, they are as still as a stone.” Such pachad befell the Egyptians as they pursued the Israelites at night. The *arrow* is singular, chets, as in Hab 3.11: “At the light of your *arrows* as they sped” [Hab 3.11], another reference to the Exodus.

Vs. 6: Nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. The *pestilence* (dever) as in vs. 3, which here is active in *darkness* or ‘ophel and can refer to a place of ambush: “That night—let *thick darkness* seize it” [Job 3.6]! A reference to *destruction* (qetev): “O Sheol, where is your *destruction*” [Hos 13.14]? Such qetev is active at noon or in full light and visible to all.

Vs. 7: A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you. The singular “it” is not specifically identified but can refer to either the pestilence or destruction in vs. 6. For another reference to nagash (*to come near*), cf. Gen 19.9: “Then they *pressed hard* against the man Lot.”

Vs. 8: You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Two types of viewing: 1) *look* or navat which connotes a beholding and the more common *seeing* or ra’ah. *Recompense* or shilumath derives from the same verbal root as shalom.

Vs. 9: Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your habitation. The verb *to make* or shawah connotes equality: “To whom then will you *compare* me” [Is 40.25]? This verb thus alludes to the fact that the psalmist claims a “likeness” between 1) the *Lord* (YHWH) as *refuge* and the person involved, machseh (cf. vs. 2) and 2) *Most High* (Helyon) as *habitation*, mehon, as in Ps 26.8: “O Lord, I love the *habitation* of your house.”

Vs. 10: No evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. The previous verse called God a refuge and habitation which here may be situated within a human *tent* or ‘ohel, a temporary dwelling and applicable to God’s dwelling in the wilderness. “On the first day of the month you shall erect the tabernacle of the *tent* of meeting” [Ex 40.2]. *Scourge* or negeh derives from a verbal root meaning *to draw near*. Qarav for *to come near* implies not just an approach but getting right into the midst of this tent.

Vs. 11: For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. A verse quoted in Mt 4.6 with regard to the temptation of Christ in the desert; a parallel can be drawn between the temporary dwelling of a tent in vs. 10 with Christ in the wilderness. The function of angels is to *guard*, shamar, notably with respect to action signified by (multiple) *ways* (derek, singular).

Vs. 12: On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. Note that the ways in vs. 11 are not of the physical variety but are born up or raised on the hands of angels. This *raising* or nasa’ is for the purpose of preventing injury.

Vs. 13: You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot. Note the act of physical walking or being on the ground as opposed to being raised up in vs. 12. Lion and adder are the objects of *treading*, darak. Young lion and serpent are the objects of *trampling*, ramas. Another meaning of this verb pertains to anything lofty: “And the cherubim *mounted up*” [Ezk 10.15]. The first verb is a simple walking-over; the second verb is a deliberate act of stomping.

Vs. 14: Because he cleaves to me in love I will deliver him; I will protect him because he knows my

name. Chashaq for *to cleave* connotes a choosing: “It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord *set* his love upon you” [Dt 7.7]. The first part of vs. 14 lacks “love” in the Hebrew; the verb for *to deliver* is palat, from which flows divine *protection*, the verb being sagav. “The name of the God of Jacob *protect* you” [Ps 20.1]. As in this verse just quoted, note the relationship of sagav with *name*, shem.

Vs. 15: When he calls to me I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him. Four manifestations of divine assistance as a result of the psalmist’s *calling*, qara’: 1) *answer* or hanah, 2) being present in *trouble* or tsarah (cf. Ps 86.7), 3) *rescue* or chalats (cf. Ps 6.4) and 4) *honor* or kavad, the same verbal root for *glory* or kavod.

Vs. 16: With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. Literally, “length of days” with which God will show *satisfaction*, savah (cf. Ps 90.14). Also God will reveal his *salvation*, yeshuah, or “Jesus.” Thus the former is a kind of filling and the latter, a kind of vision.

+

Psalm Ninety-Two

Vs. 1: It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High. Verse one and two give four reasons to praise God:

- 1) *thanks* or yadah = Lord
- 2) *sing praises* or zamar = Most High
- 3) *declare* or nagad *steadfast love* (chesed) = morning
- 4) declare *faithfulness* or ‘emunah = night

The first two are with regard to God and the second two at two different times of the day. Verse three specifies three musical instruments, lute, harp and lyre which could be played at morning and at night.

Vs. 4: For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. *Work* or pahal was mentioned in Ps 91.16 is connected with God’s servants of which the psalmist can be numbered. Note that pahal is singular in the first part of vs. 4 and most likely refers to God’s redemption of Israel through the Exodus. The *gladness* or samach which he mentions had its origins then and continues into the present.

In the second part of vs. 4 we have the plural *works*, mahash (singular), which may allude to created wonders in that they are directly dependent upon God’s hands. Such works make the psalmist ranan, *sing*.

Vs. 5: How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep! Here the theme of *works* (mahash) is continued. Note the connection with God’s *thoughts* or machashavah (singular) which connotes taking counsel before accomplishing them. “The *thoughts* of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are treacherous” [Prov 12.5]. Such divine thoughts are me’od, *very deep* (in the sense of being excessive), not fathomable to the psalmist.

Vs. 6: The dull man cannot know, the stupid cannot understand this. A verse standing midway, so to speak, between the splendor of God’s works and the next verse which deals with the fate of evildoers. Two types of persons are mentioned: 1) *dull* or bahar which connotes brutishness: “They are both *stupid* and foolish, the instruction of idols is but wood” [Jer 10.8]! 2) *stupid* or more specifically, lacking understanding, byn.

Vs. 7: That, though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever. The dull and stupid persons just mentioned cannot fathom the fate of evildoers whose existence last a day. Cf. Ps 37.35-6 which speaks of such persons in terms of a durable cedar of Lebanon in contrast to the fleeting *hesev* (*grass*) which connotes herbs. “Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come upon the land of Egypt and eat every *plant* in the land” [Ex 10.12]. *Evildoers* or those who practice ‘awen similarly engage in vanity pursuits, an alternate meaning as noted regarding Ps 90.10. *Destruction* (*shamad*, the verbal root) last *forever*, *hadey-had*; note the double use of *had* to stress the eternity of their fate.

Vs. 8: But you, O Lord, are on high forever. A brief exclamation of joy at the contrast between the fate of evildoers and divine *exultation* or *marom*. Compare *hadey-had* of vs. 7 with *halam*, *forever*, usually applied to distant time in the future.

Vs. 9: For, lo, your enemies, O Lord, for, lo, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered. The two *los* or *hineh* serve to get both the attention of God and the people listening to the psalmist. Note how they are used in conjunction with God’s enemies whom the psalmist wants to *perish*, ‘*avad*. On the other hand, he wishes evildoers or in Hebrew “makers of *vanity*,” ‘*awen* (cf. vs. 7), to be *scattered* or *parad*. “He who is *estranged* seeks pretexts to break out against all sound judgment” [Prov 18.1]. Such *parad* does not mean their destruction as with the just mentioned enemies who are more a threat than the “makers of *vanity*.”

Vs. 10: But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; you have poured over me fresh oil. A cry of *exultation*, *rum* being the verb. The *horn* or *qeren* as in Ps 89.17 only here resembling a *wild ox* or *re'em* as in Ps 29.6: “He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf and Sirion like a young *wild ox*.”

The verb *to pour* is uncertain; the oil here *fresh*, *rahanan*, which implies greenness. “But I am like a *green olive tree* in the house of God” [Ps 52.8]. Perhaps this verse can apply to a king and his anointing.

Vs. 11: My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies, my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants. Perhaps this verse was uttered with the implied anointing of a king in the previous verse. The Hebrew text lacks “downfall;” it just has *enemies* or *shur*, the only occurrence of this word in the Bible. Note that this part of vs. 11 is related to the faculty of seeing, whereas the next part involves hearing or through the reports of witnesses: *doom* with respect to “makers of *vanity*,” ‘*awen*, as noted several times earlier.

Vs. 12: The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. *Tamar* or *palm tree*, an analogy to a *righteous* person, *tsadyq*; cf. Sg 7.8: “I will climb the *palm tree* and lay hold of its branches.” There is no specific place-where with regard to this tree compared with the *cedar* of Lebanon. Cf. Ps 104.16: “The *cedars* of Lebanon which he planted.” Such cedars were used by Solomon in the construction of the Jerusalem temple; a *tsadyq* may be said to be such a tree cut down for this purpose. “And Hiram, King of Tyre, had supplied Solomon with *cedar* and cypress timber and gold, as much as he desired” [1 Kg 9.11].

Vs. 13: They are planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of our God. The quote from 1 Kg 9.11 regarding vs. 12 may apply here; despite having been cut down, such cedars are living or may be said to be more alive now that they form the structure of the Jerusalem temple. Note that cedar did not form part of the tent of meeting while the Israelites were in the desert; this wood is symbolic of their newly established identity in one spot.

Cedars are planted in the Lord's *house*, beyth; not only that, they flourish in his *courts* or chatser (singular). "Your shall make the *court* of the tabernacle" [Ex 27.9]. Parach for to *flourish*: "And their blossom *goes up* like dust" [Is 5.14].

Vs. 14: They still bring forth fruit in old age, they are ever full of sap and green. Such cedars continue to grow in the Jerusalem temple, even when old: "No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days" [Is 65.20]. Such persons are deshen and rahanan, the second term having been used in vs. 10 with regard to oil.

Vs. 15: To show that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. The whole purpose of these cedars being in the Jerusalem temple is for pointing out God's *uprightness*, yashar, from which the deshen and rahanan derive their strength. In the verse at hand, God is presented as a *rock* (tsur: note similar sound as yashar); usually plants do not flourish on a rock, but this case is different. "On this *rock* I will build my church" [Mt 16.18]. Hawlah for *unrighteousness*: "I hate robbery and *wrong*" [Is 61.8].

+

Psalm Ninety-Three

Vs. 1: The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed, he is girded with strength. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. An image of God as king who is clothed in *majesty*, ga'awah, which can also mean arrogance. "Therefore *pride* is their necklace" [Ps 73.6]. Note two occurrences of *robed*, lavash, the second coupled with *strength* or hoz; to be *girded* ('azar) with hoz it implies putting it on like a sword at your side. "Having *girded* your loins with truth" [Eph 6.14].

Once the primacy of divine rule is noted, the psalmist quickly moves on to describe the *world* (tevel, i.e., the inhabited world) as *established*, kun, and not subject to being moved. Thus the analogy between physical and spiritual realities can intimate the enduring kingship over Israel.

Vs. 2: Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting. Another instance of kun, this time with respect to God's throne which may be taken as the contact point with physical reality. *Of old* or 'az literally means *then*. Compare it with God being from *everlasting*, holam. "Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from *of old*" [Ps 25.6]. Here the English is the same as "of old" in vs. 2 but holam is the world used.

Vs. 3: The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice, the floods lift up their roaring. Attention moves from the earth's solidity to the chaos of *floods*, nahar (singular), the common word for a river or stream. Vs. three posits two sounds: *voice* (qol) and *roaring* (daky), from the verbal root dakah, *to crush*. The picture is that such floods making a crushing noise as in battle.

Vs. 4: Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty! Here the common *water*, may (singular) is used as well as *sea*, yam. *Waves* (mishbar, singular) derives from a verbal root meaning *to break*. "All your *waves* and your billows passed over me" [Jon 2.3]. The psalmist draws a parallel between the tumultuous ocean and the Lord whose *might* ('adyr, adjective) is responsible for them yet he remains above it.

Vs. 5: Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, for evermore. After the tumult of waters which was preceded by the Lord's reigning in vs. 1, the psalmist concludes with mention of divine

decrees, hedoth. This term applies to the Torah, especially the decalogue: “And in the ark you shall put the *testimony* that I shall give you” [Ex 25.21]. These decrees are “very *sure*,” from the verbal root ‘aman, worthy of belief and trust in contrast to the waters’ restlessness.

Since the hedoth were in the temple, they automatically transmit *holiness*, qodesh, “for length of days” according to the Hebrew text.

+

Psalm Ninety-Four

Vs. 1: O Lord, God of vengeance, God of vengeance, shine forth! Two attributes: *vengeance* (neqamah, mentioned twice for emphasis) and *shining* (yaphah). Cf. Dt 33.2: “He *shone forth* from Mount Paran” [Dt 33.2]. I.e., divine vengeance is equated with shining but one that instills fear and dread.

Vs. 2: Rise up, O judge of the earth; render to the proud their deserts! Here the psalmist bids God to *rise up* (nasa’) as a judge, that is, to stand, ready to pronounce sentence. This divine sentence is aimed at the *proud* or ge’eh (singular) or those who are lifted up, but an exultation quite opposite to God’s nasa’. “We have heard of the *pride* of Moab” [Jer 48.29]. Gemul or *desert* can have a positive meaning: “Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the *recompense* of God” [Is 35.4].

Vs. 3: O Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult? Two instances of had-matay, *how long*; the first is something like an incomplete sentence, as though the psalmist could barely get these words out of his mouth. *To exult* or halaz has a positive note: “With *exultation* I will divide up Shechem” [Ps 60.6]. Though the sentiment is the same in both instances, the latter is final in that it comes from God whereas the former is temporary.

The next four verses lists seven deeds of the wicked and may be outlined as follows:

- 1) vs. 4: pour out arrogant words
- 2) boast
- 3) vs. 5: crush God’s people
- 4) afflict God’s heritage
- 5) vs. 6: slay the widow
- 6) slay the sojourner
- 7) murder the fatherless

Vs. 7: And they say, “The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.” This verse is a refrain, as it were, to the evil deeds just listed and sums up the attitude of those who perform them with regard to God. Note that their contempt is couched in terms of *seeing*: ra’ah or the common word and byn or *to perceive* in the sense of understand.

Vs. 8: Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? The verb byn used to mock the wicked who applied this word with regard to the Lord in the previous verse. It is associated with the bahar (singular, *dull*) which implies a consuming action. “And both of them shall *burn* together with none to quench them” [Is 1.31].

To the *fools* or kesyl (singular) the psalmist applies *wisdom* or sakal: “They will tell what God has wrought and *ponder* what he has done” [Ps 64.9].

-

3

5-

Verses 9 and 10 contain three questions with regard to dull and foolish persons. Note the sequence: hearing, seeing and chastising:

- 1) vs. 9: planted the ear = does not hear
- 2) formed the eye = does not see
- 3) vs. 10: chastens nations = does not chastise

Vs. 10 concludes with God *teaching* (lamad) *knowledge* (dahath) and flows into the next verse.

Vs. 11: The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath. Note the connection between knowledge of vs. 10 and its verbal root yadah, *to know*, in vs. 11. Here the word for *man* is 'adam, as applied to the first man taken from earth. His *thoughts* or machashavah (singular) have their origin in this earth-nature, at least as considered in this verse. Compare the same machashavah in Ps 92.5: "Your *thoughts* are very deep!" In the verse at hand they are equated with a *breath* or havel as used in Eccl 1.1: "*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*"

Vs. 12: Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law. Here *gever* is used for *man* as opposed to 'adam in the previous verse; the former derives from a verbal root meaning to be strong and indicates an aspect of human nature different from the earth-nature associated with 'adam. Such a *gever* is the object of divine *chastening* or yasar. Note its alternate meaning: "In the night also my heart *instructs* me" [Ps 16.7]. Such a *gever* is considered *blessed*, 'ashry; cf. Ps 1.1.

'Ashry is also applied to the man *taught* (lamad) *out of* (min-, *from*; such lamad flows out, as it were) God's Torah.

Vs. 13: To give him respite from days of trouble until a pit is dug for the wicked. The third benefit given to the *gever* of vs. 12, *respite* or shaqat: "Take heed, *be quiet*, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint" [Is 7.4]. Note the preposition min (*from*) implying separation with regard to evil; consider this separating action as noted in the last verse.

Such shaqat is bestowed with a distinction period of time involved, until (had). That is, waiting for a *pit* or shachat to be dug; this word implies a sepulcher. "If I say to the *pit*, 'You are my father'" [Job 17.14]. Note the similar sound regarding shaqat and shachat.

Vs. 14: For the Lord will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage. Parallel this *forsaking* (natash) with the pit of the previous verse, as though God will not allow his people to descend there. "I will *cast* you *out* in a desert country" [Ezk 32.4]. Similarly, God will not *abandon* (hazav) his *heritage* or nachalah. "For 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].

Vs. 15: For justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it. This verse suggest that *justice* (mishpat) was once in the possession of the *righteous* (tsedeq) and is not a present reality but will exist in the future. At that future time the *upright* (yashar; cf. Ps 92.15) will follow after it; that is, not so much follow the righteous but the justice present in them.

Vs. 16: Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers? Two rhetorical questions: the preposition min (*against*) can also mean *with* used in connection with *wicked* (rahaq, singular) and the evildoer or "makers of *vanity*," 'awen. Cf. Ps 92.11 for the same definition with this word.

Vs. 17: If the Lord had not been my help, my soul would soon have dwelt in the land of silence. *Help* or *hezratah*, from *hazar* as in Ps 22.19: “O you my *help*, hasten to my aid!” Without such assistance the psalmist’s *nephesh* or *soul* was in danger of going to (in the Hebrew) the *silence* or *domah*. The verbal root *damah* has a positive meaning in Ps 4.4: “Commune with your own hearts in your beds and *be silent*.” Another reference in line with vs. 17: “Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, ‘Awake;’ to a *dumb* stone, ‘Arise!” [Hab 2.19]!

Vs. 18: When I thought, “My foot slips,” your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up. The verb *mut* for *to slip* implies a tottering and is also used in the following sense: “And if your brother *becomes poor* and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall maintain him” [Lev 25.35]. In the verse at hand, *divine chesed* is the psalmist’s *support* or *sahad*. “May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you *support* from Zion” [Ps 20.2]. Thus *sahad* emanates from the temple at Jerusalem.

Vs. 19: When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul. The Hebrew text reads, “In the multitude of my *thoughts* within me,” *sarhaphym*, used only here and in Ps 139.23: “Try me and know my *thoughts*!” Note the location of such thoughts, in the psalmist’s “*within-ness*,” *qerev*, “Transgression speaks to the wicked *deep* in his heart” [Ps 36.1].

To counter the multitude of such troublesome thoughts there are *divine consolations* or *tanchumym*, used only in Is 66.11 and Jer 16.7: “The breasts of her *consolations*” and “Give them the cup of *consolation*.” The verbal root is *nacham* which has the alternate meaning of to lament and to take vengeance. These *consolations* *cheer* the psalmist’s *nephesh*, *shahah*: “The suckling child shall *play* over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den” [Is 11.8].

Vs. 20: Can wicked rulers be allied with you, who frame mischief by statute? A rather strong insinuation with regard to God. The Hebrew reads, “Shall the throne of iniquity have *fellowship* (*chaver*) with you?” Cf. Hos 6.9: “So the priests are banded together (literally, a *company*).” The verse at hand is almost as if the psalmist were to say that such rulers were in God’s company; the term for *mischief* is *hamal*, labor in the sense of something wearisome which the rulers ordain by statute.

Vs. 21: They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. This verse continues the implication that the “throne of iniquity” is against the *nephesh* of the righteous person. The purpose is to condemn those innocents whom God supposedly protects. Such words may apply to those rulers who persuaded Pilate to crucify Christ. The Hebrew reads “and condemn the blood of the innocent to death.”

Vs. 22: But the Lord has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge. A change of perception regarding the questionable stance regarding God: *stronghold* (*misgav*) and *refuge* (*machseh*). “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed” [Ps 9.9]. “For you are my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy” [Ps 61.3].

Vs. 23: He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness; the Lord our God will wipe them out. Three actions taken by God:

- 1) Return *iniquity* or ‘on, from the same verbal root as ‘awen, *vanity*, as noted in vs. 16 above.
- 2) *Wipe out* wicked rulers, *tsamath*: “In your faithfulness *put an end* to them” [Ps 54.5].
- 3) *Wipe out*, a second instance of *tsamath*, this time for emphasis and a note on which to close Ps 94.

+

-

3

7-