



*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 101	2
psalm 103	5
psalm 113	8
psalm 119	10
psalm 120	14
psalm 121	16
psalm 122	17
psalm 123	19
psalm 124	20
psalm 125	21
psalm 126	22
psalm 127	23
psalm 128	24
psalm 129	25
psalm 130	26
psalm 131	28
psalm 138	29
psalm 140	31
psalm 145	33
psalm 146	38
psalm 147	40
psalm 148	42
psalm 149	44
psalm 150	45

psalm 101

(edition: June 6, 2020)

¹ *A hymn belonging to Dāwid*

the king's personal commitment to just governance

Permit me to laud¹ fidelity² and good governance.³
Let me, YHWH, sing what is music to your ears⁴.
² I intend to devote myself⁵ to sound⁶ policy.⁷
So, when will you come⁸ to me?
I will act out of pure motivations⁹
toward those under my governance.¹⁰
³ I will never allow harmful counsel¹¹
to have a settled place in my administration.¹²
I will refuse¹³ to act out of deception.¹⁴
Such conduct will never be associated with¹⁵ me.
⁴ Perverse desires¹⁶ will be absent from me.
I will countenance¹⁷ no harmful¹⁸ thing.

the king's commitment to a just administration

⁵ He who covertly slanders¹⁹ his fellow citizen,
I will totally silence.²⁰
The arrogant²¹ and over-confident,²²
I will never empower.
⁶ I will keep an eye out for²³ honest citizens;²⁴
they it is who will govern²⁵ with me.
He who acts honestly;²⁶
he it is who will serve with me.
⁷ They will not remain in my administration,²⁷
who act deceitfully.²⁸
One who counsels²⁹ deceptions
will never be allowed a place in my administration.³⁰

the king's ultimate intent

⁸ As a first act,³¹ I will begin to put an end to all unjust citizens;³²
eradicate from YHWH's city
all who exercise power wrongfully.³³

¹ This is Hebrew *šîr I*. It certainly means “to sing.” There is no doubt in the ancient world important statements, whether sacred or secular (if, indeed, a secular existed anciently) were put to music and sang. However, song is not a commonly used means of making important public statements today. For this reason, I have tried to “bring the text up to date” with my “laud,” which was often the purpose of song in the ancient world. Song heightened and enhanced the import and power of mere human words.

² Hebrew, *ḥesed II*.

³ Hebrew, *mišpāt*.

⁴ This is simply Hebrew, *zāmar I*, “to sing.” With my translation, I have attempted to capture for a modern audience what I think is the speaker’s hope in singing. The Psalmist does not sign about Yahweh. Rather he sings of his commitment to abide by Yahweh’s desires for good governance.

⁵ Hebrew, *śākal I*, in the Hiphil.

⁶ Hebrew, *tāmîm*.

⁷ Hebrew, *b^ederek tāmîm*.

⁸ Hebrew, *bô’*. Some have suggested that the king is undergoing a ritualistic “ordeal.” So, here, the king is waiting for God to relieve him from the ordeal due to his promises of and commitment to a just reign. See, for example, John Eaton’s *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation*, p. 351

⁹ Literally, “heart.”

¹⁰ This is Hebrew, *beqereb bêṭî*, “in/into the midst of my house.” Here I understand “house” as “dynasty,” or “rule.” Now, one can have the speaker acting “with a sound mind in his house.” But it seems to me the speaker here is speaking as a public rather than private individual. What he does in the “privacy of his home/courts” impacts all citizens.

¹¹ Hebrew, *debar-beliya ‘al*. I have taken *dābar*, word, as counsel that is heard in the king’s court, whether it be that of official or suppliant. As to the infamous, *beliya ‘al*, its exact meaning is, to this day, a mystery. That being such is negative and that such a being is harmful is not in doubt. The following lines of poetry are, perhaps, more helpful in determining the meaning of the word in the present context than any lexical analysis.

¹² Literally, “in front of my eyes.” I understand this to be the royal court that rest before the enthroned king on. The royal court is the place of governance; the place from whence the king and his counselors establish and administer governmental policy.

¹³ Hebrew, *śānē’*, “to hate.”

¹⁴ This is Hebrew, *śēṭ*, from the verb, *śūt*. The noun occurs only here and at Hosea 5.2, where it is used of civic leaders, sacred and secular, who ensnare their subjects through misdeeds. The *LXX* translates *parabasis*, a transgression, aberration, deviation from the proper, overstep. The Hebrew seems to be something like “swerve.” According to *TWOT*, the word possesses an “underlying idea of cunningness.”

¹⁵ Hebrew, *dābaq*. It means to cling to, stick to, join, attach to, etc.

¹⁶ Literally, “heart,” or “will.”

¹⁷ Literally, “know.”

¹⁸ Hebrew, *ra ‘ I*.

¹⁹ Literally, “tongues,” likely something akin to, “wag the tongue at.”

²⁰ This is Hebrew, *śāmat*. The silence is total and permanent.

²¹ Literally, “one with uplifted eyes.” We all familiar with the upraised eyebrow of the smug and arrogant as they put another in their place with a demeaning quip. Perhaps the Psalmist has this in mind. Also possible, the idea may be of one who in their arrogant confidence is always looking boldly into other’s eyes—a sign of lauded confidence in our culture, but not so lauded in many.

²² This is literally, “open hearted.”

²³ Literally, “my eyes will be upon...”

²⁴ Hebrew, *b^en^e'emnê-'eres*.

²⁵ Literally, “sit.” This “sitting” is not about the simple physical act of setting one’s back side on a chair. Those who “sit” with the king, spend time with the king, converse with the king. They are those who counsel with the king in his governance. The last line of the verse, enhances this understanding of “sitting with the king.”

²⁶ This is Hebrew, *tāmîm*, again (previously found in verse 2).

²⁷ This is Hebrew, *beqereb bêtî*, which we saw previously in verse 2.

²⁸ Given the meaning of “loose” for the Hebrew word, *remîyâ I*, I admit, it was awfully tempting to translate, “He who is fast and loose with the facts.”

²⁹ Literally, “speaks.”

³⁰ Hebrew *l'neged 'ênâ*. Again, in this instance, to be before the king’s eyes is to be in his presence in some advisory role.

³¹ Literally, “at dawn.” The “at dawn” makes sense if the king is involved in a coronation or coronation renewal ceremony, perhaps, even, one that last well into the night. “At dawn” then has the impact of “First thing in the morning.” His first royal act, effected “first thing in the morning” is to “clean the swamp.” One is reminded of the politician’s promise of all he or she will do “in the first 100 days.”

³² Hebrew, *riš 'ê-'āreš*.

³³ Hebrew, *po 'lê 'āven*. “Although *רִיֶשׁ* has no ANE cognates, it appears to derive from the same parent root as *רִיָּא* (power, #226). Consequently, *רִיֶשׁ* could highlight a negative aspect of power, i.e., the abuse of power that brings harm and destruction” (*NIDOTT*).

psalm 103

(edition: September 20, 2021)

¹ *Belonging to Dāwid*

Invocation

My entire existence¹ should be in praise² of YHWH,
and every part of me should praise³ His unmatched character.⁴
² My entire existence should be in praise of YHWH,⁵
and you⁶ should never forget a single one of⁷ His kindnesses.⁸

What yahweh does

³ He is the One who pardons⁹ all your guilt.
He is the One who heals all your infirmities.
⁴ He is the One who delivers¹⁰ you¹¹ from Hell's pit.¹²
He is the One who surrounds you with fidelity and compassion;
⁵ He is the One who fulfills your desires¹³ for good.
Your youthfulness is restored as a soaring eagle.¹⁴

Transition

⁶ YHWH is the One who does what is right
and delivers¹⁵ justice for those who suffer wrong.¹⁶

Who yahweh is

⁷ He revealed his ways to Mōšeh.
He caused the people of Yisrā'el to understand how He conducts Himself.
⁸ Devoted¹⁷ and generous is YHWH;
slow to become angry and abounding in fidelity.¹⁸
⁹ He is not always condemning.¹⁹
He is not always annoyed.²⁰
¹⁰ He does not relate²¹ to us as our sins deserve
or deal with us as our iniquities might suggest.
¹¹ But as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so overarching is his devotion toward those who revere²² him.
¹² As distant as east is from west
so far does he remove our offenses from us.
¹³ As a father feels tenderness²³ for his children,
YHWH feels tenderness for those who revere him.

What yahweh knows

¹⁴ For he understands our constitution.²⁴
He calls to mind that we are dirt.

15 Humans: their lives²⁵ are as wild grass—
they bloom as a wildflower,
16 but wind blows on it and it is no more;
the ground holds no more remembrance of it.

What yahweh is, does, and knows is everlasting and boundless

17 YHWH's fidelity exists from the distant past to the distant future toward those who worship him.
And his loyalty²⁶ extends to generation after generation²⁷
18 of those who keep his covenant
and remember to observe his precepts.²⁸
19 YHWH has secured his throne in the heavens
and his royal power rules over all

*b*enediction/doxology

20 Praise YHWH, you, his emissaries,²⁹ strong and powerful,
who pass on³⁰ his word upon hearing his uttered word.
21 Praise YHWH, all you, his hosts
who serve him by passing on his goodwill.
22 Praise YHWH, all you, his creation, in every part of his domain.
My entire existence should be in praise of YHWH.

¹ Literally, "my soul."

² The verb, "praise," is in the imperative voice. The Psalmist seems to engage in an internal dialogue with himself. This will be seen more clearly when we come to the second line of verse 2 and the pronoun "you" makes its appearance.

³ The verb from the previous line carries over to this line.

⁴ Literally, "his holy name." But, as always, I understand God's "name" to be indicative of his very essence, his character. Here, I understand "holy" (*qôdeš*) to be that which is separate and stands apart from the common.

⁵ A repeat of the first line.

⁶ We take the "you" are indicative of the Psalmist's internal conversation with himself.

⁷ Literally, "all."

⁸ Hebrew, *gemûl*.

⁹ Hebrew, *salaah*;

¹⁰ Hebrew, *gā'al*.

¹¹ Literally, "your life."

¹² Literally, "the pit." But, as we have so often pointed out, "the pit" is often a metaphor for the world of the dead, Hebrew, *š'ôl*.

¹³ This is after LXX.

¹⁴ Here, the Psalmist's youthfulness is a restoration from the death of the pit mentioned in the previous verse. In approaching death the individual is brought low, listless, and weak. But in raising him from the threat of death, Yahweh makes it possible for the dead to fly as an eagle out of the depths of the pit and return to the heights of youthfulness.

¹⁵ The first line's verb, *'āśah*, carries over to this line.

¹⁶ Hebrew, *'āśaq*.

¹⁷ Hebrew, *raḥûm*.

¹⁸ Hebrew, *ḥesed I*.

¹⁹ Hebrew, *rîḥ*.

²⁰ Hebrew, *nāṭar*.

²¹ Hebrew, *'āśâ*.

²² Traditionally, "fear," but, as nearly always, this will not do.

²³ Hebrew, *rāḥam*.

²⁴ Hebrew, *yēšer I*, "form, disposition, make up."

²⁵ Everything is in the singular and masculine here. But, obviously, it applies to everyone, male and female alike.

²⁶ This is our common, *šedāqâ*, traditionally translated "righteousness." But here, Yahweh's righteousness, or the rightness of his behavior toward humanity is found in his steadfast loyalty to them. This is a good example of parallel lines shaping each other, with parallel verbs influencing the translation of each.

²⁷ Hebrew, *l'bnê-banîm*.

²⁸ Hebrew, *piqqûḏîm*.

²⁹ Traditionally, "angels."

³⁰ Hebrew *'āśâ*.

psalm 113

(edition: August 5, 2021)

¹ *Hal'êlûyah*¹

*d*oxology

You who serve YHWH, praise² him.

Boast³ of YHWH's renown.⁴

² Pay homage⁵ to YHWH's character⁶
from this very moment and forever after.

³ From eastern to western horizon,
let YHWH's character⁷ be celebrated.⁸

⁴ YHWH is exalted above the earth.⁹
Greater is His importance¹⁰ than the universe is expansive.

*r*easons for praising yahweh

⁵ Who is like YHWH, our God;
the One who sits, exalted;

⁶ the One who¹¹ condescends¹² to look upon
heaven and earth;

⁷ the One who raises the powerless from their humiliation;¹³
the One who lifts the destitute out of their desperation,¹⁴

⁸ so that they may associate¹⁵ with those who are noble,
with the most noble citizens among my people;

⁹ the One who bestows a home upon the barren woman,
making her a mother gladdened by children?¹⁶

Hal'êlûyah

¹ Here, I have transliterated the first two Hebrew words.

² Hebrew, *hālāl II*. "Praise... is an expression of appreciation and a response to good qualities" (*NIDOTTE*, Vol. 1, p. 1035). Praise, then, focuses its attention on the worthy and exemplary character and actions of deity. It is a kind of boasting about God.

³ Hebrew, *hālāl II*.

⁴ Hebrew, *šēm*, "name." "...at a very early date the root had substantial content, being more than just a term used, e.g., to differentiate among individuals" (*TDOT*, Vol. 15, p. 133). "In addition, *šēm* incorporates those elements that are associated with the particular person or Yahweh. Thus *šēm* comes to have semantic overtones of fame, honor, influence, power, etc. Furthermore, *šēm* functions as a substitute for the person in question" (*TDOT*, Vol. 15, p. 134). This ought to be obvious: when I speak of my wife, "Estelle," to another, I am not "designating," but representing her in her entirety with all her attributes and character in mind.

⁵ Hebrew, *barak*.

⁶ Again, Hebrew, *šēm*.

⁷ Again, Hebrew, *šēm*.

⁸ Again, Hebrew, *hālāl II*.

⁹ Hebrew, *gôy*. This word seems most correctly to refer to peoples or nations. Certainly, God is above every nation as scripture so often witnesses. However, given the poetic parallelism with “heavens” in the next line, “earth” seems the better translation. That said, one wonders why the poet chose *gôy* rather than *’ereš*. Perhaps I am missing something.

¹⁰ Hebrew, *kābôd I*.

¹¹ Eaton’s “Yet humbles himself to behold... the things of heaven and earth” is very attractive and surely gets to the overall point that the psalmist wishes to make. See his, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary*).

¹² Hebrew, *šāpēl*. When used in relation to human beings, this word frequently possesses the sense of humiliation and self-abasement. It seems, often, to have the sense of one not living up to expectations. 2 Samuel 6.²⁰ is most instructive. The context is the introduction of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem. As the ark enters the city, King David dances, naked, before the ark. His wife, Michal, accuses him of humiliating himself and, by extension, her. Such “self-exposure” is seen as beneath his dignity.

¹³ Hebrew, *’āpār*. Literally “dust.” But here, “dust” is a metaphor for the lowly state of the powerless.

¹⁴ Hebrew, *’ašpōt*. Literally “trash heap.” But again, we have metaphor. Looking for food, scraps of cloth for clothing, materials for makeshift shelter, etc. in the local land fill is emblematic of the desperation in which the poor live.

The psalm is poetry. And imagery, symbolism, etc. is at poetry’s heart. So, I am not insensitive to the criticism that I have removed the poetic imagery for a “plainer” translation and easier understanding. I struggle to weigh the advantages of a more poetic translation and a “plainer” translation. In the end, I am more preacher, with his desire to be heard by and improve an audience, than I am a poet.

¹⁵ Hebrew, *yāšab*. Literally, “sit.”

¹⁶ Due to the repeated use of the participial phrase, I take verses 5-9 in their entirety as the question, rather than ending the question with verse 5.

psalm 119

(edition: April 3, 2024)

^ʾālep

- ¹ How truly fulfilled¹ are those sound in principle²,
who live³ by YHWH's guidance⁴.
- ² Progressing are those who search⁵ His revelations⁶,
and inquire after Him whole heartedly.
- ³ Indeed, they do not act unjustly⁷.
They live by His principles.
- ⁴ You have directed that Your precepts⁸
be diligently observed.
- ⁵ If only my habit⁹ was fixed
In keeping Your norms¹⁰!
- ⁶ I would¹¹ not be regretful¹²
by paying close attention to all Your directives¹³.
- ⁷ I could praise you with complete integrity¹⁴
by learning the correctness of Your judgment¹⁵.
- ⁸ I would observe your norms,
and you would not ever¹⁶ forsake me.

b_{et}

- ⁹ How can a youth¹⁷ keep their behavior¹⁸ guilt-free¹⁹?
In observing Your word.
- ¹⁰ I have sought You with all my heart.
Don't let me wander from Your directives.
- ¹¹ I have treasured²⁰ Your word in my mind²¹
so that I not offend²² You.
- ¹² You are to be praised, YHWH.
Teach me Your what You expect.
- ¹³ I have publicly²³
recounted all Your uttered wisdom^{24, 25}.
- ¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the guidance²⁶ of Your revelations,
above all wealth.
- ¹⁵ I intend to meditate on Your precepts,
and look to Your principles²⁷.
- ¹⁶ I will find joy in Your norms²⁸.
I will not ignore Your word.

¹ Hebrew, *ʾašrê*.

² Hebrew, *derek*, "way, path."

³ Literally, "walk."

⁴ Hebrew, *tôrâ*. “Instruction, teaching, guidance,” have long been viewed as the primary category of meaning for this word. We accept this view and will be guided by it in our translation. “Law” can serve as a translation as long as one understands the law as a source of interested guidance for those to whom it is given rather than a legalistic demand—though the Hebrew Bible is not without its class of texts that are quite legalistic and use the term in a legalistic manner. Within the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition, *Tôrâ* can and often does refer to the first five Books, or Pentateuch, allowing us, almost, to think of it as “scripture,” that which is written.

In this psalm, a series of words are used for the words of God and essentially, as synonyms for *tôrâ*. These include, in order of appearance: *‘ēdūt*, *piqqûdîm*, *derek*, *hōq*, *mišwâ*, *mišpāt*, *’ōrah*, and *huqâ*. While we translate each of these differently, the exact nuance of each has been lost.

⁵ Hebrew, *nāšar*. Without complaint, we could live with the translation, “observe.” However, given the LXX translation, *exereunaō*, “thoroughly explore, investigate,” and the following line’s parallel verb, *ḏāraš*, “seek, study, investigate,” the verse’s emphasis seems to be on examining what God has said rather than obeying it. This Psalm will have plenty to say about following, observing, and obeying. And, of course, one cannot do as God encourages without knowing what he encourages.

⁶ Hebrew, *‘ēdūt*. In considering this word, the first thing to note that in the Pentateuch, it most often refers to the tablets that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai, which were then deposited in the tabernacle. It goes without saying, however, that *‘ēdūt* is not the physical object of the tablet itself—this is *luhot ha ‘ēdūt*, “tablets of the *‘ēdūt*,” which Moses broke in Ex. 32.¹⁵ *‘ēdūt*, then, are the words contained on the tablets. Within in the tabernacle, God had the *‘ēdūt* placed inside the ark. The ark was often referred to as the “ark of the *‘ēdūt*, or the “chest of the tablets.” So, we might translate this word in Psalms, especially in this Psalm as “tablets, or “Ten Commandments.” However, the Hebrew Bible never calls either the tablets or their contents, “The Ten Commandments.”

As for the word, itself, *‘ēdūt*, comes from *‘ūd*, “to bear witness, warn, remind.” *‘ēdūt* is constructed from *‘ēd*, “witness” (person), and the abstract affix, *-ūt*, to create, “witness, testimony, attestation.” The LXX translates, *martyrion*, “witness, evidence, proof.” *TDOT*, mentions the following words as possibly related to Hebrew, *‘ēdūt*. Aramaic possesses, *dy*, “contract, pact,” “contractual terms,” “oath, agreement secured through an oath.” Arabic possesses, *wa’ada*, which means “to promise,” “arrange to meet.” Syriac possesses, *hd*, “remember,” Arabic possesses, *ahd*, “alliance, contract”, and *hd*, “make an alliance, obligate oneself.”

Because *‘ēdūt* is so often associated with the tablets on which God wrote “Ten Imperatives” (traditionally, “Ten Commandments”)—each statement is presented with imperative verbs—“imperatives” is a tempting translation. The Aramaic and Arabic evidence might also lead us to lean in this direction. However, the consistency with which the LXX translates *martyrion* has weight and must be taken seriously. In light of the LXX evidence many translations and translators have settled on “testimony, witness.” While witnesses do not generally issue “imperatives,” their testimony is strongly meant to suggest appropriate, if not imperative action in light of their witness. With our “revealed will,” “revelation,” we seek to straddle the two worlds: one of “imperative”—found in God’s “will”—and “testimony,” that which is “revealed.”

⁷ Literally, “They do not do injustice, *awlâ*. See, “Index of Meaning and Translation of Common and Significant Words,” for a detailed discussion of this word.

⁸ Hebrew, *piqqûdîm*. Again in verse 15.

⁹ Hebrew, *derek*.

¹⁰ Hebrew, *hōq*. In its concrete sense this word means, “to engrave, carve, hollow out, and, perhaps, sculpt.” *TDOT* notes that “the participle *mehuqqeh* means ‘carved work’ or ‘reliefs’” and *hqq* can stand “in parallelism with *kātab*, ‘write’” (Vol. x, p. X). Thus, in Psalm 119 as well as elsewhere, we can think of *hōq* at the concrete level as that which God engraved or wrote. This reminds us of the Pentateuch’s concrete use of *‘ēdūt*, for the physical tablets upon which God wrote with His finger and gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. However, just as *‘ēdūt*, moves from the concrete to the abstract, coming to mean not the

physical tablets themselves but that which is written on them, so too does *ḥōq* move from the concrete act of engraving to the abstract idea of that which is engraved. *ḥōq*, then, like *ʿēdūt*, refers to the words of God.

In discussing *ḥōq*, *TDOT* mentions a possible “connection between a special meaning of Arab. *ḥaqqā*, ‘be incumbent upon,’ and Heb. *ḥōq*, in the sense “that which is incumbent on someone.” There are indications elsewhere of it being thought of in terms of something that is “legally binding,” and as a “law” or “precept.” The question becomes, then, what is the nature of those words? Information? Admonition? Instruction? Edict? Demand? Command? Law?

There is a strange story in Judges about one of Israel judges, Jephthah. In going to war against Ammon, he made a vow that if God gave him victory then “whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’s and I will offer it up for a burnt offering” (11.³¹). As it turns out, his daughter was the first to greet him and so she was sacrificed in line with the vow. What does this have to do with our word, *ḥōq*? Each year after the young woman’s death a four-day festival was conducted to commemorate the girl’s sacrifice. This festival became a “*ḥōq* in Israel.” The King James translates “custom.”

This example, among others that we could cite, suggest that “law” or “commandment” or “edict,” even are a bit too strong for *ḥōq*. “Custom,” “norm,” “expectation,” “standard,” or “policy” seem more appropriate. Hence, our finally settling on “norm,” “standard,” and “expectation,” “what is expected” in our translation.

¹¹ I take verse 5’s “if only” to influence each of the imperfect verbs found in verses 6-8. We have entered a hypothetical world.

¹² Hebrew, *bûš*.

¹³ Hebrew, *mišwâ*. The LXX most often translate, *entolē*. To be sure, this word, like *mišwâ*, can be translated “commandment, order,” especially when used in reference to kings. However, “the [Greek] term has also the sense b. of ‘pedagogic instruction’ (*TDNT*, Vol. x, p. x). Commands can be capricious and inspired by a thirst for power and control. They can be more about advancing the individual issuing the orders than about the needs or advancement of the individuals commanded. This is not the nature or purpose of God’s “commands.” His “commands” are given only to benefit those to whom they are given. For this reason—and in harmony with the sense of “pedagogic instruction”—I choose to translate *mišwâ* as “directive.” *Mišwâ* are intended to guide and direct human action for the good of humans, not for the ego of God.

God is certainly thought of as King of Israel, and kings do issue orders, commands. At the same time, God is also thought of as Israel’s parent. While a parent can issue orders to their spouse and children, the nature of the relationship tends to be more nurturing. In the context of family, “instruction, guidance, direction seems more appropriate than “orders.”

In addition to this, we understand *mišwâ* to be closely related to *tôrâ*., which we associate with and translate as “instruction, teaching” (See our discussion of *tôrâ* in note 4).

¹⁴ Hebrew, *yōšer*.

¹⁵ Hebrew, *mišpāt*. Here, the reader should think of “good judgment,” “good decision making.” rather than in forensic terms. We could translate, “wisdom” without doing harm to the Psalmist’s meaning, as I do in verse 13.

¹⁶ Hebrew, *ʿad-mʿ ʿōd*.

¹⁷ Hebrew, *naʿar*, is male, but as is my practice, unless there is good reason to distinguish the gender, I translate without gender. Certainly, what is true here of a young man is true of a young woman.

¹⁸ Hebrew, *ʿōrah*.

¹⁹ Hebrew, *zākā*.

²⁰ Hebrew, *šāpan*, literally, “to hide, store.”

²¹ Literally, “heart.”

²² Hebrew, *ḥāṭā’*.

²³ Literally, “with my lips.”

²⁴ Hebrew, *mišpāt*.

²⁵ Literally, “the wisdom of Your mouth.”

²⁶ Hebrew, *derek*., literally, “path, way.”

²⁷ Hebrew, *’ōrah*, “path, way. In its metaphorical sense, we treat it just like *derek*.

²⁸ Hebrew, *ḥuqā’*. This is the feminine form of masculine *ḥōq*. There is no discernable difference in meaning between the two words formed from the same root.

psalm 120

(edition: September 15, 2022)

¹ *A processional hymn¹*

the psalmist remembers

It was YHWH that I, in my anguish, called upon.
How he responded to me!²

the psalmist's plea

² “YHWH! Deliver me³ from deceitful⁴ lips;
from a treacherous tongue.

the psalmist's confidence

³ What will you procure for yourself?
What will you gain for yourself, you with the treacherous tongue?
⁴ A⁵ hero's⁶ arrows, sharp pointed,
burning hot.⁷

the psalmist's trial

⁵ I was in despair⁸ because I lived, an alien, in Mešek; ⁹
I lived a transient life in Qêdâr.¹⁰
⁶ Many a year did I live
among them who distained peaceful coexistence¹¹—
⁷ though I spoke up for camaraderie,¹²
they remained antagonistic.”¹³

¹ The Hebrew word often has the physical meaning of “stair,” “step,” or “slope.” It could be so translated here, in which case we would have something like “A Song Performed on the Steps of the Temple.” It could also be more figurative, “A Song Performed in Preparation to ascend to (meet with) Yahweh.”

² I take the following to be the prayer that the Psalmist presented to Yahweh in his anguish—an anguish caused by defamation brought against him personally or against him as a representative of Israel.

³ Hebrew, *nepeš*.

⁴ Hebrew, *šeqer*. This word is about more than inaccuracies and the distribution of bad facts, untruths. There is a very personal element to it. It suggests betrayal of another, the acting out in bad faith.

⁵ This verse provides the answer to the question posed in the previous verse.

⁶ Hebrew, *gibbôr*. Obviously, the hero is Yahweh.

⁷ Hebrew *gaḥlê-r^étāmîm*. This is something like “coals of juniper.” Accusations made against the Psalmist are often likened to arrows. See, for example, Psalm 11.², 57.⁴, 58.⁷, and 64.³. It is thus a just restoration when God's judgement (delivered in words, speech) takes the same form, which it frequently does in the

Psalms. See, for example, 7.¹³, 21.², 45.⁵, 64.³. God's fiery and piercing words of judgement can also be directed at the Psalmist, himself: see, 38.².

⁸ Hebrew, *'ōwyāh-lî*.

⁹ *Mešek* appears to be an area of eastern Anatolia where Israelites were exiled.

¹⁰ Literally, "I dwelt in a Qêdârîte tent."

¹¹ Hebrew, *šālôm*.

¹² Hebrew, *šālôm*.

¹³ Hebrew, *miḥāmâ*.

psalm 121

(edition: September 15, 2022)

¹ *A processional hymn¹*

the psalmist seeks assurance in trial

I will raise my eyes to the hills.

Is this from whence my relief² will come?³

² Will my help come from YHWH,
Creator of heaven and earth?

the psalmist's question is answered

³ He will not allow your feet to stumble.

He who watches⁴ out for you will never slumber.

⁴ Be assured, He will not relax or ever fall asleep—

He who is Yisrā'el's Guardian.⁵

⁵ YHWH is your shield.⁶

YHWH is your shade, right beside you.⁷

⁶ Daytime sun will not beat down on you;

nor shall the moonlight at night.

⁷ YHWH will protect⁸ you from every evil.

He will safeguard⁹ your life.

⁸ YHWH will watch¹⁰ over all your comings and goings¹¹
from this moment, and ever more.

¹ The Hebrew word often has the physical meaning of “stair,” “step,” or “slope.” It could be so translated here, in which case we would have something like “A Song Performed on the Steps of the Temple.” It could also be more figurative, “A Song Performed in Preparation to ascend to (meet with) Yahweh.”

² Hebrew, *‘ēzer I*.

³ In Hebrew, this second line begins with an interrogative, *me’ayin*. I take this question to extend to verse 2.

⁴ The root is *šmr*. This is the first of six times this root will appear in this psalm. We could title this psalm, *Šmr*, “The Guardian.”

⁵ This is the second time our root, *šmr*, as appeared in this psalm.

⁶ This is the third time our root, *šmr*, as appeared in this psalm.

⁷ Literally, “on your right hand”

⁸ This is the fourth time our root, *šmr*, as appeared in this psalm.

⁹ This is the fifth time our root, *šmr*, as appeared in this psalm.

¹⁰ This is the sixth time our root, *šmr*, as appeared in this psalm.

¹¹ Literally, “your going out and your coming in.”

Psalm 122

(edition: June 4, 2020)

¹ *A processional hymn¹ to Dāwid²*

the joy of anticipation

I rejoiced when they said to me,
“Let’s go to YHWH’s temple.”

the beauty of y^erûšālayim

² Our feet stood
within your gates, Y^erûšālayim—
³ Y^erûšālayim, built up,
united, as one—³
⁴ where⁴ the familiar tribes ascend,
the tribes of Yāh,
as enjoined upon Yisrā’ēl
to profess YHWH’s character.⁵
⁵ For it is there that the thrones of governance are established;
thrones belonging to Dāwid’s line.⁶

Prayer for y^erûšālayim

⁶ Seek Y^erûšālayim’s welfare⁷.
May they be at ease, who love you.
⁷ May there be peace within your walls;
security within your fortifications.
⁸ For family and fellow citizens⁸
I pray for peace within you.
⁹ Because of the temple of YHWH, our God,
I can anticipate⁹ your success¹⁰.

¹ The Hebrew word often has the physical meaning of “stair,” “step,” or “slope.” It could be so translated here, in which case we would have something like “A Song Performed on the Steps of the Temple.” It could also be more figurative, “A Song Performed in Preparation to ascend to (meet with) Yahweh.”

² The might be read as “the King,” meaning the earthly king, the divine King, or both. Slightly less likely, it might also be read as “Beloved One.”

³ This is a somewhat difficult phrase, as can be seen from the myriad translations.

⁴ Hebrew, *šeššām*.

⁵ Literally, “name.”

⁶ Literally, “house,” or “dynasty.”

⁷ Hebrew, *šālôm*.

⁸ Both “family” and “fellow citizens” have the 1st person singular possessive, “my.” I have chosen not to translate this as the entire admonition to pray for Jerusalem is addressed to many.

⁹ Hebrew, *biqqēš*. “The meaning of *biqqesh* varies according to the degree of intensity and the difference in the mode of seeking (‘to seek out,’ ‘search,’ ‘search for,’ ‘seek,’ ‘wish,’ ‘long for,’ ‘desire,’ ‘demand or ask,’ etc.).

¹⁰ Hebrew, *ṭôb*.

psalm 123

(edition: September 21, 2022)

¹ *A processional hymn¹*

*t*rust in yahweh

It is to You that I lift my eyes,
The One who sits in heaven.

² See how, as the eyes of servants are on their master,
as the eyes of maid servants are on their mistress,
so are our eyes on YHWH, our God, until He has pity on us.

*p*lea

³ Have pity² on us, YHWH, have pity on us,
for we are covered³ in contempt.
⁴ Our lives are overflowing⁴ with the mockery⁵ of the self-assured⁶,
with the disdain of elites⁷.

¹ The Hebrew word often has the physical meaning of “stair,” “step,” or “slope.” It could be so translated here, in which case we would have something like “A Song Performed on the Steps of the Temple.” It could also be more figurative, “A Song Performed in Preparation to ascend to (meet with) Yahweh.”

² Hebrew, *ḥānan*.

³ Hebrew, *śāḇa*‘. This is “to be filled or sated.” However, the speakers are not full of contempt for others, but of others contempt. Our English idiom, “Covered in” comes closer to capturing the direction of the contempt than the more traditional “filled.”

⁴ Again, Hebrew, *śāḇa*‘.

⁵ Hebrew, *la*‘ag.

⁶ Hebrew, *ša*^a*nān*.

⁷ Hebrew, *ga*^a*yôn*.

psalm 124

(edition: September 21, 2022)

¹ *A processional hymn¹. For Dāwid²*

Wonder at yahweh's rescue

If YHWH had not been for us—
Yiśrā'ēl should surely say—
² if YHWH had not been for us
when mortals³ rose up against us,
³ then they would have consumed us alive
when their blazing anger came upon us;
⁴ then the waters would have swept over us,
the torrential flow surged⁴ over our necks⁵,
⁵ then the churning water would have surged over us⁶.

Praise for yahweh's rescue

⁶ YHWH be praised,
Who did not yield us, prey for their teeth.
⁷ As a bird we⁷ escaped the fowler's net.
Breaking the net, we escaped.
⁸ Our help is found in the character⁸ of YHWH,
Maker of heaven and earth.

¹ The Hebrew word often has the physical meaning of “stair,” “step,” or “slope.” It could be so translated here, in which case we would have something like “A Song Performed on the Steps of the Temple.” It could also be more figurative, “A Song Performed in Preparation to ascend to (meet with) Yahweh.”

² The might be read as “the King,” meaning the earthly king, the divine King, or both. Slightly less likely, it might also be read as “Beloved One.”

³ Hebrew, *'ādām*.

⁴ I understand this to be *'ābar II* as proposed in *TDOT* (Vol. X, p. x).

⁵ Hebrew, *nepēš*.

⁶ Hebrew, *nepēš*

⁷ Hebrew, *nepēš*

⁸ Literally, “name.”

psalm 125

(edition: January 18, 2023)

¹ *A processional hymn*¹

Those who trust in YHWH are like mount Ṣiyyôn.

They cannot be moved, always enduring²

² Y^erûṣalāyim has mountains encircling it

and YHWH encircles his people, now and forever.

³ So, governance³ of the ungodly should never dictate⁴ the decisions⁵ of the just
so that the just never become complicit⁶ with injustice.

⁴ Be good, YHWH, to those who are good

and to those who are sincerely⁷ just.

⁵ As for those who yield to⁸ perversion,

YHWH will remove⁹ them with those who act with cruelty¹⁰.

Peace be upon Yiśrā'ēl.

¹ The Hebrew word often has the physical meaning of “stair,” “step,” or “slope.” It could be so translated here, in which case we would have something like “A Song Performed on the Steps of the Temple.” It could also be more figurative, “A Song Performed in Preparation to ascend to (meet with) Yahweh.”

² Hebrew, *yāṣab*.

³ Hebrew, *šēbet*, “rod, scepter.” Here we take it as “scepter” and indicative of ruling. The Hebrew is literally, “the scepter of the ungodly.”

⁴ Hebrew, *nūah*, “to rest, settle upon.” Here, we understand the “resting upon” or the “settling upon” to mean that the just never let the wicked governance of the ungodly “rest upon” or “settle” upon the just as they make decisions. Hence, my “adopt.” We take the imperfect to be modal rather than temporal.

⁵ Hebrew, *gôṛāl*. This is literally “lot,” an instrument used for decision making.

⁶ Hebrew, *šālah*. Literally, “the just do not extend their hands with injustice.” This might mean that the just, themselves never use their power (hands) to act unjustly. But I see it as being indicative of their not extending their hands to those (the ungodly of the previous line) who govern unjustly.

⁷ Literally, “in their heart.”

⁸ Hebrew, *nāṭā*, “to stretch out, extend.”

⁹ Hebrew, *hālāk*, in the Hiphil.

¹⁰ Hebrew, *’āwen*.

psalm 126

(edition: March 30, 2022)

¹ *A Processional hymn.*

Remembrance of and appeal to yahweh's past benefits...

Whenever YHWH has reversed Šîyôn's captivity
we have been like those who dream.

² At such times our mouths are imbued¹ with laughter;
and our tongue raises a shout for joy.

At such times those in other nations say,

“YHWH has shown his greatness in what he has done for them.”

³ YHWH has indeed shown his greatness in what he has done for us.
We are joyful.

f *or help in the present trials of draught and famine*

⁴ Return, O YHWH, our fortunes,
as a torrent of water² in the desert³

⁵ that those who plant while weeping⁴
may harvest with shouts of joy;

⁶ that he who goes out weeping
as he bears his sack of seeds
may finally return, rejoicing
bearing his bunches of wheat⁵.

¹ Hebrew, *mâlê'*, “be filled with.”

² Hebrew, *'āpîq I*. The worshippers hope that their fortunes, lost in draught, will be return as a dry wadi bed suddenly runs with a torrent of water after a rain storm.

³ Hebrew, *negeb*.

⁴ After an extended draught, planting season is accompanied by uncertainty about the outcome of the planter's labors.

⁵ Traditional “sheaves.”

psalm 127

(edition: march 1, 2023)

- ¹ *A processional hymn¹. Belonging to Šēlōmōh.*
- If YHWH does not wish to build a house²,
it is to no avail for its builders to labor on it.
If YHWH does not intend to protect a city,
it is to no avail for guards to keep watch.
- ² It is to no avail whether you arise early
or stay up late.
eating food produced through much labor.³
Still,⁴ its God⁵ who grants repose to those He loves.⁶
- ³ Know⁷ that children are YHWH's inheritance.
One's wage is the fruit of the womb.
- ⁴ As arrows in the hero's hand,
even so are the children of one's prime⁸.
- ⁵ Happy is the man who has filled his quiver with them.
He will not be disappointed.

¹ The Hebrew word often has the physical meaning of “stair,” “step,” or “slope.” It could be so translated here, in which case we would have something like “A Song Performed on the Steps of the Temple.” It could also be more figurative, “A Song Performed in Preparation to ascend to (meet with) Yahweh.”

² Here, I understand the imperfect verb, *ḥānā*, to be in the subjunctive/ optative mood. Hebrew has no independent modal grammatical forms and so must be understood through context.

³ Literally, “bread of labors.”

⁴ Hebrew, *kēn*.

⁵ Literally, “He.”

⁶ The difficulty of this verse is clearly seen by the plethora of different translations and interpretations. There is no room for dogmatism here. It is one of the many times when one is tempted to translate. “...” as one does when reading an impossible broken text.

⁷ Hebrew, *hinnēh*.

⁸ Hebrew, *nē'ûrîm*.

psalm 128

(edition: December 13, 2023)

¹ *A processional hymn.*

Confident¹ can everyone be who reverences YHWH,
who lives² by His principles³.

² You will certainly live off⁴ what you have toiled over⁵.
You will be secure⁶ and well off⁷.

³ Your wife will be like a bountiful vine on the side of your home.
Your children will be like transplanted olive trees around your table.

⁴ Bear witness! Thus is a man⁸ blessed
who reverences YHWH.

⁵ May YHWH bless you from Şîyôn,
allow you to experience⁹ Y^erûşalāyim's benefits throughout your life,
⁶ and to see your grandchildren.

Peace be upon Yîsrā'ēl!

¹ Hebrew, 'ašrê. See my discussion of this word in "Index of Meaning and Translation of Common and Significant Words."

² Literally, "walk."

³ Literally, "in his paths/ways"

⁴ Literally, "eat."

⁵ Literally, "the toil/or product of your hands."

⁶ Hebrew, 'ašrê, again.

⁷ Hebrew, *tôb*.

⁸ Though I might and do justifiably translate *geber* in a genderless fashion in other settings, here the context clearly calls for a gender specific translation. Such were the times that the focus is on men.

⁹ Literally, "to see."

psalm 129

(edition: December 14, 2023)

¹ *A processional hymn.*

Israel's history of harassment

They have greatly harassed me from my earliest times¹,
Yiśrā'ēl can certainly say.

² They have greatly harassed me from my earliest times,
but they have not prevailed against me.

³ The ploughers ploughed upon my back.
They made long furrows.

The future of israel's harassers

⁴ YHWH is just.
He will sunder² the shackles³ of the malevolently⁴.

⁵ They will be thwarted⁵ and go into retreat,
all that have enmity⁶ for Šîyôn.

⁶ They will be as grass on a roof—
before it has grown, it shrivels up—

⁷ of which a reaper does not take a handful,
or bundle at his chest.

⁸ No one who passes by will say,
“YHWH's blessings be upon you.
We bless you in YHWH's name.”

¹ Hebrew, *n^e 'ûrîm*, literally, “from my youth.”

² Hebrew, *qāṣaṣ*.

³ Hebrew, *'ābôt*.

⁴ Hebrew, *rāšā'*.

⁵ Hebrew, *būš*.

⁶ Hebrew, *śānē'*.

psalm 130

(edition: september 15, 2022)

¹ *A processional hymn*¹

Invocation/ plea

² From the deepest of places,² I cry out to you, YHWH
O Lord, hear me!³
Listen to me⁴ as I appeal to your generosity⁵.

Plea for forgiveness

³ “If you stay on the look out for sin, Yah,
My Lord, who will be able to stand before you?”
⁴ But it is in your nature to forgive.⁶
This is why you are revered.⁷

hopeful expectation

⁵ I fully expect YHWH;
every part of me is expecting him
as I await his decision.⁸
⁶ I⁹ am watching for the Lord
more than watchmen watch for the morning—
far more than watchmen watch for the morning.¹⁰

benediction/ assurance

⁷ Have hope, Yisrā’el, in YHWH,
knowing that YHWH possesses fidelity,
along with an abundant capacity to pardon;¹¹
⁸ even so far as to be able to free¹² Yisrā’el
from all their sins.

¹ The Hebrew word often has the physical meaning of “stair,” “step,” or “slope.” It could be so translated here, in which case we would have something like “A Song Performed on the Steps of the Temple.” It could also be more figurative, “A Song Performed in Preparation to ascend to (meet with) Yahweh.” I have chosen to split the difference with my translation, but have an affinity for the latter translation here.

² The verb, *‘mq*, can have the meaning of “deep,” “hidden,” and “profound.” The noun that is used here, *ma‘maqqîm*, is most often associated with the watery depths of the sea. Here, it could be referencing the watery depths of *š’ôl*, the underworld, or world of the dead, hell.

³ Literally, “my voice.”

⁴ Literally, “my voice.”

⁵ The Hebrew word, *taḥanûn*, traditionally translated “supplication,” or some such idea, is derived from the verb, *ḥānan*, meaning “to be gracious, to show grace/ mercy/ compassion.” See *Excursus: Common and Significant Hebrew Words* for an in-depth discussion of this word. To “supplicate” is not simply to ask for something from God. It is to ask him specifically to show his character and exercise his inner and natural generosity.

⁶ Literally, “forgiveness is with you.”

⁷ Hebrew *yr’*. This is traditionally, “fear.” The etymology is uncertain. Some have suggested a basic meaning of “tremble.” Some, connecting it to “lung” see in it “be short of breath” (See *TDOT*, Vol. VI, p. 291), suggesting something that is deeply stirring and impactful.

⁸ Literally, “word.” The “word” for which the Psalmist waits is “I extend my forgiveness to you.”

⁹ Hebrew, “my soul.”

¹⁰ The line is repeated twice. I understand the Psalmist’s repetition to indicate intensification from line one to line two.

¹¹ Hebrew, *pāḏâ*, “to spare, yield, buy, buy back, redeem, free, release (from obligation and consequence), pardon.”

¹² Hebrew, *pāḏâ*. See previous note.

psalm 131

(edition: june 15, 2023)

- ¹ *A processional hymn. Belonging to Dāwid.*
- YHWH, I¹ am not presumptuous².
Nor am I arrogant.³
Nor do I pursue⁴ great matters⁵,
or things beyond my comprehension⁶.
- ² I have most certainly disciplined⁷ and quieted myself
as a child weaned of its mother,
I am as a weaned child.
- ³ Let Yiśrā'ēl wait expectantly⁸ on YHWH
for as long as it takes⁹.

¹ Literally, “my heart.”

² Hebrew, *gāḇah*.

³ Literally, “nor are my eyes uplifted.”

⁴ Hebrew, *hālak*, “go, walk.”

⁵ Hebrew, *gādōl*, in the plural.

⁶ Hebrew, *pālā'*. Most often used of “extraordinary phenomena, transcending the power of human knowledge and imagination” (*TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x).

⁷ Here, I take Hebrew *šiwvîṭ* as the Shaphel form of the verb to be as Labuschagne has suggested (See, *TDOT*, Vol. x, p. x). Hence, “cause myself to be,” understanding this to indicate self-control as the weaned child in the next line learns to do over time.

⁸ Could legitimately translate, “put hope in,” but the idea of “waiting” patiently and expectantly fits the tone of the previous verses.

⁹ Literally, “now and forever.” But, again, this literal and traditional reading, tends to obscure its relationship with the proceeding verses that indicate a long period of patience and coming to terms with human limitations. My translation is also applicable to the mood of pilgrims as they anxiously await the culmination of their pilgrimage. Their waiting will not last forever. But however long it lasts, it will be long enough to produce anxiousness and excitement.

psalm 138

(edition: october 16, 2023)

¹ *Belonging to Dāwid.*

Promise of praise

I will praise You with my whole being¹.
In the presence of ʾēlōhîm, I will sing of You.

² I will bow toward Your temple preeminent²,
and testify of Your character³
because of Your unwavering devotion⁴ and fidelity⁵.
For You magnify Your character and word above all things.

³ When I cried out, You answered me.
You infused strength into me.

⁴ All the world's rulers⁶ will praise You, YHWH
when they hear the words You speak⁷.

⁵ They will sing of YHWH's actions⁸,
For YHWH's reputation⁹ is tremendous¹⁰.

Reasons for praise

⁶ Though YHWH is exalted, He is aware of¹¹ the lowly¹²
but keeps His distance from¹³ the prestigious¹⁴.
⁷ When I pass through¹⁵ adversity,
You reinforce¹⁶ me.
You exert¹⁷ Your power¹⁸ against my hostile enemies,
and with maximum power¹⁹ You deliver me.
⁸ YHWH puts an end²⁰ to it for me.
YHWH, Your unwavering devotion²¹ is ever present²².
You have no intention of abandoning²³ what You have made²⁴.

¹ Literally and traditionally, “with all my heart.”

² Hebrew, *qōdeš*. Literally, “Your temple of preeminence.”

³ Literally, “name.”

⁴ Hebrew, *hesed*.

⁵ Hebrew, *ʾemet*.

⁶ Literally, “kings.”

⁷ Literally, “the words of Your mouth.”

⁸ Hebrew, *derek*.

⁹ Hebrew, *kābôd*.

¹⁰ Hebrew, *gādōl*.

¹¹ Hebrew, *râ'â*, literally, “sees.”

¹² Hebrew, *šāpāl*.

¹³ Literally, “he knows from a distance.”

¹⁴ Hebrew, *gābōah*.

¹⁵ Literally, “walk.”

¹⁶ Hebrew, *hāyâ*.

¹⁷ Hebrew, *šālah*, literally, “send, stretch out, extend.”

¹⁸ Literally, “hand.”

¹⁹ Literally, “Your right hand.” The right hand is the dominant hand, the stronger hand.

²⁰ Hebrew is *gāmar*. Interestingly, the LXX has *antapodidōmi*, “recompense.” The derived noun can mean “retribution” (See *TDNT*, Vol. x, p. x). We might read, “Yahweh retaliates in my behalf.” Either way, it seems that the point is that God put an end to the adversity and hostility that the Psalmist mentioned in the previous verse.

²¹ Hebrew, *hesed*.

²² Hebrew, *’ōlām*.

²³ The verb is in the jussive mood. Almost universally, the Hebrew jussive mood has been taken as representing a statement somewhere between an overt command and suggestion. However, like the cohortative, the jussive is one of the irrealis moods that express an as yet unrealized action, a possibility. In my view, both cohortative and jussive can reflect desire and intent. That is how I take it here. It is the smallest of leaps from the frequent translation, “May you...,” “May he...,” “May I...,” to my “You intend/desire...,” “He intends/desires...,” “I intend/desire...”

²⁴ Literally, “the works of Your hands.”

psalm 140

(edition: march 8, 2023)

¹ For the Director:¹ a hymn belonging to Dāwid.

1st plea

^{2/1} Rescue me, YHWH, from the malicious person²;
protect me from violent individuals
^{3/2} who secretly,³ at all times, intend harm.
They live for conflict⁴.
^{4/3} Their tongue is sharp, like a snake's fangs⁵.
Viper's venom is under their lips.

selâ

2nd plea

^{5/4} Protect me, YHWH, from the ungodly's power.
Protect me from violent individuals,
who intend to trip me⁶ up.
^{6/5} The high and mighty⁷ hide net and snare for me.
They spread a net across my path.
They place a snare for me.

selâ

3rd plea

^{7/6} I spoke to YHWH, "You are my God.
Hear, YHWH, my pleading voice,
^{8/7} YHWH, my Lord, my powerful protection,
You have shielded me⁸ during times of conflict.
^{9/8} Do not grant, YHWH, the ungodly's deeply-held desires.
Do not grant success to their vile plans by which they hope to rise.

selâ

4th plea

^{10/9} As for the chief of those who encircle me,
may their own burdening⁹ statements¹⁰ overwhelm¹¹ them.
^{11/10} Let burning coals fall upon them.
Shove¹² them into standing fire,
into a wretchedness¹³ from which there is no escape¹⁴.
^{12/11} A slanderous¹⁵ individual¹⁶ should have no place in the land.
Let repeated disasters hunt down the violent individual.

Confession

^{13/12} I know that YHWH holds court¹⁷ for the downtrodden;
brings justice for the impoverished.
^{14/13} Certainly, the just¹⁸ laud Your character¹⁹
The upright dwell in Your presence.

¹ Hebrew *lamnaṣṣēḥa*. See Psalm 4 note.

² Literally, “man.” As is so often the case, there is no reason to take *’ādām* as gender specific in this case.

³ Literally, “in the heart.”

⁴ Hebrew, *milḥāmâ*.

⁵ Literally, “They sharpen their tongue like a snake’s.” The metaphor is not quite right. While in speech, humans do harm with their tongue, snakes’ tongues do no harm, but their fangs. So, we have supplied “fangs” for clarity. Then too, the idea of sharpening the tongue is awkward.

⁶ Literally, “my steps.”

⁷ Hebrew, *gē’eh*. The simple, “proud” will not do, it seems to me. The word does not simply indicate arrogance. It is indicative of an arrogance born of high birth or of acquired position and power.

⁸ Literally, “my head.” Like “my soul,” this is often to be translated with a simple pronoun, especially when there is no significance attached to the body part.

⁹ Hebrew, *’āmal*. Literally, “labor, toil.” Also “distress, trouble.”

¹⁰ Hebrew, *šāpâ*. Being in the dual, the literally rendering would be lips. But “lips” can serve as a metonym for “language,” which, here, I extend to “statement,” reflective of the defamation the Psalmist’s enemies heap upon him. We might literally translate “the tiresomeness of their lips.”

¹¹ Hebrew, *kâsâ*. The basic meaning of “cover” can gravitate to “overwhelm,” which is how I take it here.

¹² Literally, “cause to fall.”

¹³ LXX translates Hebrew, *mahmōrâ* (appearing only here) as *talaipōria*. It is difficult to know exactly where the LXX translators were coming from or what they did. Is it possible that they concluded that the world came from the root *hmm*, “terror, panic, confusion, turmoil”?

¹⁴ Literally, “they are unable to rise.”

¹⁵ Literally, “tongue.” “An evil tongue wreaks havoc both in private and juridical life; the word thus also acquires the meaning of ‘malicious rumor, slander’” (*TDOT*, Vol. X, p. x).

¹⁶ Literally, “a man of tongue/slander.”

¹⁷ Hebrew, *dîn*.

¹⁸ Hebrew, *ṣaddîq*.

¹⁹ Literally, “name.”

psalm 145

(edition: June 6, 2020)

¹ *A song of praise belonging to David*

Invocation

I will exalt you, my God, my King.¹
I will praise² your character,³ always and forever.⁴
² Every day, I will praise you.
I repeat,⁵ I will sing to your character, always and forever.
³ YHWH is great, and worthy of loud and joyful acclamation.⁶
There is no comprehending⁷ His greatness.⁸
⁴ One generation after another finds cause to boast of⁹ all you do,
and confidently proclaim¹⁰ your surpassing deeds.¹¹

the Psalmist's person confession

⁵ Of your impossible and incomprehensible Being,¹²
and your impenetrable¹³ actions.¹⁴
⁶ Others expound upon¹⁵ your awe-inspiring deeds,
while I just keep tallying up¹⁶ the great things you do.
⁷ Others gush¹⁷ with remembrances of how incredibly good you are,
while I joyfully shout out¹⁸ the rightness of all you do¹⁹.

the divine character

⁸ YHWH is accepting²⁰ and nurturing,²¹
He is not inclined to reject,²² but is of enormous fidelity.²³
⁹ YHWH is good to all,
and his loving interest²⁴ controls his every action.

divine governance

¹⁰ All your works express gratitude to you, YHWH.
Those whose devotion you have won,²⁵ kneel reverently before you.
¹¹ They speak of the significance²⁶ of your governance,²⁷
and talk of your excellencies,²⁸
¹² in order to teach those not devoted²⁹ to you³⁰ of your excellencies
and the necessity of your dignifying³¹ governance.
¹³ Yours is a rule that lasts for all time;
a dominion that endures though all generations of time.

the divine character

¹⁴ A buttress is YHWH to all those who might be falling.
He raises up³² those who are bent over.

15 All eyes set themselves expectantly upon you,
as you provide all with sustenance when it is needed,³³
16 opening your hand,
and filling all living things with what is desired.
17 YHWH acts justly in all his dealings;³⁴
devoted³⁵ in all that he does.
18 YHWH stays close by those who call out to him;
to all those who call out to him trustingly.³⁶
19 He supplies³⁷ the acceptance³⁸ that those who fear him want.
He hears their repeated cries for help³⁹ and comes to their assistance
20 Yahweh protects all those who love him,
while all those who act wrongfully he eradicates.⁴⁰

benediction

21 I will openly declare praise for YHWH.
But more,⁴¹ every living thing will praise his incomparable⁴² character,⁴³
always and forever.⁴⁴

¹ I understand the possessive “my” from the earlier, “my God,” to apply to “the King” as well.

² Hebrew, *bārak*. The verb is related to the noun, “knee,” and can mean, “to bow the knee.” This bowing of the knee implies a degree of submission. To bless God’s name, or character suggests an acknowledgment, a confession of dependence upon the character of God for all good things. We think, here, of Moroni’s confession that “all things which are good cometh of Christ; otherwise men were fallen, and there could no good thing come unto them” (Moroni 7.²⁴).

³ Literally, “name.”

⁴ Hebrew, *l’ôlām wa ‘ed*.

⁵ This is the Hebrew conjunction *w^e*, which, as we have so often said, often wants understood as something more than a simple, “and.”

⁶ Hebrew, *hālāl*.

⁷ Literally, “there is no searching his greatness.”

⁸ Hebrew, *gedûllâ*. In his ecstasy, the Psalmist will follow this up with one supreme adjective, noun, and phrase after another.

⁹ Hebrew, *šābāḥ*

¹⁰ Hebrew, *nāgād*

¹¹ Hebrew, *gebûrâ*.

¹² I have read this line of verse five, with its succession of three words, *h^adār k^abôd hôdekā* (the first two in the construct state), a hundred times, maybe more. I have read it in multiple English translations, in Hebrew, in Greek, in Latin... I have played with a dozen different translations of my own. I really have thought a great deal about it, and its attempted depiction of God. I still haven’t a clue what these three successive words really mean to say. Oh, sure, I get the basic point: “God is one amazing Being.”

All three words have the sense of “glory,” “splendor,” “majesty,” “honor,” “impressiveness,” etc. Whatever differing nuance each of these words may have is difficult to ferret out. This is actually my first problem. Perhaps some ancient “intelligentsia” might have appreciated and understood the subtle nuances

of these words in combination with each other, but could the normal ancient illiterate worshipper? Was it then and is it now only to be appreciated by a select few intellectuals or “spiritualist”?

The fact is, I don’t think even intellectuals or spiritualists fully understand or appreciate what this combination of words is trying to communicate. And I think that this may just be the point!

As I indicated, I have read dozens of translations. Neither in their translations or comments do I see any indication that these scholars have any real appreciation for what exactly is being communicated here. Here is a sampling.

“The glorious splendor of your majesty.” (NIV, NASB, Amplified, RSV, Tanakh, ESV)

“The grandeur of Your glorious majesty.” (Alter)

“The splendour of the majesty of your glory.” (Eaton)

“The glorious majesty of your honor.” (ASV)

“The magnificence of the glory of thine honor.” (Wycliff)

I don’t mean to be critical but this is all just gobbly gook. I don’t know what any of this means. I suspect the translators don’t either. But, again, maybe *this* is precisely the point! “God cannot be ‘worded.’ So the author strings together an impossible combination of sounds and words that leave us confused and frustrated in our attempts to translate and describe. We were not supposed to translate and understand the meaning of each word. We are being reminded that we cannot translate and understand God.

Perhaps I am just trying to excuse my own ignorance. It might just be that I am not very bright. I remain open to this possibility. But, once more, I cannot help wondering if this isn’t the very point. We are all ignorant as we attempt to talk about and comprehend God.

Hence, my very non-literal translation. But maybe this non-literal translation is literally what the original writer intended. Maybe we should translate and read, “glorious... honored... splendorous... Oh heck, I give up. There’s no describing him!”

¹³ Hebrew, *pele*’. “Köhler proposed ‘be different, striking, remarkable,’ but this definition is too general. 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. *).

¹⁴ Hebrew, *dābar*, “word, or thing.”

¹⁵ Hebrew, *’āmar*

¹⁶ Hebrew, *sāphar*

¹⁷ Hebrew, *nāba*’

¹⁸ Hebrew, *rānan*

¹⁹ Literally, “your righteousness.”

²⁰ Hebrew, *ḥannûn*.

²¹ Hebrew, *rahûm*.

²² This is Hebrew, *’aph*. There is so much imagery in this word, one could go on and on. First, this word also means “nose.” Some have supposed it to be an onomatopoeic word that indicates the “breath,” or, in moments of displeasure, the “snort,” that emanates from the nose. Based on the Arabic cognate and its meaning of “despise,” or “refuse,” others have suggested that the imagery of “looking down the nose” at another is involved. Both are illustrative. Anger is certainly an internal feeling. At the same time, my anger, internal to myself, spills over onto the other and my feelings for and about them. When I am angry, my inclination is to reject the other’s significance and value to me. In small and large ways, I reject or dismiss them. Especially given the witness of God’s “fidelity” in the next line, it seemed best to translate *’aph* as “rejection” in this instance.

²³ Hebrew, *ḥesed II*.

²⁴ Hebrew, *raḥamîm*.

²⁵ Hebrew, *ḥāsîd*.

²⁶ Hebrew, *kābôd*.

²⁷ Verses 11 and 12 seem to be addressing the advantage of one group over the disadvantage of another. One group knows of God’s significance in their lives, the other group, having not yet made the discovery, is in need of instruction from the first group.

²⁸ Hebrew, *gebûrâ*.

²⁹ This is literally “the sons of men.” As mentioned in the previous note, I take those spoken of in verse 12 to be contrasted with those who are committed to God, mentioned in verses 10 and 11. We are dealing here with “saints,” and “non-saints.”

³⁰ Hebrew, “to him.”

³¹ Hebrew, *hādār*.

³² Hebrew, *zāqap*. The translation offered by the Jewish Publication Society’s *Tanakh Translation* is appealing: “makes all who are bent stand straight.”

³³ Literally, “in its time.”

³⁴ Hebrew, *derek*.

³⁵ Hebrew, *ḥāsîd*.

³⁶ Hebrew, *’emet*.

³⁷ Hebrew, *’āsâ I*.

³⁸ Hebrew, *rāṣôn*.

³⁹ Hebrew, *šaw’â*. “The root *šw’* is used consistently in contexts reflecting negative experiences, one possible reaction to which is expressed by *šw’*. Considering the word field accompanying *šw’* (usually *qr’*, *nšl*, *yš’*, *tepillâ*, *qôl*, *taḥanûn*), one can say that this reaction takes the form of a vocal utterance probably to be understood, similar to the case of קַוּצָה, ‘as a successive series of screams’ that aims at prompting helping intervention” (*TDOT*).

⁴⁰ Hebrew, *šāmad*. “Clearly *šmd* almost always denotes an act of destruction; the dictionaries therefore give its meaning as ‘destroy, annihilate.’ Certain observations, however, support a more abstract meaning, which need not necessarily imply ‘annihilation’—something more like ‘remove’” (*TDOT*). The verse begins with *sāmar* and ends with *šāmad*. This seems a good example of how assonance can enhance, and sometimes clarify meaning. Here, the verbs are applied to populations of opposite character. Thus, their treatment is opposite. Those who trust in God—and by extension, avoid wrongful behavior—are protected. Those who engage in wrongful behavior thus experience the opposite of protection

⁴¹ This is the simple conjunction, *w^e*. It might be argued that my translation would want a Hebrew particle such as *gam*, and I would agree if we were translating prose. But poetry is notorious for its economy of words. It seems to me that the poet has upped the ante from the first to the second poetic line. In the first line, we have one lone reveler in God. In the second we have every living thing. This elevation from the first to the second line seems to justify our, “but more,” and then some.

⁴² Hebrew, *qōdeš*.

⁴³ Again, as earlier, literally, “name.”

⁴⁴ The Psalm returns to and ends with its earlier, *l^e’ôlām wa’ed*. The Psalm, having established God’s infinite capabilities, all living beings will forever confess that their happiness, their very existence rests in the infinitely capable hands of Yahweh. No one and no thing will ever be so grand that they will rise

above this confession of dependence. Even the “sanctified” and those in possession of celestial glory will spend eternity secure in this confession. “All things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever” (DC 76.93). We “say the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, worshiping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever” (DC 76.²¹).

psalm 146

(edition: september 22, 2023)

Invocation

- ¹ Hall^olûyah
Praise YHWH¹, my all².
² I will praise YHWH as long as I live.
I will sing of my God always.

On human frailty

- ³ Don't put trust in even the best³ of human beings⁴,
for there is no salvation⁵ to be found in them.
⁴ He expires his final breath, he returns to the soil.
In that very day, all⁶ his intentions are destroyed⁷.

On the fullness of yahweh

- ⁵ Enduring⁸ is he whose help comes from Ya^ʿqōb's God;
His hope placed on YHWH, our God—
⁶ The One who created heaven and earth and ocean
and all that is in them,
the One who is always reliable⁹,
⁷ the One who effects justice for the oppressed,
the One who provides food for the hungry,
YHWH, who liberates those held captive,
⁸ YHWH, who gives sight to the blind¹⁰,
YHWH, who lifts those who are exhausted¹¹,
YHWH, who loves those who do right,
⁹ YHWH, who watches after foreigners;
He adopts¹² orphans and widows
but undermines the pursuits¹³ of the malevolently immoral¹⁴.

Benediction

- ¹⁰ YHWH will reign forever,
Your God, Šiyôn, generation upon generation.

Hall^olûyah.

¹ Hebrew, *Yāh*, shortened form of YHWH.

² Hebrew, *nepeš*, traditionally, “soul.”

³ Hebrew, *nāḏīb*. According to *TDOT*, “For all occurrences of the word group in the OT, as well as in Postbiblical Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic, the element of free will is determinative. The act of giving, the

gift, and the decision are all free and voluntary. The basic meaning of the root *ndb* can therefore be defined as ‘prove oneself freely willing’” (Vol. x, p. x). The word is sometimes parallel with “king,” and so can mean “nobleman” as though, perhaps, the “nobleman” gives freely of his time, energy, and resources to the community. Of course, kings and “nobleman” rarely turn out to be so noble, generous, or altruistic so that the word use for such individuals is likely to be a bit of self-promoting propaganda.

⁴ Literally, “the sons of man.”

⁵ Hebrew, *t^ešû ‘â*.

⁶ Greek, *pas* is found in the LXX translation.

⁷ Hebrew, *‘âbad*.

⁸ Hebrew, *‘ašrê*. See my comments on this word in the notes for Psalm 1. I take the basic meaning as “advancing.” In the previous two verses, all human beings, whether they put their trust in others or have trust place in them by others, die and cease to have influence. But this verse is to be seen as contrasting those of the previous two verses with those who trust in Yahweh. Whereas the former “perish,” the latter “endure.”

Both vocabulary and grammar show this psalm to be of likely latter composition. Do we see here the suggestion of some form of “eternal” or “enduring life”?

⁹ Hebrew, *‘emet*.

¹⁰ Literally, “opens the blind.”

¹¹ Hebrew, *kâpap*, “bent or bowed down, over.” *TWOT* assumes it to come from *kap*, hand. Thus, perhaps we should envision individuals who have fallen “on all fours,” or have fallen “to their hands and knees.”

¹² Hebrew, *‘ûd*. LXX translates, *analambanō*, “to take up, take to oneself.”

¹³ Hebrew, *derek*.

¹⁴ Hebrew, *rāšā‘* in the plural.

Psalm 147

(edition: april 2, 2023)

Invocation

- ¹ Hall^elûyah.
Truly,¹ it is good to sing of our God!
Yes, delightful, glorious is a song of praise!

First exposition on why yahweh is to be praised

- ² YHWH is rebuilding Y^erûšalāyim,
Gathering Yisrā'ēl's refugees.
³ Healing the heartbroken,²
putting an end³ to their emotional distress.

⁴ Tallying up the number of stars,
He is able to name every single one of them.
⁵ Our Lord is **awesome** and abounding in power.
There is no limit⁴ to his understanding.
⁶ YHWH restores the downtrodden.
He reduces the ungodly lower than dirt⁵.

Second exposition on why Yahweh is to be praised

- ⁷ Sing thankfully to YHWH.
With the accompaniment of lyre, sing to our God
⁸ who fills the sky with clouds;
who ensures⁶ rain for the soil;
who causes mountain grasses to grow.
⁹ He provides food to animals;
and to the chirping⁷ offspring of ravens.

¹⁰ It is not in the horse's power that He finds pleasure.
It is not in human muscle⁸ that he finds delight.
¹¹ YHWH is One who accepts those who reverence Him;
those who trust in his fidelity.

Third exposition on why yahweh is to be praised

- ¹² Praise YHWH, O Y^erûšalāyim.
Praise your God, O Şiyyôn.
¹³ For He has strengthened your barred gates,
blessing your children within.
¹⁴ He has established peace in your land.
He has satisfied you with high-quality⁹ wheat.

- 15 He sends his word out to the world.
 Ever so swiftly, His word rushes out
 16 sending snow like tufts of wool.
 He spreads frost like dust.
 17 sending his hail as tiny morsels of bread.
 Who can endure in the face of cold weather?
 18 He sends out his word, and it all melts.
 He sends a¹⁰ wind, and water flows.
- 19 He reveals his word to Ya^aqōb;
 His stipulations and resolutions¹¹ to Y'isrā'ēl.
 20 He has not done so for any other nation.
 They do not know his decisions¹².

*b*enediction

Hall^elûyah.

¹ Hebrew, *kî*. Here, the particle serves to give reason for and justify for the opening word's call for praise.

² Literally, "the shattered of heart."

³ Hebrew, *hābaš*. In medical settings, it is most often translated of "binding up" or "bandaging" a wound. Arabic has a root, *ḥbs*, meaning "to obstruct, confine, restrict."

⁴ Hebrew, *mišpār*, "number, measure."

⁵ Hebrew, *'ereš*.

⁶ Hebrew, *kân*.

⁷ Hebrew, *qārâ'*. This is a parade example of the need to give context precedent over strict and literal lexicography. Here we should understand the "call" of newly hatched birds, chirping for their food.

⁸ Literally "the leg of a man."

⁹ Hebrew, *hēleb*, literally, "fat."

¹⁰ Literally, "his."

¹¹ This is our familiar, *mišpāt*, often translated, "judgement." But, as we have so often pointed out, in moder usage this word is most often used forensically. God's *mišpāt* embraces the decisions or conclusions to which he has come, which he then passes on to humankind. In this sense, the word comes very near to the "wisdom" or "understanding" that God possesses. God has concluded what makes for the happiest life for individuals and for the most healthy and enduring existence for societies. He has passed these conclusions on to Israel in his *Torâ*.

¹² Again, *mišpāt*.

Psalm 148

(edition: December 30, 2023)

¹ Hallûyah.

☉raise from above...

Praise YHWH from the heavens.

Praise YHWH from the highest of places.

² Praise Him, all His divine messengers¹.

Praise Him, all His divine ministers².

³ Praise Him, sun and moon.

Praise Him, all glittering stars.

⁴ Praise Him, heaven's skies,
and waters above the heavens.

⁵ Praise YHWH's authority³
because He commanded, and they were created.

⁶ He fixed them forever and ever.

He issued the decree and it will not end⁴.

☉raise from below...

⁷ Praise YHWH from the earth,
sea creatures⁵ and all those of the depths,

⁸ fire and hail, snow and fog,
windstorm that does as He commands⁶,

⁹ mountain ranges and hills,
deciduous⁷ trees and all evergreens⁸,

¹⁰ all wild⁹ and domesticated animals¹⁰,
small animal¹¹ and winged bird,

¹¹ the earth's rulers¹² and all peoples,
government officials¹³ and all who govern on earth,

¹² young men as well as young women,
the elderly with the youthful.

☉raise from near...

¹³ Praise YHWH's character¹⁴
for only His character¹⁵ is unimaginably lofty¹⁶.

¹⁴ He increases the power¹⁷ of His people;
the renown¹⁸ of all His devotees¹⁹,
Yisrā'el's people²⁰, a nation close to Him.

Hallûyah.

¹ Hebrew, *mal`āk*.

² Hebrew, *šābā`*, traditionally, “host.” Here, “all His servers/ministers.”

³ Literally, “name.”

⁴ Hebrew, *‘āḇar*.

⁵ Hebrew, *tannin*.

⁶ Literally, “does His word.”

⁷ Hebrew, *p°rî*, “fruit.”

⁸ Hebrew, *‘erez*, traditionally, “cedar.”

⁹ Hebrew, *ḥayyâ*, “animal,” “wildlife.”

¹⁰ Hebrew, *b°hēmâ*, traditionally, “beasts.”

¹¹ Hebrew, *remeś*, traditionally, “creeping thing.”

¹² Literally, “kings.”

¹³ Hebrew, *śar*.

¹⁴ Literally, “name.”

¹⁵ Again, literally, “name.”

¹⁶ Hebrew, *śāḡab*, literally, “too high, inaccessibly high.”

¹⁷ Literally, “horn.”

¹⁸ Hebrew, *ḥilâ*.

¹⁹ Hebrew, *ḥāsîd*.

²⁰ Literally, “children.”

psalm 149

(edition: January 1, 2024)

¹ Hallûyah.

†he call to praise

Sing a new song to YHWH;
sing of His renown¹ in the gathering of devotees².

² Yîsrâ'êl should rejoice in the One who made it.

The people of Şîyôn should be exuberant³ about their King,
³ praise His character in dance.

and sing of Him with cymbals and harp.

†he reasons for the call to praise

⁴ For YHWH takes pleasure in His people.

He adorns the downtrodden⁴ with victory⁵.

⁵ The devoted should rejoice⁶ abundantly⁷.

They should outwardly rejoice⁸ upon their beds.

⁶ Their praise of God is deep-throated,

and a two-edged sword is in their hand

⁷ to execute retribution against the nations,
punishments for peoples;

⁸ to bind their kings with chains,

and their elites⁹ with iron chains;

⁹ to accomplish the prescribed justice.

This is the privilege¹⁰ belonging to all His devotees.

Hallûyah.

¹ Hebrew, *t^ehillâ*.

² Hebrew, *ḥāsîd*. Again in vs. 5.

³ Hebrew, *gîl*.

⁴ Hebrew, *'ānāw*.

⁵ Hebrew, *y^ešû 'â*.

⁶ Hebrew, *'ālaz*.

⁷ Hebrew, *b^ekābôd*, “in/with abundance.”

⁸ Hebrew, *rānan*.

⁹ Hebrew, *kābad*.

¹⁰ Hebrew, *hādār*.

psalm 150

(edition: January 6, 2024)

¹ Hallûyah.

Praise God in His preeminent place.

Praise Him in heaven, His stronghold.

² Praise Him for His mighty acts.

Praise Him as His bounteous greatness deserves.

³ Praise Him with trumpet blast.

Praise Him with harp and lyre.

⁴ Praise Him with tambourine and dance.

Praise Him with strings and pipe.

⁵ Praise Him with crashing cymbals.

Praise Him with clanging cymbals.

⁶ Everything that breaths should praise Yah.

Hallûyah.