

CHAPTER SIX

The Literary Work in Its Totality

To conclude our study, we shall make use of all the observations made in the previous chapters on the separate parts of the literary work in order to understand the whole work in its totality. We shall analyse three psalms according to the method of Total Interpretation: (1) Psalm 13; (2) Psalm 46; (3) Psalm 114. In the Addendum, written by Y. Zakovitch, we shall present an analysis of a narrative selection, the Tale of Naboth's Vineyard (I Kings 21).

The analysis of the first psalm will serve to demonstrate the method by which one can achieve a correct understanding of the poem. In the analysis of the second psalm, the method of Total Interpretation will be contrasted with the prevailing method of study of the Psalms, that of form criticism, and the third analysis will demonstrate the correct use of the method of Total Interpretation as distinct from the inadequate application of principles of literary criticism similar to those upon which our method is based.

The fourth analysis, that of the narrative, exemplifies how the method of Total Interpretation is no less applicable to Biblical narrative than it is to poetry. It likewise becomes clear from this analysis that our method serves as a valuable aid to text criticism, and, by enabling us to distinguish between primary and secondary layers in a literary text, to higher criticism as well.

1

Psalm 13

למנצח מזמור לדוד.

עֲד־אֵנָה ה' תִּשְׁכַּחֲנִי נֶצַח	עֲד־אֵנָה תִּסְתִּיר אֶת־פְּנֵיךָ מִמֶּנִּי.
עֲד־אֵנָה אֲשִׁית עֲצוֹת בְּנַפְשִׁי	יִגֹּן בְּלִבִּי יוֹמָם
עֲד־אֵנָה יְרוֹם אֵיבִי עָלַי.	
הַבִּיטָה עֲנֵנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי	הַאִירָה עֵינַי פֶּן־אִישָׁן הַמָּוֶת.

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פְּדִיאֵמֶר אֵיבִי יִבְלִתִּי	צָרִי יִגִּילוּ כִּי אָמוּט.
וְאֲנִי בַחֲסֶדֶךָ בִּטַּחֲתִי	יִגַּל לִבִּי בִישׁוּעָתֶךָ
אֲשִׁירָה לְה'	כִּי גָמַל עָלַי.

- 1 For the leader
A psalm of David.
- 2 How long O LORD, will You forever forget me?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
- 3 How long shall I have cares on my mind,
grief in my heart all day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?
- 4 Look, answer me, O LORD, my God!
Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep the [sleep of] death;
- 5 lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him",
my foes exult when I totter.
- 5 But I — in Your faithfulness I trust,
my heart will exult in Your deliverance.
I shall sing to the LORD, for He has dealt kindly with me.

The reader of the psalm is immediately made aware of the emotional changes which take place in it. No one emotional state is expressed in it from beginning to end. The psalmist begins with an expression of deep sorrow; out of his despair bursts forth the cry: "How long?". Thence he gradually ascends to the heights of trust: "I shall sing to the LORD, because He has dealt kindly with me". According to the accepted terminology in Psalm criticism, our psalm belongs to the genre known as individual lament, while its conclusion is one of thanksgiving.

The transformation of emotional state from one extreme to the other is also expressed in the structure of the psalm:

Stanza One

- 2 How long O LORD, will You forever forget me?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
- 3 How long shall I have cares on my mind,
grief in my heart all day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Stanza Two

- 4 Look, answer me, O LORD, my God!
Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep the [sleep of] death;
5 lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him",
my foes exult when I totter.

Stanza Three

- 6 But I — in Your faithfulness I trust,
my heart will exult in Your deliverance.
I shall sing to the LORD, for He has dealt kindly with me.

The psalm is thus divided into three stanzas: the first consisting of five lines, the second of four and the third of three.¹ It seems that the greater the poet's suffering, the more waves of emotion he feels, each one weaker than the one before, until he finally finds relief, achieves complete tranquility.² In the last sentence — "for He has dealt kindly with me" — an emotion is expressed similar to that in Psalm 116:7: "Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the LORD has dealt kindly with you".

Now let us consider the "content" of each stanza.

1. So Delitzsch, Kittel. Recently Ridderbos (see note 2).
2. Delitzsch already saw the structure of the stanzas as a stylistic device to express the psalmist's state of mind. "A deep protracted sigh is followed — as if from a heart relieved of its burden — by the gentler, half-acquiescent plea and this in turn by confident joy that his prayer has been heard. The waves of the song gradually subside until finally its gentle motion resembles the mirror-smooth sea." Nic. H. Ridderbos, accepting this interpretation, mentions that such a phenomenon can be found also in other psalms ("The Psalms: style-figures and structure", *OTS*, XIII [1963], pp. 50-51; *Die Psalmen*, pp. 152, 69). Gunkel is content to state that the poem has "no regular stanza-form". Similarly Kraus observes: "One cannot demonstrate any strophic arrangement". — E. Baumann writes: "Our feeling is that the transition in the psalm from a dominating and strict form to a free form is not pleasing". In his view, "the psalm should have concluded with the same unity with which it began. Strict form alongside free form or one inside the other is quite customary in ancient psalmody, and the transition from one form to another may be a sign of composite authorship" ("Struktur-Untersuchungen im Psalter I", *ZAW*, LXI [1945-48], p. 125). Baumann — like Gunkel, Kraus, etc. — here treats form as something which can be separated from the actual content which it subserves as vehicle, as though it were possible to establish whether the form per se is aesthetically satisfying or not.

The first stanza consists entirely of a description of the poet's condition; he has sunk far into the depths, and sees nothing but darkness. There is no ray of light.

The second stanza, in part, looks up; even though there is as yet no light, there is a longing, a hope of light: "look", "answer me", "give light to my eyes". The second part of the stanza is one of trembling and fear, a description of the dangers possible if the light does not shine forth.

The third stanza is all light and brightness: "I trust", "my heart will exult", "I shall sing".

What is the explanation for the sudden change in the psalmist's state of mind?³ On the basis of the principle of unity of form and content this question, like all others, must be answered by means of a careful study of the words of the poem, their order, their syntax, and above all through the structure of the poem. Therefore, only an understanding of the whole psalm will provide the explanation, and so we must first attempt to grasp the development of thoughts and attitudes in the psalm. To do this we must proceed step by step, verse by verse.

The psalmist's suffering, despair and impatience are indicated by the question with which the psalm opens: '*ad 'anāh*, "how long?"⁴ His state

3. This phenomenon can be found also in other psalms. For example, Psalms 6; 22; 28; 30; 31; 41; 54; 55; 56; 59; 61; etc. For answers to this question given by the commentators and scholars see in Appendix VII, pp. 435ff.
4. This plaintive question "how long?" is found in other laments, not only in the Bible (see Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 127. The same words recur in Habakkuk 1:2; Psalm 62:4), but also in Babylonian literature (Gunkel, *loc. cit.*; Baumann, *art. cit.* [note 2, above], pp. 126-128; O. Keel, *Feinde und Gottesleugner* [*Stuttgarter biblische Monographien*, VII], 1969, p. 121). According to M. Jastrow, the expression *ad mati* was used by the Babylonians as a technical term for a lament containing a petition to assuage the anger of the god (Baumann, *art. cit.* [note 2, above], p. 126). Baumann's view is that in the Bible this question appears in anaphora only in our psalm, while in the Babylonian laments the cry "how long?" appears by itself most infrequently and, as a rule, anaphorically twice or four times. This, he believes, proves decisively the stylistic relationship between Psalm 13 and the Babylonian laments. As a parallel to our psalm, Baumann suggests the Lament of Nebuchadnezzar I and especially the Lament to Ishtar (*ibid.*, pp. 126, 129-131 — See A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*, Stuttgart 1953, pp. 328-330; *AOT*, pp. 257-260; *ANET*, pp. 383-385). Baumann does indeed acknowledge that there are differences, but in his analysis of parallel forms he goes too far. H. Ringgren already claims: "Even from the purely stylistic point of view there is one striking difference between Israelitic

of mind is shown by the four-fold repetition of the question: by anaphora. As we read this anaphora we feel that with each repetition of "how long?" the psalmist, not yet released from his suffering, not even close to being released, sinks once again to where he began, and falls again and again into the abyss from which he has been striving to raise himself into the state expressed by "how long?"

The four cries of "how long?", then, reveal the poet's repeated attempt to break out of his state of confinement into freedom, but he returns to his condition of helpless servitude.

Is there a connection between these four cries of "how long?"? What is the connection? What is the main, basic suffering of our psalmist?⁵

These questions too can be answered only by a careful consideration of the psalm itself, its structure in general and in detail, the order and manner in which the poet bewails his sufferings and prays to be delivered from them. As we have repeatedly stressed, only what is demonstrably contained in the words of the poem can be considered to be the intended meaning. The value and importance of the elements in a literary work are measured by their place in its total structure.⁶ Examination of the psalm indicates the following aspects of its structure:

and Sumerian-Babylonian psalmody. There is in the latter a tendency — not found in the Biblical Psalms — toward monotony and tedious repetition, with names and epithets of gods being enumerated without adding anything new" (*The Faith of the Psalmists*, London [1963], p. 117). But first and foremost there is a general, a methodological objection to Baumann's conclusion. No doubt that there are "common" elements in Psalm 13 and the Lament to Ishtar, as asserted by Baumann. Both contain a lament, a petition and finally, thanksgiving. But it is doubtful to what extent this fact entitles Baumann to draw his conclusion. These elements in this order are natural in the appeal for help of any person who is oppressed. If it is true, as we have repeatedly stressed, that in parallel compositions it is not the common element that indicates the character of a poem but rather the difference between them, then it is much more the case here, since there is nothing characteristic about this "common element" shared by the psalm and the Babylonian hymn — it is actually common to any appeal to God by a person in distress. If this can be called "common", our psalm is no more analogous to the Lament of Ishtar than to any lyrical religious poem of this nature of any period and any place.

5. On this question as treated by the commentators, see below, pp. 435 ff.

6. Compare Böckmann, *op. cit.* (p. 272, note 2), p. 52.

lament	You	verse 2	How long O LORD...? How long will <i>You</i> ...?
	I	3a	How long shall <i>I</i> have cares on <i>my</i> mind, ...?
	the enemy	3b	How long will <i>my enemy</i> ...?
petition	You	verse 4a	<i>Look, answer me, O LORD,</i> <i>my God...</i>
	I	4b	lest <i>I</i> sleep the [sleep of] death;
	the enemy	5a	lest <i>my enemy</i> say... <i>my</i> <i>foes</i> exult...
expression of trust		verse 6aa	But I — in Your faithfulness I trust,
thanksgiving		verse 6aβb	my heart will exult in Your deliverance: I shall sing to the LORD...

It is noteworthy that in the first two cries (verse 2) of the four the psalmist gives expression to the situation existing between him and his Creator. His first thought concerns his relationship with God. From God his view turns inward, and finally he looks out into the world and he sees the enemy.

From the order in which the poet laments his sufferings, and especially from the proportion in the detail, we can conclude that their main source lies only in his feeling that God has forgotten him, has hidden His face from him; thus he commences, "How long, O LORD, will You forever forget me?"

This sentence is not logical, it contains a contradiction. "How long?" seeks an end, a limit, a conclusion of his suffering, a turn for the better, i.e. salvation, whereas "forever" knows no limit or end. A logical contradiction indeed, but not a psychological one. What we really have here is not a contradiction but a paradox⁷ in which the conflict between

7. According to the commentary *Mezudat David* the question is to be understood: "Till when shall I be a wanderer and cast about? Will You then forever forget me?" A similar conception of the verse is implied in its translation, e.g. by Schmidt ("Wie lange

despair and hope is expressed. As long as one says "how long?" — there is still hope. When he says: "will You forever forget me" — despair has overcome him.⁸ The psalmist's despair grows even greater. In his first outcry: the LORD forgets him, the LORD is passive. In the second, he sees the LORD as actively against him. Not only "forget me" but even "hide Your face from me". If God has forgotten him, if He has even hidden His face from him — there is no loneliness like his loneliness, no anxiety like his.⁹ Therefore the cry:

How long shall I have cares on my mind,
grief in my heart all day? (verse 3a)¹⁰

noch . . . ? Willst du mich ewig vergessen?"); Kraus, Dahood ("How long, O Y' . . . ? Will you eternally forget me?" etc. So also in RSV. They thus divide the one question into two. But this is only the result of failing to perceive the paradox in the text. This is also the reason for interpretations such as that of Meiri ("Every long time is called *neṣaḥ* ['forever']"), or the interpretation of Graetz (also the translation of Buber: "dauernd"). Briggs ("ever, continually"), or that of Cheyès ("neṣaḥ here does not mean forever but rather constantly, incessantly"). L. Kopf attributes to the word *neṣaḥ* here and elsewhere the meaning of "in truth", "really", that is, completely ("Etymologien und Parallelen zum Bibelwörterbuch", VT, VIII [1958], p. 158). Ehrlich in his commentary on the Psalms (*ad loc.*) interpreted it so before him (without basing it on the Arabic as Kopf did). This is also the translation of the word in the Vulgate ("penitus").

However, even if one of these interpretations were to be proven, the paradox would be lessened, dissipated, for even though the word *neṣaḥ* may be used to mean: "a long time" or "truly", etc. — its associative accompaniment, its connotation, certainly is one of "eternity".

8. In Kittel's view "the solution to the apparent contradiction in verse 2 is that the LORD seems to have forgotten His people so long that they imagine themselves to have been forgotten forever". According to Gunkel the expression "how long . . . forever" which comprises two different ideas indicates impatience. The same view is taken by Kraus, Keel (*loc. cit.* [note 4. above]) and Ridderbos (*Die Psalmen*, pp. 30, 152). However, as has been said, there is expressed here also the paradoxical condition of hope on the one hand and hopelessness on the other. Luther's well-known words define the same condition expressed in this verse: "hope itself despairs, and despair still hopes" (quoted by Delitzsch).
9. Compare: "When You hid Your face, I was terrified" (Psalm 30:8). See further Psalms 104:29; 27:9; 44:25; 69:18; 88:15; 143:7. See also Deuteronomy 31:17-18; 32:22.
10. The mediaeval Jewish commentators are divided on the syntax of verse 3a. According to Ibn Ezra the verse is *one* sentence, since the two hemistichs complement each other ("How long shall I have cares on my mind [all the time] [because of the] grief in

And again a lament, which, as it concludes the stanza, apparently expresses the greatest suffering:

How long will my enemy be exalted over me?¹¹ (verse 3b)

The psalmist's source of greatest suffering is thus his enemy.¹² More exactly, this is the greatest manifestation of his main suffering. His main suffering is, as we have said, the sense that God forgets him and hides His face from him. A theme's importance is shown, among other factors, by the

my heart all day?"). Radak conceives of the verse as *two* sentences, the first a question, the second a declarative sentence or even an exclamation ("How long shall I take counsel in my soul [to escape from my sorrows]? There is grief in my heart all day"). The *Biur* adopts Radak's view that there are two sentences, but in his view they are both interrogative sentences, complementing each other: "How long shall I take counsel in my soul [all day]? [How long shall I place] grief in my heart all day?". Modern commentators all agree that the verse is one sentence. They also agree that the word *'eṣāh* is not used here in the usual sense of "counsel" but rather as a parallelism to *yāgōn* ("grief") that is: care, suffering, anxiety, a usage perhaps found in Ben Sira 30:21 (see M. Z. Segal, *Sefer Ben Sira Hashalem*, Jerusalem 1953, p. 188 [26]). In any case the word *'eṣōt* is so translated in the Peshitta. Most scholars emend the MT to read: *'aṣebet* or *'aṣabōi* (Graetz, Ehrlich, Gunkel, Kittel and others). Köhler (*Lexicon*, pp. 726-727) mentions the conjecture that the word *'eṣōt* in our verse (and the word *ba'āṣātām* in Psalm 106:43) is derived from the root *'ṣh* related to the root *'ṣ* in Aramaic and Syriac whose meaning is "withhold from", also related to the Arabic *'aṣāhu* = "disobeyed him". According to this interpretation the meaning of the verse is: How long shall I consider rebellion in my heart? Dahood takes *'eṣōt* to signify "doubts" on the basis of Arabic and Ugaritic.

11. According to Dahood, the phrase *yārūm 'ōyēbt 'ālāy* does not mean: "will my enemy be exalted over me", but "rejoice over me", and is intended "to counterbalance" *yārāy yāgilū*, "my foes exult" (verse 5b). Referring to J. C. Greenfield who proves that in the Semitic languages the root *śmḥ* denotes not only "to rejoice" but also "to be high" ("Lexicographical Notes II", *HUCA*, XXX [1959], pp. 141-151), Dahood claims: "so *rūm* can also denote 'to rejoice' as well as 'to be high'." In support of this conclusion he cites also the view of L. Kopf (mentioned also at the end of Greenfield's article) who proves by reference to Arabic that the roots *śmḥ* and *gyl* are not only synonymous but mean etymologically: "to be great, exalted, sublime" ("Arabische Etymologien und Parallelen zum Bibelwörterbuch", VT, IX [1959], pp. 249-250), and that this is the correct interpretation of Biblical verses in which these two roots occur in parallelism. Dahood writes that in this psalm also the concept of the verb *yārūm* as denoting joy "sharpens the contrast between the sorrow of the psalmist and the *Schadenfreude* of his enemy, Death".
12. For the views of scholars on "the enemy" in Psalms see below, pp. 435 ff.

number of lines devoted to it. In the first stanza four lines tell of the sense of remoteness between God and the psalmist and his continual lament which results from this remoteness. Only in one line is the enemy mentioned. Whoever listens attentively to everything in Stanza One — to each single element and to the stanza as a whole — and not to any extraneous noises will hear that the psalmist's main suffering is the sense that God's face is turned away from him. The thought that his enemy will be exalted¹³ over him is only a secondary consideration.

Just as the lament contained in the first stanza proves that the feeling of God's hiding His face is the main source of our poet's suffering, so too the petition contained in the second stanza ("lest I sleep the [sleep of] death" etc. — verses 4b, 5) indicates that the fear of the enemy is not an independent matter but one closely integrated with the hidden Divine face.¹⁴ This feeling oppresses the psalmist above all because such a situation or his personal response to it may lend support to his enemy. Therefore he does not ask of God that He punish the enemy, nor even that he defend him against the enemy and foil the latter's plans. When he grieves at his enemy's victory over him, he is really grieving over the fact that his condition apparently vindicates his enemy and ensures his success. Therefore the one thing left for the psalmist to ask is that his trust and faith may not falter, since the faltering must lead to the enemy's triumph and victory.

However, the thought of such occurrence, while it increases his despair, also increases his hope. Now his sighs and questions cease, and the "petition" replaces the "lament".

Look, answer me, O LORD, my God!

Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep the [sleep of] death.

(verse 4)

Note the brevity of the sentences and the crowded imperatives: "Look", "answer me", "give light". Each one is an independent clause, without a conjunction between them. He makes not one but three petitions, each one greater than the last. His first petition: "look", an action expressed by an intransitive verb. His second petition: "answer me", a transitive verb with a direct object indicated by a suffix to the verb

13. Or: "will rejoice". See note 11 above.

14. See below.

(*ʾānēni*), is a request for action in which the poet makes clear reference to himself. His third petition: "give light to my eyes" — an action expressed by a transitive verb and the object mentioned in a separate word (*hā'irāh 'ēnay*). Now he asks God for an act which will enable him to feel His hand. The more he requests, the more his hope is strengthened, and the more hope he gains, the more he requests. "Give light" — a smouldering ember of hope. "Give light to my eyes" — a spark of hope.

However, in comparison with the "lament", the beginning of the "petition" expresses a greater degree of trust. This is also expressed in the form of the psalmist's address to God. In verse 2 he calls Him "LORD", here: "LORD, my God". In the beginning of the "lament" he says that God forgets him, hides His face from him. In the beginning of the "petition" he refers to Him as "LORD, my God"; here he feels that despite everything He is *his* God.

The structure of the "petition" corresponds to the structure of the "lament": "look", "answer me", "give light to my eyes" — between him and his Creator; "lest I sleep the [sleep of] death" — concerning himself; "lest my enemy say" — between him and the world. The request: "look", "answer me", corresponds to the lament that God forgets him, hides His face from him; the request: "lest my enemy say 'I have overcome him'" etc. corresponds to the lament at the triumph of his enemy over him. And the request "give light to my eyes" etc. — to what does it correspond in the lament?

What is meant by the phrase "give light to my eyes?" The sentence "his eyes lit up" (1 Samuel 14:27), used of Jonathan after he had tasted some honey, expresses a state of mind. This is also the meaning of Jonathan's words "my eyes lit up" (verse 29). Whoever feels the joy of life, his eyes light up. In the narrative about Jonathan the physiological basis of the metaphor is still preserved; the brightening of the eyes results from physical sensations. But generally this metaphor is symbolic, an indication of the will to live,¹⁵ as in the verse: "My mind reels; my strength fails me; my eyes too have lost their light" (Psalm 38:11).

15. So, e.g. Kittel, Gunkel, Taylor, Weiser. According to Chr. Barth, "give light to my eyes" means: "restore my vital powers" so that I do not die (*Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments*. Basel 1947, p. 35). This is accepted by Kraus, who mentions Calvin's similar explanation in his

The petition “give light to my eyes” corresponds thus to the lament: “How long shall I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day?” Just as the author of Psalm 19 affirms: “The precepts of the LORD are just, *rejoicing the heart*” (verse 9), and the author of Psalm 36 says to God: “With You is the fountain of life, by Your light *do we see light*” (verse 10), so our poet feels that his life is nothing but grief as long as God hides His face from him. Hence his petition: “give light to my eyes”.¹⁶

The meaning of the petition “give light to my eyes”, which has been clarified through the semantic analysis of the expression, will be confirmed by the way in which the petition continues: “Lest I sleep the [sleep of] death”. What is the meaning of the sentence?

The actual form of the sentence is: *pen'īšan hammāwet*, literally, “lest I sleep the death”. From a syntactical standpoint it should certainly be interpreted: lest I sleep the sleep of death.¹⁷ like: “and they sleep a perpetual sleep” (Jeremiah 51:39.57). But if this is so, two questions arise: (1) Why is the expression curtailed here? Why is it not given in full: *pen'īšan šēnat hammāwet*. “lest I sleep the *sleep* of death”? (2) Is it possible that the intention of the verse is to express the fear that if God will not give light to the psalmist's eyes, he will die, and the fear of his enemy is in fact the fear of the enemy's actual strength and physical victory?¹⁸

Before attempting to answer these questions we must bear in mind that no poem — not even one full of allusions and suggestive imagery — is like a picture-puzzle, the solution of which is a sentence consisting of clear unambiguous words completely embracing what is implied in the images or hieroglyphs that make up the puzzle. This is why when we try to render the language of the verse into the language of everyday speech, we can well understand that we have not extracted the full content of the

commentary. Delitzsch also interpreted this expression in the same sense. According to Dehood it may have a twofold meaning: “First, the phrase means ‘to restore to health’ (cf. Ps. XXXVII 11), and secondly, it may denote ‘to grant immortality’, since ‘to see the light’ is idiomatic for ‘to enjoy immortality’ . . . The parallelism with ‘avert the sleep of death’, which likewise may bear a double sense, sustains this interpretation” for the conclusion drawn by Schmidt from this petition see below, pp. 435 ff.

16. Compare the tie between “see light” and “see the face of the LORD” (Y.A. Seeligmann, “ΔΕΙΞΑΙ ΑΥΤΩΙ ΦΩΣ”, *Tarbiz*, XXVII [1958], pp. 128-130.

17. *GKC*, §117, note 4.

18. As the petition is generally explained by the commentators (See note 15, above).

verse in our paraphrase. If it were possible to say all that the poet says in everyday language and without using metaphors, then one may justly ask: if this is what he wanted to say, why did he not say it like this? But in fact the whole value of the verse lies in what cannot be expressed in any other language.

Let us then consider the words “lest I sleep the death”.

The verse does not say: lest I sleep the sleep of death; it does not say: lest I die — but rather it says: “lest I sleep the death”. The full metaphor: lest I sleep the sleep of death — would have given a feeling of quiet, rest and peace in the sleep of death. The non-metaphorical: lest I die — would have referred only to simple physical death. The incomplete image, however, “lest I sleep — death”, expresses neither the fear of final rest nor the fear of cessation of being, the end of life, but rather of a life which has the taste of death, of a life which is not living. In contrast to the first hemistich: “give light to my eyes” the image “lest I sleep — death” is contrasted with the hope of being enlightened with the “light of life”. Here it is the fear of the darkness of death that troubles him — not just cessation of being, but the annihilation of his bond with God.

Similar to this is the fear expressed in Psalm 143:7: “Do not hide Your face from me lest I become like those who descend into the pit”.

A life in which God hides His face, since it is a life without joy, without light, is really no life at all, but a gloomy death, a descent into the pit. Both psalms express the same idea, except that Psalm 143 uses a simile: the poet does not see himself *among* “those who descend into the pit”, rather he is *like* them, whereas our psalmist does not compare himself with those who sleep in death; he identifies himself with them.

However, a more profound penetration of the verse will demonstrate that this is not the psalmist's only intention. Besides his fear of a life in which God hides His face, which in his eyes is tantamount to death, is a second, even greater fear. He is afraid that as God removes Himself from him, he too will drift away from God. If God does not give light to his eyes, the light of his faith and trust will be extinguished and his life will be empty and void. After all, “the living, the truly living do praise You” (Isaiah 38:19), but he — will not praise God and give thanks to Him, will not declare His truth and faithfulness, will not proclaim His merciful loving kindness.¹⁹ On the contrary, he will speak out and rebel against Him.

19. Compare Psalms 6:6, 30:10; 88:11-13; 115:17; Isaiah 38:18-19. See Westermann,

The meaning of the sentence "lest I sleep the death" is confirmed by the context. The meaning we have attributed to this verse — lest I lose my faith — is supported by the following sentences — "lest my enemy say, 'I have overcome him', my foes exult when I totter" (verse 5). Similarly the meaning of the sentence "lest I sleep the death" is appropriate to the sense we have established above for the preceding sentence: "give light to my eyes."

Let us now compare the first two stanzas.

Stanza One	Stanza Two
<p>2 How long, O LORD, will You forever forget me? How long will You hide Your face from me?</p> <p>3 How long shall I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?</p>	<p>4 Look, answer me, O LORD, my God!</p> <p>Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep the [sleep of] death;</p> <p>5 lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him", my foes exult when I totter.</p>

Here we see the parallelism between the second and first stanzas, the correspondence between the two structures. However, having noted the similarity, let us also consider the differences between them. The expression of the poet's grief over the dominance of his enemy occupies only one-fifth of the first stanza; while the fear of the enemy's triumph occupies half of the second stanza. In the "lament", the poet's present state is expressed — the suffering and loneliness, his feeling of having been deserted by and severed from God. In this situation the relationship of the enemy to him is felt as a secondary matter. But when he petitions for the future, when he expresses his fear of the danger that his faith may collapse, both his deepest suffering and his main fear are concerned with the result, the triumph of wickedness in the world.

Lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him",
my foes exult when I totter.

The Praise of God in the Psalms, (transl. by K. R. Crim), Richmond, Va. (1965), pp. 155-161.

Here, as in many passages in the Psalms,²⁰ when the psalmist is seized by the fear of the victory of the wicked, he does not simply predict their words, he actually hears them, their very language, and cites their triumphant mockery in direct quotation: "I have overcome him". When he comes to visualize the enemy so vividly that he seems to be palpably near him and hears his snarl of triumph, then the situation appears to him in all its ghastly clarity. He no longer sees his enemy as an individual; he sees in his mind's eye the joy of the mob all about him, so that he says: "my foes exult when I totter". The psalmist's vision is so darkened by despair that when he reaches the end of the stanza, he sees on one side his foes exulting and on the other himself tottering.

At the end of the first stanza, when the poet concluded his lament over the present, his most pressing concern was that his being forsaken by God would be a vindication of those who had forsaken God. At the end of the second stanza, when he concludes his petition for the future, what gnaws at his spirit is the fear that his foes will exult when he totters.

As we have seen, there are three sides to the conflict in each of the two stanzas: "I" (the worshipper), God and the enemy. At the end of the first and second stanzas the "I" sees only himself confronting his enemy. The enemy will be exalted over him (in the first stanza), his foes will exult — he will totter (in the second stanza). God is present neither in the conclusion of the first stanza nor of the second. The "I" of the first stanza is included in the word *'ālāy* ("over me"), while in the second it is part of the verb *'emmōl* ("I totter"). The former expresses the poet's image of himself as the object — the subject is the enemy; the enemy is active, the psalmist is passive (and thus blameless). In the latter case, the poet's view of the future is one in which he and the enemy are both subjects. The enemy is active, and so is he. His act — his tottering — is what causes the adversaries to gloat over him.

20. Psalms 3:3; 22:8-9; 35:21; 25; 40:16; 42:4; 11; 71:11. See Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 199; Keel, *op. cit.* (note 4, above), pp. 164-185. H. W. Wolff compares the use of quotations in the psalms in general to that in prophecy, but his question, because of its generality, is purely formal. He fails to ask what is expressed in the quotation. The vagueness of the question leads to an inaccurate conclusion for, contrary to his view, there is no "inner connection" between the citation in Psalms and the words of the prophets ("Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch", *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, München 1964, pp. 49, 41, 72-73, 100-101).

As we mentioned, in the first one and one-half hemistichs of the second stanza a ray of hope glimmers; the later two and one-half hemistichs express total darkness, all the more intense since it is the darkness that comes after light. After the brief interlude of hope, when despair returns to the psalmist's spirit it is even more profound than ever.

And at this moment, from the depths of despair, our psalmist does not lament or petition but rather affirms:

But I — in Your faithfulness I trust,
My heart will exult in Your deliverance.
I shall sing to the LORD,
for He has dealt kindly with me (verse 6).

These are words of trust, of thanksgiving. Our psalmist is now far away from the great despair, the despair which had moved him to cry out four times "How long?" at the beginning of the psalm. This change, from despair to complete trust is so sudden; just after the poet's momentary return to the depths of hopelessness! The total darkness of verse 5 is dispelled in verse 6 not by the glimmer of dawn, not gradually — but all at once. It is as if midnight were immediately followed by the noontime sun.

The second stanza concludes with "my foes exult when I totter"; the third stanza opens with "But I — in Your faithfulness I trust". The words "but I", expressed in the Hebrew *wa'ānī*, a *nominativus pendens*, further indicate that the idea conveyed is one of sudden reversal.²¹ "My foes" and "I" are separated by the conjunction, which points out the contrast between them: They "exult when I totter, but I — in Your faithfulness I trust". The verb "trust" in the perfect in Hebrew — *bāṭaḥti* — indicates not a past action but one that has been and persists: I have always trusted and still do so.

How has our poet arrived at this reversal of *wa'ānī*, "but I", this change from despair to hope, lament to joyful song, from grief to exultation?

As soon as he said "when I totter", when he expressed this awful thought — he was shocked by his own words. In this shock the question flashed like a lightning bomb: on whom does "when I totter" depend? One question leads to another. Why should I totter? Because God hides

21. Mr. B. Schwartz's remark.

His face from me? However, so long as there exists the possibility for me to turn to God and pour forth my heart before Him, my sorrow that He has hidden His face from me — what place is there for despair? Finally the psalmist realizes that there is no basis for the assumption that the link between him and God has been severed, that there is a total hiding of the Divine face.²²

On the basis of what is shown in the psalm structure, it can be said that the poet's turning to God, his very prayer itself is what wrought this miracle, and changed his state of mind from despair to the certainty of salvation,²³ from "my foes *exult* when I totter" (verse 5) to "my heart will *exult* in Your deliverance" (verse 6); from the lament: "how long will my enemy be exalted '*ālāy* [over me]'" (verse 3) to the thanksgiving: "I shall sing to the LORD, for He has dealt kindly '*ālāy* [with me]'" (verse 6).

He does not speak of the future — *yigmōl*. He will deal kindly — but of the past — *gāmal*, "He has dealt kindly" — as of an event which has already taken place. He is certain that his petition has been accepted: "my heart will exult in Your deliverance" — now; "I shall sing to the LORD" — even now.

Three times does the psalmist mention God: in the beginning of the la-

22. Compare Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed*: "It is clear that the 'hiding of the Face' is caused by us, and we are the curtain forming a division between us and Him" (III, 51).
23. So F. Heiler explained the spiritual change which takes place in the Biblical laments (*Prayer* [transl. by S. Combe and J. E. Park], London, New York, Toronto [1938], pp. 260 ff.) Such a psychological explanation is given also by some critical scholars e.g. by Kittel, Gunke: (see below, p. 442), Taylor. Westermann also remarks: "It should be noted that the grief over which the suppliant is lamenting and the removal of which he pleads with God, still remains. During the praying . . . no miracle has occurred, but something else has occurred. God has heard . . . the turning point in the situation must of necessity follow" (*The Praise of God*, pp. 79-80). See also his article: "Anthropologische und theologische Aspekte des Gebets in den Psalmen", in: P. H. Neumann (ed.), *Zur neueren Psalmenforschung (Wege der Forschung, CXCII)*, Darmstadt 1976, pp. 456-457, 461). Verse 6 is interpreted as expressing the certainty of being answered also by H. Zirker (*Die kultische Vergegenwärtigung der Vergangenheit in den Psalmen*, Bonn 1946, pp. 52-53) and Dahood. See also Szörényi; Barth, below p. 444. Schmidt writes similarly; however, he tends at the same time to assume that the last verse was originally an independent prayer and was later added to our psalm. (For the explanations offered in the scholarly literature for the change of mood in our psalm see part 3 of Appendix VII, pp. 442 ff.)

ment (verse 2), in the beginning of the petition (verse 4), and at the end of the psalm (verse 6). At the beginning of the "lament" and "petition" he speaks *to* Him, at the end of the psalm he speaks *about* Him. When he is oppressed and feels God is not with him, he invokes Him to make Him present. As his faith and trust grow stronger (it may well be that his direct invocation of God brought about this strengthening or at least helped it), he speaks about God in the third person in the "peaceful quest of the 'hidden'"²⁴

2

Psalm 46

The analysis of Psalm 46¹ follows the pattern of Psalm 13 in illustrating the method of Total Interpretation. However, while pursuing this aim, we intend to demonstrate not only that this method is a valid means to the comprehension of what the Biblical poem expresses, but also, as has been repeatedly maintained in the present work, that of all the hermeneutic methods commonly employed in Biblical study this is the one most likely to afford an interpretation which is truly *exegesis* and not *eisegesis*. It appears to us that this contention is confirmed by a comparison of what emerges from the text when treated by the method of Total Interpretation with the conclusions drawn from the psalm by the prevailing method, that of form criticism.² We have already surveyed

24. *Nistār*, "hidden" is a grammatical term for the third person masculine. See above, p. 265, note 27.

1. With the following analysis of Psalm 46, compare our article "Wege der neuen Dichtungswissenschaft in ihrer Anwendung auf die Psalmenforschung (Methodologische Bemerkungen, dargelegt am Beispiel von Psalm XLVI)", *Biblica*, XLII (1961), pp. 255-302 (2nd impression with additional notes, in: Neumann [ed.], *Zur neueren Psalmenforschung* [cited above, p. 313, note 23], pp. 400-451).
2. For this purpose we shall also consider Krinetzki's analysis of the psalm which, as mentioned in the introduction (p. 42, note 49), has appeared in two articles which claim to interpret this psalm according to the principles of *Werkinterpretation*. The interpretation has not, however, been carried out according to this method; it is not based on close reading but rather on assumptions and impressions which have no basis in the language of the psalm as it is. In the following notes the name Krinetzki refers to his *Bibel und Leben*, III (1962), pp. 26-42, which repeatedly deals with matters discussed in his previous article on the psalm (*Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift*, XII [1961], pp. 52-71).

some opinions on this method in all its ramifications, judging by its results, and we have expressed our view of it. It is, therefore, unnecessary to repeat or re-emphasize that if a survey of recent research of the Psalms is proof, according to S. Mowinkel, that "Form criticism, 'die Form- und Gattungsforschung', is the absolutely indispensable basis of any understanding of the Psalms",³ the research itself proves that form criticism is a basis which necessarily gives rise to different interpretations, even contradictory ones, of the same psalm, as has been recently established by more than one adherent of this method.⁴

All that can be found in the literature of commentary and research of the Psalms in general can be found specifically in the literature on Psalm 46, both in what has been written about it and in what has been asserted on the basis of it.

The structure of the psalm is no longer a matter of dispute. Since H. Ewald,⁵ all scholars agree that in the original text of our psalm the refrain (verses 8, 12) also appeared after verse 4. The psalm, therefore, in its "reconstructed" text, consists of three symmetrical stanzas,⁶ each one of which concludes with the refrain, thus:

- Stanza One: verses 2-4 (to be followed by the refrain);
 Stanza Two: verses 5-8 (including the refrain);
 Stanza Three: verses 9-12 (including the refrain).

However, with reference to all other aspects of our psalm there is no

3. "Psalm Criticism between 1900 and 1935" (Ugarit and Psalm Exegesis)", *VT*, V (1955), p. 15.

4. See p. 62, above.

5. *Die Dichter des Alten Bundes*³, I, 2, München 1866.

6. See *BH*. Recently Krinetzki and Dahood have interpreted the psalm without inserting a refrain after verse 4, but they do not mention the prevalent view nor do they give a reason for their view. On the basis of our article mentioned above (note 1), H. Junker accepts our view that the absence of the refrain after verse 4 is authentic ("Der Strom, dessen Arme die Stadt Gottes erfreuen (Ps. 46)", *Biblica*, XLIII [1962], pp. 197-201). In order to preserve the balance of the stanza, verse 9b is deleted as an interpolation by E. Rohland (*Die Bedeutung der Erwählungstraditionen Israels für die Eschatologie der alttestamentlichen Propheten*, Diss., Heidelberg [1956], p. 123, note 5), by G. Wanke (*Die Zionstheologie der Korachiten in ihrem traditionsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhang* [BZAW, XCIII], Berlin 1966, p. 11), and among the earlier commentators, *inter alia*, by Duhn.