

The Vow (61:9). The final verse of the psalm expresses the praise of the name of God which the supplicant will sing when God responds to the prayer in the preceding verses, and a basis is provided for a period of praise and vow-paying of indefinite duration. "Singing praise and making melody, he will make his whole life a continuous paying of vows" (Delitzsch, 232).

Explanation

The main value of this psalm probably lies in its metaphorical richness. The metaphors of the high rock, the strong tower, the perpetual dwelling in the tent of God, and the shelter under the divine wings enhance the prayer and contribute significantly to our repertoire of spiritual imagination. A well-stocked and fertile imagination is essential for spiritual strength, a strength that influences the whole being of the person and/or group that possesses it. The metaphors assist us to incorporate our own experience into the experience of prayer. Prayer should engage imagination both toward the one praying and toward God. The metaphors of the psalm pass into our own experience and expand our horizons. Walter Brueggemann has written of the Psalms:

The Psalms do not insist that we follow word for word and line by line, but they intend us to have great freedom to engage our imagination toward the Holy God. . . . We will take liberties as the Psalm passes by and moves out into the richness of our experience and then back into the awesome presence of God. That is the way of metaphor (*Praying the Psalms* [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1982], 35).

Without a good stock of metaphors and an active imagination, our prayers are crippled and reduced to flattened, formulaic expressions without much power.

Perhaps the dominant metaphor in the psalm is that of distance from God in v. 3. A sense of far-awayness from the divine presence, an at-the-end-of-the-earth experience, seems to be endemic to the spiritual life from time to time (see, e.g., Pss 2:1; 10:1; 22:2, 12, 20; 35:22; 38:22 [21]; 71:12). Indeed, it is almost a continuous need: "The psalmist is here describing the human condition in existentialist terms: man constantly stands at the edge of the abyss, and only divine assistance can prevent his falling into it" (Dahood, II, 84). Werner R. Mayer discusses a provocative Babylonian prayer formula which says, "I call to you from distantness; hear me from nearness" ("Ich rufe dich von ferne, höre mich von nahe," 302-17). The formula seems to mean that prayer suspends the distantness between the supplicant and the deity. Breaking down a perceived distance and the creation of sense of nearness and presence is a major function of prayer. The Psalms are of great importance in the recognition of distantness, which results from various kinds of stress and distress, and in the closing of that gap, which threatens spiritual health and even life itself. The very recitation of psalms like 61 serves to diminish distance and enhance nearness and presence.

Calm Faith under Attack: A Psalm of Trust (62:1-13)

Bibliography

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Translation

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|---------|--|------------|
| 1 | For the leader; ^a ^c <i>al-jeduthun</i> ; ^b a Davidic psalm. ^c | |
| 2 (1) | Yes, ^a my soul waits calmly ^b for God,
from him is my salvation. | (4[2+2]+2) |
| 3 (2) | Yes, ^a he is my rock where I am secure;
my stronghold where I am safe from ruin. ^b | (3+3) |
| 4 (3) | How long will you assault ^a a person;
all of you attacking ^b
as you would a leaning wall or a battered parapet. ^c | (3+2+4) |
| 5 (4) | Yes, despite being a person of high status, ^a
they plan to push (him) down; ^b
they delight in lies;
they bless with their mouths, ^c
but inwardly they curse. SELAH. | (3+2+2+2) |
| 6 (5) | Yes, calmly wait for God, O my soul,
for my hope is from him. | (3+2) |
| 7 (6) | Yes, he is my rock where I am secure, ^a
my stronghold where I am unshaken. | (3+2) |
| 8 (7) | My welfare and my power (depend) ^a on God;
I am rock-strong and secure in God. ^b | (3+3) |
| 9 (8) | Trust in him at all times, O people; ^a
pour out your hearts before him.
God is our refuge! SELAH. | (3+3+3) |
| 10 (9) | Yes, ordinary people ^a are only a breath;
an illusion ^b are people of rank ^a —
rising ^c on the balance!
Altogether they weigh less than a breath. | (3+2+2+2) |
| 11 (10) | Trust not in extortion,
and in plunder take no empty pride;
when wealth ^a bears fruit,
do not set your heart on it. | (3+3+3+3) |
| 12 (11) | God has spoken once—
twice I heard this— ^a
that strength belongs to God. | (3+3+3) |

- 13 (12) *Yours is indeed^a a loyal-love, O Lord,
for you reward each person
according to what he [or she] has done.*

(3+4)

Notes

1.a. See n. 51:1.a.

1.b. See *Comment*.

1.c. See n. 51:1.b.

2.a. This is an attempt to translate the Hebrew וְאֵן , which occurs six times in this psalm (vv 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10). The force of the particle shifts back and forth between an affirmative meaning, "truly/surely/yes," and a restrictive meaning, "only/alone." Basically it seems to involve comparison, either overt or implied: "Yes, but on the contrary/nevertheless." N. H. Snaith ("The Meaning of the Hebrew וְאֵן " VT 14 [1964] 221-25) compares it to the Yorkshire "nobbut" and to the Greek $\alpha\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ (though $\pi\lambda\eta\gamma\eta$, "only/nevertheless/however/in any case," is used in Ps 62) and stresses the element of contrariness/exception/restriction, and even contradiction (225) in its usage.

2.b. Literally "silence/calm/stillness (is) my soul."

3.a. "My rock and my salvation" form a hendiadys (Dahood): "my rock of deliverance" or "my saving rock."

3.b. Traditionally, "I shall not be greatly moved"; וְאֵן is read adverbially; sometimes it is omitted (e.g., Kraus). The translation could be, "I am not severely shaken." Note the וְאֵן in v 7b.4.a. The verb וְאֵן may be from וְאֵן , "shout/threaten/attack" (BDB; Briggs), or from וְאֵן , "speak incessantly," extended to mean "overwhelm with reproofs." Dahood associates it with the Ugaritic *hwt*, "word" (as in Job 6:30, *hawot*, "words"), and translates, "How long will you bluster." RSV has "set upon a man"; NRSV, "assail a person."4.b. MT has pual imperfect 2nd plural, "all of you are slain" (or "will be slain"), as in KJV, "ye shall be slain all of you." However, the piel should be read here with the Ben Naphtali tradition and versional support (see GKC, 52g; Briggs). The verb וְאֵן normally refers to illegal killing (Num 35:30 is an exception), murder, or manslaughter; though "shatter" (RSV) or "attack" in a more general sense is possible. NRSV, "batter your victim."

4.c. Reading as a military metaphor, with the wall and parapet referring to the persecuted person, which seems best. It is possible to read, however, with the bulging wall as a reference to the enemies; so KJV, "as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence." Dahood has, "All of you are like a leaning wall, a sagging fence." NEB has caught the most probable meaning: "How long will you assist a man . . . all battering on a leaning wall?"

5.a. The MT וְאֵן is uncertain. Gunkel and others read וְאֵן from וְאֵן ("to deceive") as meaning "deceptions" or "treachery": "They plan deception, they delight." However, MT may be retained with the sense of "dignity/status/high position," suggesting a person of eminent position in society, such as a king. LXX has "my honor/dignity/authority/office" ($\tau\iota\mu\eta$), which may be correct.5.b. The verb וְאֵן carries the idea of "thrust out/away." If וְאֵן is read as "deception" or "deceit," the verb can be read as "mislead/lead astray" (as in contexts like Deut 13:14; Prov 7:21). Dahood notes the odd use of the infinitive וְאֵן without an accusative object and reads "to ruin they indulge in lies." Perhaps better would be:

How they counsel deceit!
They love to mislead with a lie;
blessing with their mouths,
but inwardly cursing.

5.c. MT, "with his mouth," but see *BHS*.

7.a. See n. 3.a.

8.a. Literally "my salvation/deliverance and my glory." Probably another case of hendiadys: "my glorious deliverance."

8.b. Literally, "the rock of my strength of my refuge," an extended construct chain, equal to, "my mighty rock-refuge." Note the chiasm in the verse "On God—my salvation and my glory—my mighty rock-refuge—in God" (ABBA).

9.a. LXX has "all the congregation of . . ." which may reflect Hebrew וְכָל־עַדְוָה and may be a better reading: "Trust in him, O whole congregation of the people."10.a. The *Translation* assumes that the common assumption regarding the meaning of וְכָל־אִדְוָה and וְכָל־אִדְוָה is correct when paired as here. See Pss 4:3; 49:3; Lam 3:33 (see A. A. Anderson, I, 374; Kraus, I, 169; Jacquet, II, 284). The distinction is made in some Babylonian and Egyptian sources. However, Kidner (223) correctly notes that the distinctions applied to these terms as expressions of "low estate" and "high estate" are only inferences. Both Hebrew expressions may mean "man" or "mankind." NEB has "all men."

10.b. Literally, "a lie," as in v 5.

10.c. Circumstantial infinitive; GKC, 114o. Cf. Perowne, 485.

11.a. The word וְאֵן can mean "wealth/power/force, etc."12.a. The expression "once . . . twice" may be a form of numerical saying, as in Prov 6:16-18; 30:15-31; etc. The message was repeatedly received. It is possible, but less likely, to read "two things have I learned" for the second expression (see NEB; NAB; NJV). It is possible that the וְאֵן at the end of וְאֵן is enclitic: וְאֵן וְאֵן וְאֵן : "Two times of this I have heard" = "I have heard it twice."

13.a. The conjunction is emphatic.

Form/Structure/Setting

The outstanding characteristic of this psalm is the lack of any address or prayer to God until the last verse. Testimony and exhortation dominate the psalm. The sixfold repetition of the Hebrew וְאֵן ("truly/surely/nevertheless/only") is a striking literary feature in the psalm (see note 2.a.). However, despite the presence of this feature, the psalm does not seem to have a very intricate design. The text moves forward with a fairly simple progression. Stuhlmüller (I, 284) notes that the refrain in vv 3 and 7 does not end major strophes, as would be expected, and that the conclusion seems "almost anticlimactic, like a later addition"—which it may very well be. As with many psalms, the somewhat vague structure allows for different outlines. Nevertheless, the *selah* placement (for whatever reason) seems to provide an adequate division of the psalm into three parts: vv 2-5, 6-9, 10-13. The first section is composed of two parts: vv 2-3, an opening affirmation; vv 4-5, a charge against enemies. V 4 is a relatively rare charge by a speaker directly to enemies (cf. Pss 6:9; 52:3; 55:14; 94:8), while v 5 is an indirect charge, addressed to whoever will hear. The second section is composed of three verses of personal affirmation (vv 6-8) and an exhortation to the people (v 7).

The third section begins with a reflection on the basic nature of humanity (v 16) and moves to exhortation of the people in v 11 (note that the exhortation in v 9 is positive but that in v 11 is negative). Vv 12-13 provide a conclusion in which God is directly addressed with affirmation of his loyal-love and fair dealing. The Hebrew וְאֵן occurs three times in the first section, twice in the second section, and once in the third section. The occurrence of וְאֵן in v 6 relates this verse back to v 2, as does the use of וְאֵן and וְאֵן , in vv 2 and 6 respectively. As noted above, vv 3 and 7 are the same, except for the word וְאֵן in v 3.

This psalm is clearly one of trust and affirmation, similar to Pss 4; 16; 23; 27:1-6; 91; 121; and 131. As such it shares features with the confidence sections of laments (e.g., Ps 22:23-32) and with the thanksgiving psalms (Pss 31:24-5; 32:6, 9-11; 34:10-23; 66:16-20), though strictly speaking the psalm lacks the major elements of a thanksgiving psalm. The psalm has a tone and some language common to the wisdom literature, and several scholars have put it in the wisdom

tradition (e.g., Gunkel, Kraus, Deissler, Stuhlmüller). However, it seems to be "near wisdom" and does not clearly belong to the rather amorphous context known as wisdom poetry.

The condition of the speaker is clearly that of an endangered person, under attack by those who are seeking his (or her) ruin. In the face of assault (verbal or otherwise) by assailants, the speaker declares absolute confidence in God's protection. It is quite possible to think of a speaker who has taken refuge in a sanctuary (vv 3, 7, 8, 12), where assurance of divine help and safekeeping might be powerfully realized, possibly through receiving a *Heilsorakel* from God (v 12; cf. Mowinckel, *PIW*, I, 219; Kraus, A. A. Anderson, Sabourin, 275). However, Schmidt, Leslie, and, tentatively, K. Seybold (*Das Gebet des Kranken*, 74-75) maintain that the speaker reflects an experience of severe illness, in which a weakened physical condition is likened to a bulging and falling wall, a condition made worse by enemies who batter the suffering person with vicious talk and curses. Community ceremonies for a person under attack by enemies, whether from outside the community or from inside, such as those postulated by Erhard Gerstenberger (*Der bittende Mensch*, esp. 126, 144) would be appropriate for Ps 62. In this case, the psalm would seem to be one spoken by a person being rehabilitated back into family and community life, who speaks in such a way as to challenge enemies and to profess a firm adherence to God.

Any attempt to assign a specific date for this psalm is hardly worth the effort to discuss. The scribes who provided the superscription either found the psalm in the Davidic tradition or put it there, no doubt thinking it suitable for the speaker to be David. However, this conclusion is not a substantial basis for dating the psalm (see Craigie, 31-35), and it may very well be post-exilic (cf. Westermann, 153).

Comment

The term *jeduthun* is found in Ps 39:1 with ל ; with לע , as here; it occurs also in Ps 77:1. Jeduthun is listed as one of David's chief musicians in 1 Chr 16:41, along with Asaph and Heman (1 Chr 9:16; 16:38; etc.). Mowinckel (*PIW*, II, 213) argues that the term should be understood as a noun, not as a personal name, and should be given the meaning "confession," drawing the word from דָּוָה (which Craigie, 308, correctly notes could just as well indicate "thanksgiving" or "praise"). However, it may be more probable that the word is a personal name, like Asaph and Heman, which appear in titles of psalms. In that case, it could be a reference to a family of singers with this name and the title might be translated as "For the leader in charge of [the family singing group] Jeduthun, . . ." On the other hand, the name may have become a way of referring to a tune or musical setting, according to which the psalm was to be sung (the לע would mean "according to" in this case).

Basic affirmation of trust (62:2-3). These verses express the assurance to which the speaker has come, and they suggest a previous struggle, a struggle that "had taken place in his soul, before he found in turning to God that stillness from which he is able to draw the inner strength he needed to overcome his affliction" (Weiser). Perhaps, we should think of the passage through a crisis, like that in Ps 73 and implied in Ps 131, to a turning point. The two parallel usages of ל in vv 2 and 3 indicate that the statements which they introduce do not come naturally and

easily. Despite outward appearances, God is the speaker's salvation, rock, and strength (on the concept of rock see Ps 61:3). The speaker is confident of being "safe from ruin," of not being "greatly moved"—shaken and troubled, perhaps, but safe from ruin. Assurance is postulated on a calm, still waiting for God. The stillness, or calm resting, also suggests a previous time of restless spiritual agitation.

Charge against the enemies (62:4-5). The enemies are portrayed as false friends who persecute the speaker. They are pictured as brutally aggressive, deceptive, and delighting in lies. They have no respect for the status or dignity of the person they attack (v 5a). The purpose of their actions is destructive. Their attack is like that of a besieging army assaulting and battering the weakening walls of a city (v 4; cf. Pss 3:7; 56:2; 59:5). The speaker describes a condition (in third person) which is like a wall pushed in and ready to collapse at any moment.

The situation is made worse by the hypocritical behavior of the enemies, who verbally bless the speaker, but who pronounce curses in their hearts. The text may veil magical or semi-magical use of curses and abusive, occult terms against the speaker (S. Mowinckel, *PIW*, II, 3; Kraus, I, 112-17; II, 597). The question "How long?" (v 4) is found in charges and challenges addressed to opponents or persecutors (e.g., Exod 16:28; Josh 18:3; Job 8:2; 18:2; 19:2; cf. Pss 52:3; 58:2)—though it is also used in complaints addressed to God (e.g., Ps 13:2, 3). The expression is especially suitable for disputations in which opponents address each other directly.

Affirmation and exhortation (62:6-9). The statements of calm waiting, hope, and security in vv 6-7 parallel those in vv 2-3. There are some changes in nuances between vv 2-3 and vv 6-7, however. Kidner (I, 222) notes three: first, the speaker shifts from declaration in vv 2-3 to self-exhortation in vv 6-7; second, "hope" appears in v 6 rather than "salvation" in v 2; third, the somewhat open "where I am safe from ruin" ("not greatly moved") of v 3 becomes unqualified assurance in v 7. A fourth difference between the sections is the addition of v 8, which uses a chiasmic structure to emphasize by repetition the concentration of the speaker on God (see note 8.b.). Everything which makes a person important and strong depends upon God's favor and help. The speaker turns attention to the people (probably to be understood as fellow worshipers) who are exhorted in v 9 to trust in God at all times and to "pour out" their hearts before him in prayer. (On "pouring out" prayer before God see Hannah's statement in 1 Sam 1:15: "I have been pouring out my soul before Yahweh"; also Pss 42:5; 102:1 [title]; 142:3; similarly, Hezekiah "spread out" the letter from the Assyrians before Yahweh, 2 Kgs 19:14 // Isa 37:14). The expression conveys openness and freedom in prayer to express to God all one's sufferings and distress. The third colon in v 9 ("God is our refuge") is a key statement in which the speaker extends personal faith to the community. The people are encouraged to follow the speaker in trusting God.

The weakness of mankind and the strength of God (62:10-13). The last major section of the psalm continues the instruction of v 9. The fundamental nature of humankind is set forth in v 10, and a warning against trusting in the products of oppression follows in v 11, which forms a concluding parallel with v 9 (note the repetition of "trust" and "heart"). V 10 forms a central affirmation around which the positive v 9 and the negative v 11 are placed. It is appropriate that v 10 have

he last 78 of the psalm, because the outward appearance of so many human beings and their actions is deceptively positive (see Ps 73). Trust in the wealth produced by human efforts, which so frequently involves some form of oppression and robbery, is most unwise (v 11). When wealth (כֹּחַ, "strength/wealth/power") bears fruit and increases, it is not a thing on which to set one's heart, because the essential nature of human beings is incredibly ephemeral (v 10)—less in weight than a breath on scales!

The basis for all the affirmations in the preceding verses is found in v 12. A message from God has been received, though there is no specific indication of how it came, perhaps through some oracle of salvation or from the recital of Yahweh's mighty acts (cf. Ps 136). The message which has been confirmed in a twofold way is that strength belongs to God. Possibly the twofold hearing relates to the first two parts of the psalm (vv 2-5 and vv 6-8). V 13 is added as a closing statement and supplements the revelation of v 12. God's strength is linked with his loyal-love and his faithfulness to reward people according to their works (Exod 20:5-6; Deut 5:9-10; Prov 24:12; cf. Pss 28:4; 31:24-25; Prov 11:21, 31; Rom 2:6; 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Tim 4:14; Rev 22:12)

Explanation

This psalm is mostly *about* God and faith in him; only v 13 is addressed *to* God. The psalm is a strong affirmation of trust in God despite so much in life which seems to countermand such confidence. For the speaker in the psalm, God is a bastion of security and strength, even in the face of powerful foes who threaten destruction. The truth is that power belongs to God, though the apparent circumstances seem to favor extortion, plunder, robbery, and increasing wealth. The speaker has found the strength of a calm stillness of soul before God, a position which gives power for both self-encouragement (vv 6-8) and encouragement for others (vv 9-11). Stillness before God has exorcised the frequently dominant elements of life—fearful anxiety, disappointment, pain of abuse—and has become the source of assurance of the adequacy of divine power and divine willingness to help those who are faithful. When we remain calm in trust before God, we grow in strength and discipline.

The psalm is characterized by the sixfold use of 78—the "nevertheless" quality that marks the nature of a genuine faith commitment. However, the psalm does not express a naive idealism which ignores the reality of evil in the world.

The poet is aware of the contradictory character of human nature; he is aware of that ultimate lie which deprives man of any trustworthiness. And when he extends his grave indictment to all men, there is no reason to assume that in passing this pessimistic judgment on man he has in view only the behavior of his adversaries but wants to exempt himself from it. The profundity of the religious truth expressed in this psalm consists in the very fact that the psalmist knows that to see through the eyes of God means to get to the root of all things, of men and, last but not least, of one's own self, and to see life without any camouflage or self-deception as it actually is in its unadorned truth (Weiser, 451).

Weiser's treatment of the psalm is surely the most profound theological analysis of the psalm by any modern commentator.

The affirmation of faith in this psalm relates well to other biblical passages such as Ps 73; Hab 3:17-19; Dan 3:16-18; Matt 6:25-30; 25:31-46; Phil 4:10-13.

That Which Is Better Than Life Itself (63:1-12)

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Translation

- 1 A Davidic psalm;^a when he was in the wilderness of Judah.^b
- 2 (1) O God, (1+3+3+3+3)
You are my God whom I seek,^a
my soul^b thirsts for you;
my body^c longs for you;
like^a a land parched and weary from lack of water.
- 3 (2) So longing;^a I have seen you in the sanctuary, (3+3)
beholding^b your strength and glory.
- 4 (3) For your loyal-love is better than life (itself);^a (3+3)
my lips have praised you.
- 5 (4) So I will bless you as long as I live (3+3)
(and) in your name lift up my hands.
- 6 (5) As with the food of a feast^a my soul is satisfied, (4+3)
and with my joyful lips my mouth praises (you).
- 7 (6) As^a I remember you upon my bed; (3+3)
in the night-watches I meditate on you.
- 8 (7) For you have been my help,^a (3+3)
and in the shadow of your wings I have shouted for joy.
- 9 (8) My soul clings fast to you; (3+3)
your right hand upholds me.
- 10 (9) Those who seek (to take) my life^a will be destroyed;^b (4+3)
they will go down into the depths of the earth.
- 11 (10) Those who would hand over^a the king^b to the sword (3+3)
will be left as food for jackals,
- 12 (11) but he^a will rejoice in God. (3+3+3)
Everyone who swears by him^b will rejoice,
for the mouths of lie-speakers will be shut up.^c