

Hebrew. In the first example, vv 4-9, travelers were out in the wilds, hopelessly lost, far from civilization. Their supplies of food and drink had run out, and they were at the end of their tether. But they could pray. Then they set off again and were led, they believed, to safety. Yahweh can work wonders in such providential ways; he is well able to meet the material needs of all those who trust in him.

The second case features release from prison, vv 10-16. Prisoners who had committed crimes—and so sins against the God of law and order—were languishing in their dark dungeon, dispirited and, humanly speaking, helpless in a culture where prisoners were liable to be forgotten, serving indefinite sentences (cf. Gen 40:23). But they, too, could pray, and in due course found themselves free men. They could explain it only as a divine answer to their praying. Yahweh can break even prison bars.

A third group had recovered from serious sickness, vv 17-22. Behind their illnesses lay an unwise way of life and they had no one to blame but themselves. Yet in response to prayer they were given priestly assurance of healing. Soon they knew the joy of God-given health. Yahweh can heal the sick.

The fourth type of deliverance is the most thrilling of all (vv 23-32). Like the first it features travel, but now on the perilous sea. Mariners were able to experience at first hand the forces of nature in their awe-inspiring rage. But to the Israelite monotheist it was Yahweh's wonders at work. The sailors found their nautical expertise of no avail, and could trust only to prayer. Miraculously, to their eyes, the storm subsided. Yahweh can still the stormy waves.

Imposed upon this original psalm is a fresh interpretation related to the community. They owe their entire existence to Yahweh's goodness. The exile was past, and from all over the ancient world Jews were being repatriated—by Yahweh!—to their homeland. He had claimed them back as his own people, and of that truth their presence in the temple was a proof. They had an obligation to render communal thanksgiving for his covenant grace. From land and sea they had come. Homeward bound, they had endured the dangers of desert and ocean. They were so glad to be home in their own land, in Jerusalem and in their settlements (vv 7, 36). Now they are urged to turn their relief and joy into thanksgiving and praise.

But a deeper spiritual note also needed to be struck. Rebellion against Yahweh had sent them into exile (cf. Ps 106). It had been a prison where they had had to serve their sentence (Isa 42:7; 49:9; cf. Mic 7:8). It had been a sickbed to which their own moral perversity had sent them (cf. 147:2-3; 2 Chr 36:16; Isa 53:4; Jer 33:6, 7). But Yahweh's liberating and healing word had come to them with assurance of forgiveness (cf. Isa 40:1-2). How gladly the restored community could add to the priest's report its own Amen in the form of offering and song.

The final parts of the psalm take up terms from the strophes which spoke of traveling home and weaves them into a meditation of praise concerning the activity of Yahweh. It is spoken from the perspective of the community as pious and poor (v 41), out of a deep sense of the moral providence of their God. The God of the storm can cause similar disruption on land. Sodom is a warning to believers concerning the havoc to which wickedness can lead. But Yahweh's reversal of nature can happily work another way, as Second

Isaiah had once proclaimed to the exiled people. In the second sub-unit of the strophe, vv 36-38, reference is made in tones of praise and trust to the blessings with which Yahweh endows his people. The third, vv 40, 39, 41, like the first, caps two negative statements with a positive, but now puts men to the fore. For those who were underdogs in the world, as post-exilic Judah felt itself to be, there was consolation in dwelling upon a theme borrowed from the book of Job, that those in high estate are liable to be toppled (cf. 1 Cor 1:26-29). Yahweh can demote and drive into the social wilderness; in a sense Judah in its restoration had known the reverse (v 7). When such happens, it is a proof to those with eyes to see that a moral God rules the world. It is part of his manifold "acts of loyal love" to his own that their persecutors fall.

(Psalm 107 in its final form is an impressive example of how the written word can come alive for a later generation of God's people and speak to them in a new way corresponding to their new situation. It is a mark of the living word that it is not exhausted in an ancient situation nor does it require repetition of history to become valid again, but runs freely, challenging a new generation of believers to see a fresh correspondence between word and experience.)

The psalm celebrates the deliverance of God both in the lives of individuals and in the life of the religious community. It celebrates, too, divine forgiveness which brings liberation and renewal of life to sinful men. As it praises, it intends also to teach concerning the way of folly and the way of wisdom. Divine providence concerning both the overthrown of tyrants and the blessing of the faithful must teach a moral lesson. The message spoken from faith to faith is that God rules in the lives of men and works wonders of love and power.)

In the NT divine deliverance is focused upon the agency of Jesus Christ. He announced an era of liberation and performed wondrous works of healing and stilling of the storm. These proclaim their perpetrator to be Lord of nature, bringer of wholeness and forgiveness and ruler of the lives of men, who in response are summoned to praise and thanksgiving (Luke 4:18-19; 8:22-25; 17:11-19; cf. Acts 12:1-17).

## Old, Yet Ever New (108:1-14)

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### Translation

<sup>1</sup> A Song. A Psalm. Davidic.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>2</sup> My heart is steadfast,<sup>a</sup> O God;<sup>b</sup>

I will sing and celebrate with music from my heart.<sup>c</sup>

- <sup>3</sup> Wake up, harp and lyre.  
I will wake up the dawn.
- <sup>4</sup> I will give you thanks among the peoples, Yahweh,<sup>a</sup>  
celebrate you<sup>b</sup> with music among the nations,<sup>c</sup>
- <sup>5</sup> because your loyal love towers above the heavens,  
your faithfulness reaches the skies.
- <sup>6</sup> Be exalted above the heavens, O God,  
and let your glory cover all the earth.
- <sup>7</sup> In reply to me help with your right hand  
so that those you love may be rescued.
- <sup>8</sup> God himself spoke in his sanctuary:<sup>a</sup>  
"I will exult,<sup>b</sup> I will divide out Shechem  
and measure out Succoth Valley into parts.
- <sup>9</sup> Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine,  
Ephraim is my headguard,  
Judah is my baton.
- <sup>10</sup> Moab is my wash basin,  
I throw my sandal onto Edom  
and shout in triumph over Philistia."
- <sup>11</sup> Who can take me to the fortified city?  
Who can lead<sup>a</sup> me to Edom?
- <sup>12</sup> Have you not rejected<sup>a</sup> us, O God?  
Will you not march out, O God, with our forces?<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>13</sup> Give us aid against<sup>a</sup> the enemy,  
because human help is useless.
- <sup>14</sup> With God we shall prevail:  
he is the one who will trample down our enemies.

## Notes/Comments

1.a. Here begins a group of three diverse Davidic psalms. That both Pss 57 and 60 are so labelled is the obvious warrant for this ascription. The present psalm may have existed too in a supplement to a pre-exilic collection. Its position after Ps 107 reflects not only the shared divine attribute of *חסד* "loyal love" (v 5), but also its historical and theological setting: after return to the land, the hope of total repossession and of vindication of God's sovereignty by means of Edom's conquest remains as the goal of his people.

2.a. It is possible that the nonrepetition of *לִבִּי נִכּוֹן* (contrast 57:8 [7]) represents haplography. But most probably the witnesses to a different text (see *BHS*), as elsewhere in this psalm, exhibit simply assimilation to the other psalm rather than independent testimony. M. Dahood (*Psalms III*, 93) wisely counsels against standardization. The shorter text of MT in v 2 (including the omission of *עֲרֹה*) exhibits a feasible metrical bicolon which is to be respected as a recensional variant. Heb. *לִבִּי נִכּוֹן* may have referred originally to the psalmist's act of will, his firm resolve to promise his thanksgiving ("my mind is made up"), but in this new context it refers to confidence.

2.b. H.-J. Kraus (*Psalmen*, 916) alters to *יְהוָה* here and in vv 6, 8, 12, although he grants (917) that *אֱלֹהִים* has been taken over from an "elohistically" edited part of the Psalter. It is most doubtful that a version of Ps 108 ever existed which used *יְהוָה*.

2.c. Heb. *כְּבוֹדִי* functions as an elaboration of the personal subject of the verb: see GKC § 144l, m and cf. v 7. Should the form be revocalized as *כֶּבֶדִּי* "my liver" (cf. Lam 2:11)? In the Psalter the suggestion is sometimes made in places where the term functions as seat of the emotions (cf. H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology*, 64). A. R. Johnson (*The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* [2nd ed.; Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964] 75 note 5) urges

(3+2)

(3+2)

(3+3)

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that each case must be examined on its merits. He has suggested that it denoted "the person of man in all its dignity and worth." J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay (*Psalms 51-100*, 44) define it as "the God-given faculty of praise."

4.a. For this less common type of thanksgiving formula in which God is directly addressed rather than speaking of him in the third person see F. Crüsemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte*, 274-76.

4.b. The variant text in *S* (see *BHS*) is to be explained as an instance of contamination from other passages, a frequent phenomenon in *S*, here from 18:50 (A. Vogel, *Bib* 32 [1951] 51-52).

4.c. For the *maqeph* in MT see *BHS*.

5.a. Heb. *מַעַל* has replaced *עַד* "as far as" in 57:11 (10), probably to stress the link with v 6a. In this new composition *עַל־שָׁמַיִם* (על) functions as a strophic hinge (see *Form/Structure/Setting*).

7.a. See note 2.c. above.

8.a. An ancient oracle concerning God's hegemony over Palestine and Transjordan is cited as the basis of the request of vv 6-7. E. Lipinski (*La liturgie pénitentielle*, 101-5) has urged that this was already its significance in Ps 60.

8.b. C. R. North (*VT* 17 [1967] 242-43), comparing Num 13:17, has restructured *אֶעֱלֶה* as *אֶעֱלֶה־יְהוָה* "I will go up now" (=NEB), with an enclitic *יְהוָה*. He noted that *עַל* is not used elsewhere with a divine subject. Dahood (*Psalms III*, 94) parries this argument by reference to Ugaritic text where verbs of joy are so used in a military context. The apparent function of the verb as inclusive counterpart to *אֶתְרוּעַע* "shout in triumph" at the end of the oracle (v. 10) favors MT. Z. Weisman (*Bet Miqra* 34 [1968] 49-52) proposed *אֶעֱלֶה לְלוֹז* "I will go up to Luz," thus securing a triple reference to place names.

11.a. MT is generally emended to an imperfect *יִנְחַן־י* "lead," assuming haplography of *yod*. The verbal parallelism so suggests and the ancient versions so imply.

12.a. R. Yaron (*VT* 13 [1963] 237-39) has argued that *וְנִחַתְנוּ* be rendered "be angry with us" in the light of the Accadian cognate verb *zenū* "be angry."

12.b. The construction of the second colon is ambiguous. (a) It could be consecutive, "so that you do not . . ." But the repetition of *אֱלֹהִים* "God" suggests rather synonymous parallelism. (b) The force of the interrogative could carry over. But when the clause is taken as a further question, its implication is positive while that of the first colon is negative. (c) A third possibility would be as (b) but to render at the end "against our forces" (for "against" with verbs of fighting cf. BDB, 89a). This would perfect the parallelism. But probably (b) is to be preferred. From the despair of vv 11, 12a there is a movement within the interrogative line to a plea in v 12b, which develops into the explicit prayer of v 13. The change from perfect verb to imperfect within v 12 enhances this preference.

13.a. For *עַד* after the stem *עָזַר* "aid" cf. Deut 33:7; Ezra 8:22. The construction is probably to be explained by analogy with verbs of salvation.

## Form/Structure/Setting

Psalm 108 consists of the latter halves of two other psalms, 57:8-12 (7-11) and 60:7-14 (5-12). The formal ingredients are largely those of the earlier contexts. But whereas 57:8-12 functioned within an individual complaint, the verses now have a role to play within a communal complaint spoken by a representative of the community (cf. 108:7, 11-14). In fact the section taken from Ps 60 is the determinative one, which has here been provided with a new introduction, from Ps 57. It is not necessary here or elsewhere in the discussion of Ps 108 to retrace ground already covered by the commentary on the two earlier psalms; the present task is to concentrate upon the re-use of the older material. A vow of praise (vv 2-4) is grounded in divine love (v 5). Then prayers for God's saving intervention (vv 6, 7) are followed by citation of a divine oracle (vv 8-10). Finally, questions representing implicit appeal to God (vv 11, 12) move first to a direct prayer and then to a declaration of trust (vv 13, 14).

It is to be noted that three times praise or prayer is substantiated by an assertion with a divine reference. This exegetical parallelism points to a triadic structure of vv 2-5, 6-10, 11-14, four, five and four lines respectively (cf. *BHK* and *BHS* which indent at v 6). The structure suggested by J. Schildenberger (*Estudios Eclesiásticos* 34 [1960] 684), whereby the psalm consists of two strophes each with two sub-strophes of three lines, vv 2-4 + 5-7, 8-10 + 11-13, and a final line, has little to commend it. The strophic hinge  $\text{לְעַלְמֵי־לְוָלָד}$  already noted in vv 5-6 is matched by another,  $\text{אֶדְוֹם}$  "Edom" in vv 10-11. In each strophe the divine noun or name occurs at two places, in vv 2, 4, then vv 6, 8, and finally vv 12 (twice), 14. The first and second strophes both begin with references to  $\text{כְּבוֹד}$  "glory," albeit in different senses (vv 2, 6). The first and second at or near their close contain a reference to nations, specified in the latter case (vv 4, 10). At the beginning of the first strophe is a chiastic pattern of verbs, in vv 2b-4,  $\text{וְאֶזְמְרָה : וְאֶזְמְרָה :: עֹרָה : עֹרָה}$ , repeating "celebrate with music" and "awake." This pattern is balanced by chiastic parallelism at the end of the third strophe: v 14b corresponds to v 13a, repeating  $\text{צָר}$  "enemy," while v 14a functions as a contrast to v 13b. The poetic reshaping of the material from Pss 57 and 60 is to be noted. The end of the former material now functions as the head of a new strophe, dovetailing into the latter's source material but sacrificing the crucial role of the repeated stem  $\text{שָׁמַר}$  "save" which brought two strophes to a close (60:7, 13 [5, 11] = 108:7, 13). The shorter introduction to the whole composition, compared with 57:8-10 (7-9), provides a more fitting counterpart to its new ending. The result is by no means a misshapen gluing together of two ends but a new creation of three beautifully balanced strophes. Its stylistic unity warns against disregarding its new unity and suggests that the psalm be taken seriously as a composition in its own right.

J. Becker (*Israel deutet seine Psalmen*, 65-67) has stressed that the whole is more than a sum of its parts. He has suggested that vv 4, 6 invest the Ps 60 material with a new universal dimension. Its mention of different tribes and nationalities becomes an illustration of the eschatological relationship between Israel and the nations. He dates the new composition to the exilic or post-exilic period and sees a reflection of the  $\text{כְּבוֹד}$  proclaimed by Second Isaiah (Isa 40:5; 59:19; 60:2, etc.) in the new association of divine glory with the deliverance of the people. He suggests severance from the cultic roots of the original material, such as thanksgiving; the "sanctuary" of v 8 would be for the redactor a heavenly one.

Over against Becker's chronological setting may be placed the pre-exilic one suggested by O. Eissfeldt ("Die Psalmen als Geschichtsquelle," 105) on the grounds of the psalm's particular combination of nationalistic and religious attitudes. More particularly S. Mowinckel (*Psalmenstudien*, vol. 3, 72-73) related the psalm to the period of Jehoram, king of Judah in the ninth century B.C. (cf. 2 Kgs 8:20-22). Rogerson and McKay (*Psalms 101-150*, 56) offer a less rarified interpretation than Becker. The new psalm, like Ps 60, was intended for use in a time of military crisis. Psalm 57:8-12 (7-11) was originally a prayer associated with a night vigil, and such a setting is possibly still presupposed. "The king or commander of the army could then be imagined dedicating his cause to God . . . just before first light on the day of a military

expedition or of battle." The enemy is not specified: the reference to Edom in v 11 is judged to be a symbol of any aggressor.

One factor relevant to chronology is the replacement  $\text{לְעַל}$  in v 5 which appears to be so tied to the structure of the psalm as to be due to the redactor. BDB (759a) observe that its use with the sense of  $\text{לְעַל}$  "upon" is a feature of late Hebrew. Dahood's reference to Phoenician heaped-up prepositions (*Psalms III*, 94), if intended as a chronological pointer, cannot convincingly offset the impact of the actual Hebrew examples set out in BDB. The universalism of vv 4, 6 does not necessarily dilute the sequel. The focus upon Edom in v 11 would have special meaning for the Jewish community after 587 B.C., as the book of Obadiah eloquently testifies. The same book attests the organic link between conquest of Edom and possession of the whole land, the first being viewed as a signal for the second and also for the vindication of Yahweh and Israel against "all the nations" (Obad 15-21). Accordingly there appears to be good reason for taking the reference to Edom as literal. Whether the new composition was used first for an actual campaign against Edomites cannot be clarified. It may simply reflect confidence expressed by a leader of the community in Yahweh's ultimate victory on their behalf.

#### Explanation

A new situation prompted the re-use of the second half of Ps 60, a prayer anchored in God's promise. The post-exilic religious community looked back hungrily to the old boundaries of the promised land and therefore prized highly an ancient oracle. Shechem and Succoth, v 8, immediately west and east of the Jordan, represented God's claim to the whole land. He was a warrior who used his people as instruments of war. Neighboring nations were claimed as vassals subject to his authority. The leader of the community took this oracle as warrant for his plea on their behalf for vindication.

The older poem itself pinpointed Edom as the most relevant ingredient claimed from the promise. The specification received fresh warrant after Edom's treachery when Jerusalem fell in 587 B.C. (cf. Obad 11-14). Edom became the focus of the community's appeal for divine justice. In their eyes the corollary of Edomite ascendancy was Judean humiliation, which spelled God's own dishonor. But God could and would, it is confidently affirmed, give the victory in the inaugural struggle for repossession of the whole land. Human aid is solemnly renounced, to stress total dependence upon him.

So Ps 60 came alive with a new relevance. But the grim beginning of that psalm was judged less auspicious. The post-exilic community knew all too well the theme of divine judgment (cf. v 12), and encouragement was what was needed on the occasion(s) when the new psalm would be sung. Accordingly it was replaced with the confident assurance of the second half of Ps 57. Its vow of praise breathed certainty, uncowed by the pagan environment. It grounded its hope in the reality of God's overwhelming loyalty to his own. It looked for manifestation of his glory so that all men might know Yahweh to be the true God.

So the psalm became the vehicle of believing prayer. It came to speak for the religious community at their contemporary level of revelation and

experience. They prayed as best they knew, taking seriously the ancient revelation of national election and the covenant tradition concerning God, Israel and the land. By using this psalm, they sought to be faithful to that revelation and to enhance God's glory. The combination of earlier psalms illustrates the vitality of older scriptures as they were appropriated and applied to new situations in the experience of God's people. Evidently Ps 60 had harked back to a promise already old: over and over again God's word speaks to the hearts of his people.

## Not Guilty (109:1-31)

### Bibliography

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### Translation

- <sup>1</sup> Director's. Davidic.<sup>a</sup> A Psalm.  
God whom I praise, do not be silent,<sup>b</sup> (3+2)
- <sup>2</sup> for wicked<sup>a</sup> mouths, (4+4)  
deceitful<sup>b</sup> mouths<sup>c</sup> have they opened<sup>d</sup> against me,  
they have spoken to me<sup>e</sup> with lying tongues,
- <sup>3</sup> and surrounded me with hateful talk (3+3)  
and attacked me without reason.
- <sup>4</sup> In return for my love<sup>a</sup> they accuse me, (3+2)  
while my whole attitude has been one of prayer.<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>5</sup> They have accorded me evil in return for good, (4+3)  
with hatred in return for my love:
- <sup>6</sup> "Get a wicked person<sup>a</sup> to testify against him, (3+3)  
let an accuser stand on his right.<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>7</sup> When he is tried, he will end up guilty (3+3)  
and his plea will be<sup>a</sup> counted as sin.
- <sup>8</sup> May his life be a short one (3+3)  
and someone else take his office.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>9</sup> May his children become fatherless (3+2)  
and his wife a widow.
- <sup>10</sup> May his children leave their ruined homes to beg<sup>a</sup> (4+3)  
and wander about asking for money.

- <sup>11</sup> May the creditor<sup>a</sup> exact<sup>b</sup> all he has, (4+3)  
may strangers plunder his earnings.
- <sup>12</sup> May he have no one to extend him loyal help, (3+3)  
no one to care for his fatherless ones.
- <sup>13</sup> May his offspring be destroyed, (3+3)  
their name<sup>a</sup> blotted out in the next generation.
- <sup>14</sup> May his forefathers' wrongs be remembered in Yahweh's presence<sup>a</sup> (4+3)  
and his mother's sins not be blotted out.
- <sup>15</sup> Let them ever confront Yahweh, (3+3)  
and may he destroy memory of the family<sup>a</sup> from the earth.
- <sup>16</sup> For he did not remember to show loyal help,<sup>a</sup> (3+3+3)  
but persecuted the poor and needy  
and the disheartened to their death.<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>17</sup> He loved cursing—may he experience it.<sup>a</sup> (3+3+2)  
He did not like to bless—  
may it keep<sup>a</sup> its distance from him.
- <sup>18</sup> He made cursing his habit: (3+3+3)  
may it seep into him like water,  
into his bones like oil.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>19</sup> May it be like the clothing he wears, (3+3)  
as tight as the belt he always has around him."
- <sup>20</sup> May this be the way Yahweh punishes<sup>a</sup> my accusers, (4+3)  
those who speak such evil against me.
- <sup>21</sup> But may you, Yahweh my Lord, (3+4)  
act on my behalf, in accord with your name.  
Rescue me because your loyal love<sup>a</sup> is so good.<sup>b</sup> (3+3+3)
- <sup>22</sup> For I am poor and needy  
and my heart within beats wildly with distress.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>23</sup> I am fading like a lengthening shadow, (3+2)  
shaken off like a locust.
- <sup>24</sup> Through fasting my knees cannot support me, (3+3)  
my body is thin through losing weight.
- <sup>25</sup> I have become the butt of their insults, (4+3)  
when they see me they toss their heads.
- <sup>26</sup> Help me, Yahweh my God, (3+2)  
save me in accord with your loyal love,
- <sup>27</sup> so that they may know that this is your handiwork, (3+3)  
that you yourself have done it, Yahweh.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>28</sup> They are cursing, but may you bless,<sup>a</sup> (4+4)  
may my assailants be confounded,<sup>b</sup> but your servant<sup>c</sup> be gladdened.
- <sup>29</sup> May my accusers be covered with disgrace (3+3)  
and clothed with confusion.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>30</sup> I will offer Yahweh many thanks with my mouth, (4+3)  
I will praise him among the assembly<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>31</sup> for standing on the right of the needy person, (3+3)  
ready to save him from those who put him on trial.<sup>a</sup>