

dangerous (v 10). The evil are characterized here entirely in terms of their speech in a manner which illustrates forcefully the potential evil of the tongue (cf. Jas 3:6-12). Their words, in the absence of "truth," were without foundation or certainty, and hence altogether unreliable. The inner emotions and desires of the wicked are of such a destructive nature that their throat is like an "open grave," symbolizing death, but more forcefully (in a hot climate) an abominable stench; in the pure air of morality, their words created an unbearable smell. Their tongues articulate no truth, but only the smooth words of flattery, which are lies designed cunningly to enable the evil to achieve their ends. With respect to such evildoers, the psalmist can only pray for their destruction (v 11); their thought and words are not only a danger to the righteous, but an insult to God.

Again, it is not certain whether the psalmist has particular enemies in mind, or simply envisions all those articulators of evil whose words can be heard in every day of life. But the prayer here for their destruction does not reflect the psalmist's vindictiveness; he prays for it because they have been rebellious against God (v 11). He does not ask for thunderbolts from heaven; he asks only that their evil might reverberate upon themselves, that they might be tripped up in their own devious schemes, and thus become their own victims.

A prayer for protection (5:12-13). The psalm concludes both with a prayer for protection and with a confident exhortation to rejoice in God's protectiveness. The psalmist, who began on a very personal note (*my* words, *my* murmurings, v 2), has now gained sufficient confidence to address all the righteous: "let all . . . rejoice" (v 12). The ground for rejoicing is not the impending destruction of the wicked persons (v 11), but rather the spontaneous result which is experienced by all those "who take refuge" in God, and are delivered from anxiety about "those lying in wait" (v 9). Their rejoicing is to be "for ever," an expression denoting the furthest duration of time imaginable, though (in the context of the Psalter) probably limited to the duration of life itself. One who finds refuge in God has a life-long source of jubilation.

The psalmist prays that God will "set a screen" over (v 12; or, "overshadow, cover," כָּסָה) his people, evoking perhaps the imagery of God's protection being like that of a bird covering its chicks protectively with its wings (cf. Ps 91:4). In v 13, the metaphor is expanded into the simile of the large body-shield which protects the entire body from the assaults of enemies. Both the metaphor of v 12 and the simile of v 13 develop the initial statement concerning those who "take refuge" (v 12a) in God, and that refuge makes possible both exultation in God (v 12d) and the receipt of God's blessing (v 13a).

The righteous are described as "those who love your name," and the name of God is pregnant with theological implications in the OT literature. The revelation of the divine personal name, *Yahweh* (see Exod 3:13-15; 6:2-3), was both an intimation of God's gracious movement toward Israel, and also of his impending redemption from Egyptian slavery and of the establishment of the Sinai covenant. Those who love the name are those to whom it has been revealed, the chosen people, and those to whom the blessing of the name had been granted in redemption and covenant. But more than that, the name symbolized God's presence in Israel; the sanctuary was the place

in which God chose to set his name (Deut 12:5), indicating both his presence and the possibility of approaching God and calling upon his name. At the beginning of the psalm, the worshiper had used both God's name (*Lord*: יהוה, v 2) and titles ("my King, my God," v 3) in his entreaty to be heard; at the end of the psalm, he repeats God's name (יהוה, v 13), in the sure confidence of God's blessing and favor.

Explanation

Psalm 5 illustrates with clarity the polarity and tension which characterize certain dimensions of the life of prayer. On the one side, there is God: on the other, evil human beings. And the thought of the psalmist alternates between these two poles. He begins by asking God to hear him, but recalls that evil persons have no place in God's presence. He turns back to God again, expressing his desire to worship and his need of guidance, but then is reminded of the human evils of the tongue. Eventually, he concludes in confidence, praying for protection and blessing. But the prayer is not only for protection *from* wicked persons, but also a prayer for protection from becoming *like them*. Those who use their tongues to exult in God, cannot also use them to boast and flatter.

Thus, although the original psalmist was perhaps seeking protection from particular enemies, there is a sense in which this psalm may be seen as a prayer for protection from one's own tongue, from the evil that is within a person, both real and potential. St. Paul quotes from this psalm in his catalog description of sinful mankind: "No one is righteous. . . . *Their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to flatter*" (Rom 3:10-13; cf. Ps 5:10). Thus the enemies of the psalmist may symbolize all persons without God, without the gospel; and like all sinful mankind, they require the gospel.

Psalm 5 offers not only a prayer that may be used in the worship of God, but also a mirror of mankind without God. And it is important to note that the principal characteristic of evildoers in this psalm is to be found in their speech: they are "boasters," they speak "falsehood," "there is no truth in their mouth," "their throat is an open grave," and "they speak flattery." Ancient Israel was not a primitive society where the only ills were acts, but—like our own society—it was an age in which the more sophisticated sins of speech abounded. And the sins of speech were not only an affront to God, but also caused pain in the lives of fellow human beings. Thus, from a NT perspective, it is difficult to limit this psalm as a prayer for protection; it must also be perceived as a prayer of self-examination and a request for forgiveness and deliverance.

A Prayer in Sickness (6:1-11)

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Translation

- ¹ For the musical director. With stringed instruments. Upon the octave.^a A psalm of David.
- ²⁽¹⁾ O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger (3+2)
and do not chastise me in your wrath.
- ³⁽²⁾ Be gracious to me, O Lord,^a for I have grown feeble. (4+4)
Heal me, O Lord, for my bones have become disturbed,
- ⁴⁽³⁾ and my soul has become exceedingly disturbed. (3+3)
But you, O Lord—How long?
- ⁵⁽⁶⁾ Return, O Lord. Save my soul! (4+3)
Deliver me because of your lovingkindness.
- ⁶⁽⁵⁾ For in Death, there is no memory^a of you. (3+3)
In Sheol, who can praise you?
- ⁷⁽⁶⁾ I have grown weary with my groaning. (2, 3+3)
Every night, I soak my bed,
I dissolve my couch with my tears.
- ⁸⁽⁷⁾ My eye wastes^a away because of grief: (3+3)
it grows weak on account of all my enemies.^b
- ⁹⁽⁸⁾ Depart from me, all workers of wickedness, (4+4)
for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.
- ¹⁰⁽⁹⁾ The Lord has heard my supplication. (3+3)
The Lord will accept my prayer.
- ¹¹⁽¹⁰⁾ All my enemies shall be disappointed^a and exceedingly disturbed. (4+3)
They shall turn back. They shall be disappointed in a moment.

Notes

1.a. השמיני ("the octave") is difficult to interpret; the literal sense of the word is *eighth*. The term is omitted in certain mss; see De-Rossi, IV, 2. See further 1 Chr 15:21, which might support the interpretation "octave." The implication may be that the musical accompaniment should be on a lower or base octave (*all' ottava bassa*, Delitsch, *Psalms I*, 168), which would be appropriate to the solemn theme of the psalm. A further possibility is that the expression refers to the tuning of a musical instrument, or to scale; see further the comments on the colophon to the Hurrian cult-song from Ras Shamra in the INTRODUCTION (PSALM TITLES).

3.a. It is possible that the two occurrences of "Lord" (יהוה) in this verse should be omitted as glosses, the first being absent in certain Heb. mss, and the second being absent both in certain Heb. mss and G (Vaticanus). But it is preferable to keep the words, for they fit well with the tone of entreaty in the opening portion of the prayer.

6.a. זכרון is parsed as a noun, "memory, remembrance" (after MT), rather than a participle, as implied by G.

8.a. Following MT, the subject of עתקת "grow weak" is "eye"; but it is possible that a first person sing. form of the verb should be read (after G, Aquila and Symmachus), which would be translated: "I have grown weak. . . ."

8.b. The word צורר has caused numerous difficulties; the translation above ("enemies") assumes it is derived from צרר (II), "to show hostility to" (BDB). Dahood translates the line: "my heart has grown old from pining" (*Psalms I*, 38), deriving from Akk. *šurru* and Ugar. *šrrt*, which (he claims) mean "heart, innards." The Ugaritic evidence, however, does not clearly support

Dahood's hypothesis. Driver (*CML*, 150, cited by Dahood) gives the meaning of *šrrt* as "recess" or "heights," simply citing an Akk. cognate (*šurru*) to illustrate the etymology of "recess." Gibson (*CML*², 156) also suggests "recess." Gordon (*UT*, #2199) offers "heights," noting also the possibility of "recesses, hiding places," as suggested by Finkel. Aistleitner proposes "heights," though with an element of doubt (*WUS*, #2363). Dietrich and Loretz propose "shining (peaks)" ("Zur ugaritischen Lexikographie (v)," *UF* 4 [1972] 29). Of the seven uses of the Ugaritic word *šrrt*, six occur in conjunction with *špn*, and the most appropriate translation would be "heights of Šapon," or possibly "recesses of Šapon." The seventh use of the term *šrrt* is quite different and probably should be translated "lintel, door-pivot" (*CTA* 16.1.43; cf. Gibson, *CML*², 95). In summary, while admitting the possible sense of Ugaritic *šrrt* as "recesses," and the possible etymology in terms of Akkadian, none of the Ugaritic texts uses the term in conjunction with human beings or gives strength to the possibility of a Hebrew word meaning "heart." On the general etymological difficulties with the term, in both Akkadian and Ugaritic, see B. Margalit, "Studia Ugaritica II," *UF* 8 (1976) 150 (n.33). Thus, Dahood's hypothesis with respect to the meaning of the term צורר is to be rejected.

11.a. The editorial suggestion in *BHS* to delete יבש "be disappointed and" at the beginning of this verse is unnecessary, and fails to appreciate the phonetic effect of the repeated use of the consonants *yodh*, *beth*, and *shin* in this line. As Delitzsch observed of this verse: "How much music the Psalter contains! Would that composers understood it!" (*Psalms I*, 174).

Form/Structure/Setting

Psalm 6 may be classified generally as an *individual lament*, though more precisely it is a *psalm of sickness*, reflecting the prayer for healing of a person afflicted in both body and spirit. The contents of the psalm do not give any explicit clues as to its initial association with the cult or formal worship in Israel, though such an association is possible. The marked transition in tone which takes place between vv 8 and 9 may imply that the suppliant has received an oracle or word of confidence from the priest, and gone away from God's house in faith and certainty (see further the *Comment*).

By the time of the psalm's inclusion in the Psalter (it belonged initially to the first Davidic collection, then to the music director's collection), it had become a part of Israel's resources for worship, and was sung with musical accompaniment, as is implied in the title verse. The early church used this psalm and six others (Pss 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143) as the "Penitential Psalms," which were traditionally sung on Ash Wednesday. Although it is not a *penitential* psalm in the most explicit sense, the tone of the psalm is appropriate to penitence and v 2 might be taken to imply penitence.

The change in tone (between vv 8 and 9) does not undermine the unity of the psalm, as supposed by some of the older commentators, for change is vital to the spiritual progress within the psalm, whereas continuity is indicated by the use of similar and related words in both parts. Thus, forms derived from ינן "gracious" occur in vv 3 and 10, the verb נבהל "be disturbed" is used in both vv 3-4 and in v 11, and the verb שוב "return" is used in vv 5 and 11; these stylistic devices impress upon the reader both the unity and the power of the poem. But, from another perspective, the substance of Ps 6 contains a high percentage of formulaic language (*viz.* it shares *formulae*, clauses or phrases, both with other psalms and with OT books beyond the Psalter; see R. C. Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms*, 105). The nature of this common language, indicating perhaps an oral form of composition, should create caution with respect to the formula-

tion of an hypothesis concerning the interrelationship between this psalm and other psalms or literature such as Jeremiah (see further Coppens, *HUCA* 32 [1961] 217-26, for additional arguments against dependence on Jeremiah). The common language gives the psalm a familiar flavor, but at the same time it is distinctive by virtue of the power and pathos of its lamentation.

Neither the form nor the content contain any clear and firm evidence with respect to the date and authorship of Ps 6. There are differences of opinion with respect to the structure of the psalm, but it falls most naturally into three parts: (1) the psalmist's cry of anguish (vv 2-4); (2) a prayer for deliverance from misery (vv 5-8); (3) confidence in answered prayer (vv 9-11).

Comment

The psalmist's cry of anguish (6:2-4). The anguished cry with which the psalm begins reflects the psalmist's experience of physical illness and spiritual travail. The psalmist has become feeble and weak as a result of the course of his illness, though the poetic language of the psalm does not permit the identification of the disease. Both the inner and the outer person have been affected; the double use of the same verb (לָרַג "be disturbed") indicates that both the *bones* (representing the physical being) and the *soul* (representing the inner or spiritual being) have been profoundly disturbed.

Before specifying his sorry estate, the psalmist has prayed that God not "rebuke" and "chastise" him in his divine wrath (v 2), and this opening plea poses certain difficulties of interpretation. One way of understanding it is to suppose that the psalmist perceived an intimate relationship between sin and sickness; thus his experience of sickness presupposed acts of sin, which in turn suggested that sickness itself was an act of divine chastisement and rebuke. But nowhere does this psalmist explicitly confess to sin; in this, Ps 6 differs from Ps 38, which opens with an identical plea, but which continues to a confession of sin. Here, there is no confession of sin and there is no explicit statement of penitence. If this interpretation of v 2 is correct, then one must either suppose that the psalmist has committed sins in ignorance, and therefore cannot explicitly repent, or else that, like Job, he is a righteous sufferer whose sickness cannot be explained simply as a consequence of evil action.

A different and more satisfactory sense can be attributed to the opening plea, though it too is related to the concept of the righteous sufferer. It may be that the psalmist prays not to be rebuked or chastised for bringing this problem to God in prayer; whatever the reason for his sickness, it must either have been sent or permitted by God, and it might seem presumptuous of a mere mortal, albeit a suffering mortal, to complain of the experience which God has permitted to fall upon him. If this interpretation is correct, the psalmist first prays that God not be angry with him for raising a problem, namely his sickness, for which God may have had a good reason. Then, immediately, he goes on to ask that God be gracious to him; that is, that God treat him in a manner characterized by grace, the undeserved and freely given love and mercy of God, because physically and spiritually he can no longer bear the suffering. He does not claim that he deserves God's grace,

for by definition it cannot be deserved or earned, but he pleads for it nevertheless on the basis of his sorry estate. He needs God's grace, knows that he needs it, and in desperation asks for God's grace.

But, eventually, the anguish exceeds words and overcomes the psalmist's power to articulate his agony; he can only ask "How long?" How much longer must he continue to suffer? How much longer will it be until he experiences the gracious action of God?

A prayer for deliverance from misery (6:5-8). Gaining strength again, the psalmist returns to his plea and explicitly asks God to deliver him from his sickness. He begins the next stage in his prayer by saying "Return" (v 5), presumably implying that the state of sickness had been an experience in which it seemed that God had deserted him; now he asks for God to return. (Alternatively, the verb יָשׁוּב could carry the sense "again" in conjunction with the following verb, leading to the translation: "Save my soul again, O Lord." The implication of this translation would be that the psalmist asked for God to do for him now what he had already done in the past, on another occasion.) "Save my soul:" the implication is "save my *life*" (on the use of נַפְשִׁי, "soul, life," in the Psalms, see further A. A. Anderson, *Psalms I*, 266-67). Deliverance was requested on the basis of God's "lovingkindness" or covenant love (רַחֲמֵי), and the request is entirely appropriate. Just as Israel as a nation received God's love in covenant in, and after, the great deliverance from Egypt, so too each member of the covenant community could request the continuing experience of God's lovingkindness in the act of divine deliverance.

Close to death as a result of his sickness, the psalmist prays for deliverance from that ultimate enemy, death itself. The conception of death and the after-life implicit here is that of the OT in general (with the exception of some of the later writings, which reflect the beginning of eschatological thought). The state of the dead is not differentiated with respect to good and evil persons; there is no clear distinction here between heaven and hell. *Sheol* was conceived as a kind of underworld; the word is translated in *G* as *hades* (ᾗδης). In *Sheol*, persons were believed to exist in a form of semi-life, at rest, yet not in joy, for they had not the fullness of life which made possible the richness of relationship with the living God. Death was thus to be dreaded. The psalmist feared death, for in the state of *Sheol* there would be neither memory of God, nor the praise and worship of God. The word "memory" does not refer to the abstract possibility of remembering God in *Sheol*, but rather to the role of memory in the worship and praise of God. It was memory which evoked the praise of God, for the memory of what God had done for the living was a basis for the living to both praise God and to go on living within the perspective of a good memory (see further Deut 8 and Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 184-89).

The psalmist's sickness had created both exhaustion and insomnia. "I soak my bed" (v 7); the literal sense is that he *caused his bed to swim*, or *float*, so profuse were his tears. The insomnia was the result partly of the pain accompanying sickness, and partly of the spiritual anguish and sense of separation from God which resulted from that pain. As for most sufferers, it was in the long watches of the night, when silence and loneliness increase and the warmth of human companionship is absent, that the pain and the grief reached

their darkest point. It is possible that this psalm reflects the time of morning prayer, when the memory of the long night was still vivid and the thought of another night was appalling; if such were the case, there would be a certain affinity between this psalm and Pss 3-5, which were also related to the morning and evening times of prayer.

The *wasting* and *weakness* of the *eye* (v 8) are indicative of the state of physical decline into which the psalmist had descended, just as conversely the clear eye symbolized strength and good health. It was said of Moses, before his death, that "his eyesight had not failed" (Deut 34:7), indicating his generally robust state of health at the age of 120 years! But the psalmist's eye had faded before its time, partly as a result of the *grief* stemming from his sickness, and partly because of "enemies" (v 8). The reference to enemies may be the result of a common experience of the sick in ancient Israel; many persons believed that the sick were sinners, being judged by God, so that even a sick man's friends might become enemies. Such was apparently the experience of Job (30:1-15). The tragedy of enmity in a time of sickness is that it compounds the pain, for the person who is ill needs friendship, not enmity, and his diseased condition undermines that robustness of character which may simply shoulder the experience of enmity and bear it as an inevitable part of the experience of living. The psalmist has no such spiritual and emotional reserves; he has reached rock bottom.

Confidence in answered prayer (6:9-11). The tone and atmosphere of the psalm change radically in these last three verses. It may have been the case that as the psalmist progressed in prayer, he eventually reached a point where faith and confidence outstripped anguish and despair. But if the initial context of the psalm's use were cultic, if it presupposes the worshiper going to the temple with his problem, it is quite possible that the change in tone is the consequence of some act or statement external to the psalmist.

Perhaps we should understand the presence of a priest or temple servant, who—having heard the opening words of the worshiper—declares a message or oracle from God which gives faith to the psalmist. Just as Hannah had poured out her lament to God, weeping profusely as she prayed, and then had received a word of confidence from Eli the priest (1 Sam 1:17), so too the psalmist's sorrowful prayer may have been met with a word from God, spoken by his representative, which restored confidence and faith. (For a fuller discussion, see Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen*, 71, 129.)

As confidence returns, the first topic to be taken up is the same as the last topic to be mentioned in the lament: "depart from me, all workers of wickedness." The "workers of wickedness" (v 9) are presumably none other than the enemies of v 8. When sorrow was in ascendancy and faith lagged, enemies caused grief and compounded injury; now that faith and hope were restored, the enemies could be confidently dismissed. The grief had been caused by enemies partly as a consequence of the sufferer's sneaking and insidious suspicion that perhaps they were right, perhaps God had indeed deserted the sufferer; but now that the psalmist has confidence that "the Lord has heard" (v 9b), the enemies no longer offer a threat. Where there is confidence in God, no human being can activate anxiety.

The tenses of the two verbs in v 10 differ. The first implies an action

completed in the past: (the Lord) "has heard." The second implies an action still in the future: (the Lord) "will accept." Although some scholars have sought to change this sequence and translate both verbs as if they were in the same tense, the alternation is probably deliberate. The psalmist has opened his prayer fearfully, lacking any confidence that God would hear this, or his former prayers, but he closes with confidence. The Lord has indeed heard him. But the answer to the prayer lay still in the future—he "will accept," implying that the act of divine healing and restoration, when it came, would be the ultimate consequence of God having heard his prayer. The psalmist's faith, in other words, outstripped the reality of any change in his physical condition.

In the concluding verse, the process of liberation can be seen. Whereas at the beginning, both his body and his soul had been "exceedingly disturbed" (vv 3-4), now the psalmist perceives that his enemies would be "exceedingly disturbed" (the same terminology is employed in v 11). And whereas early in his prayer, he had asked God to "return" to him (using the root נשׁוּב), now he perceives that his enemies would "turn back" or "return" (v 11b; the same verb is used). In his newfound confidence, he perceives not only that God will answer his own prayer, but also that his malicious enemies would find their sin boomeranging upon themselves.

Explanation

Mortality is of the essence of the human condition. In a life filled with uncertainty and an unknown future, there remains always one certainty, that one day we shall die. But whereas the healthy person knows this, yet learns to live with an awareness of mortality, the sick person may find that equanimity dissolves and the awareness of death becomes more vivid. Health is normal and it may result in praise, but sickness is a reminder and an anticipation of death. Life itself is no longer so good, for it is marred with pain, and the experience of imperfection in living evokes awareness of that ultimate enemy, death. In sickness, the body does not function properly; in death it ceases to function altogether. Thus it is that the psalms conceived on the sickbed are marked by a profound pathos, for though they contain the words of the living, they are haunted by the shadow of dying.

For the modern Christian or Jewish reader of the Bible, it is most difficult to enter fully into the spirit of the OT *psalms of sickness*. The contemporary Christian and the contemporary Jew can face the experience of sickness and the anticipation of death with a perspective denied to the psalmists, namely belief in a life in God's presence beyond the grave. Yet there was no such clearly articulated doctrine in early Israel. It emerged only in the latest writings of the OT and found fuller expression in the Jewish centuries preceding the Christian era; but even in NT times, there was a debate between the Sadducees and the Pharisees concerning the legitimacy of a belief in resurrection and life beyond the grave. To grasp the initial profundity of the psalms of sickness, we must first attempt to read them within the perspective of the beliefs of their authors. This life is the life given by God. It terminates in death, beyond which was Sheol, an existence not really known, shadowy

and incomplete in its substance. Sickness, in a sense, is an anticipation of Sheol; it was hard in sickness to rejoice in God and praise him, but in Sheol it would be impossible.

It is proper that the modern reader of the Psalms understand them with an awareness of the doctrine of resurrection and everlasting life. But to add this perspective to the psalms of sickness too quickly may be questionable, especially for the healthy reader. For the awareness of joy and resurrection beyond sickness and the grave may contribute to a casual understanding of death, and a casual understanding of mortality is likely to crumble with the onset of sickness and the advent of death. It was a fact, as the psalmist knew, that this life was the gift of God; in this life God could be praised, but in death it would no longer be possible to join in the praise of the congregation of the faithful (v 6). If too easily we think that when sickness and death approach, we will trust in God and look to the life beyond, then when the reality comes, the casual faith may not sustain. Like the psalmist, we need a full appreciation of this life before we can look beyond it. And like the psalmist, we may have to undergo the anguish of pain and the sense of separation from God before we can emerge to the faith that rests confidently upon God. The sense of anguish and trouble which permeates this psalmist's words was experienced by Jesus, and indeed influenced his words (v 4; cf. John 12:27); we perceive the pathos of the psalm most clearly when it is read in the context of the Passion.

The Prayer of a Person Falsely Accused (7:1-18)

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Translation

- ¹ A Shiggaion^a of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.
- ²⁽¹⁾ O Lord my God, I have sought refuge in you. (4+4/3)
Save me from all my pursuers and deliver me,
- ³⁽²⁾ lest they^a should rip me^b like a lion, (3+3)
tearing^c me up, with no deliverer.
- ⁴⁽³⁾ O Lord my God, if I have done this thing, (4+3)
if there is injustice in my hands,
- ⁵⁽⁴⁾ if I have repaid my ally with treachery, (3+3)
and rescued his adversary^a empty-handed,

- ⁶⁽⁵⁾ let an enemy pursue^a me^b and overtake me, (4+3+3)
and let him trample my life onto the earth,
and let him lay my glory^c onto the dust. SELAH^d
- ⁷⁽⁶⁾ Arise, O Lord, in your wrath. (3+3, 2+2)
Lift yourself up against the furious outbursts of my enemies.
Awake,^a O Lord my God.^b
Declare^c a judgment!
- ⁸⁽⁷⁾ And let the assembly of peoples^a gather around you, (3+3)
and above it^b take your seat on high.
- ⁹⁽⁸⁾ The Lord adjudicates the nations^a! (3,3+2)
Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness,
and according to my integrity, O Most High.^b
- ¹⁰⁽⁹⁾ Let the evil of wicked persons come to an end,^a (3+2, 3+2)
but establish the righteous,
and scrutinize the thoughts and emotions,^b
O righteous God.
- ¹¹⁽¹⁰⁾ My shield^a is upon^b God, (3/2?+2)
the One who delivers the upright of heart.
- ¹²⁽¹¹⁾ God is a righteous judge, (3+3)
but God^a is indignant every day
- ¹³⁽¹²⁾ if a person does not repent.^a (2,2+3?)
He sharpens his sword;
he has bent^b his bow and prepared it,
- ¹⁴⁽¹³⁾ and for it^a he has made ready instruments of death. (3+3)
He will make his arrows fiery shafts.^b
- ¹⁵⁽¹⁴⁾ Lo, he^a is in labor with iniquity, (3+2+2)
and he is pregnant with mischief,
and gives birth to falsehood.
- ¹⁶⁽¹⁵⁾ He dug a pit and excavated it; (3+3)
then he fell^a into the hole he was making.
- ¹⁷⁽¹⁶⁾ His mischief returns upon his own head, (3+3)
and his violence descends on his forehead.
- ¹⁸⁽¹⁷⁾ I will laud the Lord because of his righteousness, (3+3)
and I will sing the praise of the name of the Lord Most High.

Notes

1.a. The meaning of *Shiggaion* (׀׀׀׀) is uncertain. G simply translates *psalm* (ψαλμὸς). If it is related to the root ׀׀׀׀, "to go astray, reel," it might indicate a psalm of a particular type (e.g. characterized by "wandering" style, uneven meter, or a type of lament characterized by distracted thoughts and words), but there can be no certainty. Mowinckel offers the reasonable hypothesis that the word is related to Akk. *šegu*, "psalm of lamentation" (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, 209). The word occurs only here in the Psalter, though a different form of the word occurs in Hab 3:1.

3.a. "They"; literally, "he," though the reference is to the "pursuers" (v 2).

3.b. "Me" is literally ׀׀׀׀, "my soul," which may often refer to the individual in the manner of the English pronoun. Dahood translates "my neck," noting the use of Ugaritic *npš*. This is possible, though if the Ugaritic nuance is to be followed, *throat* would be a more appropriate translation than *neck*; the word *npš* designates the internal organ of respiration and ingestion