



*And he arose and rebuked the wind,  
and said unto the sea, "Peace, be still."  
And there was a great calm.*

## Table of contents

psalm 42 .....	3
psalm 43 .....	6
psalm 44 .....	7
psalm 46 .....	10
psalm 47 .....	12
psalm 48 .....	13
psalm 49 .....	16
psalm 50 .....	20
psalm 51 .....	23
psalm 52 .....	26
psalm 53 .....	28
psalm 54 .....	31
psalm 55 .....	32
psalm 56 .....	36
psalm 57 .....	39
psalm 58 .....	42
psalm 59 .....	45
psalm 60 .....	48
psalm 61 .....	50
psalm 62 .....	52
psalm 63 .....	55
psalm 64 .....	57
psalm 65 .....	59
psalm 66 .....	61
psalm 67 .....	64
psalm 69 .....	66
psalm 71 .....	72



# Psalm 42<sup>1</sup>

(edition: may 27, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Director. A maškil. Belonging to the family<sup>2</sup> of Qōrah*

the pain and contradictions of god's absence

<sup>2/1</sup> As a deer craves water brooks,  
so do I<sup>3</sup> yearn for You, 'Elohîm.

<sup>3/2</sup> Every part of me<sup>4</sup> thirsts for 'Elohîm, for the Living God.  
Oh, when will I be able to enter and appear in 'Elohîm's presence?

<sup>4/3</sup> My tears have been my only food<sup>5</sup> day and night  
as others constantly confront me<sup>6</sup>: "Where is your God?"

<sup>5/4</sup> These things I intend to bring up<sup>7</sup>.  
Also, I intend to pour out my deepest feelings<sup>8</sup>  
when I move forward with the throng;  
when I lead them into 'Elohîm's temple  
with the ringing cry of joy and praise,  
the uproar of one in pilgrimage.

Refrain

<sup>6/5</sup> Why should I yield myself<sup>9</sup> to despair<sup>10</sup>,  
or get worked up<sup>11</sup>?  
Wait expectantly for 'Elohîm,  
because I will yet praise Him  
for the triumph<sup>12</sup> that comes with His presence<sup>13</sup>.

the pain and contradictions of god's absence

<sup>7/6</sup> My God, I have myself completely<sup>14</sup> intimidated.<sup>15</sup>  
For this reason, I will focus<sup>16</sup> on You.

As from the region of Yardēn<sup>17</sup>  
and Ḥermôn's peaks,<sup>18</sup>  
<sup>8/7</sup> deep tumultuous waters sound<sup>19</sup> against deep tumultuous waters,  
so the roar<sup>20</sup> of rushing<sup>21</sup> waters  
and all Your breaking waves<sup>22</sup> surge over me.

<sup>9/8</sup> During the day, YHWH asserts<sup>23</sup> His unwavering devotion<sup>24</sup>.  
At night a song possesses<sup>25</sup> me,  
a prayer to my life-giving<sup>26</sup> God.

10/9 I ask<sup>27</sup> God, my rocky refuge<sup>28</sup>:  
 “Why have You forgotten me?  
 Why must I live<sup>29</sup> in gloom<sup>30</sup> because of the oppressiveness of my enemies?  
 11/10 In an effort to break<sup>31</sup> me,<sup>32</sup>  
 my detractors tauntingly poke<sup>33</sup> at me,  
 saying to me every minute of the day<sup>34</sup>,  
 “Where is your God?”

Refrain

12/11 Why should I yield myself to despair?  
 Why should I get worked up?  
 Wait expectantly for <sup>E</sup>lōhîm,  
 because I will yet praise Him  
 for the triumph that comes with His presence, even that of <sup>E</sup>lōhîm.

---

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 42 and 43 should be read as one psalm.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “sons.”

<sup>3</sup> Literally, “my soul.” We often sense either intimacy or intensity when Hebrew’s *nepeš* is used. Here, then, we might have translated, “I thoroughly crave You.” However, in this case, it seems that the English verb, “yearn,” already possesses the necessary intensity, as it expresses something more intense than, say, “desire.”

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *nepeš*, is present once more. Unlike the previous line where “yearn” seems to capture the intensity of the Psalmist’s longing, “thirst” does not capture a more intense longing.

<sup>5</sup> Literally, “my food.”

<sup>6</sup> Literally, “in speaking against me.”

<sup>7</sup> This verb, along with the verb in the next line, are in the cohortative mood. The cohortative mood can express desire, intention, (self) encouragement, determination, premonition, and permission.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *nepeš*, traditionally, “soul.”

<sup>9</sup> Literally, “my soul”

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *šāḥaḥ*, in the Hithpolel.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew *hāmâ*. This is often a loud noise indicative of tumultuous movement. When used as an emotional response, as here, it has the idea of turbulence. Here, the verb is 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, “you.” This refers to “the soul” in the previous line. It is awkward phrasing, but the point is clear, the Psalmist is talking to himself, encouraging himself, giving himself a pep talk.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *yešû‘â*.

<sup>13</sup> Literally, “the triumph of his face.”

<sup>14</sup> Literally, “my soul is”

<sup>15</sup> Again, this is Hebrew, *šāḥaḥ*, in the Hithpolel.

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *zākar*, “remember.”

<sup>17</sup> Traditionally transliterated, “Jordan.”

---

<sup>18</sup> These are the main sources of what in Israel. The Psalmist calls our mind to the waters that rush down in torrents from these sources as a means of describing the turbulence of his life.

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew, *qârâ*’ I, literally, “to call.” It is not impossible, however, that it is *qârâ*’ II, “meet,” and that the waters are “meeting,” i.e., crashing against each other. As the two following lines make clear, when deep waters “sound” or “meet,” the result is tumultuous.

<sup>20</sup> Literally, “voice” or “sound.” Just as we would be justified in translating “bark of a dog” upon reading “sound of a dog,” we seem justified in specifying the nature of the “sound” that a

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *šinnôr*, “spout, pipe, gutter.” It seems to indicate here a concentration, channeled flow of water, something like one might see in rapids.

<sup>22</sup> Literally “Your breakers and Your waves.” We take this as a hendiadys.

<sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *šâwâ*, “to command, charge, appoint.” Here Yahweh “commands his unwavering devotion.” The one who “commands” is the one in charge, control. What does this mean, this commanding, the controlling of his devotion?

<sup>24</sup> Hebrew, *hesed*.

<sup>25</sup> Literally “is with me.”

<sup>26</sup> Literally, “God of my life.”

<sup>27</sup> Literally, “I say.” But the “saying” takes the form of a question in the follow-up line.

<sup>28</sup> Hebrew, *sela*’.

<sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *hâlak*, “to go, walk, behave.”

<sup>30</sup> Hebrew, *qâdar*.

<sup>31</sup> Literally, “in the breaking of”

<sup>32</sup> This entire line is difficult, as can be seen by the many differing translations. The most honest translation might simply be the ellipsis, “...” Still, one wants to try, so here is the reasoning behind my translation. First, the root, *ršh* is usually associated with “killing, murder.” However, *TDOT* notes that “Only in North Arabic do we find a verb *raḏaha*, which means ‘break to pieces, shatter; OSA *rdh*, ‘strike, fight,’ may also be related” (Vol. x, p. x). Add to this the LXX translation of *katathlaō*, “to break, crush in pieces,” and the idea of “breaking” seems more likely than “murdering.” Now, as for that which is broken, *’ešem*, bones (here it is in the plural). This word can indicate “spine,” thus “back.” We speak of having one’s back broke to indicate being “totally finished, undone.” Thus, we might read, “as if to break my back.” At the same time, *’ešem* is sometimes used for the embodiment of the entire person. This is how I take it here.

<sup>33</sup> Hebrew, *hārap*.

<sup>34</sup> Literally, “all the day.”

# Psalm 43<sup>1</sup>

(edition: may 27, 2023)

*the pain and contradictions of god's absence*

- <sup>1</sup> Rule in my favor<sup>2</sup>, 'Elohîm,  
and argue my case against people without loyalty<sup>3</sup>.  
Deliver me from individuals of deception<sup>4</sup> and injustice<sup>5</sup>.
- <sup>2</sup> Since you, my God, are my fortress,  
Why have you turned me away?  
Why must I live in gloom because of my enemies' oppressiveness?<sup>6</sup>
- <sup>3</sup> Send Your light and truth that they might lead me,  
give me entrance into Your temple<sup>7</sup> preeminent<sup>8</sup>,  
even into Your very own abode.
- <sup>4</sup> Then I will approach 'Elohîm's altar;  
approach<sup>9</sup> God, source of my joy and rejoicing,  
and praise 'Elohîm, my God, with lyre.

*Refrain*

- <sup>5</sup> Why should I yield myself to despair?  
Why should I get worked up?  
Wait expectantly for 'Elohîm,  
because I will yet praise Him  
for the triumph that comes with His presence, even that of 'Elohîm.

---

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 42 and 43 should be read as one psalm.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *šāpaṭ*. Here, the Psalmist's desire that God "judge me" "give me a ruling," means that he wishes God to rule in his favor.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *hāsîd*.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *mirmâ I*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *'awlâ*.

<sup>6</sup> Same as vs. 10.c.

<sup>7</sup> Literally, "mountain."

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *qōdeš*. For a full discussion of this word, see *Excursus: Common and Significant Hebrew words*.

<sup>9</sup> The verb of the previous line applies to this line as well.

# Psalm 44

(edition: February 18, 2024)

<sup>1</sup> *For the director. Belonging to the family<sup>1</sup> of Qōrah. A maškîl.*

†he witness about the past

- <sup>2/1</sup> †Elohim, we have heard with our own ears;  
our ancestors<sup>2</sup> have described<sup>3</sup> to us  
the deeds you performed in their days,  
in previous times.
- <sup>3/2</sup> You, by Your power<sup>4</sup>, dispossessed nations  
and planted our ancestors<sup>5</sup>.  
You devastated<sup>6</sup> peoples,  
but proliferated<sup>7</sup> our ancestors<sup>8</sup>.
- <sup>4/3</sup> Certainly<sup>9</sup>, they did not take possession of land by their own sword,  
nor did their own power<sup>10</sup> bring them victory<sup>11</sup>.  
Truly, it was Your dominance<sup>12</sup>, and Your power,  
and Your presence<sup>13</sup> with which You favored them.

†he impact and application of the past's witness

- <sup>5/4</sup> You are He who is my King, †Elohim.  
Decree Ya<sup>‘a</sup>qōb's triumph.
- <sup>6/5</sup> Through You, we have surged against<sup>14</sup> our enemies.  
Through Your power<sup>15</sup>, we have trampled those who rise against us.
- <sup>7/6</sup> I will most certainly<sup>16</sup> not rely on my bow.  
My sword will not bring me victory<sup>17</sup>.
- <sup>8/7</sup> Surely, You will bring us victory<sup>18</sup> against our foes,  
and thwart<sup>19</sup> those hostile<sup>20</sup> toward us.
- <sup>9/8</sup> It is in †Elohim that we boast at all times,  
and Your power<sup>21</sup> that we always acknowledge.

*selâ*

†he present contradiction with the witness of the past

- <sup>10/9</sup> But You have forsaken and humiliated us,  
and have not gone out with our armed forces.
- <sup>11/10</sup> We turn in retreat from our enemies,  
so that<sup>22</sup> those hostile to us plunder us.
- <sup>12/11</sup> You have made us food, like sheep.  
You have scattered us among the nations.
- <sup>13/12</sup> You sell Your people for no gain<sup>23</sup>,  
and make no profit<sup>24</sup> from their sell<sup>25</sup>.
- <sup>14/13</sup> You turn us into an insult used by neighboring nations<sup>26</sup>,  
and a humiliating laughingstock to those surrounding us.
- <sup>15/14</sup> You turn us into a bad example<sup>27</sup> among the nations;  
a headshake among peoples.

16/15 My humiliation is always present<sup>28</sup>,  
and shame spreads over<sup>29</sup> my face  
17/16 at the speech<sup>30</sup> of those who taunt and revile<sup>31</sup>;  
as a result of the enemy who has the last laugh<sup>32</sup>.

### Complaint about the contradiction

18/17 All this has happened to us, though<sup>33</sup> we have not forgotten You,  
and have not been untrue to Your covenant.  
19/18 Our commitment<sup>34</sup> has not strayed<sup>35</sup>,  
nor have our steps turned from Your path.  
20/19 Still You have crushed us in a monster's<sup>36</sup> den<sup>37</sup>,  
and covered us with deep gloom.  
21/20 If we have ignored our God's renown<sup>38</sup>  
and spread our hands out to a loathsome god  
22/21 wouldn't 'E<sup>l</sup>ōhîm discover this?  
Surely, He knows deeply hidden things<sup>39</sup>.  
23/22 Certainly it is because of You that we are being constantly<sup>40</sup> slain;  
that we are thought of as sheep for slaughter.

### Prayer for help and the reversal of the contradiction

24/23 Wake up! Why are you sleeping, my Lord?  
Awaken! Don't constantly reject.  
25/24 Why do You remove Your presence<sup>41</sup>?  
Why do You ignore<sup>42</sup> our miserable oppression<sup>43</sup>  
26/25 seeing that we sink to the dirt;  
our stomachs cleave to the ground?  
27/26 Arise to our aid.  
Deliver<sup>44</sup> us in keeping with Your unwavering devotion<sup>45</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally, "sons."

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, 'āb, "father," in the plural.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, sāpar.

<sup>4</sup> Literally, "hand."

<sup>5</sup> Literally, "them." But the pronoun applies to the ancestors who described their experiences.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, rā'a'.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, šālah, literally, "to send out/away, spread, extend, stretch out."

<sup>8</sup> Again, "them." See note 5.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, kî.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, z'roa', "arm." Also in next line in reference to God.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, yāša'.



- 
- <sup>12</sup> Literally, “right hand,” the “dominant hand.”
- <sup>13</sup> Literally, “the light of your face.”
- <sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *nāgah*, “gore, push, thrust.”
- <sup>15</sup> Literally, “name.”
- <sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *kî*.
- <sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *yāša* ‘.
- <sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *yāša* ‘.
- <sup>19</sup> Hebrew, *būš*.
- <sup>20</sup> Hebrew, *śānê* ‘.
- <sup>21</sup> Again, literally, “name.”
- <sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *w<sup>e</sup>*, “and.”
- <sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *b<sup>e</sup>lo* ‘ *hôn*.
- <sup>24</sup> Literally, “you do not increase...”
- <sup>25</sup> Hebrew, *m<sup>e</sup>hîr*, literally, “the going price, purchase price.”
- <sup>26</sup> Literally, “our neighbors.”
- <sup>27</sup> Hebrew, *māšâl*.
- <sup>28</sup> Hebrew, *neged*, “in front of, before, against.”
- <sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *kāsâ*, literally, “covers.”
- <sup>30</sup> Hebrew, *qôl*, literally, “voice.”
- <sup>31</sup> The participles are singular, but the singular represents a class.
- <sup>32</sup> Hebrew, *nāqam*, literally, “gets revenge.”
- <sup>33</sup> Hebrew, *w<sup>e</sup>*, literally, “and.”
- <sup>34</sup> Literally, “heart.”
- <sup>35</sup> Hebrew, *sûg*, “to turn, turn back, deviate, digress, apostatize.”
- <sup>36</sup> Hebrew, *tannîm*.
- <sup>37</sup> Hebrew, *māqôm*.
- <sup>38</sup> Literally, “name.”
- <sup>39</sup> Literally, “secrets of the heart.”
- <sup>40</sup> Hebrew, *kal-hayyôm*.
- <sup>41</sup> Literally, “hide Your face.”
- <sup>42</sup> Hebrew, *šākah*.
- <sup>43</sup> Literally, “our misery and our oppression.” I take the pair as a hendiadys.
- <sup>44</sup> Hebrew, *pādâ*.
- <sup>45</sup> Hebrew, *hesed*.

# Psalm 46

(edition: January 22, 2024)

<sup>1</sup> For the Director. Belonging to the family<sup>1</sup> of Qōrah. ‘al ‘almût. A song.

Trusting god in the face of instability

<sup>2/1</sup> ‘Elohîm is our strong refuge<sup>2</sup>,  
He has proven to be<sup>3</sup> an incredible source of protection<sup>4</sup> in distress<sup>5</sup>.  
<sup>3/2</sup> Therefore, we will not fear because earth quakes<sup>6</sup>,  
or the mountains tumble<sup>7</sup> into the sea;  
<sup>4/3</sup> its waters roar and roil,  
mountain ranges quaking from its surge. selâ

God’s stabilizing effect on zion

<sup>5/4</sup> There’s a river, its channels gladden ‘Elohîm’s city,  
‘Elyôn’s unrivaled<sup>8</sup> dwelling place.  
<sup>6/5</sup> ‘Elohîm is in it.  
It cannot be shaken.  
‘Elohîm provides it immediate<sup>9</sup> aid.

God’s destabilizing effect on the world

<sup>7/6</sup> Nations have plotted<sup>10</sup>. Kingdoms have collapsed.  
He speaks. Earth reels.  
<sup>8/7</sup> YHWH Š<sup>e</sup>bā’ôṭ is with us.  
Ya ‘aqōb’s God is our impregnable fortress<sup>11</sup>. selâ  
  
<sup>9/8</sup> Come! Contemplate<sup>12</sup> YHWH’s deeds<sup>13</sup>!  
How He disconcerts<sup>14</sup> the world—  
<sup>10/9</sup> putting an end to worldwide<sup>15</sup> war,  
He will break bow and chop up spear,  
and burn round shield<sup>16</sup> with fire!

God’s stabilizing effect on zion

<sup>11/10</sup> Be calm and acknowledge<sup>17</sup> that I am ‘Elohîm.  
I rule<sup>18</sup> over the nations.  
I rule over the world.  
<sup>12/11</sup> YHWH Š<sup>e</sup>bā’ôṭ is with us.  
Ya ‘aqōb’s God is our impregnable fortress. selâ

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “sons.”

---

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “our refuge and strength.” I translate the two nouns as an hendiadys.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, “He is found.”

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *‘ezrâ*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *šārâ*.

<sup>6</sup> Literally, “changes.” LXX has *tarassō*, “to shake, disturb, unsettle.”

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *môṭ*. Also in verse 6, where I translate, “shaken,” and verse 7, where I translate “collapse.”

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *qādōš*.

<sup>9</sup> Literally, “at the turning of morning.”

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *hāgah*. Compare Psalm 2.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *mišgāb*.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *hāzâ*.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *mip‘âl*.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *šammâ*.

<sup>15</sup> Literally, “to the end of the earth.”

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *‘agālâ*. While the word indicates only “wagon,” the military context of the previous line would demand a translation of “military transport wagon” if the Masoretic reading is retained. Recognizing the military context, the LXX went in a different direction, translating, *thyreos*, “shield,” apparel reading, *‘agilâ*, “round shield. The LXX reading requires such a conservative emending of the text that we have accepted it here. The KJV translation, “chariot” seems unlikely as *‘agālâ* is not otherwise translated as chariot.

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *yāda‘*, literally, “know.”

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *rûm*, literally, “be high, exalted.”

# Psalm 47

(edition: January 17, 2024)

<sup>1</sup> For the Director. Belonging to the family<sup>1</sup> of Qōrah. A hymn.

Celebration of god's kingship

<sup>2/1</sup> Every nation should clap their hands.  
They should cheer<sup>2</sup> 'Elohîm with enthusiastic<sup>3</sup> voices.  
<sup>3/2</sup> Because YHWH 'Elyôn is to be revered,  
Great King over the entire world that He is.  
<sup>4/3</sup> He will make nations subservient to us,  
and put peoples under our feet.  
<sup>5/4</sup> He will determine<sup>4</sup> our inheritance,  
even the majestic One of Ya<sup>a</sup>qōb, whom He loved.

*selâ*

Celebration of God's enthronement

<sup>6/5</sup> 'Elohîm has ascended accompanied by loud acclaim<sup>5</sup>;  
YHWH has ascended<sup>6</sup> accompanied by horn blast.  
<sup>7/6</sup> Sing of 'Elohîm. Sing!  
Sing of our King. Sing!  
<sup>8/7</sup> Because 'Elohîm is King over the whole world.  
Sing contemplatively<sup>7</sup>.  
<sup>9/8</sup> 'Elohîm reigns over nations.  
'Elohîm is enthroned on His **incomparable**<sup>8</sup> throne.  
<sup>10/9</sup> The nation's nobility is gathered.  
The people of 'Abrâhâm's God are gathered<sup>9</sup>.  
Because earth's protection<sup>10</sup> belongs to 'Elohîm,  
He is greatly exalted.

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally, "sons."

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *rûa'*.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *rinnâ*.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *bâḥar*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *rûa'*, as in verse 2.

<sup>6</sup> The verb of the previous line is to be applied to this line.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *maskîl*.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *qōdeš*.

<sup>9</sup> Again, applying the previous line's verb to this one.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *māgēn*.

# Psalm 48

(edition: January 27, 2024)

<sup>1</sup> *A song. A hymn belonging to the family<sup>1</sup> of Qōrah.*

God is zion's impregnable defense

<sup>2/1</sup> YHWH is great, and One to be much praised  
in our God's city, His preeminent<sup>2</sup> mount.  
<sup>3/2</sup> It is of unparalleled<sup>3</sup> beauty, the entire land's source of joy—  
Mount Şîyôn, Heights<sup>4</sup> of Şāpôn<sup>5</sup>, City of the Great King.  
<sup>4/3</sup> 'Elohîm, present in its defenses<sup>6</sup>,  
is recognized<sup>7</sup> as an impregnable fortress<sup>8</sup>.

Historical example of god's defense

<sup>5/4</sup> When—just consider this!—kings banded together<sup>9</sup>;  
when they unitedly<sup>10</sup> advanced<sup>11</sup>;  
<sup>6/5</sup> they saw the city thus<sup>12</sup>, were astonished,  
dismayed, and hurried away.  
<sup>7/6</sup> Trembling seized them.  
Anguish seized them like that of a woman in labor.

<sup>8/7</sup> With an east wind, You break apart  
Taršîš ships.  
<sup>9/8</sup> Just as we have heard, so have we observed.  
As for the city of YHWH Şebā'ôt,  
the city of our God, 'Elohîm,  
He always secures<sup>13</sup> it.

*selâ*

Response to god's defense

<sup>10/9</sup> We visualize<sup>14</sup>, 'Elohîm, Your unwavering devotion  
located inside Your temple<sup>15, 16</sup>.  
<sup>11/10</sup> Consistent with<sup>17</sup> Your reputation, 'Elohîm,  
praise for You<sup>18</sup> extends to earth's most distant parts<sup>19</sup>.  
Your dominant power<sup>20</sup> accomplishes<sup>21</sup> triumph.  
<sup>12/11</sup> Mount Şîyôn continually rejoices;  
Yehûdâ's citizenry<sup>22</sup> are always exuberant<sup>23</sup>  
because of Your governance<sup>24</sup>.

Call to evangelize

<sup>13/12</sup> Circle Şîyôn, and go all around it.  
Count its towers.

14/13 Fix you mind<sup>25</sup> on its defenses.  
Scrutinize<sup>26</sup> its fortress  
so that you can describe them to future generations.  
15/14 For here, <sup>E</sup>lōhîm is our God  
since time immemorial and forever.  
It is He who will lead us beyond death<sup>27</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “sons.”

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *qōdeš*.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *nōp*.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *y<sup>e</sup>rēkā*.

<sup>5</sup> This often refers to Divinity’s place of abode.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *’armôn*.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *yāda’*.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *mišgāb*.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *yā’ad*, literally, “gathered,” but the context suggests that the gathering of kings is antagonistic.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *yaḥdō*.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *’ābar*. “Many assume two roots. “The first is *’br II*, “be angry,” under which one may classify the nominal derivatives *’ebrâ I*, “anger, wrath,” and *’ebrâ II*, “surge...” The second, *’br I*, refers in general to a purposeful change of location or position from A to B. The position of the speaker defines the course of this movement as going or coming away from, by, or toward the speaker. This yields a plethora of semantic aspects in both the literal and the figurative sense” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x). The “advance” should be understood as hostile in intent.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *kēn*, “thus,” i.e., they saw the city, impregnable, as it was described in verses 1-3.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *kûn*.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *dāmâ*, in the Piel.

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *hēkāl*.

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew is simply, “inside Your temple.”

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *K<sup>e</sup>*.

<sup>18</sup> Literally, “Your praise.”

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew, *qāšû*, “end, edge.”

<sup>20</sup> Literally, “Your right hand.”

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *mâlê’*, “to be full.”

<sup>22</sup> Literally, “daughters.”

<sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *gîl*.

<sup>24</sup> Hebrew, *mišpāt*.

<sup>25</sup> Hebrew, *lēb*.

---

<sup>26</sup> Hebrew, *pāsag*. Presumably, the word means “to cut up, dissect.” The use here is figurative. The “dissection” of the city’s fortress signifies a careful analysis, inspection.

<sup>27</sup> The meaning is uncertain. Many have put forth varying translations. Some translate, “until death,” signifying that God is ever present in the life of Zion’s inhabitants. Some translate, as I do, “beyond death.” Many of these understand this to be an illusion to life after death. My “beyond death” is meant to convey God’s protection of Zion’s inhabitants protecting them from the violent death intended by their hostile enemies.

# Psalm 49

(edition: December 11, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Director of Qōrah's sons,<sup>1</sup> a hymn of worship*

The psalmist calls for attention to his discernment

<sup>2</sup> Hear this, all nations.  
Lend an ear, all who dwell the world over<sup>2</sup>—  
<sup>3</sup> this includes<sup>3</sup> every human being<sup>4</sup>;  
every single individual<sup>5</sup>,  
rich and poor alike.  
<sup>4</sup> I will publicly<sup>6</sup> utter what is instructive<sup>7</sup>.  
The musings of my mind<sup>8</sup> will focus on understanding.  
<sup>5</sup> I will extend a listening hear to instruction<sup>9</sup>.  
Accompanied by lyre, I will then unlock<sup>10</sup> a conundrum<sup>11</sup>.

The psalmist unlocks the conundrum

<sup>6</sup> Why should I be intimidated in evil times,  
when the deviant<sup>12</sup> surround me<sup>13</sup>—  
<sup>7</sup> those<sup>14</sup> who rely on their own resources<sup>15</sup>  
and promote themselves<sup>16</sup> because of their great wealth;  
<sup>8</sup> individuals<sup>17</sup> who can by no means deliver<sup>18</sup> anyone,<sup>19</sup>  
or provide 'ēlohîm the ransom price;<sup>20</sup>  
<sup>9</sup> for the cost of delivering a life is too expensive,<sup>21</sup>  
and is always<sup>22</sup> out of reach.<sup>23</sup>  
<sup>10</sup> Do they<sup>24</sup> think they will live forever;  
not experience<sup>25</sup> the Pit?  
<sup>11</sup> Surely, one can observe that the astute<sup>26</sup> die;  
that they perish right along with the ignorant and stupid,  
and leave their wealth to those after them.  
<sup>12</sup> In their mind,<sup>27</sup> their houses are enduring;<sup>28</sup>  
their abodes, passing from one generation to another.  
They even name lands after themselves!  
<sup>13</sup> But even the most prestigious don't last long;<sup>29</sup>  
exactly like senseless animals.<sup>30</sup>  
  
<sup>14</sup> This is their way of life, madness<sup>31</sup> owns them,  
and those who follow<sup>32</sup> them accept what comes from their mouth!  
<sup>15</sup> Like sheep, they are destined<sup>33</sup> for Še'ôl. *selâ*  
Death shepherds them,  
and leads them down daily into flat plains.<sup>34</sup>  
Še'ôl consumes their body;<sup>35</sup>  
consumes<sup>36</sup> what dignity they possess.



The psalmist pauses to reassure himself

16 But 'ēlohîm will deliver me from Š'ôl's grasp,<sup>37</sup>  
for he will take me to himself.

*selâ*

The psalmist recaps his message

17 So don't be overawed when someone<sup>38</sup> grows wealthy;  
as their house grows more impressive.  
18 Because, when they<sup>39</sup> die, they can't take a thing;  
their grandeur won't follow along.  
19 Though they might celebrate<sup>40</sup> their life while living,  
others praising them<sup>41</sup> because they do well for themselves,  
20 they will end up<sup>42</sup> right where their fathers did.  
From then on,<sup>43</sup> they'll<sup>44</sup> see no light.  
21 Individuals who have prestige, but lack insight  
are exactly like senseless animals.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I often translate such masculine language into gender inclusive language. However, because musical personnel in Judah's temple were almost certainly exclusively male, I leave, here, the language in the masculine.

<sup>2</sup> I have rendered Hebrew, *heled*, as "the world over." This is based on the parallelism. The word itself seems to indicate that which is lasting and permanent.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *gam*, serves here as emphasis, a kind of "moreover."

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, 'ādām I.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, 'îš I.

<sup>6</sup> Literally, "my mouth will speak." Well, of course one speaks with their mouth. We don't use our nose to speak. It seems that the point is that the Psalmist means to go public with his views.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *hokmôt*, traditionally, "wisdom." The verb means to "know, learn, or understand, have insight, be sensible." In the causative stems, the verb means "to inform, instruct, explain, or teach."

<sup>8</sup> Literally, "my heart."

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps literally, "a maxim," or "proverb," but these were meant to provide guidance. Because we no longer utilize maxims to any great extent in our teaching, I have translated as I have so that the reader can more easily relate to the saying. This is yet another example of my placing an interest in helping the modern reader understand above fidelity to a lexicon.

<sup>10</sup> Literally, "to open."

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *hîdāh*.

<sup>12</sup> Following *LXX*. When the Psalmist or, indeed, anyone from the ancient world, speaks of the "depraved, perverted," they are not focused primarily on the internal flaw that is to be found in such an individual, but, rather, on the "social deviancy" of the individual. Such concepts are difficult in our modern world, in which we are unnaturally obsessed with the individual, and come very close, at times, to denying the very, very close connection between the individual and society.

<sup>13</sup> Literally, "my steps," or "heels."

---

<sup>14</sup> In discussing “the wicked,” their character, and their essence, the Psalmist will jump, as he often does, back and forth between the individual (with single verbs) and the class (with plural verbs). For consistency, my translation will reflect the plural, or class emphasis.

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *ḥayil*. “The verb is probably a denominative derived from the noun, corresponding to its basic meaning, ‘strength.’ The noun itself often has the more concrete meaning ‘wealth’ or ‘army’ (*TDOT*, Vol. \*, p. \*). The world is indicative of capacities. In this world, the capacities of both individuals and institutions is based upon accumulated financial resources. Even armies, as this word is sometimes translated, are dependent upon financial resources.

<sup>16</sup> This is Hebrew *hālāl* II, in the hithpael stem.

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *ʾiṣ* I. It is singular, but it seems clear that “the man” is part of the class of the guilty wicked under discussion.

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *pādā*.

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew, *ʾāḥ* II, “brother, kinsmen, countrymen.”

<sup>20</sup> Literally, “compensation, ransom payment, atonement cost.”

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *yāqar*, “to be rare, expensive, valuable, invaluable, costly, precious.” “This notion of value easily leads to nuances reflecting quantity rather than quality, always in the sense of a smaller quantity: ‘(be) rare, scarce’” (*TDOT*, Vol. \*, p. \*).

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *ʾōlām*.

<sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *ḥāḏal*. It means “to cease, withdraw, abstain from, leave, stop.” “The verb can also mean ‘refrain from,’ in the sense of not even beginning to do something” (*TDOT*, Vol. \*, p. \*).

<sup>24</sup> Literally, “he.” The Psalmist continues with reasons to not fear “the wicked,” first mentioned in verse 6.

<sup>25</sup> Literally, “he will not see”

<sup>26</sup> Hebrew, *ḥākām*.

<sup>27</sup> Hebrew, *qereḇ*. Can indicate internal organs or simply the spatial idea of interiority.

<sup>28</sup> Hebrew, *ʾōlām*.

<sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *lîn*, indicates a short, single overnight stay, and then, less concretely, that which is transitory, non-enduring.

<sup>30</sup> This line is exactly replicated in the final line of the Psalm. The translation, “like an animal” is secure. The question is what to do with the final third person plural *niphal* verb, *niḏmû*, from the root *dmh*. As *TDOT* points out, “scholars disagree as to which root [of three] lies behind the occurrences” of the root in this and the final verse of this Psalm (See, Vol. \*, p. \*). I take it to come from *dāmâ* II, “to be dumb, silent.” Here, the “silence” of animals is a consequence of their inability to speak. They lack the intellectual capacity to speak.

One might object that the Psalmist has already spoken of the prestigious as being “like and animal”—in relation to the inevitability of death in verse 13, and in relation to ignorance in the final verse. He has, indeed. But I read that final *niḏmû*, “they are like,” to represent a point of emphasis. Literally, we might translate, “they are like, as animals, they are like.” Hence, my “they are just exactly like animals.”

To read “they are like, as animals, they perish” works fine. It certainly works in verse 13. But the emphasis is different in the psalm’s last line. There, the issue is not the length of life, but intelligence. So, in the final line, the prestigious are as stupid as animals with no thought to the longevity of life.

<sup>31</sup> Hebrew, *kesel*, “to be stupid, slow, sluggish.”

<sup>32</sup> Most likely this is temporal and indicates those who come after them. But since those who come after them temporally, accept the claptrap that comes out of their mouths, they also become “followers,”

---

“disciples.” So, my translations allows the reader to consider both meanings and consider whether the Psalmist also intended the reader to consider both meanings.

<sup>33</sup> With the most minute emendation—replacing the initial short vowel with a long—I read Hebrew, *šît*. “šît is a semantically malleable term and consequently also semantically vague, something coming to expression not only in the widely varying renderings in the early versions, but also in the broadly drawn lists of meanings in the various lexicons” (TDOT, Vol. \*, p. \*). Its meanings range from the concrete and locative “put, place, lay,” to a more figurative “appoint, establish, install, fix” to “impose.”

<sup>34</sup> We should warn the reader that the text is extraordinarily corrupt. Autur Weiser, perhaps wisely, left the line untranslated, commenting in a foot note, “The restoration of the seriously corrupt text is hopeless” (“The Psalms,” *The Old Testament Library*). TDOT comments that “the text is so hopelessly corrupt that no genuinely cogent explanation is possible” (Vol. \*, p. \*).

In an attempt to do the “hopeless,” I am suggesting emending the Masoretic text with an original reading something like, *wayyordām bāmēšārīm labōqer*, “it leads them down into the flat plains daily.” In this proposal, a scribe’s eye sees two *mems* rather than one and a single vowel in the verb is changed, producing “descend, go down,” (*yārad*) rather than “rule” (*rādâ I*). It is true that we do not, elsewhere, read of plains in Šē’ôl. However, the metaphor utilizing sheep—death shepherding the dead as sheep—might have led the author to think of sheep grazing and thus of a grassy plain. It is all, admittedly, a stretch.

<sup>35</sup> I understand this noun to come from the root *yšr*. The verb, *yāšar*, means “to fashion or shape,” often of the potter’s work in crafting his pot. Most significant for understanding this passage, the verb is used in Genesis 2.7 for Yahweh’s work forming man from clay. Thus, death, here, is deconstructing God’s handiwork, the human body.

<sup>36</sup> The verb from the previous line applies to this line as well.

<sup>37</sup> Literally, “hand.”

<sup>38</sup> Literally, “a man, ’iš.

<sup>39</sup> Hebrew reads “He” and “his” where I translate “they” and “their.”

<sup>40</sup> Hebrew, *bāarak I*.

<sup>41</sup> Here, the Psalmist slides to the second person singular, “you.” Has he turned his attention to someone specific? Does he wish to drive home his message with the more familiar pronoun?

<sup>42</sup> Literally, “come into, enter.” To “enter” a location is to have “arrived, finished, or ended” a journey.

<sup>43</sup> Hebrew, *’aq-nešah*.

<sup>44</sup> Hebrew is back to third person plural, “they.”

<sup>45</sup> See the note in verse 13 for comment on this translation.

# Psalm 50

(edition: october 18, 2022)

<sup>1</sup> *A hymn belonging to 'āsāp.*

*God calls for a trial*

God, 'ēlōhîm YHWH, has spoken,  
and has called out for the world's attention<sup>1</sup>  
from east to west.

<sup>2</sup> Out of Şiyyôn, perfection of beauty,  
'ēlōhîm reveals<sup>2</sup> Himself.

<sup>3</sup> Our God comes, and not reservedly<sup>3</sup>.  
Fire burns before Him,  
and rages<sup>4</sup> mightily all around Him.

<sup>4</sup> He calls out to the heavens above  
as well the earth, for the purpose of judging His people:

<sup>5</sup> “Gather to Me those faithful to Me  
who have entered into covenant with Me through sacrifice.”

<sup>6</sup> The heavens are to declare His justness;  
for it is 'ēlōhîm who is Judge<sup>5</sup>.

*(selâ)*

*God's testimony at trial*

<sup>7</sup> Listen up, My people, and let Me speak, Yîsrâ'êl.  
I testify against you,  
I, 'ēlōhîm, your God.

<sup>8</sup> It isn't because of your sacrifices that I reprove you,  
or because of your holocaust offerings that are conspicuous<sup>6</sup> and continuous.

<sup>9</sup> I don't need<sup>7</sup> a bull from your family<sup>8</sup>,  
or a goat from your stalls;

<sup>10</sup> for every living thing found in the wild belongs to Me,  
animals from a thousand mountains.

<sup>11</sup> I am familiar<sup>9</sup> with all hard-to-find birds<sup>10</sup>  
and small critters<sup>11</sup> that are Mine.

<sup>12</sup> If I could feel hunger, I wouldn't inform you,  
for the world is Mine along with its abundance.

<sup>13</sup> Need I eat bull meat,  
or drink goat blood?

<sup>14</sup> Sacrifice to 'ēlōhîm as an expression of praise,<sup>12</sup>  
fulfill your vows made to 'elyôn,

<sup>15</sup> and call out to Me in times of need—  
I will strengthen<sup>13</sup> you, and you will magnify Me.”

*God's charges at trial*

- 16 But to the ungodly, 'ēlōhîm says:  
    “What does it mean for you to celebrate<sup>14</sup> My stipulations  
    and take My covenant into your mouth  
17 but despise admonishment  
    and cast My words behind you?  
18 If you observe a thief, you join<sup>15</sup> him,  
    and your share is with adulterers.  
19 Your mouth spreads wickedness  
    and your tongue is paired with deception.  
20 You sit and speak against your brother.  
    You assign fault to your own mother's son.  
21 You did these things and I remained silent.  
    You now imagine, falsely, that I am like you.<sup>16</sup>  
    I will prosecute you and lay it all out for you<sup>17</sup>.

*final warning and promise*

- 22 Take careful note of this, you who ignore<sup>18</sup> God  
    lest I tear you to pieces and there be no one to deliver.  
23 Whoever<sup>19</sup> sacrifices to express praise honors Me,  
    and they<sup>20</sup> establish<sup>21</sup> a means<sup>22</sup>  
    that I can reveal 'ēlōhîm's salvation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew, *qārā'*.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *yāpa'*, can mean to “shine,” “send out light.” However, it can also mean “to appear” (See TDOT, Vol. x, p. x). We have take it in the latter sense here.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *hāraš*, literally, “be silent.”

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *śā'ar*, “to blow, storm.”

<sup>5</sup> While the *šōpēt* functions in all matters of governance—military, judicial, economic, religious, etc.—the present context clearly has his judicial function foremost in mind.

<sup>6</sup> Literally, “before me, right in front of me.”

<sup>7</sup> Literally, “take, receive, accept.”

<sup>8</sup> Literally, “house.”

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *yāda'*, “to know.”

<sup>10</sup> Literally “birds of the mountains,” or “mountainous birds.” Here, “mountains” should be understood in terms of metonymy, indicative of areas that are difficult to reach. LXX has “birds of the sky.”

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *zîz*. The meaning of the word is uncertain. The *zîz* are those of the “steppes” or “mountain meadows,” *śāday*. But, I have left this untranslated to match the metonymy of the previous line. The idea is that the critters that belong to God are in places somewhat unfamiliar to many.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *tôdâ*. According to *NIDOTTE*, “The vb. primarily refers to an acknowledgement.” In the religious sphere, this can be acknowledgement of God and his greatness—praise—or acknowledgement of human nature—“confession.” It can also refer to a sacrificial offering that has praise as its objective.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *hālaš*.

---

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *sāpar*, literally, “count, tally, narrate.”

<sup>15</sup> The LXX has *syndrome*, “run with,” apparently reading the Hebrew verb, *rûš*. Rather than the more traditional, *rāšâ*, “have pleasure in.” Here, we understand “to run with” as “joining.”

<sup>16</sup> The Masoretic text is a bit messy here. I have relied on the LXX.

<sup>17</sup> Literally, “arrange it before your eyes.”

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *šākaḥ*.

<sup>19</sup> Literally, “he who.” But, as is my practice, I read such masculine language generically except where “male” is central to the meaning.

<sup>20</sup> Hebrew, “he.”

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *šîm*.

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *derek*, literally, “way, path.”

# psalm 51

edition: June 1, 2022

<sup>1</sup> For the Music Director. A song of Dāwid<sup>2</sup> when the prophet Nātān confronted<sup>1</sup> him in regard to his having had sex<sup>2</sup> with Baṭ-šeḃa‘.

## Invocation

<sup>3/1</sup> Be generous,<sup>3</sup> ᵊlōhîm, as is reflective of your fidelity<sup>4</sup>.  
Consistent with your deep tenderness,<sup>5</sup> erase my wrongdoings<sup>6</sup>.  
<sup>4/2</sup> Completely wash away my guilt.  
Cleanse me of my momentous sin<sup>7</sup>.

## Confession

<sup>5/3</sup> For I am aware of my wrongdoings;  
and my momentous sin confronts me always.  
<sup>6/4</sup> It is against you, and only you, that I have sinned,  
and done what you view<sup>8</sup> as evil.  
So, you are right in your pronouncement<sup>9</sup>;  
you are justified in your ruling.  
<sup>7/5</sup> Yes,<sup>10</sup> I was born in guilt.  
And, yes, in sin my mother passionately conceived<sup>11</sup> me.  
<sup>8/6</sup> But,<sup>12</sup> you value truth, however hidden,  
and make me acknowledge<sup>13</sup> what I would keep secret.<sup>14</sup>

## Plea

<sup>9/7</sup> Purify me with ᵊzôḃ,<sup>15</sup> and I’ll be clean.  
Wash me, and I’ll be white as snow.  
<sup>10/8</sup> Proclaim<sup>16</sup> joy and gladness for me  
that the body<sup>17</sup> you crushed can rejoice.  
<sup>11/9</sup> Hide your face from my sin,  
and wipe out all my guilt.  
<sup>12/10</sup> Create in me an inner purity,<sup>18</sup> ᵊlōhîm,  
and restore a fixed<sup>19</sup> determination<sup>20</sup> deep inside<sup>21</sup> me.  
<sup>13/11</sup> Do not cast me off from your presence<sup>22</sup>,  
and do not take from me your unriveled<sup>23</sup> influence<sup>24, 25</sup>.  
<sup>14/12</sup> Bing back the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain me with your generous<sup>26</sup> spirit.

## Promise

<sup>15/13</sup> I will teach the rebellious your principles  
and sinners that they should return to you.

<sup>16/14</sup> Deliver me from the guilt of spilt blood<sup>27</sup>,

'elōhîm, God who saves me.  
 I'll shout out your rectitude.  
 17/15 My Lord, open my lips  
 and my mouth will declare your renown.  
 18/16 For you do not yearn for sacrifice, that I should offer it.  
 It isn't burn offerings that you relish.  
 19/17 The sacrifices 'elōhîm wants<sup>28</sup> —a broken will<sup>29</sup>  
 and a heart, broken and beaten down—  
 'elōhîm, you will not disdain.

### *b*enediction

20/18 Gladden Şiyyôn with your favor.  
 Bolster<sup>30</sup> Y<sup>e</sup>rûšālayim's fortifications.  
 21/19 Then will you find pleasure in proper<sup>31</sup> sacrifice—  
 whole, burnt offerings.  
 Then they will offer bulls on your altar.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is Hebrew, *bô'*, “come, approach, enter,” with the preposition *'el*, “to, against.” Literally, then, “come against.”

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “having come to Baṭ-šeḇa'.”

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *hānan*. See *Excursus: Common and Significant Hebrew Words* for full discussion of this word.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *hesed*. See *Excursus: Common and Significant Hebrew Words* for full discussion of this word.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *raḥamîm*, from *rāḥam*. See *Excursus: Common and Significant Hebrew Words* for full discussion of this word.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *peša'*.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *haṭṭā't*, the intensive form of *ḥ<sup>a</sup>tā'ā*.

<sup>8</sup> Literally, “what is evil in your eyes.”

<sup>9</sup> Literally, “word, utterance.”

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *hēn*, which applies to the following line as well.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *yāḥam*, literally, “be in heat.”

<sup>12</sup> Again, Hebrew, *hēn*.

<sup>13</sup> Literally, “make me know.”

<sup>14</sup> These two lines are extremely difficult. Even the LXX shows its confusion by changing the line division in an attempt to make sense of it. As I read it, the Psalmist confesses the depth of his sin and finds, to his surprise, that God is pleased by the confession, though it be ever so dark.

<sup>15</sup> Traditional “hyssop.” The exact plant is unknown.

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *šāma*, ' in the Hiphil, “cause me to hear.”

<sup>17</sup> Literally, “bones.”

<sup>18</sup> Literally, “a clean heart.”



---

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew, *kûn*.

<sup>20</sup> Hebrew, *rûah*, “spirit, breath, disposition.”

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *qereḇ*.

<sup>22</sup> Literally, “your face.”

<sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *qōdeš*. I take this root, *qdš*, to be indicative of that which is “abnormal, unique, set apart, and other-wordly.”

<sup>24</sup> Again, Hebrew, *rûah*.

<sup>25</sup> Traditionally, “holy spirit.” But in Christian doctrine “Holy Spirit” is thought of, confusedly, as a separate yet united member of the Godhead. There is no thought of godhead here, at least in my view.

<sup>26</sup> Hebrew, *nādîḇ*.

<sup>27</sup> Literally, “blood,” in the plural, “bloods.”

<sup>28</sup> We feel the influence of the verbs of wanting and pleasure from the previous two lines extending to this line.

<sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *rûah*, traditionally, “spirit.”

<sup>30</sup> Literally, “build.”

<sup>31</sup> Hebrew, *ṣedeq*.

# Psalm 52

(edition: September 23, 2021)

<sup>1</sup> For the Music Director. A insight<sup>1</sup> of Dāwid<sup>2</sup> when Dôḗg the 'adômî went and reported to Šā'ûl and told him, "Dāwid has entered 'hîmelek's house."

*t*he destructive character of the arrogant and powerful

<sup>3/1</sup> Why do you expect commendation<sup>2</sup> for malice,<sup>3</sup> O you powerful?<sup>4</sup>—  
perpetually insulting God.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4/2</sup> Your tongue intends to bring about ruin;  
like a sharpened razor, it enacts treachery.

<sup>5/3</sup> You love badness more than goodness;  
you love<sup>6</sup> uttering falsehood more than truth.<sup>7</sup>

*selâ*

<sup>6/4</sup> You love every destructive<sup>8</sup> word,  
O deceitful tongue.

*E*xecration of the arrogant and powerful

<sup>7/5</sup> But God will obliterate you for good.<sup>9</sup>  
He will take hold of you and rip you from your dwelling.  
He will uproot you from the land of the living.

*Selâ*

<sup>8/6</sup> The just<sup>10</sup> will see it and be awestruck.  
They will scoff at the "great one"<sup>11</sup> saying<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9/7</sup> "You see, this is the one who did not rely on 'ēlōhîm for strength  
but trusted in his own great wealth  
and remained firm in his desire for ruin."<sup>13</sup>

*b*enediction

<sup>10/8</sup> But I am like a luxuriant olive tree in 'ēlōhîm's house.<sup>14</sup>  
I trust in 'ēlōhîm's reliability<sup>15</sup> always and forever.

<sup>11/9</sup> I will praise you forever because of what you have done,  
and will express hope in your excellent character;  
doing so openly before those devoted<sup>16</sup> to you.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew, *maskîl*.

<sup>2</sup> This is the hithpael imperfect of *hālal*.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *rā'â*.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *gibbôr*. According to *TDOT*, "the emphasis lies on power and strength, and frequently also on excellence and superiority, as well as on greater strength... A *gebher*, and even more a *gibbor* (intensive form), has specific noteworthy characteristics that someone else has to a lesser degree or not at all.... Thus *gbr* can mean "to be prominent," "to play a (the primary) role," "to be important," "to have significance," "to be of use or to be distinguished," "to exceed," "to win the victory," etc.,

---

“... *gibbor*, with the doubling of the middle radical, is an intensive form, and thus means a particularly strong or mighty person who carries out, can carry out, or has carried out great deeds, and surpasses others in doing so. Therefore, the usual translation is “hero,” especially in military activities. But it can also be used in a broader sense to refer to any special degree of physical might, power, authority, and splendor (“glory”)...

“Anyone who is exceptionally important or powerful in some field is a *gibbor*,

“Sometimes *gibbor* is used to denote the most eminent and leading man in an official vocation.”

*NIDOTTE* notes that “The Arab. *ġabbār* means all-powerful... The word is sometimes used of those occupying a preeminent position.”

A *gibbor*, then, is one who carries weight in society. They are looked up to and their example is emulated because of some perceived superiority. They are given and hold positions of leadership and preeminence among their peers.

<sup>5</sup> This reading is after the LXX and understands *ḥesed* to come from *ḥesed* II rather than *ḥesed* I.

<sup>6</sup> The verb, *'āhab* is carried over from the first line to the second.

<sup>7</sup> This is Hebrew, *šedeq*.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *bela' I*, literally, it seems, “to swallow, devour.”

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *neṣaḥ*, “in perpetuity.”

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *šaddîq*.

<sup>11</sup> Literally, “him.” The subject continues to be the character and fortune of the *gibbôr*—the arrogant big man from verse 3.

<sup>12</sup> This “saying,” is not found in the text, but I understand the next verse to be the words of those who scoff at those who suppose themselves to be powerful.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *hawwâ*. This word can mean “desire.” It can also mean “destruction,” “ruin.” Is this an example where the poet wants the reader to think of both meanings at the same time?

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *bayit I*. Literally, “house,” often “temple” in reference to Yahweh. But, “house” can also refer to “dynasty” or “kingdom” as in “the house of David.”

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *ḥesed II*.

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *ḥāsîd*.

# Psalm 53

(edition: September 30, 2021)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Music Director. According to māḥ<sup>a</sup>lat.<sup>1</sup> An insight<sup>2</sup> of Dāwid.*

*the psalmist's assessment of the state of affairs*

<sup>2/1</sup> The<sup>3</sup> defiantly self-centered<sup>4</sup> thinks to himself<sup>5</sup>,  
“‘ēlohîm is not to be considered.”<sup>6</sup>  
They are a corrupting influence<sup>7</sup>. They are loathsomely unjust.  
They do nothing good.

*‘ēlohîm's assessment of the state of affairs*

<sup>3/2</sup> ‘ēlohîm looked down from the heavens  
upon humankind<sup>8</sup>  
to determine, “Are there any in possession of knowledge;  
any<sup>9</sup> who consult<sup>10</sup> ‘ēlohîm?”  
<sup>4/3</sup> The whole lot of them<sup>11</sup> had rebelled;<sup>12</sup>  
as one, they had become morally tainted.<sup>13</sup>  
There were none among them who did good.  
None! Not even one!<sup>14</sup>

*‘ēlohîm's response to the state of affairs*

<sup>5/4</sup> Do they not understand, those who act cruelly—<sup>15</sup>  
as if they were eating some common bread, they devour those I love<sup>16</sup>—  
that it is ‘ēlohîm, himself, that they fail to acknowledge<sup>17</sup>?  
<sup>6/5</sup> This is why<sup>18</sup> they tremble dreadfully, when there had been no dread before:  
because ‘ēlohîm will scatter the bones<sup>19</sup> of those who besiege you;  
they are thwarted because ‘ēlohîm has rejected them.

*benediction: lesson drawn from ‘ēlohîm's response*

<sup>7/6</sup> Who will provide Yiśrā’ēl deliverance from Şiyyôn?  
‘ēlohîm, when he returns his exiled people.  
Ya ‘aqōb will rejoice.  
Yiśrā’ēl will express gladness.

---

<sup>1</sup> Assumed to be a musical notation of unknown nature. As usual, I leave it untranslated.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *maškîl*.

<sup>3</sup> Verses 2-6a are nearly identical to those found in 14.<sup>1b-51</sup>

<sup>4</sup> According to *TDOT*, “The etymology of the root *nbl* is problematic and has not been accounted for satisfactorily. Its basic meaning is disputed and translations have varied, beginning with the *LXX* and

---

Vulgate” (Vol. \*, p. \*) This is most unfortunate, given that the meditation found in this Psalm all begins with the consideration of the *nbl*.

According to *NIDOTTE*, “נבל and its cognates in the OT refer to one who acts foolishly in a moral or religious sense, breaking social orders or behaving treacherously towards God” (Vol. \*, p. \*). Several passages do have this type of societal focus. Our “degenerate” intentionally produces disturbances in others’ lives and in the societal makeup.

Today, we think of the ‘fool,’ as one who is mentally or intellectually deficient in some way. When you used it derisively, we usually mean that someone is “stupid.” Hence, my reluctance to translate the Hebrew word in this way. Jeremiah identifies one who “getteth riches, and not by right” (17.<sup>11</sup>) as a *nāḅal*. It should be clear that those who “getteth riches” are rarely intellectually deficient. In fact, they are often quite gifted, even if the giftedness is of dubious character. The man, Nabal, who acted so callously and ungratefully toward David, had become quite wealthy. Clearly, he was a gifted businessman. But he would not be bound by obligations to others. He owed no one anything. He had only himself to thank for his success. It is this unwillingness to experience and flout obligation to other individuals or to the customs of society that makes one a fool.

When we think of “defiance,” we usually think of rebelliousness. I use “defiant” to indicate a specific kind of rebelliousness. “The underlying notion of *defy* is of the renunciation of allegiance. It comes via Old French *defier* from a Vulgar Latin *disfidare* ‘renounce one’s faith,’ a compound verb formed from the prefix *dis-*, denoting reversal, and Latin *fidus* ‘trusting’” (*Dictionary of Word Origins*, John Ayto). Such defiance flows from self-absorption.

<sup>5</sup> Literally, “says in his heart.”

<sup>6</sup> Atheism is extraordinarily scarce in the ancient world. It seems unlikely that the “troublemaker” is here denying the existence of God. Rather, it seems to me that he is more likely to be denying God’s interest or involvement in the troublemaker’s deeds or the harm they do. It may be best to understand it as the ancient way of saying that there is no accountability.

<sup>7</sup> Literally, “they are corrupting.”

<sup>8</sup> Literally, “the sons of men.”

<sup>9</sup> The question posed in the proceeding line continues in this one.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *dāraš*, “to seek, inquire of.”

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *hakkōl*. This is an intensification of our normal “all,” *kōl*.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *sûr*.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *’ālah*.

<sup>14</sup> Micah 7.<sup>2-3</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *’āwen*. In our discussion in *Excursus: Common and Significant Hebrew Words*, we note that this word most often involves the improper use of power for the purposes of harming. We considered translating “who act violently.” Unfortunately, our society today has a twisted idea of “violence,” which too often involves only physical violence. Our unenlightened society understand the young man who pistol whips a victim to be violent, but does not call the business man who extorts, “violent.” This is lamentable, foolish, and dangerous. Thus, I avoided the word and idea surrounding “violence.”

<sup>16</sup> Literally, “my people.” Hebrew, *’am*, often has a sense of community and kinship, a sense of belonging.

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *qārā’* I. “The root *qr*’ occurs in all Semitic languages but Ethiopic; it encompasses a range of meanings from “cry, call, summon, invite, pray, read, recite” to “sing” or (Middle Hebrew) “crow.” The basic meaning could be identified with loud speech. In Akkadian the root is represented by *qerû(m)*,

---

Assyr. *qarā'u(m)*, “invite” (human beings or gods), “summon” (e.g., to battle), “call away” (in death)” (TDOT, Vol. \*, p. \*).

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *šām*, literally “there, then.” “There” is the place where they are. The place where they are is the place where they do not perceive that the harm perpetrated upon their fellow men, in particular the innocent, is a harm perpetrated upon God. When the knowledge of this finally comes to them, it will send shock waves through the evil doers.

<sup>19</sup> I.e. “defeat and kill.”

# Psalm 54

(edition: april 28, 2022)

<sup>1</sup> For the Music Director. A *Maskil* belonging to *Dāwid*. <sup>2</sup>When the *Zîpî* came and informed<sup>1</sup> *Šā`ûl*,  
“Isn’t *Dāwid* hiding among us?”

## Complaint

<sup>3</sup>     ʿēlōhîm, deliver me because of who you are<sup>2</sup>.  
      Take up my case with your unmatched power<sup>3</sup>.  
<sup>4</sup>     ʿēlōhîm, respond to my prayer.  
      Hear the words of my mouth;  
<sup>5</sup>     for those hostile to me rise against me.  
      Those who seek my life are alarmingly powerful<sup>4</sup>.  
      They pay ʿēlōhîm no attention<sup>5</sup>.

*Selâ*

*ʿēlōhîm responds to the complaint*

<sup>6</sup>     Witness<sup>6</sup> how ʿēlōhîm comes to my aid!  
      My Lord, in support of me!  
<sup>7</sup>     Turn upon my adversaries their own maliciousness<sup>7</sup>.  
      In your trustworthiness, annihilate them.

*the psalmist’s gratitude for ʿēlōhîm’s response*

<sup>8</sup>     Free of compulsion,<sup>8</sup> I will offer you sacrifice.  
      I will laud your character, YHWH, for it is excellent.  
<sup>9</sup>     For he has delivered me from all adversaries<sup>9</sup>,  
      and my own eyes have discerned what has come upon my enemies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “said.”

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “through your name.” When one utters a name, one sees a face and calls up fundamental characteristics and the very essence of the individual named. As so often, I understand God’s “name” as a metonym for his character.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *gebûrâ*.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *ʿārîṣ*.

<sup>5</sup> Literally, “they do not set God before them.”

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *hinnēh*.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *hāra* ‘, “the evil.” The definite article identifies the evil as specific. It is not simply a generic evil that will return to them, but “the specific evil” that they planned for the Psalmist.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *n<sup>e</sup>dābâ*, “free will offering.”

<sup>9</sup> From Hebrew, *ṣārar II*.

# Psalm 55

(edition: may 28, 2022)

<sup>1</sup>*For the Music Director. A Maskil belonging to Dāwid.*

## *Invocation*

- 2/1 Hear, 'ēlōhîm, my prayer.  
Do not ignore<sup>1</sup> my plea for favor.  
3/2 Give me your attention and answer me.

## *The psalmist's plight*

- 4/3 My thoughts wander, and I am confused  
because of the uproar<sup>2</sup> of the enemy;  
before the crush of the ungodly<sup>3</sup>.  
They batter<sup>4</sup> me with abuse  
and, rage filled, they hate me.  
5/4 My heart palpitates<sup>5</sup> in my chest<sup>6</sup>  
as the terrors of death come crashing down on me.  
6/5 A fearful trembling<sup>7</sup> comes upon me  
and writhing<sup>8</sup> takes over<sup>9</sup> me.

## *The psalmist's desire for relief*

- 7/6 Then I think,<sup>10</sup> O that one would give me wings like a dove  
that I might fly away and abide in peace.  
8/7 Truly, I would fly far away.  
I would remain in an unpopulated place<sup>11</sup>.  
9/8 I would rush to my sheltered place  
away from the rushing winds of the violent storm.

*Selâ*

## *The nature of the ordeal*

- 10/9 Muffle,<sup>12</sup> my Lord, rip apart their allegations<sup>13</sup>,  
for I witness the violent punitiveness<sup>14</sup> that is in the city.  
11/10 Twenty-four-seven,<sup>15</sup> it<sup>16</sup> envelopes the city<sup>17</sup>.  
And inside the city is abuse induced misery<sup>18</sup>.  
12/11 It is filled<sup>19</sup> with craven desire<sup>20</sup>  
while oppression and deception never leave its public squares.

## *The added tragedy of the ordeal*

- 13/12 But, it isn't an enemy who belittles<sup>21</sup> me—  
this I could bear—  
or someone who has hated me who promotes<sup>22</sup> himself over me—  
then I could hide from him—



14/13 but, you, a man of my same rank,  
 my friend, and one whom I knew well,  
 15/14 with whom, together, I<sup>23</sup> enjoyed sweet companionship<sup>24</sup>,  
 with whom, together, I walked among the worshippers<sup>25</sup> in 'ēlōhîm's temple.

*Imprecation and hope*

16/15 Let death come upon them;  
 may they descend into hell while still alive  
 because multiply evils<sup>26</sup> are deeply imbedded<sup>27</sup> in their homes.,  
 17/16 As for me, I will call upon 'ēlōhîm  
 and YHWH will deliver me.  
 18/17 Evening, morning, and mid-day I will lament<sup>28</sup> and moan  
 and He will hear my voice.  
 19/18 “Restore<sup>29</sup> peace to me from the hostility against me;  
 for they are many who are against me.”<sup>30</sup>

*Imprecation and grievance*

20/19 God will hear,  
 and he who exists from eternity will humble them<sup>31</sup>  
 for whom there is no relenting<sup>32</sup>  
 and who will not reverence 'ēlōhîm.  
 21/20 He exploited<sup>33</sup> his power<sup>34</sup> against those at peace with him.  
 He betrayed<sup>35</sup> his bond.  
 22/21 His words<sup>36</sup> were supportive<sup>37</sup>,  
 but hostility lurked within.  
 His utterances<sup>38</sup> seemed harmless<sup>39</sup>,  
 but they were a menacing weapon.

*selâ*

*benediction*

23/22 Give your worries<sup>40</sup> to YHWH, and he will uphold you.  
 He will never allow the innocent to falter.  
 24/23 But you, 'ēlōhîm, will cast them down into the deepest of pits.  
 The violent and deceitful will not live a normal life span<sup>41</sup>.  
 As for me, I will rely upon you.

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “hide yourself.”

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *qôl*, “voice,” “sound,” “noise.”

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *rāšā'*.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *môṭ*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *hîl*.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *qereb*, literally, “in my midst.”

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *yir'â w'ra'ad*. I take this to be a hendiadys.

---

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *pallāšûṭ* (verb, *pālaš*). The meaning is uncertain. There is Hebrew *palaš*, which means “to roll about in mourning” (See *HALOT*, Vol. 3, p. 935).

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *kāsâ*, “to cover.”

<sup>10</sup> Literally, “said.” But there is no reason to think he is speaking to anyone.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *miḏbār*. Traditionally, “wilderness,” this an arid or semi-arid place where grazing is possible, but farming is difficult or impossible. But, here, the Psalmist is not interested in the location for its whether, but for its solitude. Here, the Psalmist will not have to deal with humans or their bad, abusive behavior.

<sup>12</sup> There is little agreement as to whether there is just one root, *bl’*, or two, or even three. The most common meaning is to “swallow,” “gulp down.” This is often used as a metaphor for destructive actions and occurrences that bring an end or threaten to bring an end to something or someone. The LXX went with *katapontizo*, “throw into the sea,” “sink,” “drown.”

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *lāšôn*, “tongue.” As another example of metonymy, we understand the tongue to stand for “speech.” But to simply translate the word here as, “speech” will not do. For it is clear that the speech is of a particular type. It is speech offered in litigation as the next line makes clear.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *ḥāmās w<sup>e</sup>rîb*. Again, I take the two nouns to be a hendiadys.

<sup>15</sup> Literally, “day and night.”

<sup>16</sup> The verb, *sāḥab*, is in the third person masculine plural. I understand the subject to be the two nouns, *ḥāmās w<sup>e</sup>rîb*, from the previous line. However, having understood the two nouns as a hendiadys representing a single idea, I have translated *sāḥab* in the singular.

<sup>17</sup> Literally, “walls.”

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *’āwen w<sup>e</sup>’āmāl*. The city is surrounded by and filled with a debilitating punitiveness and abuse.

<sup>19</sup> Literally, “in the midst of it.”

<sup>20</sup> Hebrew, *hawwâ I*.

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *ḥārap*.

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *gāḏal* in the Hiphil. The root has the basic meaning of “great.” “*gdl* never means greatness of number, but always greatness of dimension and size. When it is used in connection with a collective concept (e.g., *goy*, ‘nation’), *gdl* does not primarily convey the idea of a large number, but the greatness and extent of the entire unit envisioned” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x). According to *TDOT*, “The scale of possible nuances of meaning extends all the way from literal-dimensional size (e.g., a great stone) to a figurative-abstract concept of greatness (e.g., great joy). In trying to determine the meaning of *gdl* in a specific context, we must not only keep in mind the wide variety of nuances that this word may have, but also its function in the syntactical structure of the sentence or the adjoining unit of speech” (Vol. x, p. x).

In the Hiphil it often has the idea of “boasting.” “The intrinsically transitive Hiphil of *gdl* [as here] always means ‘to set oneself forth as great illegally, presumptuously, and arrogantly, to boast, to triumph over (‘al) others’” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x).

<sup>23</sup> This verb, along the one in the following line, is singular plural. But the singular is necessary for a better English translation.

<sup>24</sup> Hebrew, *sôd*. LXX translated, *édesmátos*, “prime meat,” “delicacies.”

<sup>25</sup> Hebrew, *regeš*, literally, “the noisy crowd.”

<sup>26</sup> Hebrew, *rā’â*, is in the plural.

<sup>27</sup> Hebrew, *qereḇ*, literally, “in the midst of.”

---

<sup>28</sup> Hebrew, *šîyah*. This word has occasioned much discussion. Even after all that, its exact meaning is uncertain. It seems to cover a range from “muse” to “talk to oneself” to “speak” to “complain.” From “meditation” to “lament.”

<sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *pādâ*. By emending the text, changing only vowels, I read the verb in the imperative and take this and the following line as a direct quotation of part of the Psalmist’s prayer.

<sup>30</sup> The wide variety of differing translations is indicative of the difficulty of this verse. Really, for both this and the following verse, the most truthful translation is no translation at all. Just, . . .

<sup>31</sup> With the Hebrew text being corrupted as it is, and with the English translations differing so radically as they do, I did what I seldom do and simply relied on the LXX.

<sup>32</sup> Hebrew, *halîpâ*, literally, “changing.”

<sup>33</sup> Hebrew, *šâlah*, literally, “send out, stretched.”

<sup>34</sup> Literally, “hand.”

<sup>35</sup> Hebrew, *hâlâl*, “to defile, profane, break, dissolve.”

<sup>36</sup> Literally, “mouth,” here, through metonymy, used for the words the mouth speaks.

<sup>37</sup> Literally, “smooth as butter.”

<sup>38</sup> Literally, “words.”

<sup>39</sup> Literally, “thin as oil.”

<sup>40</sup> Hebrew, *yehâb*. “The LXX interprets the word to mean ‘anxious care,’” *mérimva*.

<sup>41</sup> Literally, “will not half their days.”

# Psalm 56

(edition: august 4, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> For the Director. *‘al-yonaṭ ‘êlem r<sup>e</sup>ḥōqîm. Belonging to Dāwîd. A miktām. When the P<sup>e</sup>lištîm seized him in Gaṭ.*

*P*lea, complaint, and confession of trust

<sup>2/1</sup> Have pity<sup>1</sup> on me, ‘êlōhîm.  
Although<sup>2</sup> it is a mere mortal<sup>3</sup> that vigorously pursues<sup>4</sup> me.  
the attacker<sup>5</sup> inexorably<sup>6</sup> closes in<sup>7</sup> on me.  
<sup>3/2</sup> Always,<sup>8</sup> my foes energetically pursue me.  
Indeed, they are many who are hostile<sup>9</sup> to me, having the advantage.<sup>10</sup>  
<sup>4/3</sup> Whenever I find myself intimidated<sup>11</sup>,  
I will turn trustingly<sup>12</sup> to You.

*R*efrain

<sup>5/4</sup> It is in ‘êlōhîm, whose word I extol;  
it is in ‘êlōhîm that I find security<sup>13</sup>.  
I will not be afraid of what anybody<sup>14</sup> might do.

*C*omplaint and plea

<sup>6/5</sup> Always, words are used to bring me pain.<sup>15</sup>  
All their plans are aimed<sup>16</sup> at harming.  
<sup>7/6</sup> They secretly cause strife.<sup>17</sup>  
They keep watch on me, hoping<sup>18</sup> for my death<sup>19</sup>.  
<sup>8/7</sup> Because of his maliciousness, hand him over to misfortune<sup>20</sup>.  
Angrily cast down such people, ‘êlōhîm.

*C*onfession of trust

<sup>9/8</sup> You have documented<sup>21</sup> my agitation<sup>22</sup>.  
Recorded<sup>23</sup> my tears on parchment<sup>24</sup>.  
Are they not written in Your book?  
  
<sup>10/9</sup> My enemies will fall back in retreat  
when I call out.  
This I know, because ‘êlōhîm is on my side<sup>25</sup>.

*R*efrain

<sup>11/10</sup> It is in ‘êlōhîm, whose word I extol;  
it is in YHWH, whose word I extol;  
<sup>12/11</sup> it is in ‘êlōhîm that I find security.  
I will not be afraid of what any human being<sup>26</sup> might do.

*Gratitude and the fulfilling of an obligation*

13/12 The commitment<sup>27</sup> You placed upon me, 'ēlōhîm,  
I will fulfill: a thank offering<sup>28</sup> to You  
14/13 Because You have delivered me<sup>29</sup> from death,  
delivered<sup>30</sup> my footsteps from stumbling,  
I go on living<sup>31</sup> in 'ēlōhîm's presence,  
In the light of the living.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew, *hānan*.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *kî*.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, 'enôš.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *šā'ap*. There is uncertainty about this word, even extending to the question of whether there is one or two roots. Translations vary widely: “swallow” (KJV), “hot pursuit” (NIV), “persecute” (New JPS Tanakh), “lie in wait” (Weiner), “harass” (Terrien), “tramples” (Alter), etc. Whatever it is, it is not good for the Psalmist. I am generally persuaded that the word is onomatopoeic. It represents the sound of heavy breathing. The two best possibilities seem to be that the heavy breathing is the result of exertion or of desire. While the second is not out of the question, the following parallel line leads me to lean in the direction of the first.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *lāham*.

<sup>6</sup> Literally, “all the day.” If the enemy just keeps closing in, closing in, closing, it feels unstoppable.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *lāhaš*, literally, “to squeeze, press, oppress.”

<sup>8</sup> Again, “all the day.”

<sup>9</sup> Again, Hebrew, *lāham*.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *mārôm*. Once more, there is wide divergence in translating this final word of the line. Perhaps most common is the tendency to see this as a direct address to God, “the High One.” Yet, this is without parallel. Next commonly, it is understood as “proudly, arrogantly.” Not impossible. LXX translates, *hýpsos*. I have been unable to find an example of this Greek word being used negatively in any sense, including the sense of arrogance. To me, it seems best to read “from a height.” In battle, whoever holds the high ground holds the advantage.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *yârê'*.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *bāṭah*.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *bāṭah*. Also, in verse 12. “The derivatives of the root *bṭḥ* first of all have the meaning ‘to feel secure, be unconcerned,’ or specifying the reason for the security, ‘to rely on something or someone’” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x). Notwithstanding the LXX’s translation of *elpízein*, “hope, trust,” I have translated as I have here because of the line that follows. But “it is in 'ēlōhîm that I place my trust” is by no means out of the question.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *bāšār*., “literally, “flesh, meat.”

<sup>15</sup> The line is a difficult one, as can be seen from the many and varied translations.

<sup>16</sup> Literally, “against me.”

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *gûr* II.

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *qāwâ*.

---

<sup>19</sup> Literally, “my soul.”

<sup>20</sup> Literally, “to it.” But, the “it” can be understood as his own maliciousness. But the line is very difficult, as, again, the wide variety of translations demonstrate.

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *sāpar*.

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *nōd*. “The vb. נָדַד, signif[ies] oscillation, a movement back and forth...” (*NIDOTTE*, Vol. x, p. x). Again, the translations vary wildly due to the uncertainty of the meaning. LXX translated, *zōē*, “life, manner of life.”

<sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *śim*, “put, set.”

<sup>24</sup> Literally, “skin.” Often read as “water bag/ bottle” made from animal skin, I understand it, here, to be parchment made of animal skin. This makes for a tight parallelism with the preceding line.

<sup>25</sup> Literally, “for me.”

<sup>26</sup> Hebrew, *’ādām*.

<sup>27</sup> Hebrew, *nēder*, traditionally, “vow.”

<sup>28</sup> Hebrew, *tôdâ*.

<sup>29</sup> Literally, “my soul.”

<sup>30</sup> I apply the verb from the previous line to this one.

<sup>31</sup> Hebrew, *hālāk*, literally, “walk.” It often has this metaphorical meaning. The enduring sense comes from the Hithpael form in which it is found here.

# Psalm 57

(edition: july 15, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Director. 'al-tašhēt. Belonging to Dāwīd. A miktām. When he fled from Šā'ûl into the cave.*

*ρ*<sup>lea</sup>

<sup>2/1</sup> Have pity on me, 'ēlōhîm.  
Have pity on me when I<sup>1</sup> come to You for refuge  
and take refuge in the shade of Your wings  
until the danger<sup>2</sup> has pasted.

*Confession of trust*

<sup>3/2</sup> I will call out to 'ēlōhîm 'elyôn,  
to God who brings an end to what hangs over me<sup>3</sup>.  
<sup>4/3</sup> He will reach down<sup>4</sup> from heaven and deliver me;  
undermine<sup>5</sup> my vigorous pursuer<sup>6</sup>. *selâ*  
'ēlōhîm will extend<sup>7</sup> His unwavering devotion<sup>8</sup> and fidelity<sup>9</sup>.

*Complaint*

<sup>5/4</sup> My life<sup>10</sup> exists among lions.  
I lay down among those who feast on<sup>11</sup> human beings—  
their teeth a spear and arrows,  
their tongue a sharp sword.

*Refrain*

<sup>6/5</sup> Exalted above heaven, is 'ēlōhîm.  
Your majesty is above the entire world.

*Complaint*

<sup>7/6</sup> They have set a trap<sup>12</sup> for me.<sup>13</sup>  
They set<sup>14</sup> a snare<sup>15</sup> for my life<sup>16</sup>.  
The dig a pit in my path<sup>17</sup>.  
It is they who fall into it. *selâ*

*d*<sup>etermination to praise</sup>

<sup>8/7</sup> My determination<sup>18</sup> is firm, 'ēlōhîm. My determination is firm.  
I most certainly will sing<sup>19</sup>, and sing on.  
<sup>9/8</sup> My entire being<sup>20</sup> will certainly be invigorated<sup>21</sup>.  
Harp and lyre will certainly be set to vibrating.  
I will certainly so enliven the dawn.  
<sup>10/9</sup> I will praise You among the nations, my Lord.  
I sing of You among many peoples.

*Refrain*

11/10 Because Your unwavering devotion is as expansive as the heavens  
and Your fidelity as high as the clouds.

12/11 'ĕlōhîm is certainly exalted above the heavens.  
Your renown above all the world.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew, *nepeš*, traditionally, “my soul.”

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *hawwâ*.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *rōmēr 'ālâ*. Literally, “who ends on me.”

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *šâlah*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *hārap*.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *šâ'ap*. See my note at 56.<sup>2</sup>. The appearance of this word has the effect of tying this psalm together with the previous psalm.

<sup>7</sup> As in the verse's first word, this is Hebrew, *šâlah*. Our translation of this word in this verse is a good example of how versatile we must be when we translate a language such as Biblical Hebrew with its limited vocabulary into English with its more expansive vocabulary.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *hesed*.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *'emet*.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *nepeš*

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *lāhaṭ*. *Lāhaṭ* can mean to “burn, be ablaze, inflamed” first in the literal sense and then in a metaphorical sense, “passionate.” In the Piel it means “consume, devour.” *TDOT* speculates about a possible relationship with Arabic *lahata* or Akkadian *la'ātu* meaning “to swallow.” It also considers the possibility of a second root “meaning ‘act greedily.’” (Vol. x, p. x). *NIDOTTE* assumes a second root meaning “swallow, devour” (Vol. x, p. x). The LXX, as unsure as everyone else about what to make of the line, understands the Psalmist to be troubled with “poor sleep.” Our translation attempts to maintain parallelism with the preceding line.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *rešet*, literally, “net.”

<sup>13</sup> Literally, “my feet,” feet being a metonym (Synecdoche) for the person.

<sup>14</sup> We carry the verb over from the previous line.

<sup>15</sup> This translation maintains the parallelism which many translations lose. The translations, varied as they are, demonstrate the uncertainty of this line. But we note the JPS Tanakh mention that the Mishnah knows a *kefifah*, meaning “a wicker basket used in fishing.”

<sup>16</sup> Literally, “soul.”

<sup>17</sup> Literally, “before my face, in front of me.”

<sup>18</sup> Literally, “heart.”

<sup>19</sup> This verb is in the cohortative form. It should be remembered that imperative forms (second person), cohortative forms (first person), and jussive forms (third person) all have a wider nuance than simply “command.” Each can express instruction, request, invitation, and wish. They can also express assurance, which is how I take the cohortative here and the imperatives in the next verse.



---

<sup>20</sup> Hebrew, *kābôd*.

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *ʿûr*. This verb is the verb of each line of this verse. It is in the imperative form in the first two lines and in the cohortative in the third. “A survey of the use of *ʿwr* suggests that its fundamental meaning is ‘to excite, stir up,’ in the sense of ‘become/make active such that someone or something becomes and remains engaged in some activity’” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x).

# Psalm 58

(edition: October 25, 2021)

<sup>1</sup> For the Music Director. *ʾal-tašḥēt*. A *miktām* belonging to *Dāwīd*

Question posed to world leaders

<sup>2/1</sup> Do you rulers<sup>1</sup> truly decree what is just?  
Do you govern your citizenry<sup>2</sup> with equity?<sup>3</sup>

The psalmist's answer

<sup>3/2</sup> From an inner rage,<sup>4</sup> you act with injustice.  
The world over<sup>5</sup> you facilitate<sup>6</sup> violent power.<sup>7</sup>  
<sup>4/3</sup> The wicked are alienated<sup>8</sup> from conception.  
They are unmoored<sup>9</sup> right from the start,<sup>10</sup> spewing<sup>11</sup> deception.<sup>12</sup>  
<sup>5/4</sup> Their poison is like the poison of a snake.  
They are like a deaf cobra that refuses to hear.<sup>13</sup>  
<sup>6/5</sup> They will not listen to the sound of snake charmers;  
will not hear<sup>14</sup> the charm of even the gifted charmer.

Imprecation of world leaders

<sup>7/6</sup> ʾēlōhîm! Knock the fangs<sup>15</sup> out from their mouth.  
Shatter the jaws of lions, YHWH!  
<sup>8/7</sup> May they vanish away as flowing water.  
When he shoots his arrows, let them become flimsy.<sup>16</sup>  
<sup>9/8</sup> May they be like a slug that oozes away as it crawls along.  
Like a woman's miscarried fetus,<sup>17</sup> let them not see the light of day.<sup>18</sup>  
<sup>10/9</sup> May they be like a thornbush that, before<sup>19</sup> it grows<sup>20</sup> thorns  
and matures, a blazing heat blasts it.

Benediction

<sup>11/10</sup> The just will be glad when they see the wicked get their comeuppance.<sup>21</sup>  
They will immerse their feet in the blood of the wicked.  
<sup>12/11</sup> Then<sup>22</sup> one will conclude:<sup>23</sup> "To be sure the just prevail."<sup>24</sup>  
Truly there is a God who rules on earth."

---

<sup>1</sup> The text of Psalm 58 is difficult throughout, showing signs of corruption. Here, I have emended the text, as so many have and do, to read *ēlîm* rather than *ēlem*. While *ēlîm* can and usually does mean "Gods, it can be "mighty ones," as *ʾēlōhîm*, an appellation for Yahweh, means "Mighty One." I understand these "mighty ones" as societal leaders. The use of *ēlîm* rather than what might be more tradition, such as *šopēt* might be indicative of a certain sarcastic irony on the part of the Psalmist. The verb *šāpaṭ* does occur in the next line.

---

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “the children of men.” But in the context of the nations and their ruling classes, citizenry fits best.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *mēšārīm*. At its most basic level, the verb, *yāšar*, seems to mean “to be level, straight.”

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *ʾap-b<sup>e</sup>lēb*. This has traditionally been translated something like, “yea (reading *ʾap*, not unreasonably, as a particle from *ʾap* I) in or from the heart...” But, here, I understand *ʾap* to come from *ʾap II*, “wrath, anger. At the same time, “heart” is indicative of an inner feeling, mood, or thought.

<sup>5</sup> Literally, “in the earth.”

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *pālas*. The verb means to “make a path,” “clear the way.”

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *h<sup>a</sup>mas y<sup>e</sup>dēkem*, “violence of your hands.” But “hand” is often a metonym for “power” and “authority.”

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *zār*. A *zār* is a “hostile foreigner.” The wicked, then, though “homegrown” and a citizen of his or her nation, is hostile to the traditions, laws, interests, etc., of his or her own nation. They do not simply possess thoughts and engage in actions that are wrong and thus prohibited, they possess thoughts and engage in actions that do actual harm to others. They are, then, sociopaths and/or psychopaths.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *zāʾā*, “wander off, roam, go astray.” “Religiously, to go astray is to leave a point of orientation. To be lost is to be without a reference point such as might be offered by: (a) wisdom, (b) the teaching of the law, or (c) God” (*NIDOTTE*, Vol. \*, p. \*)

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *mibbeten*, “from the womb.”

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *dābar*, “speak.” But, here, the simple “speak falsehood,” would not capture the depth of the anti-social behavior. Their words are likened to the poison that a poisonous snake injects in its victim.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *kāzāb*. Such lies and falsehood are more than mere factual errors on the part of the wicked. They are an active and purposeful attempt to harm others. Such deception is currency for the violent injustice mentioned in the first two verses.

<sup>13</sup> Literally, “they stop their ears.” Cobras do not hear with ears. They “hear” through vibrations. It is doubtful that the Psalmist was aware of this. Thus, we can take the reptile’s not hearing as willful in the Psalmist’s estimation.

<sup>14</sup> Again, the verb is supplied in and carried over from the preceding line.

<sup>15</sup> Literally, “teeth.” But, here, the Psalmist continues his snake simile, even though in the next line, he shifts to the similes of a lion. In fact, the Psalmist shifts from one simile to another as he seeks to express his contempt for the world’s wicked leaders.

<sup>16</sup> The line is difficult, if not impossible. Since the days of LXX, various emendations have been proposed. There is no synthetic line of poetry to assist us. From line to line, the Psalmist jumps from one unrelated simile to another as he utters execrations upon unjust rulers. Though the Hebrew is difficult, it seems clear that the Psalmist’s ask that the arrows shot by wicked rulers will be ineffectual in some way. I understand the request to be that the arrows, when shot, will lose their rigidity and become flimsy so that they cannot penetrate their target. “Make the arrows like ‘wet noodles.’” But, I’ll not be dogmatic about this imagery and will be happy to see other possible solutions.

<sup>17</sup> The Hebrew is simply, “miscarriage.”

<sup>18</sup> Literally, “the sun.”

<sup>19</sup> Once more, we are confronted with two most difficult lines of poetry. My translation represents an educated guess.

<sup>20</sup> Literally, “knows.”

<sup>21</sup> The Hebrew is simple, “when they see vengeance.”

---

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *w<sup>e</sup>*.

<sup>23</sup> Literally, “say.”

<sup>24</sup> This is literally, “fruit belongs to the just.” But “fruit” is often used metaphorically for prosperity, success, or reward. The preceding lines make it clear that the “success” the just enjoy is that of triumph over the wicked so well described in this Psalm.

# Psalm 59

(edition: july 26, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Music Director. ʾal-tašhēt. A miktām belonging to Dāwīd. When Šāʾûl sent and they watched his house to kill him.*

Ⲁlea and complaint

<sup>2/1</sup> Liberate<sup>1</sup> me from my enemies, YHWH.  
Protect<sup>2</sup> me from those who rise up against me.  
<sup>3/2</sup> Liberate<sup>3</sup> me from those who practice aggression<sup>4</sup>.  
Rescue me from violent individuals<sup>5</sup>.  
<sup>4/3</sup> Just look<sup>6</sup> how they ambush me<sup>7</sup>;  
how the mighty oppose<sup>8</sup> me,  
not for any disloyalty or crime<sup>9</sup> on my part, YHWH!  
<sup>5/4</sup> Without cause for offense<sup>10</sup>, they attack<sup>11</sup> steadfastly<sup>12</sup>.  
Wake up and look at what I am confronting<sup>13</sup>!  
<sup>6/5</sup> But You, YHWH, ʾElohîm Šebāʾôt, Yîsrāʾêlʾs God,  
wake up to recompense every hostile alliance<sup>14</sup>.  
Show no favor to any who plot<sup>15</sup> aggression<sup>16</sup>.

*selâ*

Ⲣrefrain

<sup>7/6</sup> They reappear<sup>17</sup> in the evening. They snarl<sup>18</sup> like dogs.  
They roam the city.  
<sup>8/7</sup> They foam<sup>19</sup> at the mouth,  
daggers<sup>20</sup> between their lips.  
But who is paying attention<sup>21</sup>?

Ⲁmprecation

<sup>9/8</sup> But You, YHWH, make sport of<sup>22</sup> them.  
You scoff<sup>23</sup> at all hostile alliances<sup>24</sup>.  
<sup>10/9</sup> His strength! I wait for You,  
for YHWH is my unassailable stronghold<sup>25</sup>.  
<sup>11/10</sup> My unwaveringly devoted<sup>26</sup> God will shield<sup>27</sup> me,  
ʾElohîm putting the fear of me<sup>28</sup> on my enemies.  
<sup>12/11</sup> You shouldn't disappear<sup>29</sup> them, lest my people be oblivious.<sup>30</sup>  
Exercising your strength, you should turn them into rootless refugees<sup>31</sup>,  
and lay them prostrate, our battle shield, our Lord.  
<sup>13/12</sup> Their offensive<sup>32</sup> mouths, their lip's utterances!  
They are captives of their own hubris.  
They proclaim cursedness and nihilism<sup>33</sup>.  
<sup>14/13</sup> Bring an end to these<sup>34</sup>. Bring an end, and let them be no more!  
By this they will understand that ʾElohîm rules in Yaʿaqōb,  
and to earth's ends.

## Refrain

15/14 They reappear in the evening. They snarl like dogs.  
They roam the city.<sup>35</sup>

16/15 They wander about for food<sup>36</sup>.  
When they remain unsatisfied, they wander all night<sup>37</sup>.

## Praise

17/16 But as for me, I will sing of Your power.  
I will shout exultantly of Your unwavering devotion from the break of day,  
because You are my unassailable stronghold<sup>38</sup>  
and my place of refuge<sup>39</sup> whenever<sup>40</sup> I am under duress<sup>41</sup>.

18/17 My strength! I will sing praise to You,  
because <sup>E</sup>lōhîm is my unassailable stronghold,  
my unwaveringly devoted God.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew, *nāṣal*.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *sāgab*. While the root has the basic meaning of “be high,” high places are associated with safety and protection. See *TDOT* for discussion of this slide from “be high” to “protect” in the Piel.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *yāša’*.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *’āwen*.

<sup>5</sup> Literally, “men of blood.”

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *kî hinnēh*.

<sup>7</sup> Literally, “my soul.”

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *gûr II*. I am of a mind that *gûr I* (“be a foreigner”), *gûr II* (“attack”), and *gûr III* (“be afraid”) are all of one piece, foreigners inducing fear and being seen as hostile to national interests.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *ḥaṭṭā’*, traditionally, “sin.”

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *’āwôn*.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *rûṣ*.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *kûn*, “to be firm, steadfast, set.”

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *qârâ’*.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *gôy*. “...the primary meaning of the Heb. *goy* as ‘people’ is fully assured, but it remains unclear to what extent the principle of identification is based on political, territorial, or gentile consideration...

“... it remains true that Hebrew evidences a tendency for *goy* to describe a people in terms of its political and territorial affiliation, and so to approximate much more closely to our modern term “nation.” (*TDOT*, Vol. x. p. x).

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *bāgad*.

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *’āwen*, as in verse 3.

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *šûb*.

---

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *hâmâ*.

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew, *nāba* ‘. This is literally “to flow,” but we all can easily understand what a “flow” from a threatening dog is.

<sup>20</sup> Hebrew, *ḥereb*.

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *šāma* ‘.

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *šāḥaq*.

<sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *lā* ‘*ag*.

<sup>24</sup> See note in verse 6.

<sup>25</sup> Hebrew, *mišgāb*.

<sup>26</sup> Hebrew, *ḥesed*.

<sup>27</sup> Hebrew, *qāḏam*, “literally, “be in front of me.” I take this to mean that God stands in front of and between him and his enemies.

<sup>28</sup> Translations of this line vary greatly. Many supply additional vocabulary, as does the KJV: “let me see my desire...; “let me look in triumph...” (OTL; ESL; similarly, NASB); “grant me sight of my foes’ defeat” (Alter). Others go farther afield: “let me gloat over...” (JPS Tanakh and similarly, NIV); “enable me to defy...” (Terrien).

My solution is only slightly more daring. I emend the text to the root *yr*’, “fear” understanding the Lord’s positioning of Himself in front of the Psalmist to induce fear of him. The Psalmist will not be the push over that the attackers had thought.

<sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *hārag*, literally, “kill, slay, destroy.” Here, the idea is that rather than being out of sight and out of mind through death, they should be alive and visible as they suffer the consequences of their wickedness.

<sup>30</sup> Hebrew, *šākaḥ*, “forget,” but forgetful, not in the loss of memory, but in the loss of appreciation and understanding.

<sup>31</sup> Hebrew, *nūa* ‘. Just as Cain, who served as a warning to others.

<sup>32</sup> Hebrew, *ḥaṭṭā* ‘*t*.

<sup>33</sup> Hebrew, *kaḥaš*. “...we find an ambivalent meaning basic to the semantic content of the word group; the ambivalence can usually be expressed by the two translations ‘say [or ‘bring about’] that something is not’ and ‘not say [or ‘bring about’] that something is.’ Both meanings probably coexisted from the beginning as inversive functions. From them developed more specific meanings: (1) ‘deny (the truth of something)... (2) ‘deny, be false to’” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x).

<sup>34</sup> Not the people (see verse 12), but their curses and nihilism.

<sup>35</sup> The verse is exactly the same as verse 7

<sup>36</sup> Literally, “the wander about to eat.”

<sup>37</sup> Literally, “they spend the night.” I have brought the idea of wondering for food from the previous line to this one.

<sup>38</sup> Hebrew, *mišgāb*.

<sup>39</sup> Hebrew, *mānôš*.

<sup>40</sup> Literally, “in the day of”

<sup>41</sup> Hebrew, *šar*.

# psalm 60

(edition: august 2, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Director. ʾal-šūšan ʿēdūt. A miktām belonging to Dāwīd for instruction. <sup>2</sup>When he fought <sup>A</sup>ram-nah<sup>a</sup>rayim and <sup>A</sup>ram-Šôbâ, and Yô ʾāb returned after he defeated <sup>E</sup>dôm at rêʾ-melaḥ—consisting of 12 military companies<sup>1</sup>.*

## Complaint

<sup>3/1</sup> ʾE<sup>l</sup>ōhîm, You have abandoned us, breached our lines<sup>2</sup>.  
You've been enraged. Restore us!  
<sup>4/2</sup> You cause the land to tremble, split it open.  
Repair its fissures for it is roiling.  
<sup>5/3</sup> You have shown harshness to Your people.  
You have given them befuddling<sup>3</sup> wine to drink.

## Plea

<sup>6/4</sup> You have in the past provided those who reverence You a warning signal;  
hoisted a warning about archers<sup>4</sup>  
<sup>7/5</sup> so that those beloved by You might be delivered.  
Oh, may Your power save and respond to me!

## The divine response

<sup>8/6</sup> ʾE<sup>l</sup>ōhîm proclaimed from His **preeminence**<sup>5</sup>:  
“I will certainly triumph<sup>6</sup>. I will certainly take possession<sup>7</sup> of Š<sup>e</sup>kem.  
I will certainly make distribution of land in the plain of Sukkôt.  
<sup>9/7</sup> Gilʾād belongs to me. M<sup>e</sup>naššeh belongs to me.  
ʾEprayim is my principal stronghold,  
Y<sup>e</sup>hûdâ, my ruler.<sup>8</sup>  
<sup>10/8</sup> Mōʾāb is where I wash.<sup>9</sup>  
ʾEdôm is where I toss my shoes.  
P<sup>e</sup>lešet must hail me!”

## The uncertain response

<sup>11/9</sup> Who will take command<sup>10</sup> against a fortified city?  
Who will lead us against ʾE<sup>d</sup>ôm?  
<sup>12/10</sup> Isn't it You, ʾE<sup>l</sup>ōhîm, that rejects us,  
and You, ʾE<sup>l</sup>ōhîm, who will not accompany our armies?  
<sup>13/11</sup> It is He who should provide support us against the enemy,  
since human help is worthless.  
<sup>14/12</sup> It's through ʾE<sup>l</sup>ōhîm that we can act decisively<sup>11</sup>,  
and He it is who can defeat our enemies.



---

<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, “thousand.”

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “us.”

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *tar ‘ēlâ*. The verb means something like, “stagger, reel.”

<sup>4</sup> The two lines are difficult and have occasioned many different translations.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *qōdeš*.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *‘ālaz* in the cohortative, which can have the mood of insistence.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *ḥālaq*, “to apportion, divide, distribute.” But, here, this certainly means that it is His to distribute, meaning that He possesses it.

<sup>8</sup> The Hebrew is unclear. We have followed the LXX.

<sup>9</sup> Literally, “the pot of my washing.”

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *yābal*, “to lead, guide, lead forth, conduct.”

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *ḥayil*.

# psalm 61

(edition: august 10, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Music Director. Belonging to Dāwid*

Ṗlea

<sup>2/1</sup> Hear, <sup>ʿE</sup>lōhîm, my cry for help<sup>1</sup>.

Be attentive to my prayer.

<sup>3/2</sup> From the edge of earth, I call out to You, being deeply disheartened<sup>2</sup>.

Guide me into a mountain stronghold<sup>3</sup> high above me.

<sup>4/3</sup> To be sure,<sup>4</sup> You have been my refuge,  
a powerful defense<sup>5</sup> against the enemy.

<sup>5/4</sup> I wish to always find refuge<sup>6</sup> in Your temple.

May I find shelter under cover of Your wings.

*selâ*

†he plea is answered

<sup>6/5</sup> Truly, it is You, <sup>ʿE</sup>lōhîm, You who has listened to my solemn promises<sup>7</sup>;  
who has made me heir to those who reverence You<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7/6</sup> You have added time to the King’s life.<sup>9</sup>

His years are like one epoch<sup>10</sup> after another<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8/7</sup> He will sit enthroned before <sup>ʿE</sup>lōhîm for a long time<sup>12</sup>.

Unwavering devotion and fidelity will lengthen<sup>13</sup> his time.

<sup>9/8</sup> Thus, I intend to always praise<sup>14</sup> Your character<sup>15</sup>

so as to fulfill my solemn promises day after day.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew, *rinnâ*.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “when my heart is weak.”

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *ṣûr*.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *kî*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *migdāl*.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *gûr*. The verb is in the cohortative, here expressing a desire or wish. This word is usually understood as being focused on the fact that one is a foreigner. However, the foreigner is often looking for protection and security. The parallelism with the next line suggests that shelter is as elemental to the word as the idea of foreignness.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *nēder*.

<sup>8</sup> Literally, “your name.”

<sup>9</sup> Literally, “You have added days to the king’s days.”

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *dôr*, traditionally “generation.”

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *dôr wadôr*.

---

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *’ōlām*, traditionally, “forever.”

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *nāṣar*, “to keep, preserve, maintain, guard.”

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *zāmar* is in the cohortative, indicating, here, a wish, intent, or desire.

<sup>15</sup> Literally, “name.”

# psalm 62

(edition: august 30, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Director of Y<sup>e</sup> dūtūn. A hymn of Dāwid.*

†he sufficiency of god

<sup>2/1</sup> My deepest<sup>1</sup> security<sup>2</sup> is found solely<sup>3</sup> in 'Elohîm.<sup>4</sup>

My safety<sup>5</sup> comes from Him<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3/2</sup> He is my only safe refuge<sup>7</sup>;

my only<sup>8</sup> unassailable stronghold. I will not be greatly unsettled<sup>9</sup>.

†he depravity of human beings

<sup>4/3</sup> Just how far will you go in attacking others<sup>10</sup>?

You are all murderers,  
as if others are a collapsing wall;  
a wall to be shoved down.

<sup>5/4</sup> They only scheme to eradicate their<sup>11</sup> worth<sup>12</sup>.

They cherish falsehood.

Publicly<sup>13</sup>, they offer praise,

but privately<sup>14</sup>, they are contemptuous<sup>15</sup>.

*selâ*

†he sufficiency of god

<sup>6/5</sup> It is through 'Elohîm that I<sup>16</sup> must find calm<sup>17</sup>  
because my hope comes solely<sup>18</sup> from Him.

<sup>7/6</sup> He is my only safe refuge;

my only unassailable stronghold. I will not be unsettled<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>8/7</sup> My hard-earned victory<sup>20</sup> comes from 'Elohîm.

He is my strong mountain refuge.

My shelter is in 'Elohîm.

<sup>9/8</sup> A nation must trust Him at all times.

Pour out to Him all that you feel<sup>21</sup>.

'Elohîm is our shelter.

*selâ*

†he insufficiency of human beings

<sup>10/9</sup> Human beings<sup>22</sup> are simply<sup>23</sup> worthless<sup>24</sup>;  
humankind<sup>25</sup> completely<sup>26</sup> untrustworthy<sup>27</sup>.

On a weight scale, they are, combined, less than air<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>11/10</sup> Do not rely on exploitation<sup>29</sup>.

Do not crave<sup>30</sup> wealth through plunder.

Though it produces wealth<sup>31</sup>, do not commit yourself to it<sup>32</sup>.

†he sufficiency of god

12/11 First, <sup>1</sup>E<sup>1</sup>lōhîm spoke.

Second, I heard, this:

“Power belongs to <sup>1</sup>E<sup>1</sup>lōhîm.”

13/12 You, Lord, possess constancy<sup>33</sup>,

in that you compensate<sup>34</sup> individuals<sup>35</sup> to match their action.

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “my soul.”

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *dûmîyâ*. The basic idea of this word seems to be “rest” and “silence.”

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *’ak*, first word of the Hebrew line.

<sup>4</sup> Literally, “is solely in <sup>1</sup>E<sup>1</sup>lōhîm.” Our “*found* solely in <sup>1</sup>E<sup>1</sup>lōhîm” is more in line with English usage.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *yešû ’â*.

<sup>6</sup> Literally, “is from Him.” But, again, “comes from Him” is more in line with English usage.

<sup>7</sup> I translate Hebrew, *šûrî wîšû ’âfî*, as a hendiadys.

<sup>8</sup> The verse’s first word, *’ak*, carries its influence to this line as well.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *môf*.

<sup>10</sup> Literally, “a man.” By a man, the Psalmist might mean, “me.” But if they attack the Psalmist for their own ends, they likely will resort to attacking anyone if it advances their own agenda.

<sup>11</sup> Literally, “his.” This line continues to describe how some attack, murder, and devalue others.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *š’ ’êf*, “height, dignity.”

<sup>13</sup> Literally, “with his mouth.”

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *b<sup>e</sup>qirbām*, “in their midst.”

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *qālal*, in the Piel stem.

<sup>16</sup> Literally, “my soul”

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *qāmam*. The verb is in the imperative, indicating not so much “command,” but “necessity.”

<sup>18</sup> As in verse 3, the influence of the first line’s *’ak* carries over to this line.

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew, *môf*.

<sup>20</sup> I read Hebrew, *yîš ’î wuk<sup>e</sup> bôdî* as a hendiadys, “my difficult [literally, “heavy”] victory.”

<sup>21</sup> Literally, “your heart.”

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *benê- ’ādām*.

<sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *’ak*, again. Verses 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 10 all begin with this word.

<sup>24</sup> Hebrew, *hebel I*.

<sup>25</sup> Hebrew, *benê ’îš*.

<sup>26</sup> Once more, we understand the verse’s initial *’ak* to apply to this line. We understand that if one is “only” untrustworthy, they are completely untrustworthy.

---

<sup>27</sup> Hebrew, *kāzāb*. “In modern European languages, in conformity with the European tradition of philosophical ethics, ‘lie’ in the sense of ‘speak lies’ is defined as ‘saying what the speaker knows to be untrue.’ Three major elements determine the precise meaning of such ‘lying’: its predominant or exclusive association with the use of language to convey information, its primary emphasis on the act of communication, and its stress on the subject of the action. ‘Lying’ in this sense refers primarily to the discrepancy between what the speaker knows and says. It means the deliberate statement of something known to be untrue and thus belongs in the realm of ethics.

A series of observations makes it clear that identification of *kzb I* with ‘lie’ or its equivalent in modern European languages is misleading if not actually wrong. These observations suggest instead that the primary meaning of *kzb I* is ‘(objectively) deceptive, false, untrustworthy, false, worthless’” (*TDOT*, Vol. x. p. x).

<sup>28</sup> Hebrew, *hebel I*, again.

<sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *’ōšeq*. “Guttural, sibilant, and plosive constitute a phonetic matrix that probably expresses aggression by its very nature” (*TDOT*, Vol. x. p. x).

<sup>30</sup> Hebrew, *hābal*. LXX translates, *epipothēō*, “to long for, crave, desire,” which many modern translations follow.

<sup>31</sup> Hebrew, *nūb*. The line literally reads, “Though it bears fruit...” I understand the “it” to be the exploitation and plunder of the previous lines.

<sup>32</sup> Literally, “set heart.”

<sup>33</sup> Hebrew, *hesed*. Please see my discussion in “Excursus: Common and Significant Hebrew Words Found in Psalms.” Note, especially, my belief that context must always trump any servile commitment to any single translation.

<sup>34</sup> Hebrew, *šālam*, in the Piel stem.

<sup>35</sup> Hebrew, *’iš*.

# Psalm 63

(edition: September 24, 2020)

<sup>1</sup> *A Psalm belonging to David... When he was in the Y<sup>e</sup>hûdah Wilderness.*

*the psalmist's search for god*

- <sup>2/1</sup> <sup>2</sup>Y<sup>e</sup>lohîm, you are my God,  
I am always looking for you.  
The deepest part of me<sup>1</sup> thirsts for you;  
the temporal part of me<sup>2</sup> is in need of you,  
as<sup>3</sup> a parched land  
wilting for lack of water.
- <sup>3/2</sup> Thus, I gaze upon you in the Holy Place,  
to witness your strength and honor.

*the psalmist's intent and expectation*

- <sup>4/3</sup> Because your relationship<sup>4</sup> with me is more important<sup>5</sup> to me than life itself,  
I will boast of you.
- <sup>5/4</sup> Yes, I will bow the knee to you throughout my life.  
I will raise my hands to you.<sup>6</sup>
- <sup>6/5</sup> Inasmuch as you fill my being<sup>7</sup> with an abundance of the very best,<sup>8</sup>  
I<sup>9</sup> will extol you with an exultant shout.<sup>10</sup>
- <sup>7/6</sup> Whenever I think of you upon my bed,  
I will meditate upon you throughout the night.
- <sup>8/7</sup> For you are a help to me.  
I am secure<sup>11</sup> under your protection.<sup>12</sup>
- <sup>9/8</sup> Every part of me<sup>13</sup> clings to you;  
your right hand holds on to me.<sup>14</sup>

*the day of reckoning*

- <sup>10/9</sup> As for those who seek my ruin,  
they shall enter the realm of the dead.<sup>15</sup>
- <sup>11/10</sup> They will find themselves handed over to the sword-wielding hand  
to become food for a pack of wild, scavenging dogs.<sup>16</sup>
- <sup>12/11</sup> The king will rejoice in <sup>2</sup>Y<sup>e</sup>lohîm.  
He will be exuberant<sup>17</sup> who swears truthfully<sup>18</sup> by him.  
But he will be silenced<sup>19</sup> who utters falsehood.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is literally “my soul.” What I hear in the psalmist’s appeal to “my soul” is a confession of his utter, complete, and total, reliance on God. He is not divided in his commitment.

---

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “my flesh.” Just in case there is any doubt about his confession of “soul” commitment, the Psalmist doubles down with his “my flesh,” as emphasis that he is unaware of his need for and dependence upon God.

<sup>3</sup> Others have suggested before me that we read the prefix b as k, the difference being the removal of the slight tittle.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *hesed*. Much has been said about this word and I have provided an excursus dedicated to it and its meaning. It can be difficult to translate. We find, most commonly, translations such as “love,” “kindness,” “loving kindness,” “mercy,” and “grace.” Most commonly, I translate it as “fidelity.” However it is translated, all agree that it is built upon a relationship, a connection between two parties. It signifies an unfailing commitment to another and this suggests relationship.

<sup>5</sup> Literally, “better.”

<sup>6</sup> Literally, “in your name.” The bowed knee and upraised hands is, of course, the “posture” of prayer.

<sup>7</sup> Most commonly, “my soul.” I often translate it simply, “me.”

<sup>8</sup> This is literally something like “milk and fat.” It could be translated “milk in abundance.” In Isaiah 55.<sup>2</sup>, and again in Jeremiah 31.<sup>14</sup> it is associated with the goodness of the Lord and seems to imply no small portion of that goodness.

<sup>9</sup> Literally, “my mouth.”

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *renānâ*. “By associating *qôl* and *rinnâ*, Ps. 47:2 (Eng. 1) likewise emphasizes that the use of *rnn* presupposes a loud outburst” (*TDOT*, Vol. \*, p. \*). This is literally “a ringing cry,” “a loud outcry.” It is probably an onomatopoeic word.

<sup>11</sup> The word used here is the same used in verse 6, *rānan*. In is done from the shadow of God’s wing. It is impossible to not think of birds chirping loudly under their mother’s protective wing. As one imagines this scene, one can hear the ruckus raised by the nestlings. One can also see the birds as taking refuge, finding cover and protection under the mother’s wings. This is the image I see here. This is an example of translating a word according to its context rather than slavishly adhering to some lexical prescription.

<sup>12</sup> Literally, “in the shadow of your wing.”

<sup>13</sup> This is literally “my soul.” The psalmist makes confession of his utter, complete, and total, reliance on God. There is no question about who he trusts.

<sup>14</sup> This is quite the image. The Psalmist, weaker of the two, clings to Yahweh while Yahweh, the stronger, holds tight onto the Psalmist. There will be no getting to the Psalmist. He is doubly secure.

<sup>15</sup> Literally, the “depths of the earth.”

<sup>16</sup> To die without burial was considered one of the worse things that could happen. It is often viewed as an expression of God’s displeasure. God would not allow such a thing to happen to one of his favorites. To translate such passages as “cursed by God” might be too loose a translation, but the idea is certainly to be found in the event.

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *hālal II*, in the hithpael stem. The idea is close to that of being boastful. Those who speak and act truthfully through their commitment to God will not be able to contain themselves.

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew simply has “swear by him.” But, it should be obvious that if one swears by God, it is to be done truthfully. But the parallelism that exists between this and the final line of the poem makes it clear. The faithful swear truthfully while the wicked utter falsehoods.

<sup>19</sup> Literally, “his mouth will be closed.”



# psalm 64

(edition: august 30, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Director. A hymn belonging to Dāwid.*

Ṁlea in the face of plotters

<sup>2/1</sup> Hear, <sup>ʿE</sup>lōhîm, the tone<sup>1</sup> of my complaint<sup>2</sup>,  
the consequence<sup>3</sup> of my dread of the enemy. Watch over<sup>4</sup> my life!  
<sup>3/2</sup> Protect<sup>5</sup> me from the plotting of those who are malicious<sup>6</sup>;  
from the conspiracy<sup>7</sup> of those who practice aggression<sup>8</sup>,  
<sup>4/3</sup> who sharpen their tongue as if it were a sword.  
They draw their arrows, hateful<sup>9</sup> words,  
<sup>5/4</sup> intent on shooting the blameless<sup>10</sup> from ambush.  
Suddenly they fire at him, without fear.  
<sup>6/4</sup> They are committed<sup>11</sup> to the malicious<sup>12</sup> affair<sup>13</sup>.  
They secretly organize<sup>14</sup> their traps.

İnvestigation into plotters

They think,<sup>15</sup> “Who can detect<sup>16</sup> them?<sup>17</sup>  
<sup>7/6</sup>Let them conduct a thorough investigation into wrongdoing<sup>18!</sup>”<sup>19</sup>

“We have finished our investigation of the facts:<sup>20</sup>  
inside, at the core<sup>21</sup>, humans are unintelligible<sup>22</sup>.” dangerous

Ŗesults of the investigation

<sup>8/7</sup> So,<sup>23</sup> <sup>ʿE</sup>lōhîm will fire His arrows at them.  
Unexpectedly<sup>24</sup>, they are shot through<sup>25</sup>.  
<sup>9/8</sup> Their own tongue will devour<sup>26</sup> them.  
All who see them will flee from them.  
<sup>10/9</sup> And all humankind will be awestruck<sup>27</sup>,  
declare <sup>ʿE</sup>lōhîm’s deeds,  
and understand how he operates<sup>28</sup>.  
<sup>11/10</sup> The devoted will rejoice in YHWH and take refuge<sup>29</sup> in Him.  
All the sincerely upright<sup>30</sup> will boast of Him.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew, *qôl*, “voice.”

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “my tone in my complaint.”

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *min*, prefixed to *paḥad*, “dread.”

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *nāṣar*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *sāṭar*, literally, “hide.”

- 
- <sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *rā'a* .
- <sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *rigšâ*.
- <sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *'āwen*.
- <sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *mar*, literally, “bitter.”
- <sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *tām*. LXX, *ámōmos*.
- <sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *ḥāzaq*, in the Piel stem, “to strengthen, make firm, hard, rigid.”
- <sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *ra* .
- <sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *dābār*, “word, thing.”
- <sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *sāpar*, in the Piel stem.
- <sup>15</sup> Literally, “say.”
- <sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *rā'a*, literally, “see.”
- <sup>17</sup> Perhaps it is the plotters, themselves, who feel they will not be discovered, in which case we might have expected, “Who will uncover us?” Or perhaps it is the plotters’ traps that they think will go undetected. Either way, the expected results would be the same.
- <sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *'awlâ*.
- <sup>19</sup> We take this as a continuation of the quotation started in the last line of the previous verse.
- <sup>20</sup> This line is impossible as the many and vastly different translations reflect. We might translate literally, “We have finished the investigation of what is to be investigated.” We take it as the response of those who have looked into the plot. The conclusions of the investigation are found in the next line.
- <sup>21</sup> Literally, “the heart.”
- <sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *'āmōq*, literally, “deep.”
- <sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *w<sup>e</sup>*. The conjunction often wants interpreting according to the context.
- <sup>24</sup> Or, “suddenly.”
- <sup>25</sup> Hebrew, *makkâ*, literally, “wounded, struck.”
- <sup>26</sup> Hebrew, *kāšal*, “to ruin, overthrow.”
- <sup>27</sup> Hebrew, *yārê*’.
- <sup>28</sup> Literally, “understand his deeds”
- <sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *ḥāsâ*.
- <sup>30</sup> Literally, “upright of heart.”

# psalm 65

(edition: september 13, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> *For the Director. A hymn belonging to Dāwid. A song.*

God's care for humans

<sup>2/1</sup> A hush can serve as praise to You,<sup>1</sup> God in Şiyôn,<sup>2</sup>  
and can serve as a vow fulfilled to You.  
<sup>3/2</sup> Hearer of prayer,  
all humans<sup>3</sup> come to You.  
<sup>4/3</sup> Our sinful<sup>4</sup> deeds prevail over us.  
Our willful rebellion<sup>5</sup> You cover over<sup>6</sup>.  
<sup>5/4</sup> Happy are those You choose, whom You draw near,  
so they<sup>7</sup> may abide in Your courts.  
We are fully satisfied with being in Your beautiful house,  
Your preeminent<sup>8</sup> temple.  
<sup>6/5</sup> Triumphantly<sup>9</sup>, You answer us in astonishing ways<sup>10</sup>, our saving God,<sup>11</sup>  
the source of security<sup>12</sup> to the ends of the earth,  
and the farthest sea;  
<sup>7/6</sup> who founds<sup>13</sup> mountain ranges through His power;  
who is armed with strength;  
<sup>8/7</sup> who calms the tumultuous seas,  
their turbulent waves,  
and their riotous peoples.  
<sup>9/8</sup> Those who live in distant places are awestruck at evidences<sup>14</sup> of You.  
Morning and evening You produce rejoicing.

God's care for nature

<sup>10/9</sup> You care<sup>15</sup> for the earth and give it abundance.  
You greatly enrich it,  
mighty<sup>16</sup> streams full of water.  
You increase<sup>17</sup> their grain, for in this manner you provide for it.  
<sup>11/10</sup> Saturating its furrows,  
and penetrating its furrows,  
You soften it with rain,  
and facilitate<sup>18</sup> its spouting plants.  
<sup>12/11</sup> You bestow<sup>19</sup> a year with Your beneficence<sup>20</sup>.  
Your revolving years<sup>21</sup> flow with abundance.  
<sup>13/12</sup> The grazing pastures flow with abundance,  
and the hills take up rejoicing.  
<sup>14/13</sup> Pastures are dressed up with flocks  
and plains are covered in grain.  
They are jubilant, even breaking out in song<sup>22</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “To You a hush [silence] is praise.”

<sup>2</sup> Translations of this line are all over the map. Another of many lines of poetry found in the Bible that keeps one humble.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *bāśār*, literally, “flesh, skin.”

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *‘āwōn*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *peša’*.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *kāpar*.

<sup>7</sup> Literally, “he.”

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *qādōš*.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *b<sup>e</sup>sedeq*.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *yâre’*.

<sup>11</sup> Once more, the translations of this line are all over the map.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *mibtāh*.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *kûn*.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *’ôl*. “’*oth*, ‘sign,’ is an object, an occurrence, an event through which a person is to recognize, learn, remember, or perceive the credibility of something” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x).

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *šûq*.

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *’elōhîm*.

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *kûn*.

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *bārak*., literally, “bless,” but we know the intent of his “blessing” is to make growth possible.

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew, *’ātar*, literally “to crown,” or “encircle.”

<sup>20</sup> Hebrew, *ṭôbâ*.

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *ma’gāl*, literally, “track” or “course.” I understand this to refer to the course of the stars that rotate through the sky as the year proceeds.

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *šîr*.

# Psalm 66

(edition: February 7, 2024)

<sup>1</sup> *A song for the director. A hymn.*

Call for worldwide praise of god

<sup>2</sup> The entire world should cheer<sup>1</sup> 'Elohîm;  
sing to the fame<sup>2</sup> of His character<sup>3</sup>;  
offer<sup>4</sup> forceful<sup>5</sup> praise of Him<sup>6</sup>;  
<sup>3</sup> say of 'Elohîm, "How awesome are Your deeds!  
Because of Your tremendous strength, Your enemies cower<sup>7</sup> before You."  
<sup>4</sup> All the world should bow down to You and sing of You;  
All the world<sup>8</sup> should sing of Your character<sup>9</sup>. *selâ*

Call to witness god's awesomeness.

<sup>5</sup> Come! Witness<sup>10</sup> 'Elohîm's deeds—  
He whose actions toward humanity are awesome!<sup>11</sup>  
<sup>6</sup> He transformed sea into dry ground.  
They crossed through the watercourse with dry feet,  
there, causing us to rejoice<sup>12</sup> in Him.  
<sup>7</sup> He rules by his enduring<sup>13</sup> power.  
He<sup>14</sup> scrutinizes<sup>15</sup> the nations.  
The rebellious<sup>16</sup> cannot raise up against Him. *selâ*

call for israel to praise god

<sup>8</sup> Praise, O people, our God,  
and proclaim His renown<sup>17</sup>—  
<sup>9</sup> He who secures<sup>18</sup> us<sup>19</sup> with life,  
and does not allow<sup>20</sup> our feet to slip<sup>21</sup>.  
<sup>10</sup> You have certainly tested us, 'Elohîm.  
You have refined us as one refines silver.  
<sup>11</sup> You have led us into a snare.  
You have placed hardship on our back<sup>22</sup>.  
<sup>12</sup> You have allowed people to ride right over us.  
We have experienced<sup>23</sup> fire and water,  
but you have led us to superabundance.

Psalmist takes up call to worship god

<sup>13</sup> I will enter your house with sacrifices<sup>24</sup>.  
I will fulfill the promises<sup>25</sup> I made to You<sup>26</sup>,  
<sup>14</sup> which I uttered openly<sup>27</sup>  
and spoke publicly when I was in distress.

15 I will offer up to You offerings of well-fed sheep<sup>28</sup>  
along with the smell of rams.  
I will offer bulls and male goats.

*selâ*

Øsalmist takes up call to witnesses of god

16 Come. Give heed. And I will inform all who reverence <sup>E</sup>lōhîm  
what He has done for me<sup>29</sup>.  
17 I called to Him out loud<sup>30</sup>,  
praise on my tongue.  
18 Had I found malice<sup>31</sup> in myself<sup>32</sup>,  
My Lord would not have listened.  
19 However, God did hear me.  
He was attentive to my vocal prayer.  
20 Praise be to <sup>E</sup>lōhîm  
who did not ignore my plea  
or withdraw<sup>33</sup> his unwavering devotion from me.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew, *rûa*’.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *kābôd*.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, “name.”

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *śîm*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *kābôd*, often has the sense of “power, might.”

<sup>6</sup> Literally, “His praise.”

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *kāhaš*.

<sup>8</sup> The subject of the previous line is the subject of this line. While the text leaves out the subject in the second line, the mind supplies the subject and I often reflect this in my translation.

<sup>9</sup> As in verse 2, this is, again, literally, “name.”

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *rā’â*.

<sup>11</sup> Literally, “he is awesome of action toward the sons of man.”

<sup>12</sup> The verb is in the cohortative mood. Among the many things that the cohortative can indicate—wish, intent, insistence, etc.—is purpose or consequence.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *’ôlām*.

<sup>14</sup> Literally, “his eyes.”

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *šāpâ*.

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *sārar*.

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *’hilâ*.

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *śîm*.

<sup>19</sup> Literally, “our soul.”

---

<sup>20</sup> Hebrew, *nāṭan*.

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, *mōṭ*.

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *motnayim*. The word indicates, “loins, hips, lower back.” LXX translated, *nōtos*, “back.”

<sup>23</sup> Literally, “entered.”

<sup>24</sup> Hebrew, *’ōlâ*.

<sup>25</sup> Hebrew, *nēder*.

<sup>26</sup> Literally, “I will fulfill to You my promises.”

<sup>27</sup> Literally, “which my lips uttered.” But as so often, I understand this use of the lips—and in the next line, the mouth—as indicating something that was spoken out loud and, thus, publicly.

<sup>28</sup> Hebrew, *mēaḥ*, “fat.”

<sup>29</sup> Literally, “for my soul.”

<sup>30</sup> Literally, “my mouth called to Him.”

<sup>31</sup> Hebrew, *’āwen*.

<sup>32</sup> Literally, “in my heart.”

<sup>33</sup> The verb, *sûr*, translated “ignore” in the previous line, must apply to this line as well, though with a different word translation.

# psalm 67

(edition: December 11, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> For the music director.<sup>1</sup> Music and song.

*the evangelizing of all nations*

<sup>2/1</sup> 'ĕlohîm! May You show us grace,<sup>2</sup> and bless us!  
May You lighten us with your presence<sup>3</sup> *selâ*  
<sup>3/2</sup> so that how You conduct yourself<sup>4</sup> might be known<sup>5</sup> throughout the earth;  
made known<sup>6</sup> to all peoples, the victory You can bring.<sup>7</sup>  
<sup>4/3</sup> That the nations might acknowledge<sup>8</sup> You,<sup>9</sup>  
all peoples yield<sup>10</sup> to You;  
<sup>5/4</sup> that hosts of people might rejoice and shout loudly  
when You govern<sup>11</sup> the nations justly,<sup>12</sup>  
when You supply direction to the peoples of the earth. *selâ*  
<sup>6/5</sup> That the nations might acknowledge You,<sup>13</sup>  
every people yield to You.

*the blessings of evangelizing*

<sup>7/6</sup> Earth will then yield its bounty.<sup>14</sup>  
'ĕlohîm, our God, will bless us.  
<sup>8/7</sup> 'ĕlohîm will bless us  
because<sup>15</sup> every corner of the earth reveres<sup>16</sup> Him.

---

<sup>1</sup> First encountered at 4.<sup>1</sup>. See note there.

<sup>2</sup> The verb is in the imperfect, which I take, here, subjunctive in mood.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, “face.” The suffix is third person, “his face.” But I have translated second person, “your face.” LXX has “show yourself to us.”

<sup>4</sup> Literally, “your way.”

<sup>5</sup> The verb is in the Qal, not the Piel. But the Qal infinitive has the feel of a causative mood.

<sup>6</sup> The verb from the previous line applies to this line as well.

<sup>7</sup> Literally, “your victory,” *y'ĕšû 'ātekā*.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *yādâ II*. Often translated “praise,” the verb “primarily refers to an acknowledgement” (*NIDOTTE*), or confession. “Acknowledgement” certainly can take the form of “praise,” and often this is how this word wants translated. However, the Psalmist wants the nations to do more than “praise.” The Psalmist prays that all nations, seeing the graceful and saving way that God conducts himself in Israel, might accept His rule and come to live under his helpful influence.

<sup>9</sup> We might have translated, “Then the nations might acknowledge you.” The Psalmist sees his nation as an ambassador, an evangelist, to bring the good news of God’s rule to the world. This is consistent with the nations foundational call that came through Abraham. “Thou shalt be a blessing... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12.<sup>2-3</sup>). Paul will later renew this mission call. The grace that



---

God bestows upon the church is “to the praise of the glory of his grace... that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ” (Ephesians 1.<sup>6, 12</sup>). God does not bless Israel so she can live it up and live happily ever after. Rather, he blesses her in hopes that peoples around her will see what benefits come from living under his governance.

<sup>10</sup> This is the same Hebrew, *yādâ II*, that we saw in the first line of the verse. There is, it seems to me, in all “confession” a sort of “yielding” or “submission.”

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *šāpaṭ*, traditionally, “judge.”

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *mīšôr*.

<sup>13</sup> The Psalmist repeats, word for word, his hope from verse 4.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *yebûl*. Literally, “produce.” But the sense one gets here is that the “produce” is sufficient, and more than sufficient for a happy, healthy, and peaceful life, for this is the kind of life God grants.

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *wê*.

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *yārē’ I*.

# Psalm 69

(edition: December 11, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> For the director, 'al-šōšannîm.<sup>1</sup> Belonging to Dāwid

First plea and complaint

<sup>2/1</sup> Rescue<sup>2</sup> me, 'ēlōhîm;  
for the water has risen<sup>3</sup> up to my neck<sup>4</sup>.  
<sup>3/2</sup> I sink into muddy depths,  
where it is impossible to stand.  
I have fallen<sup>5</sup> into unfathomably deep<sup>6</sup> waters  
in which surging waters<sup>7</sup> sweep over me.  
<sup>4/3</sup> I am exhausted from screaming<sup>8</sup> for help.  
My throat is raw<sup>9</sup>,  
my eyesight<sup>10</sup> fails  
while I wait for my God.  
<sup>5/4</sup> More numerous than the hairs on my head  
are those who hate me without justification.  
Powerful<sup>11</sup> are they who would annihilate<sup>12</sup> me.  
My enemies are liars—  
What I have not stolen, must I restore?

Confession and plea

<sup>6/5</sup> 'ēlōhîm, You know my folly<sup>13</sup>,  
and my guilt<sup>14</sup> is not hidden from You.  
<sup>7/6</sup> Don't allow those who wait for You, to be discouraged<sup>15</sup> by my experience<sup>16</sup>,  
my Lord, YHWH Š<sup>e</sup>bā'ôt.  
Don't allow those who long for You to experience humiliation<sup>17</sup> on account of me,  
God of Yiśrā'ēl.

Second complaint

<sup>8/7</sup> For it is over You that I bear defamation<sup>18</sup>;  
that humiliation is spread across<sup>19</sup> my countenance.<sup>20</sup>  
<sup>9/8</sup> I am estranged from my siblings<sup>21</sup>,  
and am foreign to my mother's children.  
<sup>10/9</sup> Yes, my fervor<sup>22</sup> for Your house consumes<sup>23</sup> me,  
so that the same insults they hurl at You<sup>24</sup> fall on me.  
<sup>11/10</sup> I lamented intensely<sup>25</sup> during<sup>26</sup> a fast,  
and it became another criticism<sup>27</sup> of me.  
<sup>12/11</sup> I adopted sackcloth as my garment<sup>28</sup>,  
but<sup>29</sup> I became a parody<sup>30</sup> to them.  
<sup>13/12</sup> Those who sit in the public square<sup>31</sup> mull over<sup>32</sup> me,  
while I am a drinking song for those who drink booze.

## Second plea

- 14/13 As for me, my prayer is offered to You<sup>33</sup>, YHWH,  
at an opportune moment<sup>34</sup>.  
'ēlōhîm, respond to me with Your abounding and unwavering devotion<sup>35</sup>;  
with your staunch<sup>36</sup> assistance<sup>37</sup>.
- 15/14 Deliver me out of the muck  
so that<sup>38</sup> I don't sink.  
Let me be delivered from those who hate me,  
and out of the unfathomably deep waters.
- 16/15 Don't let the surging waters sweep over me,  
or let the muddy depths<sup>39</sup> engulf me,  
or let the pit shut its mouth upon me.
- 17/16 Respond to me, YHWH, for Your unwavering devotion<sup>40</sup> is indispensable<sup>41</sup>.  
Attend to me as befits Your abundant compassion<sup>42</sup>.
- 18/17 Don't hide Yourself<sup>43</sup> from Your servant,  
for I am distressed. Hurry! Answer me!
- 19/18 Be present in my life<sup>44</sup>! Reclaim<sup>45</sup> me!  
In light of my enemies, spare<sup>46</sup> me!

## Third complaint

- 20/19 You certainly are fully aware<sup>47</sup> of the shameful and humiliating defamation I face<sup>48</sup>.  
All my attackers are known to You<sup>49</sup>.
- 21/20 The defamation has broken me<sup>50</sup> and I am miserable<sup>51</sup>.  
I wait for someone to have pity, but no one does<sup>52</sup>,  
and for comforters, but I find none.
- 22/21 Rather, they have put poison in my food,  
and for my thirst, they have given me vinegar to drink.

## Imprecation

- 23/22 Let the meal<sup>53</sup> before them become a ruse<sup>54</sup>,  
and let bait look wholesome to them.
- 24/23 Let their eyes become dim without sight  
and cause their bowels to be constantly loose<sup>55</sup>.
- 25/24 Pour Your angry condemnation<sup>56</sup> out upon them,  
and let Your burning anger overtake them.
- 26/25 Let their fortified encampments lie in ruins.  
Let it be impossible for them to dwell<sup>57</sup> in their tents.
- 27/26 Because, they hound<sup>58</sup> whoever You, Yourself, wounded,<sup>59</sup>  
and add<sup>60</sup> to the suffering of those You injured<sup>61</sup>.
- 28/27 Add this offense to their other offenses  
and let them not experience<sup>62</sup> Your exoneration<sup>63</sup>.
- 29/28 Let them be erased from the record of those living,  
and not recorded among the innocent.

The psalmist response to god's help

- 30/29 I suffer denigration.<sup>64</sup>  
It is Your help<sup>65</sup>, 'ēlōhîm, that can lift me.  
31/30 I fully intend to praise<sup>66</sup> 'ēlōhîm's character<sup>67</sup> in song,  
and magnify Him with confessional praise<sup>68</sup>.  
32/31 Such is more pleasing<sup>69</sup> to YHWH than a young bull  
or mature horned and hooved<sup>70</sup> bull.

The response of the downtrodden to god's help

- 33/32 May the downtrodden<sup>71</sup> realize<sup>72</sup> this and rejoice.  
May those who make appeal to 'ēlōhîm be invigorated<sup>73</sup>,  
34/33 for YHWH does pay heed to the destitute<sup>74</sup>,  
and has never been disdainful of the imprisoned.

The response of heaven and earth to god's help

- 35/34 Heaven and earth praise Him;  
the seas and all that moves in them  
36/35 because 'ēlōhîm delivers Şîyôn,  
and builds up Y<sup>e</sup>hûdâ's cities.  
They will live there and remain in possess of it.  
37/36 The descendants of His servants will inherit it,  
and those who love Him will permanently reside in it.

---

<sup>1</sup> As is my usual practice, I have left this obscure musical notation untranslated.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *yāšā'*.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *bô'*, literally, "come into, enter."

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *nepeš*. Traditionally, and often translated as "soul," this word can also indicate "breath" and "throat" from whence breath comes.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *bô'*, literally, "come into, enter."

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *ma'amaqqîm*. This word is often indicative of something that is mysterious and unfathomable. It can also be something that is unconquerable.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *šibbōlet*, "flood, deluge."

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *qârâ'*.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *hârar*. "To burn, dry up."

<sup>10</sup> Literally, "eyes."

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *'āšam*. "The meaning of *'āšûm* [the adjective] oscillates between 'numerous, many' and 'mighty, powerful'....

"One must remember that in segmentary societies the power and prestige of a family were defined by the number of its members and their cattle, and that in pretechnological warfare military power depended primarily on the number of warriors. There was therefore no reason to separate the two aspects linguistically. The semantic oscillation that causes problems for us is due to the language of translation

---

and its sociocultural presuppositions” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x). Similar observations are applicable to the verb. We choose “powerful” over “numerous here for two reasons. First, the enemies numerical advantages were already mentioned in the first line. Secondly, the LXX translated with, *krataiōō*, “be strong, powerful.” By translating “many” in the first line and “powerful” in this line, we capture both ideas found in Hebrew, ‘*āšam*.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *šāmat*.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew, ‘*iwwelet*.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, ‘*ašmā*.

<sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *bwš*.

<sup>16</sup> Literally, “because of me.”

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *kālam*.

<sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *herpā*. Again in verse 10, 11, 20, 21, .

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew, *kāsā*, “to cover, clothe.”

<sup>20</sup> Literally, “face.”

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew, ‘*āh*, literally, “brother.”

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *qin ‘ā*, “jealousy, zealotry.”

<sup>23</sup> Hebrew, ‘*ākal*, literally, “eat, devour, consume.”

<sup>24</sup> Literally, “the same castigations they castigate you...”

<sup>25</sup> Literally, “my soul, *nepeš*.

<sup>26</sup> Literally, “in.”

<sup>27</sup> The noun is in the plural which I take here as “another.”

<sup>28</sup> Literally, “I put my garment sackcloth.”

<sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *w<sup>e</sup>*.

<sup>30</sup> Hebrew, *māšāl*, traditionally, “proverb.” Greek *parōidia* “burlesque song or poem,” from *para-*, “beside, parallel to” and *ōidē* “song, ode.” This idea of placing something beside something comes very close to the basic meaning of *māšāl*. “Parody” as a “burlesque song,” comes close to the idea in the final line of verse 13.

<sup>31</sup> Literally, “gate.” But the gate was a village or city’s gathering place for discussion and decisions making.

<sup>32</sup> Hebrew, *śīah*.

<sup>33</sup> Literally, “my prayer to You.”

<sup>34</sup> Hebrew, ‘*ēt rāšôn*, literally, “time of acceptance.”

<sup>35</sup> Hebrew, *hesed*.

<sup>36</sup> Hebrew, ‘*emet*.

<sup>37</sup> Hebrew, *yēša* ‘.

<sup>38</sup> Hebrew, *w<sup>e</sup>*, “and.”

<sup>39</sup> Hebrew has only “depths.” But the language of this verse is so similar to that found in verse 3, that we should understand the “depths” to be the same as those in verse 3.

<sup>40</sup> Hebrew, *hesed*.

- 
- <sup>41</sup> Hebrew, *tôb*.
- <sup>42</sup> Hebrew, *raḥamîm*.
- <sup>43</sup> Literally, “Your face.”
- <sup>44</sup> Literally, “my soul.”
- <sup>45</sup> Hebrew, *gā’al*.
- <sup>46</sup> Hebrew, *pādâ*.
- <sup>47</sup> Literally, “You, you know.” I take this repetition here to indicate the certainty and fullness of God’s awareness.
- <sup>48</sup> Literally, “my criticism and my shame and my humiliation.” Though in the strictest sense, a hendiadys is indicative of the coalescing of two into one, I take the three nouns as a sort of extended hendiadys.
- <sup>49</sup> Literally, “before you.”
- <sup>50</sup> Literally, “my heart.”
- <sup>51</sup> Hebrew, *nûš*. The word appears only here. LXX translates, *talaipōria*, “wretchedness, misery.”
- <sup>52</sup> Hebrew, *’ayin*.
- <sup>53</sup> Hebrew, *šulḥān*, literally, “table.” However, as the LXX handling of this word demonstrates, “table” can serve as a metonym for “food, meal.”
- <sup>54</sup> Hebrew, *paḥ*. This is a trap or snare. But a bird trap presents a ruse to the bird, appearing to be what it is not.
- <sup>55</sup> Hebrew, *mā’ad*, literally, to “shake, slip, slide.” Here we have another excellent example of where we must allow the lexical meaning to yield and bend to the context. We do not talk about having “slippery or shaky bowels.” We could understand something like “bowels that cramp constantly,” but we know the consequence of this.
- <sup>56</sup> Hebrew, *za’am*.
- <sup>57</sup> Literally, “let there not be dwelling.”
- <sup>58</sup> Hebrew, *rādap*, “to pursue, hunt, persecute.”
- <sup>59</sup> Hebrew, *nāḳā*, traditionally, “strike or smite.” But the word’s focus is less on the act of the one applying the action and more on the consequences of the action.
- <sup>60</sup> This is after the LXX, which reads, *prostithēmi* for Hebrew, *sāpar*. We could read *sāpar* as “celebrate.” Of course to celebrate another’s pain serves to add to another’s pain.
- <sup>61</sup> Literally, “the suffering of Your wounded.”
- <sup>62</sup> Literally, “enter,” *bô’*.
- <sup>63</sup> Hebrew, *šēdāqâ*.
- <sup>64</sup> Literally, “I am denigrated and suffering.”
- <sup>65</sup> Hebrew, *yēšû’â*.
- <sup>66</sup> The verb is in the cohortative mood.
- <sup>67</sup> Literally, “name.”
- <sup>68</sup> Hebrew, *tôdâ*.
- <sup>69</sup> The verb, “it is pleasing,” *yātab*, is in the present feminine, matching the gender of *tôdâ* at the end of the previous line. Hence, my “such.”

---

<sup>70</sup> Hooved animals are born with a protective hoof capsule which falls off shortly after they begin to walk—the capsule serves to protect the mother’s uterus and birth canal during gestation and birth.

<sup>71</sup> Hebrew, *’ānāw*.

<sup>72</sup> Hebrew, *rā’ā*.

<sup>73</sup> Literally, “may your heart be alive.”

<sup>74</sup> Hebrew, *’ebyôn*.

# psalm 71

(edition: October 27, 2023)

the psalmist's plea

- <sup>1</sup> It is in you, YHWH, that I seek refuge.  
May I never be put to shame.
- <sup>2</sup> As befits you,<sup>1</sup> rescue me and bring my escape.  
Bend your ear to me and deliver me.
- <sup>3</sup> Be, for me, a mountain retreat  
always available for entrance—  
you have so decreed my deliverance—  
for you are my mountain fortress.
- <sup>4</sup> O, My God, deliver me from the ungodly's power<sup>2</sup>;  
from the grasp<sup>3</sup> of the ruthlessly unjust<sup>4</sup>.

the psalmist's basis for hope

- <sup>5</sup> For you are my hope, my Lord, YHWH;  
my confidence from my earliest days.
- <sup>6</sup> I have relied on you from birth;  
since you removed me from my mother's womb.  
I will praise you always.
- <sup>7</sup> I am as a portent for many  
when<sup>5</sup> you act as my strong refuge.
- <sup>8</sup> I<sup>6</sup> overflow with praise of you;  
I overflow<sup>7</sup> all day with boasting about you.

the present trial

- <sup>9</sup> Do not cast me away when I am old.  
When my strength is diminished, do not abandon me.
- <sup>10</sup> When my enemies speak out against me,  
and those scrutinizing<sup>8</sup> me plot together,  
<sup>11</sup> asserting: "God has forsaken him."  
Pursue and seize him for he has no one to rescue him,"
- <sup>12</sup> 'ēlōhîm, do not be distant with me.  
My God, be quick to help me.
- <sup>13</sup> May those who impugn<sup>9</sup> me be disappointed<sup>10</sup> and stymied<sup>11</sup>.  
Cover those who seek my demise<sup>12</sup> with reproach and contempt.

hopes for the future

- <sup>14</sup> As for me, I will always wait expectantly  
and add to all your praise.
- <sup>15</sup> I will innumerate your triumphs<sup>13</sup>.  
All day long, I will recount your acts of deliverance  
though I can't comprehend their scope<sup>14</sup>.



- 16 I will press on<sup>15</sup> with the strength of my Lord, YHWH.  
I will celebrate your and only your triumph<sup>16</sup>.
- 17 'ēlōhîm, you have taught me from my earliest days,  
and right up to the present, I have heralded your preeminence<sup>17</sup>.
- 18 And even when old and gray,  
'ēlōhîm, don't leave me  
until I have borne witness<sup>18</sup> to your strength;  
borne witness<sup>19</sup> of your superiority to the rising generation.

God's labors for the psalmist

- 19 Your achievements<sup>20</sup>, 'ēlōhîm, extend to the heavens,  
you who has done great things.  
Who is like you?
- 20 Though you have caused me to experience many grave afflictions,  
you bring me back<sup>21</sup> to life,  
and out of the depths of Še'ôl<sup>22</sup> you again raise me.
- 21 You increase my greatness.  
You surround and comfort me.

The psalmist's commitment to praise

- 22 For this,<sup>23</sup> I will praise you with string accompaniment;  
praise you for your trustworthiness<sup>24</sup>, 'ēlōhîm.  
I will sing of you with lyre,  
Yisrā'el's Incomparable One<sup>25</sup>.
- 23 I will wax rapturous when I sing of you—  
my whole being that you have spared.
- 24 Finally,<sup>26</sup> I will every moment<sup>27</sup> reflect on your heroism<sup>28</sup>  
because they have been disappointed and confounded  
who sought my demise.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew, *b<sup>e</sup>šiddiqātā*, traditionally, “in your righteousness.”

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “hand.”

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *kap*, literally, “palm.” Here, it seems, we can see the hand cupped for gripping hold or clasping onto something, in this case, the Psalmist.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *āwal*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *w<sup>e</sup>*, “and.”

<sup>6</sup> Literally, “my mouth.”

<sup>7</sup> The previous line's verb carries over to this line.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew, *šāmar*.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *šāṭan*. In this instance, those who attack the Psalmist do so by impugning him as heard in verse 11.

- 
- <sup>10</sup> Hebrew, *bûš*.
- <sup>11</sup> Hebrew, *kālā*.
- <sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *rā'â*.
- <sup>13</sup> Hebrew, *šedāqâ*. Many scholars believe that the root, *šdq*, has more to do with victory than correctness. Wherever one comes down on this discussion, the present parallelism supports a translation indicating God's victoriousness rather than his "morality."
- <sup>14</sup> Hebrew, *s'pōrôt*.
- <sup>15</sup> Hebrew, *bô'*.
- <sup>16</sup> Again, Hebrew, *šedāqâ*.
- <sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *pālā'*.
- <sup>18</sup> Hebrew, *nāgađ*.
- <sup>19</sup> Applying the previous line's verb to this one.
- <sup>20</sup> Hebrew, *šedāqâ*, yet again.
- <sup>21</sup> The verb *šûb*, as TWOT, points out, can have the meaning of "again." "Second, often (over 120 times) *וַיִּשָּׁב* acts as a son of an auxiliary verb whose function is to repeat the action of the second verb: "and 'again' (Vol. x, p. x)
- <sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *'ereš*, "earth," often means the underworld, or the place of the dead.
- <sup>23</sup> Hebrew, *gam*.
- <sup>24</sup> Hebrew, *'emet*.
- <sup>25</sup> Traditionally, Holy One of Israel
- <sup>26</sup> Hebrew, *gam*.
- <sup>27</sup> Literally, "all day."
- <sup>28</sup> Hebrew, *šedāqâ*, one last time.

# Psalm 72

(edition: June 6, 2020)

<sup>1</sup> *Belonging to Šelōmōh.*

*a* plea for and the nature of good governance

- <sup>1</sup> ʿēlohîm, grant godly<sup>1</sup> governance<sup>2</sup> to the king;  
godlike justice<sup>3</sup> to the king's son.
- <sup>2</sup> May he adjudicate<sup>4</sup> among your people rightly;<sup>5</sup>  
with equity<sup>6</sup> for the downtrodden.<sup>7</sup>
- <sup>3</sup> The surrounding mountains<sup>8</sup> can then signify<sup>9</sup> the peace of the nation;  
the surrounding hills, the orderliness.
- <sup>4</sup> May he, then, administer justice to the nation's vulnerable<sup>10</sup>.  
May he come to the rescue of the destitute's children<sup>11</sup>  
and crush those who would violently loot<sup>12</sup> them.

*d*omestic blessings accruing to the king from good governance

- <sup>5</sup> The king<sup>13</sup> will then endure<sup>14</sup> as the sun and moon  
for endless generations.
- <sup>6</sup> He will be like rain falling upon the fields;  
a soaking rain upon the ground.
- <sup>7</sup> In that day, those who act justly will flower,  
and peace will increase as long as the moon endures<sup>15</sup>.

*ī*nternational blessings accruing to the king from good governance

- <sup>8</sup> He will exercise power<sup>16</sup> from sea to sea,  
from river to the ends of the earth;
- <sup>9</sup> desert peoples<sup>17</sup> will bow down to him,  
his enemies will eat<sup>18</sup> dust;
- <sup>10</sup> kings of Taršîš and the sea coasts will pay him tribute;  
kings of Šēbā' and Sēbā'<sup>19</sup> will offer tribute as well.
- <sup>11</sup> Indeed,<sup>20</sup> every king will bow the knee to him,  
every nation be in service<sup>21</sup> to him.

*n*ature of good governance

- <sup>12</sup> Because he comes to the rescue of the destitute who are screaming<sup>22</sup> for help,  
as well as the downtrodden and those who have no other source of succor;
- <sup>13</sup> because<sup>23</sup> he shows compassion<sup>24</sup> for the powerless and impoverished;  
brings deliverance into the life of the destitute;
- <sup>14</sup> because he defends<sup>25</sup> them from violent exploitation;<sup>26</sup>  
views<sup>27</sup> their lives<sup>28</sup> as invaluable;<sup>29</sup>

*Personal blessings accruing to the king for good governance*

- 15 He will live long,  
and have presented to him gold from Š<sup>e</sup>bā'.  
Prayers will be offered continuously on his behalf;  
the entire nation praise him.
- 16 There will be an abundance of grain in the land;  
its kernels sway on the mountain ranges<sup>30</sup> as on L<sup>e</sup>bānôn;  
sprout outside cities as naturally as grass.<sup>31</sup>
- 17 His fame<sup>32</sup> will endure forever;  
his renown come up<sup>33</sup> as often as the sun.  
Every nation will be blessed through him;  
esteem him a bearer of happiness.

*Concluding doxology*

- 18 Praised be YHWH 'ēlohîm, Yiśrā'ēl's God,  
who alone acts wondrously.<sup>34</sup>
- 19 Extolled be his august<sup>35</sup> character,<sup>36</sup> forever;  
the whole earth filled with his grandeur.  
'Āmēn and 'āmēn.<sup>37</sup>
- 20 *The prayers of Dāwid, Yiśay's son, end here.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “your.” But since this is God’s governance, what the Psalmist, king or cult official, is really asking is that he learn to rule as God rules. Also, “your justice” in the next line.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew, *mišpāt*.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, *ṣedāqâ*.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, *dîn I*.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, *ṣedeq*.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew, *mišpāt*. With the text’s *mišpāt... ṣedāqâ... mišpāt.... ṣedeq*, we have an ‘abba’ chiasmic structure.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew, *‘ānāw*.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew only has “mountains.” But, the plural suggests all the mountains that surround Jerusalem.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew, *nāśā’*, literally means “to lift, carry, bear.” Here, the mountains’ and hills’ “bearing” of peace is a comforting sign that peace will be as sure as the mountains surrounding Jerusalem are firm.

<sup>10</sup> Again, Hebrew, *‘ānāw*.

<sup>11</sup> Literally, “sons.”

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew, *‘āšaq*. “Guttural, sibilant, and plosive constitute a phonetic matrix that probably expresses aggression by its very nature. Similar phonetic combinations are: *šdd*, “deal violently with”; *šht*, “slaughter”; *šhq*, “rub away”; *šht* piel, “destroy”; *šmd hithpael*, “destroy”; *šs* ‘piel, “cleave” (*TDOT*, Vol. \*, p. \*).

---

<sup>13</sup> Literally, “he.” But the pronoun refers to the king.

<sup>14</sup> This reading follows the LXX.

<sup>15</sup> Literally, “until there is no moon.”

<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, *rādâ I*. The idea is not simply to govern, but to dominate the scene.

<sup>17</sup> Hebrew, *šî II*. This word is most often used in association with animals of an unknown character that inhabit desert regions. Given the list of nations over which a moral Jewish king might expect to rule, it seems best to understand it to include human desert dwellers. This is consistent with the LXX reading.

With the mention of the sea coasts in the next verse, it might be best to understand that the Psalmist does not have any particular desert peoples, tribes, or nations in mind. Rather, “desert dwellers,” and “coastal peoples” represent a sort of “all-inclusiveness.” Or, it may simply signify “east and west.”

<sup>18</sup> Literally, “lick.” But the imagery is clear. The Psalmist’s enemies bow before the king and kiss his feet, thus tasting the dirt that is found there.

<sup>19</sup> The Psalmist seems to have selected nations at the outer limits of Judah’s ancient influence and familiarity. This serves to add an exclamation point to his hopes found in verse 8.

<sup>20</sup> Hebrew, *w<sup>e</sup>*.

<sup>21</sup> If we were to understand all of this in a more intimidating manner, we might want to translate, “in servitude to him” rather than “in service to him.” One might argue that they are the same, but as we use normally use them, the latter sounds slightly more “voluntary” than the former. The first suggests involuntary service, whereas the second opens the possibility of the service being voluntary, based upon the just nature of the king rather than upon his raw power.

<sup>22</sup> Hebrew, *šewa* ‘. “one can say that this reaction takes the form of a vocal utterance probably to be understood, similar to the case of צעק, “as a successive series of screams” that aims at prompting helping intervention” (*TDOT*, Vol. \*, p. \*). The fact that the verb always appears in the intensive piel stem adds to the intensity of the request.

<sup>23</sup> I take the influence of the initial *kî*, “that, because,” in verse 12 to extend to this and the following verse.

<sup>24</sup> Hebrew, *hûs*, “be compassionate, show compassion, be sorry for, pity, have sympathy.” In poetry, parallel with *hanan*. “The construction with ‘*ayin* (‘eye’) may preserve a more original sense: ‘the eye overflows [undoubtedly with tears] concerning (‘*al*) a person or thing,’ i.e., the actual subject weeps or suffers on account of something or some situation. It is easy to see how this earlier meaning could be used to express emotions thought of in less concrete terms, especially pity” (*TDOT*, Vol. \*, p. \*).

<sup>25</sup> Hebrew, *gā’al*. See *Excursus: Common and Significant Hebrew Words*.

<sup>26</sup> Hebrew, *tōk*, “oppression, exploitation.” I have taken the text’s “exploitation and violence” as a hendiadys.

<sup>27</sup> Literally, their lives as invaluable in his eyes.”

<sup>28</sup> Literally, “their blood.”

<sup>29</sup> Hebrew, *yāqar*, means, “to be precious, valued, esteemed, costly, ascribe valuable, consider rare, scarce, honorable, respectable.” “The root is well attested in Akk. (*aqāru*, vb. be precious, use up, make rare, value, give honor, adj. rare, expensive, valuable), Aram. (אִקְרָא, adj. heavy, honored, precious; יִקְרָא, vb. be[come] heavy, honored; יִקְרָא, nom. honor, value), Sabeian (*wqr*, nom. honor), and Arab. (*waqār*, nom. dignity)” (*NIDOTTE*, Vol. \*, p. \*).

<sup>30</sup> Literally, “on the tops of the mountains”

---

<sup>31</sup> As can be seen from the multiplicity of translations, there is much uncertainty on the exact meaning of this line. All I can do is explain the rationale behind my translation. First, for Hebrew preposition, *min*, commonly, “from.” It is a very small step from “from” to “outside.” Once outside the city, it is another very small step to “around” the city. There are better, clearer words the poet might have used, but, well, it is poetry after all.

Now, for my “as naturally as grass.” The literal reading would be “earth grasses.” We might have translated slightly more literally, “as natural grass.” God created these to beautify the earth. They grow everywhere. No cultivation is necessary. They just grow out of the earth, naturally, on their own.

The imagery here is that wheat grows as plentifully and effortlessly as natural grasses.

I will not be offended if the reader prefers another translation—one more creative, imaginary, or literal.

<sup>32</sup> Literally, “name.” When we remember or mention the name, “Beethoven” we are not focused on anything as simple as his “name.” Rather, we call to mind who he was and what he accomplished.

<sup>33</sup> This is the only occurrence of the word in the Hebrew Bible so in understanding the word we are dependent on the parallelism found in this line and the one proceeding.

<sup>34</sup> Hebrew, *pālā*, “extraordinary.” “The texts all deal with extraordinary phenomena, transcending the power of human knowledge and imagination. Seen from this perspective, the usual translation of the niphāl as “be marvelous” comes close to the basic meaning” (*TDOT*, Vol. \*, p. \*).

<sup>35</sup> Hebrew, *kābôd*.

<sup>36</sup> Literally, “name.”

<sup>37</sup> Does the double use of the word signify something that is “beyond reliable” “without doubt”?