all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.
(Ps 27:4, REB)

As a hind longs for the running streams,
so I long for you, my God.
I thirst for God, the living God;
when shall I come to appear in his presence?
(Ps 42:1–2, REB)

I rejoiced when they said to me,
"We are going to the house of the Lord."
Our feet stood inside your gates, O Jerusalem,
Jerusalem built up, a city knit together,
to which tribes make pilgrimage,
the tribes of the Lord,
—as was enjoined upon Israel—
to praise the name of the Lord.
(Ps 124:1–4, NJV)

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill.
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
If I do not remember you,
If I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.
(Ps 137:5–6, NIV)

Pilgrimages and festivals are almost universal features of religious life. They are concerned with the physical aspects of religion: journey, temple courts, feasting, liturgies, fellowship with fellow pilgrims, and the like. These physical aspects, however, have meaning because they bear spiritual realities with them. The experiences of pilgrimages and festivals stay with the worshipers when they return to everyday life. They have seen what they would never have seen had they stayed at home.

Ps 84 bears witness to a strong and living faith which longs for the "living God" (v 3) and the context of holiness, life, and love in the temple courts and beyond. We may read this psalm, as it often has been read, with sensitive awareness of its spiritual dimensions. For example, the transformation of the Valley of Baca into an oasis (v 7) is indeed "a classic statement of the faith which dares to dig blessing out of hardships" (Kidner, II, 305). J. Levenson (*Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* [Minneapolis: Winston, 1985] 177–78) writes of this same verse: "it implies a kind of natural/spiritual transformation: *Natural* in that a valley becomes a mountain, Zion, and *spiritual* in that the ascent somehow enables the worshippers to make the water of tears into springs. . . . In other words, the road up to the Temple is the objective correlative of an inner spiritual development which is crowned by a vision of God in his place on Mount Zion. The physical ascent is also a spiritual ascent." This is a way of saying that pilgrimage and festival are sacraments: visible actions become the means of grace and revelation of the presence of God. Pilgrimage and festival have surplus meanings which engage the participants in spiritual encounter.

Beyond actual participation in pilgrimage and festival, the poetic descriptions of the joy of the celebrants are themselves sacramental. The poems become signs of the presence of God for those who read them. They serve as a kind of *vade mecum:* psalms which the readers can take with them for regular use and the renewal of memory and the spirit of pilgrimage (a suggestion made for Pss 120–34 by K. Seybold, *Die Wallfahrtspsalmen: Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Psalm 120–134* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978] 73). The pilgrimage psalms probably functioned for ancient Israelites in this way. When they were far away from Jerusalem, some doubtless found the psalms to be an encouragement for the difficult journeys at festival times; journeys they might have avoided otherwise. Others who could not go found that the psalms revived their memories and kindled their imaginations, either from their own experiences or from the stories of those who had been to Zion. The pilgrimage psalms helped them to visualize the beauty of the temple and its courts, the birds nesting near the altars, the dry valleys on the journey which were transformed by rain, and the crowd in the temple courts, shouting with joy and thanksgiving (Ps 42:5).

For many there could be no physical journey to Zion, but the psalms allowed them to be pilgrims and festival celebrants in memory and imagination. We too can have spiritual kinship with the ancient pilgrims and feel the anticipation of festival times well up in our hearts. The ancient pilgrims left Jerusalem behind when the festivals were over to return to their worldly occupations, but the memories and the faith engendered were not lost:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you.
(Ps 137:5–6, RSV)

We remember also, and we know forever, that even one day in the courts of God is worth more than a thousand anywhere else. Through the psalms we may become pilgrims too. Those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, let them hear

Revive Us Again (85:1–14)

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Translation

1 For the leader:[a] a Korahite psalm.[b]
2 (1) *O Yahweh, you favored*[a] *your land;* (3+3)
you "turned" the fortunes[b] *of Jacob.*

3 (2) *You lifted off the guilt of your people;* (3+3)
you covered all their sin,[a] SELAH.
4 (3) *You pulled back*[a] *all your wrath;* (3+3)
you turned away[b] *from your hot anger.*
5 (4) *Turn us,*[a] *O God of our salvation!* (3+3)
Put an end[b] *to your displeasure with us.*
6 (5) *Will you be angry with us forever?* (3+3)
Must your anger be prolonged for generation after generation?
7 (6) *Will you not turn*[a] *(and) give us life,* (3+3)
that your people may rejoice in you?
8 (7) *O Yahweh, show us your loyal-love,* (3+3)
and grant us your salvation!
9 (8) *I will hear what God has to say:*[a] (3+3+3+3)
Yahweh indeed[b] *will command*[c] *well-being*
for the loyal members of his people[d]—
But don't turn back to folly![e]
10 (9) *Surely*[a] *his salvation is near to those who fear him,* (4+3)
so that Glory[b] *may dwell in our land.*
11 (10) *Loyal-Love and Faithfulness*[a] *have met together;* (3+3)
Righteousness and Well-Being have embraced.[b]
12 (11) *Faithfulness will spring up from the earth,* (3+3)
and Righteousness will look down from heaven.
13 (12) *Yahweh will indeed bestow what is good,* (3+3)
and our land will yield its harvest.
14 (13) *Righteousness*[a] *will go before him,* (3+3)
and prepare a way for his footsteps.[b]

Notes

1.a. See n. 51:1.a.
1.b. See n. 84:1.c.
2.a. For the tense of the verbs in vv 2–4, see *Form/Structure/Setting* below. I have left the translation "turned" literal and in quotation marks in order to emphasize the play on the verb שוב and its varied uses in the psalm.
2.b. The *kethiv* is שבות, but שבית, "captivity," is the marginal reading. שוב means "returning" or "restoration." The words are derived from two different Heb. roots: שוב, "turn/return," and שבה, "take captive." The technical expression שוב שבות occurs in a number of contexts, e.g., Pss 14:7 (53:7); 126:4; Deut 30:3; Jer 29:14; 30:3, 18; 31:23; 33:26; 48:47; 49:39; Hos 6:11; Amos 9:14; Zeph 2:7; 3:20; Ezek 16:53; 29:14; Joel 4:1; Lam 2:14; Job 42:10. In some cases, the meaning may be that of "bring back/restore captives," as the scribal tradition on the margin of Ps 85:2 indicates: "brought back the captivity of Jacob," probably thinking of the return of exiles from Babylonia. However, the more comprehensive meaning "restore the fortunes/well-being" is to be preferred in most contexts, even where שבית occurs. See H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos,* tr. W. Janzen et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 76, n. 19; Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah,* 99, 266, n. 19, for summaries and references; also W. L. Holladay, *The Root SUBH in the Old Testament with Particular Reference to Its Usages in Covenantal Texts* (Leiden: Brill) 110–15; A. R. Johnson, *CPIP,* 67, n. 4; cf. Johnson, *CPIP,* 200, n. 2). Note the parallel in Hos 6:11 of שוב שבות with רפא in Hos 7:1, leading Kraus (II, 756) to translate "the restoration of the wounded body politic" (following Wolff, *Hosea,* tr. G. Stansell, ed. P. D. Hanson [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974] 123).
3.a. The versions indicate plural, "sins" (*BHS*). See, however, 2 Chr 6:25–26; Dahood, II, 286.
4.a. The verb אסף means "gather/remove"; "gather and take away," BDB, 62, no. 4. For, אסף as "draw back/withdraw," see 1 Sam 14:19.

4.b. Some commentators find difficulty with "you turned (away) from the heat of your anger." Kraus (II, 753) proposes to read השבת מחרון, "you have stilled/calmed your anger from hotness" (lit.); "you have stilled the heat of your anger" (see also Gunkel, 375), reading the verb as שבת "cease/desist." The problem arises because of MT's hiphil form of שוב, which is normally transitive, "cause to return/restore XXX," rather than qal, which would be intransitive. If emendation is rejected, one solution is to assume that the hiphil is used here as qal (for qal with מן, see Exod 32:12; Jonah 3:9; for somewhat similar construction, see Ezek 14:6; 18:30; 21:35; Delitzsch, III, 10; Perowne, 127), with the object "yourself" understood, as in KJV. An easier solution is to assume that the text originally used an enclitic *mem:* השיבות־ם חרון אפך: "You turned back the heat of your anger." The parallel with 4a is improved and the intransitive problem with the hiphil is solved (H. D. Hummel, "Enclitic *MEM* in Early Northwest Semitic, Especially Hebrew," *JBL* 76 (1957) 102; Dahood, II, 287, who, however; thinks that the hiphil may have an intransitive sense here, relying on the internal hiphil השיבנו, "return to us/restore us," in Ps 80:4, 8, 20).
5.a. The meaning of this verbal expression is a major problem in this psalm. One option is to read the qal שובנו ("turn us") as equal to the hiphil in Ps 80:4, "O God, restore (השיבנו) us" (as in Gunkel, 375; Kraus, II, 253; RSV; NAB; NIV; REB; and probably intended by LXX ἐπίστρεψον ἡμᾶς "turn us." Another proposal (as, e.g., Oesterley, 383) is to read the שובנו of MT as שוב־נה, "Turn now, O God . . . and bring an end to your displeasure." Another approach is to assume that the verb has dative force, rather than accusative: "turn/return to us"; see Dahood, II, 287, and now embraced by Johnson, *CPIP,* 200, n. 2; also Buttenwieser (the suffix is "an accusative of direction," 281), Kissane, NEB. Kidner (II, 308) comments correctly that "the grammatical evidence is indecisive"; the meaning depends on the interpretation of the psalm and may have varied as it was used in different contexts. See *Form/Structure/Setting* below.
5.b. See Johnson, *CPIP,* 200, n. 3. The verb is lit., "break off" (פרר), as in Ps 89:34. However, Dahood (II, 287) argues for פרר as "flee," on the basis of the Ugaritic text, 1 Aqht 120 (*pr wdu,* "flee and fly"), also citing Ps 89:34; Job 15:4; Eccl 11:10. However, the Ugaritic root *pwr* = *prr* can mean "break/violate/annul" (G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* [Edinburgh: Clark, 1956] 163; C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual,* 314, no. 1594. B. Margalit (*The Ugaritic Poem of AQHT* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989] 408, n. 11) argues that the root in the AQHT text is properly *tpr,* "sew/sew up," rather than *prr,* "flutter/fly," as generally assumed. Therefore "brush off/invalidate" should be retained as the meaning of the Heb. verb.
7.a. Kraus (II, 253; also, Briggs, II, 234; Gunkel, 375; Oesterley, 383) omits אתה (the personal pronoun "you") because of supposed overloading of the colon; possibly bring a misreading of הלא תשוב as הלא אתה תשוב. However, the colon is not seriously overloaded and the emphatic "you" adds intensity to the plea. LXX has ὁ θεός, "O God," indicating Heb. האל or אלה (*BHS*), perhaps influenced by 9a. NJV translates "Surely you will revive us again," assuming that the הלא indicates a strong affirmative statement (see GKC 150e), unless it is taken as ironic, i.e., "Surely you wouldn't fail to . . ."—which is unlikely.
9.a. The combination of האל יהוה, "the God, Yahweh," is strange, and some commentators prefer to omit the האל (e.g., Kraus, II, 753; Schmidt, 160, propose הלא for האל: "I am listening [for] what he says! Is it not that Yahweh speaks of salvation?"). However, the MT punctuation indicates that "the God" (or El; Dahood has "El himself") and "Yahweh" should be read with different colons, though, of course, they are in apposition.
9.b. Reading the כי as emphatic (cf. Ps 77:12, etc.).
9.c. Reading the piel ידבר ("he will speak") in the sense of "command," as in Gen 12:4; Exod 1:17; 23:22, or possibly "promise," as in Gen 18:19; 21:1–2; Deut 1:14; 6:3. See W. H. Schmidt, *TDOT,* III, 97 (cf. in proclamation, *TDOT,* III, 100–101, and God's intention "to speak peace" or "to speak good"; Num 10:29).
9.d. Treating "to his people and to his loyal ones" (אל־עמו ואל־חסידיו) as a hendiadys, with Dahood (II, 289). However, it is possible that the construction is appositional: "to his people, that is to those who are his loyal-ones."
9.e. The last colon of v 9 is considered perplexing by some commentators. Gunkel (375) thinks that it does not fit in the context, and Kraus (II, 753) calls it *sinnwidrig* ("nonsensical/absurd"), which is surely incorrect, though Dahood (II, 289) claims that it "defies analysis." Gunkel proposes to change to ואלי שבי־לו כסלה, which reads: "and to those who turn their hope/confidence to him" (followed by Oesterley, 383), understanding כסלה as "hope/confidence" as in Job 4:6, where it is parallel to תקוה, "hope" (see also Ps 78:7; Prov 3:26). Schmidt (160–61) reads ואל ישיבו אליו לבם, "and to those who turn their heart to him"; reflecting LXX's καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐπιστρέφοντας πρὸς αὐτὸν καρδίαν, see also, John-

son, *CPIP*, 206. Kraus (II, 754) follows F. Notscher and changes אל־ישובו לכסלה to אל ישבו בלי כסלה: "Let them not dwell without hope!" (suggested also in *BHS*). NEB, "and to all who turn and trust in him," probably reflects ואל שבי לכסלה, lit., "and to those coming back to hope." The revisers of NEB in REB have wisely returned to MT: "Let them not go back to foolish ways." A. R. Johnson (*CPIP*, 205) translates: "But let there be no reverting to folly!" MT does not require enendation, though LXX offers an acceptable optional reading. J. S. Kselman (*CBQ* 46 [1984] 23–27) reconstructs vv 9–10 to read: "Let me declare [hiphil for qal] what El decrees, / What Yahweh says—for he promises peace, / to the devoted ones of his people, / to the one who dwells in security. / Surely, near is his salvation to those who fear him; / Near is his glory to him who dwells in our land." Kselman emends the imperfect ישובו to the qal participle of ישב, "one who dwells," and understands כסלה as meaning "confidence/assurance." See n. 10.b. for his reconstruction of v 10b.

10.a. For the meaning of the particle אך, see n. 62:2.a.

10.b. The suggestion that כבודו, "his glory," be read for MT's "glory" is fairly frequently made (*BHS*). Dahood (II, 289) argues that the suffix on ישעו, "his salvation," does double duty for כבוד (= "his glory") and that the text does not need changing. Kselman argues that the lack of real synonymous parallelism in v 10 (cf. Dahood) points to the need for an alternate reading (following Dahood). He argues that אך קרוב and לשכן are syntactically parallel, as are also ישעו and כבוד, "his salvation" and "[his] glory," but that ליראיו ("to those who fear him") and לשכן ("to dwell") are not really parallel although they are both prepositional phrases. He proposes to emend the infinitive לשכן to a participle (לשֹׁכֵן) and read "(Near is) his glory to the one who dwells in our land," citing כשועתו and כבודו ("his salvation" and "his glory" in Ps 96:2–3; also, Isa 62:1–2; Ps 62:8). He contends that "his salvation" and "(his) glory" function as a hendiadys: "The poet asserts that God's glorious salvation is near to those who fear him and who consequently dwell in the land" (24).

The resulting reading is attractive and well balanced, although the word order is unusual (as Kselman notes, *CBQ* 46 [1984] 25). But Kselman begins with a dubious assumption: that the parallelism in v 10 has to be fully synonymous. Most parallelism is *not*, and the now well-established thesis that parallelism is basically supplementation rather than repetition of content applies here. V 10b goes beyond 10a to explicate what the nearness of Yahweh's salvation means. Thus, I have treated "Glory" in v 10b as a personification, as with Loyal-Love, Faithfulness, Righteousness, and Well-Being (Peace) in vv 11–12. Goulder (112) suggests that there is here a tetrad of supernatural powers, similar to a tetrad in Ps 96:6 and another in 89:15. If Glory is included, there is a pentad rather than a tetrad. Of course, it is *his* (Yahweh's) glory which dwells in the land, as well as *his* mercy, etc.

11.a. Or, "Truth."

11.b. The niphal נְשָׁקוּ, "have kissed each other" would ease the reading (MT has נָשְׁקוּ, qal). Optionally, the emendation to נִשְׁקוּ, niphal from שקק, "rush together/embrace" (cf. Joel 2:9; Nah 2:5) is frequently adopted (e.g. Kraus, II, 754; REB, "have embraced").

14.a. Syr indicates וצדיק, "and the righteous one," for MT's צדק, "righteousness," but MT should be retained.

14.b. The meaning of this colon is not clear. To what or to whom does the suffix on "his steps" refer? Will "Righteousness" set a way for the steps of Yahweh? Or does the suffix refer to "Righteousness" itself ("and he will put its steps to/on a way")? Or should something like the sense of שִׂים לב (e.g., Job 4:20) with the idea of "set the heart to" = "pay attention/regards/heed" be understood (as in Delitzsch, III, 12; cf. Gunkel, 375) with the meaning: "Righteousness shall go before . . . and attend unto the way of his (Yahweh's) steps." Delitzsch argues, though he does not prefer it, that the לדרך פעמי can be understood as a construct relationship: "(Righteousness) will set (his footsteps) to the footsteps of him (Yahweh)," understanding the "his steps" as doing double duty, meaning that Righteousness both goes before Yahweh like a herald in 10a and follows closely in his footsteps in 10b.

Emendation is common of course. Kraus (II, 754) suggests instead of וישם either וישר, "straightness/rightness," or ושלום, "peace/well-being": Righteousness goes before him / and well-being follows in his tracks" (see also Jacquet, II, 632, 637, and others). Dahood (II, 290) prefers to read the *lamedh* on "way" as emphatic, vocalize the דרך ("way") as a qal participle, and derive the ישם from the Ugaritic root *ysm* (Aramaic *wsm*), "pleasant/beautiful," yielding "beauty," and thus: "beauty will indeed tread in his steps."

I prefer to read "Righteousness" as the subject of ישם, with the verb used either in the sense of (1) determine/fix a way or (2) make/prepare a way, with דרך as construct with פעמיו ("his steps"): "the (way) of his steps" = "the way for his steps." The construction may mean that Righteousness, like the herald of a king, will *prepare* the way for the king or else will determine or set the way the king will go.

Gunkel (374, 375), who prefers to read ושלום or וישר, thinks the figure is that of a king who has heralds going before and footmen who trail behind: Righteousness is the forerunner and Peace/Rightness follows behind. The emendations are unnecessary, but the idea of a herald going before a king is probably correct.

Form/Structure/Setting

In terms of general genre, Ps 85 is a prayer for the favor and saving work of Yahweh. Complaint is not expressed directly in the psalm, but conditions of distress are presupposed behind the statements and petitions in vv 2–8. It is clear that the speaker and those who are represented by him/her have understood their distress as the result of the wrath and displeasure of Yahweh. They want to be revived, given a restoration of "life" by Yahweh (v 7). The second part of the psalm (vv 9–14) contains affirmative statements about the saving work of Yahweh which is near at hand for those who are faithful to him. The psalm closes with a fine section of poetic depiction of the great qualities of Yahweh's presence and power: Glory, Loyal-Love, Faithfulness, Righteousness, and Well-Being (Peace); all are ready to go forth to participate with Yahweh as he bestows his goodness on the land and its people.

What kind of context in life and worship is reflected in the psalm? Mowinckel (*PIW*, I, 223) argues that Pss 85 and 126 are prayers for peace and a happy new year which belonged to harvest and new year celebrations, having the idea of a "turning of destiny" (the "turning" refers to every new year, especially in Ps 126). Weiser (571–72) also argues that the scene in Ps 85 is "probably that of a service of supplication of the cult community, held within the framework of the festival cult," and eschews a historical context for "the tradition of the festival cult celebrated at the autumn feast . . . when the cult community continually witnessed at first hand . . . the *Heilsgeschichte* as the representation of the gracious acts of God's guidance (deliverance from Egypt, bestowal of the promised land)." Weiser is willing to assign a pre-exilic date to the composition of the psalm.

Many interpreters, however, have assumed that the psalm belongs to the period after the exile (including Mowinckel, *PIW*, I, 223; not evident, however, in *Psalmenstudien*, III, 54–59). Kissane's well-expressed summary of Ps 85 puts forth the general approach of many commentators: "This psalm is a message of hope to the returned exiles who during the early years after the return from exile were discouraged because their condition fell far short of the glorious and happy state which had been foretold by the prophets. The exile is at an end, and the sins of Israel which caused it are now pardoned. But the sad condition of the people implies that the anger of God is not yet fully appeased" (II, 72). In this approach, the perfect forms of the verbs in vv 2–4 are usually translated as English present perfects: "you have been gracious . . . you have forgiven," etc.

Two or three problems plague this view. First, the content of vv 2–4 remains in serious tension with that in vv 5–8. If Yahweh has favored the land, turned the fortunes of Judah, lifted away and covered sin and guilt, and drawn back his wrath, why is it necessary to continue to pray for these things? "This is a direct contradiction in Hebrew as in English," Goulder (*Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 100) comments. "If God has taken away all his wrath and turned from the fierceness of his anger, then he has already caused his indignation to cease, and is not drawing

his anger out to perpetuity." Second, the "turning of the fortunes," in v 2 is a comprehensive expression, found as early as Hos 6:11, and is not necessarily tied to the return of Israelite exiles and the restoration of Jerusalem. Third, it is argued that there is a lack of direct evidence from the OT that contemporary Israelites regarded the return of some exiles and the rebuilding of Jerusalem as a sign of a mighty act of forgiveness and restoration on the part of Yahweh (Goulder, 100, who has reference to Haggai ["You expected much, but it came to little," 1:9] and Zechariah ["O LORD of hosts, how long will you be without mercy for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah that have felt your anger these seventy years," 1:12]).

The main weakness of these objections, however, lies in the assumption that the speaker in Ps 85 is reflecting the context of the *early* return and restoration. If we assume a later period, for example that of Ezra and Nehemiah, the "turning of the fortunes of Jacob" in the return of exiles becomes plausible. It is frequently assumed that MT's *qere* reading of שׁבית for שׁבות indicates a reference to the return of exiles from captivity in Babylonia, which is reflected in LXX. This is probably true, though the early meaning of שׁבות and שׁבית may not have been significantly different in the formulaic saying of "turn the turning/captivity," both meaning to restore (see v 2b above). It seems highly probable that Ps 126:1 reflects the return from exile, which is described as one of Yahweh's great works (see the comments of Allen, 169–75). From the perspective of a later context (post-exilic), the "turning of the fortunes" by Yahweh in the return and restoration becomes one of the examples of such action. The question which Ps 85 seeks to answer is: Will Yahweh "turn our fortunes" again and demonstrate his loyal-love in further saving works? To this, the answer of the psalm is "Yes" (vv 9–14).

Thus, it does not seem necessary to treat the perfects in vv 2–4 as prophetic with a future, eschatological force (see Gunkel, 373; Oesterley, 302; NJV), or as precative perfects with imperative force (as, Buttenwieser, 272; Dahood, II, 286: "Favor your land . . . restore . . . withdraw, etc."; note A. R. Johnson's change of mind on the precative perfect, in *CPIP*, 202, n. 1), or as characteristic perfects, as in JB: "Yahweh you favour your own country, you bring back the captives of Jacob." It seems to me that it is better to understand the perfects in vv 2–4 as expressing simple past tense, without fixing the historical context too tightly. The original composition and use of the psalm may have been much earlier, with the primary reference of the language of vv 2–4 to the events of the exodus from Egypt and the wilderness wanderings (note Johnson, *CPIP*, 208), but its present role in the Psalter reflects post-exilic experience (on the reinterpretation of the psalm, see Becker, *Israel deutet*, 58–59; cf. Aejmelaeus, *The Traditional Prayer in the Psalms*, 13). The exile and the return of some exiles were experiences of a piece with Yahweh's saving acts in earlier history (cf. Allen, 174, on Ps 126). Ps 85, of course, is concerned with the extension of those saving works into the future.

Goulder (98–111) seeks a different explanation for the language in Ps 85. He begins, of course, with the assumption that all the Korahite psalms originally belonged to the festival celebrations at the sanctuary at Dan in the Northern Kingdom, and thus must date prior to 722 B.C.E. (see *Form/Structure/Setting* of Ps 84). His main case is that the *selah* indicates a pause in which the story of apostasy, judgment, and forgiveness in Exod 32–34 would be set forward in a cantillation or recitative. He argues that the emphasis on forgiveness of sins and withdrawal of wrath in vv 2–4 does not fit well with the events of the exodus and

conquest, but are very appropriate for Exod 32–34. He finds five phrases in common between Ps 85 and the Exodus passages: (1) "Turn from the heat of your anger" (שׁוּב מחרון אפך) in Exod 32:12 with Ps 85:4b; (2) "Yet now if you will forgive their sin" (תשׂא הטאתם) in Exod 32:32 (also see 34:7) with 85:3; (3) "Yahweh, Yahweh, God" (יהוה יהוה אל) in Exod 34:6 with the use of אל ("God") in 85:9; (4) "loyal-love and faithfulness (truth)" (חסד ואמת) in Exod 34:6 and in Ps 85:11; (5) "Behold, my angel shall go before you" (ילך לפניך) with Righteousness going before in Ps 85:14 and in Exod 32:34 (לפניו יהלך). Goulder's is an interesting hypothesis, but only that: a hypothesis. The expressions in Exod 32–34 and Ps 85 are not distinctive enough to these contexts to constitute very persuasive evidence. A minor flaw in Goulder's case is that MT has the *selah* after v 3 rather than after v 4 where it would be expected. The value of Goulder's study is to strengthen the case against the exclusive application of the language in the psalm to the return from exile. For a similar treatment of a psalm, though not tied to a *selah*, see Freedman's interpretation of Ps 23 in *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy*, 275–302.

Modern commentators have argued for more than one speaker in Ps 85, giving it a liturgical character (Gunkel, 373). In particular, the view that it is a prophetic or other cultic official who gives an oracle as God's answer to the prayer of the congregation in vv 2–7 has been popular (e.g., Leslie, 122; Weiser, 571, 573; Anderson, II, 611; Johnson, *CPIP*, 199–209; Kraus, II, 757; and the summary in Goulder, 108–9). This may be true, but I see little reason to require a change of a speaker in Ps 85. The speaker may be understood as a prophet or priest, who hears the message of Yahweh in v 9, but the postulate of a change of speaker is built on general theories rather than on the content of the psalm. In this, I agree with Goulder (111), though on different grounds. Goulder argues that the priest-poet (whom he identifies with the מנצח, "leader," in the title) requires no hearing of "the mysterious voice of God speaking" (Weiser, 571) because the message has been heard by all the assembly in the recall of the story in Exod 32–34. In my opinion, the message would have been clear to any priest or prophet or faithful Israelite from the traditions recalled in vv 2–4 without necessary recourse either to an oracle from the "mysterious voice of God" or to the recitation of Exod 32–34. The formulation of the message in vv 8–14 is done from traditional elements in the proclamation of Israel's faith which would have been known to any informed speaker.

Comment

A recall of Yahweh's favor in the past (85:2–4). These verses have received considerable attention in the *Notes* and *Form/Structure/Setting* sections above and the material there need not be repeated here. The "land" (ארץ) is Israel's dwelling place, but it is really Yahweh's land (Lev 25:23; Kraus, II, 756), even though it is called "our land" in v 13. It is "our land" because Yahweh favored it and gave his people prosperity in it ("turned the fortunes of Jacob"). The "favor" shown to the land was especially manifest in Yahweh's forgiveness of sins, by the removal of sin-guilt (Isa 40:2), and his pulling back his wrath from destroying his people.

These verses provide the basis for the petitions which follow in vv 5–8. "The members of the congregation, whose eyes are firmly focused on God, know who it is to whom they pray and what they can hope for from him in their present

affliction" (Weiser, 572). The supplications are rooted in a firmly established tradition of faith. They are addressed to God who "turns fortunes" and turns away from wrath. (Kraus notes the frequent use of "Jacob" as a name for Israel in Isa 40–55; e.g., 40:27; 41:8; 42:24; 43:1, 22, 28; 44:1, 2, 5, 21, 23; 45:4, 19).

Supplication for Yahweh's saving work (85:5–8). The difficulty with the verb in 5a has been discussed in the *Notes* (5.a.) and in the *Form/Structure/Setting* section. I take it that the best sense is that of "turn us" = "restore us" (as in Pss 80:4, 8, 20; 126:4), with "again" or "further" understood. It is possible that we should understand the expression שובנו as a contracted form of שוב שבותנו, "turn our fortunes (as you did in the past)"—the full form would have made the colon too long; assuming that the poet thought it important to use אלהי ישענו, "god of our salvation" (note the threefold use of -נו, "us," in the verse). The prayer seeks an end to Yahweh's anger, which is a prerequisite to restoration. The rhetorical question in v 6, designed to be persuasive, conveys a sense of the experience of long-endured wrath, which threatens the very life of the people (v 7). The suppliants have experienced adverse conditions so long that they feel dead and in need of a renewal of life, a revitalization by the one who gives life (cf. Pss 71:20; 80:18; 138:7; 143:11; Hos 6:2; 14:87; Ezek 18:27). For an extensive study of life in the OT, see H. Ringgren in *TDOT*, IV, 324–44. The verb שוב ("turn") is used again in v 7. Yahweh is implored to "show" (v 8), that is, "demonstrate/manifest" his loyal-love (חסד) in action. For חסד, see note Ps 51:3.a.

A message of assurance (85:9–14). The speaker in v 9 declares intention to hear what God, Yahweh, has to say. As noted above, a goodly number of commentators think of some kind of oracular experience in which a prophet/priest receives a message from Yahweh for the worshiping community. Weiser (573) argues that the recipient of the oracle receives only one word: שלום, "peace/well-being," translating: "The Lord, yea, he speaks: 'salvation' to his people . . ." The material which follows could be considered as the filling out of the oracular message of *Shalom* by the prophet/priest. This seems somewhat forced to me, and the text lends itself to understanding it as an indirect report of the message of Yahweh: "In the present case the psalmist does not go on to speak *qua* Yahweh in the first person but seems, rather, to be giving the gist of the divine response" (Johnson, *CPIP*, 205). Johnson says further that the situation is like that in Ps. 20:7, where the speaker says, "Now I know that Yahweh saves . . ." If this is the case, it suggests a message which results from reflection and observation rather than from some oracular voice. The message is the speaker's interpretation of what Yahweh has to say (cf. Kraus, II, 757; Kissane, II, 74, argues that there is no new revelation, but the message is derived from prophecies such as those in Isa 40–66).

The message is one of encouragement and assurance, designed to build confidence and hope. As I have read it, v 9d is a warning by the speaker to the people not to turn back to old ways of folly, which would nullify the saving work of Yahweh. The apostasy of the past should be avoided (Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons Korah*, 111, cites Exod 34:12–17 and Jer 10:8 as relevant; the latter passage uses the root of "folly" in connection with idolatry). The positive statements in vv 10–14 are made up of traditional material, but they are artistically constructed into a brilliant and unique passage, which reminds the reader of Deutero-Isaiah. Buttenwieser, 273–80, even argues that Ps 85 is from the same author as Isa 40–55, though earlier. He notes the striking similarity of Ps 85 to Isa 40–55 but says

there is no "labored imitation"; the psalm shows the "poetic spontaneity" which marks the works of genius.

The poetry of vv 10–14 is marked by the personification of the primary qualities of Yahweh and his action. His "salvation" is near (cf. Isa 51:5; 56:1; Matt 3:2; Mark 1:15), and his "Glory" will again dwell in the land (for "glory," cf. Pss 19:1; 26:8; 57:6, 12; 63:3; Isa 6:3; 40:5; 60:2; 62:2), Kraus (II, 758) remarks that the message corresponds to that in Isa 46:13 (RSV):

> I bring near (קרבתי) my deliverance (צדקתי),
> it is not far off,
> and my salvation (תשועתי) will not tarry;
> I will put salvation (תשועה) in Zion,
> for Israel my glory (תפארתי).

Cf. the desertion of the temple and Jerusalem by the glory of Yahweh in Ezek 11:22–25 and its return in Ezek 43:1–4.

Glory, Loyal-Love (חסד), Faithfulness (Truth), Righteousness, and Well-Being (Peace/*Shalom*) are presented as living agents of Yahweh's work of bestowing goodness and productivity on the land. The four great "agents" in v 11 have met together, like kings or generals preparing for some action, and they are in harmony. All the "agents" are partners in concord; there is no meeting of opposites in a picture of atonement as some older interpretations would suggest (see Kidner, II, 310; Perowne, 126). The qualities of divine action and life are set forth in these verses; contrast the absence of faithfulness (אמת) and loyal-love (חסד), and knowledge (דעת) from the residents of the land in Hos 4:2 (cf. Isa 59:14–15). The land will receive the action of the "agents" in coordinated endeavor from below and above, according to v 12. Faithfulness springs up from the earth (cf. Isa 58:8–9) while Righteousness looks down from heaven, prepared to go as a herald before Yahweh in a theophanic advent (v 14). For the verb שקף, "look/gaze," see Pss 53:3; 102:20; Deut 26:15. For v 12, cf. Isa 45:8 (RSV):

> Shower, O heavens, from above,
> and let the skies rain down righteousness;
> let the earth open, that salvation may sprout forth,
> and let it cause righteousness to spring up also;
> I the LORD have created it.

Cf. the return to chaotic conditions in the flood narrative in Gen 7:11. See also Hos 2:21–22; Isa 32:15–18. All of this action will bring goodness and productivity to the land (v 13).

I have retained the traditional translation "harvest" in v 13, but too much emphasis should not be put on "harvest" as such. There is no need to deny the appropriateness of Ps 85 for the celebration of harvests, and יבול can refer to agricultural produce of the ground (note Deut 11:17; Lev 26:4, 20; Hab 3:17; Hag 1:10–11; Ps 78:46); there is no reason to deny this as the basic meaning. A few references, however, seem to point toward a more general meaning of "production" or "productivity" (cf. Deut 32:22; Judg 6:4; Job 20:28). Gunkel (374) calls attention to the rich harvests and fertility which is associated with the new era

that Yahweh will bring to his people in Hos 2:21–23; Amos 9:13–15; Isa 4:2; 30:23–25; Jer 31:12; to which may be added Zech 8:11–12; cf. Ps 65:10–14.

The "agents" do the work of Yahweh, of course, as is made clear in v 13. It is Yahweh who gives goodness and fertility to the land, however they may be mediated. V 14 reflects the idea of a theophanic coming of Yahweh (cf. *Comment* on Ps 65:10–14). Righteousness will go before Yahweh as a herald before a king and prepare a way for his journey through the land (cf. Isa 58:5; 62:11; 40:3–5, 10; Gunkel, 374; Kraus, II, 758). For discussion of "faithfulness" (truth), see *Comment* on 51:8; for "righteousness," see the *Explanation* of Ps 71. "Righteousness" in this context refers to Yahweh's judging and saving acts which bring deliverance to his people. The concept differs little from "salvation" (as in Deutero-Isaiah; e.g., see Isa 42:21; 46:12–13; 51:1, 5–6, 8; 62:1), but the judging aspect of the "righteousness" of God should not be lost (Kraus, *Theology,* 42–43). Though his judgments are ultimately saving judgments (Ps 36:7), Yahweh is the one who "puts things right." "The righteousness of Yahweh is the perfection of the manner in which he sees through everything, evaluates, judges, and saves. It is the perfection of the one who, true to his responsibilities to the community, helps all who are oppressed, falsely accused, persecuted, or suffering, and reveals himself as their deliverer" (Kraus, *Theology,* 43; cf. Pss 31:2; 71:2).

The expression which encompasses all that Yahweh will do is שלום, "Well-Being/Peace," used in vv 9 and 11. The "agents" will produce the *shalom* which Yahweh commands for his people in v 11 (see note 9.c). *Shalom* is the comprehensive concept of well-being, peace, and welfare which includes love, faithfulness, righteousness, prosperity, and glory. W. Brueggemann (*Living Toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom* [Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1982] 16) has summarized *Shalom* in vigorous descriptive language with reference to Lev 26:4–6 and Ezek 34:25–29a: "It is well-being that exists in the very midst of threats—from sword and drought, and from wild animals. It is well-being of a material, physical, historical kind, not idyllic pie in the sky, but salvation in the midst of trees and crops and enemies—in the very places where people always have to cope with anxiety, struggle for survival, and deal with temptation. It is well-being of a very personal kind . . . but it is also deliberately corporate. If there is to be well-being, it will not be just for isolated, insulated individuals; it is rather security and prosperity granted to a whole community—young and old, rich and poor, powerful and dependent. Always we are all in it together." This is the word of Yahweh for his people. For further discussion of *shalom,* see Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms,* 82), who says that *shalom* in the Psalms is used with four meanings: (1) the fruitfulness and undisturbed growth, prosperity, and life of the land and the whole earth: Pss 72:3, 7; 85:11; 147:14; (2) well-being of the whole nation: Pss 29:11; 85:8–9; 125:5; (3) the basic function of the king: Ps 72:3–7; and (4) the distinctive force available to the city of Jerusalem: Ps 122:6–9.)

Explanation

I will not repeat the explanations already given in the sections above. Perhaps it is sufficient here to call attention to v 7, which seems to be the key verse in the psalm: "Will you not turn (and) give us life / that your people may rejoice in you?" Ps 85 is a prayer for renewal of "life" among the people of Yahweh. The

supplication in v 7 looks back to Yahweh's life-giving actions in the past and it looks forward to the great message of the future *shalom* in vv 9–14. "Life" is, of course, more than physical existence, and to "revive" or "renew" life is more comprehensive than a new surge of physical vitality. H. Ringgren (*TDOT,* IV, 333) points out that the piel form of the verb חיה can be used for the restoration of the walls and ruins of a city, which can be "revived" (Neh 3:34 [4:2]; 1 Chr 11:8). "Living water" is fresh running water or water from a spring, not from cisterns (Lev 14:5–6, 50–52; 15:13; Num 19:17; cf. Jer 2:13; 17:13; Zech 14:8). Life, like *shalom,* is the capacity for healthy action and well-being. "The word *chayah* thus means not merely 'be or stay alive,' but also to enjoy a full, rich, and happy life" (Ringgren, 334). The verb can refer to healing (see Num 21:8–9; Josh 5:8) and the restoring of strength (as in the case of Samson in Judg 15:19; cf. Gen 45:27; also 2 Kgs 1:2; 8:8–10, 14; 20:1, 7 = Isa 38:1, 9, 21). In Psalms, see 71:20; 30:4; 80:19; cf. 56:14.

Life in the OT is especially characteristic of Yahweh. He "lives" (Ps 18:46) and never dies (Ps 121:4). He is the God of life (Pss 36:9; 42:8), the "Living God" (Josh 3:10; Pss 42:3; 84:3; Hos 2:1 [1:10]; 2 Kgs 19:4, 16 = Isa 37:4, 17; Deut 5:23 [26]; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; Jer 10:10; 23:36), and the power of life flows from him (Ps 145:16; 36:8–10; 80:18; 1 Sam 2:6; Deut 32:39; cf. Jer 2:13; 17:13). Those who are far from him will perish (Ps 73:27). He provides the "Way (or Path) of Life" (דרך חיים): Ps 16:11; Prov 5:6; 6:23; 15:24; Jer 21:8; cf. Prov 2:19; 10:17. Thus all of life is a gift and a trust from Yahweh, just as the land is (Ps 16:5–6; 17:14; Kraus [*Theology of the Psalms,* 163] notes the idea of a "portion in life" for humans in Ps 17:14; note also the use of חלק, "portion," in 142:6; Isa 17:14; Lam 3:24; Eccl 9:5–6, 9). In 1 Sam 25:29, Abigail says to David that he is "bound up in the bundle of life with Yahweh" (cf. A. R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* [Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1949] 105–6; the reading in 1 Sam 25:29 may refer to being "tied up in a document," cf. Job 14:17; Isa 8:16; P. K. McCarter, Jr., *I Samuel,* AB 8 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1980] 399, translates in 1 Sam 25:29 as "tied up in the Document of the Living" = to the "Book of the Living" in Ps 69:29).

Thus "life" and the "revival of life" refers to the well-being of an individual or a people, not to mere duration of living (Johnson, *Vitality,* 102). Kraus (*Theology,* 163) remarks: "The life that he [Yahweh] imparts is not primarily . . . the natural fullness of vitality and vegetation, from which the power of being emanates. It is rather, transcending all seasonal rhythms, the power of blessing that is active in the history of the chosen people and in the created world that shall never be moved (Ps 93:1)." It is worth noting that "life" is sometimes combined with *shalom,* and in the case of Prov 3:16–18 (RSV), with wisdom:

> Long life is in her [wisdom's] right hand;
> in her left hand are riches and honor.
> Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
> and all her paths are peace [שלום].
> She is a tree of life [עץ חיים] to those who lay hold of her;
> those who hold her fast are called happy.

See also Mal 2:5; for association with "blessing," see Deut 30:16, 19 (Ringgren, 333). When Yahweh traverses his land and visits his people, as v 14 implies, he will bestow on land and people goodness, fertility, life, and *shalom.*