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Psalm 73

(edition: April 28, 2022)

¹ *A song belonging to 'Āsāp¹*

Invocation

How good 'Ēlohîm is to Yisrā'ēl,
to those of pure heart!²

the psalmist's past views and uncertainties

² But I, for a time,³ lost⁴ my footing;
lost⁵ my balance⁶.
³ I felt envious of the corrupt⁷
when I observed how well off⁸ the ungodly were.

the comfortable life of the wicked

⁴ Even in death, they experience no suffering,⁹
but die with stomachs full.
⁵ They do not experience the hardships¹⁰ of common people¹¹,
nor are they struck as others are struck.
⁶ So, they¹² adorn¹³ themselves with self-conceit¹⁴;
cloak themselves in a garment of cruelty¹⁵.
⁷ Their eyes bulge out¹⁶ on account of their corpulence¹⁷;
their physique¹⁸ goes beyond¹⁹ imagination²⁰.

the corruption of the wicked

⁸ They are disdainful and promote²¹ wanton oppression²².
Their rhetoric is ever so soaring²³.
⁹ They²⁴ claim divine license;²⁵
their assertions²⁶ are found the world over.²⁷
¹⁰ This is why peoples keep turning²⁸ to them;
why, as overflowing water, they flow²⁹ to them.
¹¹ They³⁰ think,³¹ “How will God know?
'Elyôn be aware?”
¹² In summary:³² these are the ungodly³³;
ever secure, always³⁴ increasing in wealth.

the psalmist's past views and uncertainties revisited

¹³ What³⁵ a waste, my efforts to keep myself innocent,
washing my hands in purification rites;³⁶
¹⁴ while I was battered³⁷ every single day,

battered³⁸ every morning by my internal debate³⁹!
15 If I had concluded,⁴⁰ “I’ll just reckon⁴¹ these things to be as they seem,”
I would have become unreliable⁴² to an entire generation of your children!⁴³
16 As I continued to think on this, hoping to understand,
it became a burden⁴⁴ to me⁴⁵.

*t*he psalmist’s new-found convictions

17 Until, that is, I entered the holy place of God,
there to discern what awaits⁴⁶ the ungodly⁴⁷.
18 Contrary to what I had thought,⁴⁸ you subject⁴⁹ them to delusions⁵⁰.
You let them fall prey⁵¹ to lies.
19 How suddenly they become objects of horror⁵²;
come to a complete end through multiple catastrophes!⁵³
20 They are⁵⁴ as a dream from which one awakens.
My Lord,⁵⁵ upon waking up, the shadowy memory⁵⁶ of them is loathsome⁵⁷.
21 My mind⁵⁸ then became disillusioned⁵⁹.
Inside, I felt humiliation.⁶⁰
22 I, myself, had been stupid and knew nothing.
Beastly was I before you.
23 Still,⁶¹ I am always with you.
You keep hold of me by your own power⁶².
24 You direct⁶³ me with your guidance,
then,⁶⁴ receive me gloriously.
25 Who do I have in heaven, but you?
I have no earthly desires.⁶⁵
26 Though exhausted, mind and body,⁶⁶
my heart distressed,⁶⁷
’ēlohîm will always be my future.⁶⁸

*b*enediction

27 So it is that⁶⁹ those who distance themselves⁷⁰ from you perish.
You make an end to those who play the harlot in departing from you.
28 But for me, having God near, that is what is precious⁷¹ to me.
I choose⁷² my Lord, YHWH, as the place I’ll go for shelter,
there, to tally all your achievements⁷³.

¹ This ’Āsāp, or the school of poets from which he comes, has a different, more difficult poetic style. The poetic style is leaner, even more opaque than other poets found in the Psalms.

² Here, the opening word of the first line, ’ak, is translated with my exclamation point.

³ Hebrew, *me’at*, “a little.”

⁴ Hebrew, *nāṭâ*. The basic meaning of the word is to “extend,” “stretch,” “spread out.” One’s feet are supposed to be right under them, giving balance and stability. The idea, here, seems to be that the Psalmist’s feet were too far apart, causing an imbalance.

⁵ The verb is *šāpak*. It means to pour. I have been unable to account for this strange turn of phrase. Is he slipping in some slippery mixture? Nor can I, so far, find anyone else willing to comment on it.

⁶ Hebrew, *’āšur*, literally, steps.

⁷ Hebrew, *hālāl* III. The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain. The LXX used *ānomos*, “lawless, criminal, corrupt.” I follow the LXX lead here.

⁸ Hebrew, *šālôm*.

⁹ The language of this and the following line are difficult, but the point is clear.

¹⁰ Hebrew, *’āmāl*. “The basic meaning of the root is presumably ‘be(come) tired’; around this basic meaning cluster a series of semantically related meanings: on the one hand, *’ml* denotes what makes people tired, i.e., ‘work’ (verb and noun); on the other, it refers to the condition of someone who is exhausted, i.e., ‘trouble,’ ‘misery,’ and ‘ruin’” (*TDOT*, Vol. *, p. *).

¹¹ Hebrew, *’enôš*. This word wants translated according to context. “They do not experience toil as others” would work. However, “others” are those unlike them. The “wicked” are well-fed, thus better off. The *’enôš*, here, is clearly one of a lower class.

¹² Hebrew shifts to the 3rd person singular, here, but I maintain the 3rd person plural translation for the sake of consistency.

¹³ Hebrew, *’ānaq*, “adorn the neck, wear a neckless.”

¹⁴ Hebrew, *ga’awâ*. The verb means to “be or become high, to exalt oneself, be arrogant, to boast, be majestic.”

¹⁵ Hebrew, *hāmās*, “violence, assault, injury.” “The most common synonym of *chāmās*, however, is *shōdh* (→ טרף *shādhadh*) (Isa. 59:6f.; 60:18; Hab. 2:17 [twice]), which means primarily oppression of the *’anîyîm* [down-trodden] and *’ebyônîm* [impoverished] (Ps. 12:6 [5]) and even suggests that this is the basic meaning of *chāmās*. The pair *chāmās* and *shōdh* seems almost to have been felt to constitute a single concept....

“It would be difficult to maintain the distinction between *shōdh*, which means violence against property and possession, and *chāmās*, which signifies an attack on human life. Stoebe sees the difference in the fact “that the emphasis in the case of *shōdh* is on the act itself, whereas in the case of *chāmās* it is on the nature and consequences of the act” (*TDOT*, Vol. *, p. *).

The “violence” certainly can be, often is, physical. However, the mouth can be “violent.” Additionally, as the “violence” that Hagar committed against Sara shows, it is often something much deeper than that. It is an attack upon the very idea of personhood and what it means to be human.

¹⁶ Literally, “go out.”

¹⁷ Hebrew, *hēleb* I, “fat.”

¹⁸ Hebrew, *maskîl*, “form, image.”

¹⁹ Literally, “pass over.”

²⁰ Hebrew, *lēbāb*, “heart, mind, intellect.” We might have translated “defies understanding” or even “defies description.” The Psalmist would, no doubt, agree with the KJV’s assessment that these fat, rich men “have more than heart could wish.” However, I do not think that this is what the Psalmist is saying. The first line described their pudgy face. The second, their overall physique. We, in our overfed society where just about every one of us could be thus described, do not appreciate the scandal of portliness in the ancient world and what it said about the insensitive nature of the individual toward the world around him.

²¹ Literally, “speak, or to talk up.” But someone who speaks positively of looting is surely either already engaged in it or plotting it.” We should also mention that the word is in the intensive piel stem. Also significant, LXX uses *laléō* rather than *légō*.

²² Hebrew, *’ōšeq*, “oppression, extortion, loot.” “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* hithpaal, “destroy”; *šs* ‘piel, “cleave” (*TDOT*, Vol. *, p. *).

“Thus *’šq* belongs to the semantic domain associated with threats to life and well-being. Our word group denotes circumstances inimical to life” (*TDOT*, Vol. *, p. *).

²³ This is literally, “They speak above highly.”

²⁴ This and the three lines that follow it are most difficult.

²⁵ Everyone, and I mean everyone translates “they set their mouths against heaven.” I am not exactly sure what this means, but it is literal and safe. I suppose one could reasonably understand, “they rebel against heaven.” One could also understand something like, “they lay claim to heaven/ and they dominate on earth.”

²⁶ Hebrew, *lāšôn.*, “tongue, speech, language.” “For the most part, the LXX translates with *glōssa*, the Vulg. with *lingua*. The literal meaning of both words, “tongue,” underwent metonymical expansion to include such meanings as “speech, speech idiom,” and as such they were able to offer a fairly consistent rendering of the Hebrew term. Here, obviously, I understand their “speech” to represent their arguments and justifications for their behavior, ideology, etc.

²⁷ Literally, “the tongues walk in/on the earth. My translation of the two lines of verse 9 is a parade example of my philosophy concerning translation. A complaint that I am taking the “poetry” out of the poetry might have some legitimacy. It is true that I have removed the symbolic imagery of “mouth” and “tongue” that makes poetry, poetry. But, I am most interested in understanding what the Psalmist is trying to teach us. I would say I am attempting to translate the spirit of the Psalmist rather than the letter.

²⁸ Hebrew, *šūb*. “Although the extraordinarily extensive semantic spectrum of the witnesses makes it difficult to determine the basic meaning, it is highly likely that *šwb* originally represented a verb of motion with the following basic meaning: to move in an opposite direction from that toward which one previously moved. The normal case assumes that the goal of the movement is the original point of departure. Because the latter condition is clearly not fulfilled in a whole series of witnesses, perhaps the basic meaning is rather “turn around, turn”

“In secular usage *tāru* [Akkadian] exhibits a remarkable concurrence with *šwb* (“return, turn, turn around, [fly] to and fro, return to an earlier condition, reestablish oneself, calm oneself, return [to dust], do something again”).

Here, I have taken the word to indicate a turn which is habitual, constant. People turn to these self-promoters over and over again.

²⁹ Hebrew, *māšā*, literally, “drain.”

³⁰ This might represent the view of the impious. They know that they have gotten away with a life of immoral and criminal behavior and so become agnostic in the sense that they do not believe in a god who is active in human affairs. On the other hand, these words might represent the view of those who keep coming back to the impious as community leaders. Seeing the impious do so well, convinces “the masses” that god is not watching or responding to the immoral and criminal behavior of the powerful.

³¹ Literally, “say.”

³² Hebrew, *hinnēh*.

³³ Hebrew, *rāšā* ‘.

³⁴ I understand Hebrew, *’ōlām* to apply to both verbs.

³⁵ The Psalmist continues sharing his past foolish musings in light of the comfortable and influential life the wicked live.

³⁶ Hebrew, *niqqāyôn*. If I followed my common practice, “I might have translated, “washed myself...” seeing the hands as a projection of self. However, in this case it feels right to translate “wash my hands.” The Psalmist, surely, had attempted to stay innocent through proper behavior. However, he almost certainly also would have utilized purification rites as well. However, one translates, though, the point is clear. There was a point in the Psalmist’s life and reflections when he considered the possibility that the wealthy and powerful had it right and he had it wrong.

³⁷ Hebrew, *nāga* ‘, literally means touch and extends from the lightest touch, sexual for example, to the heaviest, a death producing blow. Here, of course, the battering is not that of physical abuse, but of temporal challenges and mental turmoil.

³⁸ I understand the verb from the previous line to apply to this line.

³⁹ Hebrew, *tōkahat*. The word can mean “reproof, correction,” but has the basic meaning of “setting right,” or “showing what is right” (See *TDOT*, Vol. *, p. *). It is often used in forensic settings where one tries to arrive at the proper decision based on the evidence. “The action denoted by *ykh* is verbal, taking the form of argument and counterargument” (*TDOT*, Vol. *, p. *). LXX uses *élenxos*, “cross examination, testing for the purpose of proving or refuting. We should understand that the Psalmist is having an internal debate about what to think of God, the impious, and how one lives one’s life. We might have translated “doubt,” “vacillation,” or “uncertainty” as he goes back and forth in his own mind.

⁴⁰ This is one of the many examples where Hebrew, *’amar*, “say,” needs to be translated according to the syntax and context.

⁴¹ Hebrew, *sāpar*, “to count, number, reckon, rehearse.” The line is, as *BDB* observes, untranslatable as it stands. But I understand the Psalmist to be reflecting on both his own observations shared above, and the assertions of the ungodly about God’s ambivalence toward the oppressive conduct of the ungodly, the success it produces in their lives, and the suffering it brings into the lives of others.

⁴² Hebrew, *bāgad*, “faithless, unreliable, false, act treacherously, secretly.”

⁴³ The exclamation point at the end of this line represents the opening word, *hinnēh*, of the line.

⁴⁴ Hebrew, *’amal*.

⁴⁵ Literally, “in my eyes.”

⁴⁶ Literally, “their end.”

⁴⁷ Literally, “them.”

⁴⁸ Hebrew, *’ak*, here “however.” The psalmist now contrasts his previous views with those that he learned from his temple experience.

⁴⁹ Hebrew, *šît I*, “to put, place, appoint, impose”

⁵⁰ Literally, “smooth places.”

⁵¹ Literally, “cause them to fall.”

⁵² Hebrew, *šammâ I*. “This nom. does not represent the horror or desolation itself but the objective spectacle of such atrocity” (*NIDOTT*, Vol. X, p. x).

⁵³ Hebrew, *ballāhâ*, here in the plural. “The radicals of the Heb. root *blh* form an ordinary Semitic root. Outside the Hebrew language, it appears as a verb and a noun in Akkadian, in the later stages of Babylonian and Assyrian, meaning “to die out (go out of use), waste away (perish), condition of nonexistence” (*TDOT*, Vol. *, p. *).

⁵⁴ I have supplied this “they are” to give a better sense to the line, which is clearly corrupt.

⁵⁵ This line is most difficult as it reads in the Masoretic text. One can see the confusion that the Hebrew text causes in the LXX's translation and in the many different approaches translators have taken over the millennia.

⁵⁶ Hebrew, *šelem II*, "shadow, darkness."

⁵⁷ Hebrew, *bâzâ*, "to despise, devalue, discount, be dispicable."

⁵⁸ Hebrew, *lēbāb*, "heart."

⁵⁹ Hebrew, *hāmēš I*. The word means "to sour or ferment." One only has to decide, then, what it means to have the heart "sour." LXX translated "burned." I am not sure what this was to signify. Does it mean the individual felt humiliated, shamed, as a reddened face might?

⁶⁰ Literally, "I was pierced in my kidneys, innards." Might have translated, "embittered." The Psalmist's embitterment or disillusion is with himself, not another.

⁶¹ Hebrew, *w^e*.

⁶² Literally, "with your right hand."

⁶³ Hebrew, *ēšâ I*. "Depending on usage and context, one can distinguish three semantic variants. If the emphasis is on the "initiative" of the leader, the verb can be interpreted as meaning 'lead someone in the right way,' 'show someone the right way.' If the context refers primarily to the action of the leader during a journey, the word can mean roughly 'accompany someone for protection.' In some cases the goal of the journey stands so clearly in the foreground that one can interpret *nāhâ* as 'lead someone safely to the goal'" (*TDOT*, Vol. *, p. *).

⁶⁴ Literally, "afterwards."

⁶⁵ Literally, "I possess no desire on earth."

⁶⁶ Literally, "flesh and heart." In this and the following line, the Psalmist is once more recalling the stupidity of his past. In the third line of the verse, the Psalmist will compare his own instability with the permanence that is found in God.

⁶⁷ This is but one of several possible translations.

⁶⁸ Hebrew, *hālaq II*.

⁶⁹ Hebrew, *hinnēh*, as in verse 12.

⁷⁰ Hebrew, *rāhēq*. The adjective would mean "be distant." But the distance that develops between the individual and God is one purposefully brought about by an individual's thought, attitude, desire, and actions, not those of God. The individual rejects God, rather than God rejecting the individual.

⁷¹ Hebrew, *tôb*.

⁷² Hebrew, *šû*, to "put, place, set, establish."

⁷³ Hebrew, *melā'kâ*.

Psalm 82

(edition: June 6, 2020)

¹ *A hymn belonging to ʿāsāp.*

Sitting of the judge

ʿĕlohîm takes his established place¹ in the divine assembly.
Even among ‘the gods,’² he rules.

trial and verdict

² How long will you go on governing perversely,
continuing to support³ the interests of the powerful?⁴
³ You ought to govern for the powerless⁵ and orphaned.
You ought to sustain⁶ those living under the humiliation of want.⁷
⁴ You should free the disenfranchised and impoverished;
deliver them from the power⁸ of the anti-social⁹—
⁵ they who have no knowledge and possess no discernment;
they who operate in the dark;¹⁰
until all upon which the earth is built totters.

Sentence and execration

⁶ I, even I pronounce, “Though you are ‘gods,’
all of you, ‘sons of the most high god,’
⁷ it is certain, you will die the common death of man.
As any other ruler, you will fall.

Assent

⁸ Rise up, ʿĕlohîm. Govern the world.
Do, truly, take possession of every nation!

¹ My, “takes his appointed place,” is the Hebrew verb, *nāšab*, “to stand, station oneself, establish.” LXX translates, *ʾistemi*, which can mean “to establish.” My translation is a bit of a hybrid, I suppose one might say.

² Hebrew, ʿĕlohîm. In the economy of poetry, my, “even” is not in the Hebrew. But it seems warranted here.

³ Hebrew, *nsʿ*. The question is, literally, “how long will you life the faces of the wicked.” It is tempting to translate, “how long will you support the lobbying of the wicked.” The king looks daily into the faces of supplicants, all of them wishing something from him. After looking into their faces, he either grants or doesn’t whatever it is that they are lobbying for.

⁴ This is our well-known *rāšāʿ*, commonly “wicked, evil, criminal, guilty,” etc. But this is an example where context trumps lexicography. Given the context, especially the following two verses, it is clear that

the wicked are the wealthy, the influential, the powerful, the politically well-connected. This, then, is how we have translated here. With our “anti-social” of verse four, we come closer to the wickedness that is Hebrew, *rāšā'*, and to what the Lord makes clear: “the well-connected engage in all sorts of wicked, anti-social behavior.”

⁵ Hebrew, *dal*. See excursus for in-depth discussion of this word’s meaning. This is a more than clear picture about Yahweh’s feelings toward “the poor.” He sees that society finds them of little worth, and thus, poorly cared for, humiliated, and oppressed. Their physical appearance is testament to society’s insensitivity to their plight.

⁶ This is the Hiphil of Hebrew, *šādaq*.

⁷ Hebrew, *‘ānī warāš*.

⁸ Literally, “hand.”

⁹ Hebrew, *rāšā'*.

¹⁰ With our, “they operate in the dark,” we engage in a double entendre that we sense in the text. The influential are, themselves ignorant, devoid of any moral compass. At the same time, they work in societies shadows, behind closed doors, hiding their true motives and actions.

Psalm 88

(edition: october 30, 2023)

¹ *A song. Hymn belonging to the sons of Qōrah. For the director. 'al maḥālat l' 'annôt. A mašqîl belonging to Hêmân, the 'ezrâhî.*

The psalmist's opening plea

^{2/1} YHWH is the God who helps me¹.
During the day, I call out to You. At night I appear before You.
^{3/2} Give entrance to my prayer.
Lend a listening ear to my outburst²
^{4/3} because I³ am exhausted⁴ by cataclysm⁵,
as my life nears Še'ôl.

Complaint: the fear and threat of še'ôl

^{5/4} I am thought of with those who descend into the Pit.
I am as one without strength,
^{6/5} let go⁶ to be among the dead like those fatally wounded;
among those sleeping in the grave
to whom you do not give thought
and who are cut off from Your power⁷.

^{7/6} You have put me in the lowest of pits,
in the very darkest and deepest.
^{8/7} Your wrath comes down hard⁸ on me,
and You pound me down⁹ with all Your crashing waves¹⁰. *selâ*

^{9/8} You have taken from me those who know me.
You have made me abhorrent to them.
I am imprisoned and cannot escape¹¹.
^{10/9} My condition¹² deteriorates because of my misery.
I call out to You all day, YHWH.
I stretch out my hands to You.

^{11/10} Can You perform any beneficial divine act¹³ for the dead?
or can the departed¹⁴ rise up and praise You? *selâ*

^{12/11} Can Your unwavering devotion be recounted in the grave?
Or Your fidelity in the underworld¹⁵?

^{13/12} Can Your beneficial divine acts be known in its darkness?
Or Your achievements¹⁶ in the land of forgetfulness?

complaint: yahweh contributes to the psalmist's suffering

^{14/13} But I have repeatedly shouted out¹⁷ to You, YHWH
My petition greets You first thing in the morning.

- 15/14 Why, YHWH, do You spurn me¹⁸?
 Why do you hide Yourself¹⁹ from me?
- 16/15 I have been distressed and ready to die from a young age²⁰.
 I have carried a dread of You.
 I am in despair.²¹
- 17/16 Your intense anger has overwhelmed me.
 Your intimidation²² has undone²³ me.
- 18/17 They besiege me all the time.
 They utterly²⁴ encircle me.
- 19/18 You have removed love and friendship²⁵ far from me.
 My acquaintances exist in a dark place.

¹ Literally, “God of my help,” *y^ešû ‘â*.

² Hebrew, *rinnâ I*.

³ Literally, “my soul.”

⁴ Hebrew, *šābā‘*, “satiated, full.”

⁵ Hebrew, *rā ‘â*.

⁶ Hebrew, *hopšî*.

⁷ Literally, “your hand.”

⁸ Hebrew, *sāmak*.

⁹ Hebrew, *‘ānâ*.

¹⁰ Hebrew, *mišbār*.

¹¹ Hebrew, *yāšâ’*. Another parade example of context driving translation and interpretation. The traditional and lexical, “go out” must be read in light of the imprisonment.

¹² Literally, “my eyes.”

¹³ Hebrew, *pele’*. The word “refers to mighty acts of God that are humanly inexplicable and indescribable, but are experienced as extremely efficacious events that shape human lives” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x).

¹⁴ Hebrew, *r^epā ‘îm*.

¹⁵ Hebrew, *^abaddôn*.

¹⁶ Hebrew, *š^edāqâ*.

¹⁷ Hebrew, *šewa’*. *TDOT* observes that the word is “probably to be understood... ‘as a successive series of screams’ that aims at prompting helping intervention” (Vol. x, p. x).

¹⁸ Literally, “my soul.”

¹⁹ Literally, “Your face.”

²⁰ Hebrew, *na ‘ar*.

²¹ This is most uncertain.

²² Hebrew, *bi ‘ût*. “A predominant function of this word is to express the terror of a lesser individual who stands in the presence of a greater individual—often times a human being before a numinous being” (*NIDOTTE*, Vol. x, p. x).

²³ Hebrew, *ṣâmaṭ*.

²⁴ Hebrew, *yaḥad*.

²⁵ Literally, “lover and friend.”

Psalm 89

(edition: November 29, 2023)

¹ *A maškil belonging to 'êṭān, the 'ezrâhî.*

a questionable assumption?

^{2/1} I intend to always¹ sing² of YHWH's unwavering devotion³,
and to publicly⁴ reveal Your fidelity⁵ continuously⁶.

^{3/2} Surely, I assumed⁷ that Your unwavering devotion would always exist⁸;
that You would firmly establish the heavens and Your fidelity in them.

yahweh's assurance

^{4/3} I made a covenant with My chosen one.
I swore an oath to my servant, Dāwid.

^{5/4} "I will always firmly establish your descendants,
and continuously support your throne."

selâ

Confession about the incomparable god

^{6/5} The universe professes⁹ the wonder¹⁰ You are, YHWH,
as well as Your fidelity in the assembly of the peerless¹¹.

^{7/6} For who in heaven¹² can be compared to YHWH?
Who is like YHWH among the gods¹³?

^{8/7} 'Ēl inspires tremendous awe¹⁴ in the council of the peerless¹⁵.
Awestruck¹⁶ are all who are in his orb¹⁷.

^{9/8} Yahweh, 'Eiōhîm Ṣ'ebā'ôṭ, who is as mighty as You,
Yah, with¹⁸ Your enveloping fidelity?

^{10/9} It is You who exerts control¹⁹ over the ocean's swells²⁰.
When their waves rise up, it is You who calms them.

^{11/10} It was You who subjugated the mortally wounded²¹ Rahab.
With Your muscular arm²², You scattered Your enemies.

^{12/11} The heavens as well the earth are Yours.
You founded the world and its abundance.

^{13/12} It was You who created north and south.
Tābôr and Ḥermôn rejoice loudly in Your character²³.

^{14/13} You possess incomparably powerful²⁴ biceps.
Your forearm is strong, Your dominant hand²⁵ active²⁶.

^{15/14} Rectitude²⁷ and justice²⁸ are the foundation of Your throne.
Unwavering devotion and fidelity are present with You²⁹.

†he blessedness Yahweh extends to yiśrā'ēl

^{16/15} Fortunate are the people who are familiar with the cultic shout³⁰.
YHWH, they live³¹ in the light of Your presence³²!

- 17/16 They will at all times experience joy because of Your disposition³³,
and because of Your just intervention, they will be encouraged³⁴.
- 18/17 Truly, credit³⁵ for their strength is Yours,
and through Your goodwill, You increase our power³⁶.
- 19/18 Truly our protection³⁷ belongs to YHWH,
and to Yisrā'el's Peerless One³⁸, our King.

†he promises yahweh made to dāwīd

- 20/19 Then, through vision, You explained³⁹ to Your devotees,
and said, "I have given help to a hero.
I have exalted a chosen one from among the people.
- 21/20 I have identified as My servant, Dāwīd.
With My inimitable⁴⁰ oil, I have anointed him,
22/21 whom My power⁴¹ will secure
as well My might⁴² strengthen.
- 23/22 No enemy will dominate⁴³ him,
nor any with ill will⁴⁴ oppress him.
- 24/23 I will crush his opponents,
and defeat those who hate him,
25/24 but My fidelity⁴⁵ and unwavering devotion⁴⁶ will accompany⁴⁷ him,
and through Me, his power⁴⁸ will be great.
- 26/25 I will establish his power⁴⁹ over in the sea;
His dominance⁵⁰ over rivers.
- 27/26 He will say of Me, "You are my Father,
my God, and my safe⁵¹ shelter⁵²."
- 28/27 Even more⁵³, I will make him My heir⁵⁴,
loftiest of Earth's rulers⁵⁵.
- 29/28 Always will I and My unwavering devotion⁵⁶ provide him protection,
and My promise to him be reliable⁵⁷.

†he promises yahweh made to dāwīd's heirs

- 30/29 I will always establish his descendants⁵⁸,
and make his throne as durable as the universe.
- 31/30 If his heirs⁵⁹ should forsake My Tôrâ,
and not exercise⁶⁰ the My sort of just governance⁶¹;
32/31 if they should break My statutes,
and not observe My what I require⁶²,
- 33/32 I will punish their rebelliousness⁶³ with a rod,
and their perversion⁶⁴ with a beating.
- 34/33 But I will not annul⁶⁵ My unwavering devotion to him,
or break from My fidelity.
- 35/34 I will not break My covenant,
or alter My public⁶⁶ pronouncement.
- 36/35 Once and for all I swore as only I can⁶⁷
I will not be less than candid⁶⁸ with Dāwīd.

37/36 His descendants will always exist.
His throne will be before Me as is the sun;
38/37 as the moon always endures—
a trustworthy witness in the clouds.

selâ

Complaint about yahweh's apparent breach of promise

39/38 But You have rejected and disdained;
You have abandoned Your Māšîaḥ.
40/39 You have voided the covenant with Your servant.
You have desecrated his crown.
41/40 You have torn down all his walls.
You have turned his fortifications into ruins.
42/41 All who pass his way plunder him.
He is a disgrace⁶⁹ to his neighboring countries.
43/42 You have increased⁷⁰ the power⁷¹ of his adversaries.
You have brought joy to his enemies.
44/43 You have even turned the blade⁷² of his own sword back on him,
and not supported him in battle.
45/44 You have terminated his splendor,
and flung his throne to the ground.
46/45 You have shortened the time of his youthful vigor.
You have enveloped him in disillusionment⁷³.

selâ

Ṁlea for yahweh's attention

47/46 How long, YHWH? Will You hide Yourself perpetually?
Will Your rage burn like a fire?
48/47 Call to mind how fleeting⁷⁴ I am;
how helpless⁷⁵ You created all human beings—
49/48 Who lives, but does not experience⁷⁶ death?
Who delivers himself from Š^e'ôl?
50/49 Where are Your former acts of unwavering devotion, My Lord,
That You swore to Dāwiḍ in Your fidelity?
51/50 Call to mind, My Lord, the disgrace⁷⁷ of those who serve You⁷⁸,
of this entire great nation, I bear in my bosom;
52/51 how Your enemies, YHWH, have heaped insult⁷⁹,
heaped insult at the feet of Your Māšîaḥ.

benediction

53/52 YHWH is always to be praised.
'Āmēn and 'āmēn!

¹ Hebrew, 'ôlām.

² The verb is in the cohortative here.

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- ³ Hebrew, *ḥesed*. Again in verse 3, 5
- ⁴ Literally, “with my mouth.”
- ⁵ Hebrew, *’emûnâ*. Again in verse 3, 6, 9, 25, 34, 50
- ⁶ Hebrew, *l’ dôr w’ dôr*.
- ⁷ Literally, “I have said.”
- ⁸ Literally, “be built.”
- ⁹ Hebrew, *yādâ*. Often, “praise.”
- ¹⁰ Hebrew, *pele’*. Literally, “Your wonder.”
- ¹¹ Hebrew, *qāḏōš*. See our discussion of this word in *Index of Meaning and Translation of Common and Significant Words*. Here, these seem to be beings who exist and reside in association with God.
- ¹² Literally, “in or among the clouds.”
- ¹³ Or, “the children of the gods.”
- ¹⁴ Hebrew, *’āraṣ*.
- ¹⁵ Hebrew, *qāḏōš*.
- ¹⁶ Hebrew, *yārê’* in the Niphal.
- ¹⁷ Hebrew, *sābîḇ*.
- ¹⁸ Hebrew, *w’*, literally, “and.”
- ¹⁹ Hebrew, *māšal*.
- ²⁰ Literally, “swelling.”
- ²¹ Hebrew, *ḥālāl*.
- ²² Literally, “the arm of Your strength.”
- ²³ Literally, “name”
- ²⁴ Hebrew, *g’ḥûrâ*. “The verb not only has the simple positive meaning ‘to be strong,’ but frequently, in fact originally, a comparative sense as well” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x). Hence, my “incomparably.”
- ²⁵ The words I translate as “biceps,” “forearm,” and “dominant [right] hand,” are *z’rôa’*, *yād*, and *yāmîn* respectively. I do not always translated these words so technically, but with the words used together as they are hear, a more technical translation seems justified. While I often understand body parts assigned to God as examples of metonymy—“hand” or “arm” = “strength,” “power,” etc.—this psalm shows a propensity to anthropomorphism.
- ²⁶ Hebrew, *rûm*., “literally, “high” or “lifted.”
- ²⁷ Hebrew, *ṣedeq*.
- ²⁸ Hebrew, *mišpāt*.
- ²⁹ Literally, “Your face.”
- ³⁰ Hebrew, *ṯrû’â*. These are loud noises of many types—human and trumpet—and emotions—joy and war, derision, etc.
- ³¹ Literally, “go.”
- ³² Literally, “face.”
- ³³ Literally, “name.”

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- ³⁴ Hebrew, *rûm*, most fundamentally, “be high.”
- ³⁵ Hebrew, *tip`eret*, traditionally, “glory, beauty.”
- ³⁶ Hebrew, *qeren*, literally, “horn.” Also in verse 25.
- ³⁷ Literally, “shield.”
- ³⁸ Hebrew, *qôdeš*.
- ³⁹ Hebrew, *dābar*.
- ⁴⁰ Hebrew, *qōdeš*.
- ⁴¹ Literally, “My hand.”
- ⁴² Literally, “arm.”
- ⁴³ As the diversity among translations demonstrates, the form and meaning of this verb is unknown. There can be no room for dogmatism. For my translation, I read *nāšā`* rather than *nāšā`*, changing *š* to *š̄*, a most minor and conservative of emendations.
- ⁴⁴ Hebrew, *awlâ*. Literally, “son/child of perversity.”
- ⁴⁵ Hebrew, *emûnâ*.
- ⁴⁶ Hebrew, *hesed*.
- ⁴⁷ Literally, “be with him.”
- ⁴⁸ Literally, “horn” as in vs. 18.
- ⁴⁹ Literally, “hand.”
- ⁵⁰ Literally, “right hand.” If *yād* can serve as a metonym for power, it goes double for *yāmîn*, “right hand,” which has traditionally been seen as the dominate hand.
- ⁵¹ Hebrew, *yēšû`â*.
- ⁵² Traditional, “rock of salvation.”
- ⁵³ Hebrew, *ap*.
- ⁵⁴ Literally, “my firstborn.” The previous verse informed us that the king was thought of as a son. Here, firstborn should be understand this a political sense, with the firstborn male becoming full heir to his father.
- ⁵⁵ Literally, “kings.”
- ⁵⁶ Hebrew, *hesed*.
- ⁵⁷ Hebrew, *aman*.
- ⁵⁸ Literally, “seed.”
- ⁵⁹ Literally, “sons.”
- ⁶⁰ Hebrew, *hālak*, literally, “go, walk.”
- ⁶¹ Hebrew, *mišpāt*, literally, “my governance/justice rule.”
- ⁶² Literally, “my requirements, commandments.”
- ⁶³ Hebrew, *peša`*.
- ⁶⁴ Hebrew, *awôn*.
- ⁶⁵ Hebrew, *pārar*.

⁶⁶ Literally, [pronouncement] “of my lips.”

⁶⁷ Here, I translate Hebrew, *qōdeš*, “as only I can” to reflect my understanding of this word. I take the word to be indicative of something that is “unique, unmatched, unparalleled, preeminent,” etc.

⁶⁸ Hebrew, *kāzab*. The traditional “lie” is too strong here. There is no reason to think that ancient Israelites believed God capable of lying. In the Piel stem, the Hebrew word can have a soften connotation of “disappoint” or “fail.” God will never fail David by not telling him the truth, even if that truth is unpleasant.

⁶⁹ Hebrew, *ḥerpâ*.

⁷⁰ Literally, “raised, lifted up.”

⁷¹ Literally, “hand.”

⁷² Hebrew, *šōr I*, literally, “flint.”

⁷³ Hebrew, *bûšâ*. See our discussion on *bwš I* in our “Index of Meaning and Translation of Common and Significant Words.”

⁷⁴ Hebrew, *ḥeled*, “duration”? “to be fleeting”? LXX translates, *hypóstasis*, “essence.”

⁷⁵ Hebrew, *šâwe’*.

⁷⁶ Literally, “see.”

⁷⁷ Hebrew, *ḥerpâ*.

⁷⁸ Literally, “your servants.”

⁷⁹ Hebrew, *ḥārap*.