

Exegesis of Psalm 62

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The most basic and fundamental element of the psalms is their: expression of continual total and exclusive trust in God. This element is most fully expressed in Psalm 62. This psalm, as well as Psalms 4, 16, 27 and 131, is a psalm of trust. Each expresses the same firm hope in God's ability to help his faithful ones become "more than conquerors."

Several scholars argue that the psalms of trust originated from the genre of the lament.¹ One of the reasons for this is that the structures are basically the same though details differ. Drijvers identifies four common elements: the call to Yahweh, the lament, the petition, and the motivation.² At the same time the psalms of trust transcend the bitterness of the immediate experience to express complete confidence in God. They also speak of the Lord in the third person instead of to him in the second person.³

It is difficult to be precise concerning the original *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 62. Its original setting appears to come from the private devotion of an individual to the Lord (cf. 2-8).⁴ The individual seems to be a man of authority, a king,, because of the way he addresses the enemy (vs. 5) and exhorts his people (vs. 9). It evidently was composed while the pressure was still intense (vs. 4: "How long will ye rush upon a man, will ye slay, all of you . . .?") It was set, then, in the devotional

¹ See Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms*. The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1966) Vol. 1, p. 68; E. A. Leslie, *The Psalms* (Nashville; Abingdon Press, 1949), p. 548; R. E. Murphy, "Psalms," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968), p. 572; William Taylor, "Psalms, Exegesis," *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 322.

² Pius Drijvers, *The Psalms: Their Meaning and Structure* (London: Burns and Pats, 1965), pp. 118-123.

³ Taylor, p. 322.

⁴ All verse numbers in this paper follow the Hebrew text.

life of a king who in the midst of great adversity put all his trust on the Lord.

It probably had no original connection with the temple worship. But it shows some evidence of adaptation to community usage (vss. 9-13). The occasion is a day of public prayer (vs. 9: "Pour ye out your heart before him . . ."), when the king and the people have a common need. In its final form, then, this psalm comes out of the cultic worship of the community.

Scholars have divided the Psalm in different ways.⁵ Basically it consists of two pericopes. Verses 2-8 are the psalmist's expression of trust in God; verses 9-13 embody his exhortation to the people to put their trust in the Lord. The psalm, however, is one unit, tied together by the particle *'ak* and by the theme of trust, which is expressed throughout. Therefore both pericopes can be understood only when studied together.

The meanings of the superscriptions of many of the psalms are uncertain and most are probably later additions. The heading of this psalm is one such superscription: "To the choirmaster unto Jeduthan, a melody for (to) David." "To the choirmaster" may refer to a collection of hymns compiled by a music director for use in temple worship. Jeduthan⁶ may have been one of the persons who was skilled in composing hymns that David had chosen to be responsible for performing them in the temple.⁷ The LXX translates *miz^emor* (melody) as *Psalmos*. The word has usually been understood to refer to a song sung to stringed accompaniment. The prefix *l^e* can be translated either "to" or "for" David, but either way its meaning is ambiguous. One explanation is that it means "belonging to the collection of David." With any of the conclusions one reaches concerning the heading he

⁵ Leupold divides it by the "selahs," making it consist of three sections of four vss. each. See H. C. Leupold, *Expositions of the Psalms* (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1959), p. 458; cf. A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1951), p. 348. Drijvers (p. 250) divides it into four sections: vss. 1-2 (English) expression of trust; 3-4, lament; 5-7, expression of trust; 8-12, exhortation of the bystanders.

⁶ Mowinckel says this is not a personal name because it is incompatible with *'al*. He maintains that Jeduthan is a cultic term indicating either the action "over" which the psalm is sung or the purpose "to" which it is intended. "The word is derived from *yadhu* and must mean something like 'confession'; it is sung at confession 'for confession.'" See Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), Vol. 2, p. 213.

⁷ Cf. 1 Chron. 16:41; 25:1. Also Dahood, 1:90; Leupold, p. 458; W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (London: SPCK, 1955), p. 15.

still cannot be certain as to its meaning and must remain open to insights that may shed light on it and make the purpose and occasion of this psalm clearer.

The first thing that one notices in reading the psalm is the repeated use of 'ak at the beginning of the verses.⁸ Hence the psalmist begins with this particle. It is interesting also to note that all the verses of the first pericope begin with 'ak, 'adh or 'al, the words being very similar to one another in sound. It seems that 'ak becomes an essential element in discovering the meaning the psalmist is trying to express.

Brown, Driver, and Briggs⁹ say that 'ak carries with it a restrictive force emphasizing that what follows is in contrast with other ideas in general.¹⁰ Snaith argues that 'ak always involves a restriction and an element of "on the contrary."¹¹ Psalm 73 is an example. It begins "Only God is good to Israel." In other words, in spite of everything that seems obvious to the majority of people, God alone is able to give Israel what is truly good for her. In this psalm 'ak is used restrictively but also for emphasis, as is clear from its position in each of the verses. It emphasizes something that is contrary to popular opinion and is best translated "only." The psalmist is going against the general beliefs of the time and is wanting his ideas to stand as strongly opposed to others. "Only unto God is my soul silence." The whole phrase 'ak 'el 'elohim¹² is emphatic and expresses the writer's emphatic idea. Contrary to the popular view it is only in God that he is silent. The state of mind indicated by the particle 'ak is that of one who through his many experiences has been seriously contemplating a subject, estimated all his resources and means of reliance, and examined his own state of mind and is now able to say "only unto God is my soul silence."

⁸ It occurs at the beginning of vss. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10.

⁹ From now on abbreviated BDB.

¹⁰ BDB, p. 36; cf. also Gen. 7:23; Job 14:22; Ps. 37:8; Prov. 11:24; Isa. 45:14. All of these use 'ak in a restrictive sense and are best translated "only," "exclusively," or "utterly."

¹¹ Norman H. Snaith, "The Meaning of the Hebrew 'ak," *Vetus Testamentum*, 14(1964); 221. Ex. 12:15; 31:13; Lev. 23:27, 39 use 'ak and are all concerned with an item that is different, unique, or contrary to that which is generally done. Dahood says 'ak is restrictive in 5 occurrences in this psalm, 2:90.

¹² Dahood wants to emend the text to "the God of gods" changing 'el to 'el, 2:90.

The meaning of *dumiyah* (silence) from this verse alone is uncertain.¹³ Tsevat says this form occurs nowhere else but in the psalms.¹⁴ Of the four occurrences of *dumiyah*, Psalm 39:3 affords the clearest parallelism. Here it seems to be synonymous with *'alam*, which BDB defines as "to bind" or when in the niph'al (as it is here) "to be dumb." The parallelism in Psalm 22:3 may not be antithetical, but four words are contrasted. *'eq^era'* is opposite of *dumiyah li* and *yomm* is antithetical to *la^elah*. For our purpose the former contrast is the important one. The opposite of "call," or "cry out," is "silence." We can infer then from these passages that *dumiyah* means silence. Both BDB and Gesenius have it coming from the unused root *dhum*. They have, however, no definite proof that this is the original root. *Dhum* is very closely connected with the root *dhamam* (according to both BDB and Gesenius), which also means "to be silent."

Since there is no evidence for *dhum*, it may be possible to get an even better grasp of *dumiyah* by looking at the meaning of *dhamam* in the context of the other psalms and, if possible, in the context of a psalm of trust. Psalm 131 affords this possibility. Its basic structure is very similar to Psalm 62. The psalmist expresses his childlike trust in the Lord (vss. 1 & 2). In turn, he exhorts the people of Israel to do the same (vs. 3). The first stich in verse 2 can be translated "surely I have smoothed and stilled my soul . . ." *Dhamam* is synonymous with *shavah*, which BDB defines as "to be smooth" or "composed." So *dhamam* takes on the idea of being calm, composed, satisfied, confident. This meaning can be substantiated even further from the context of the psalm.

The psalmist compares himself to a weaned child. As a weaned child once craved the milk of his mother, he now is content with-

¹³ Dahood translates it "mighty castle." He argues that it is the masculine form of the Ugaritic *damath* and similar to the Accadian *dimthu*, which means castle or fortress; cf. Ezek. 27:32. He also wants to shift the *athnach* so *naph^eshu* is in the second stich. His translation reads "The God of gods alone is my mighty castle." For further reference, see Mitchell Dahood, "Accadian-Ugaritic *dmt* in Ezekiel 27:32" *Biblica*, 45(1964), 83-84.

Jastrow believes that the yah-ending represents an emphatic affirmative. This would give the stich an added idea of "Only unto God is my soul indeed silent." Morris Jastrow, "The Origin of the form yah of the Divine name," *ZAW*, 16 (1896), 1-16.

¹⁴ Matitiah Tsevat, *A Study of the Language of the Biblical Psalms* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1955), p. 14. There are only three other occurrences: 22:3; 39:3; 65:2. Perowne understands the phrase in 65:2 "to thee silence is praise" to mean that praise is given to thee in silence, i.e., "the deep stillness of the heart's devotion as opposed to the loud noisy service of heathen worshipers," p. 503.

out (vs. 2). Likewise, the psalmist who was once restless and proud and attempted to walk in ways for which he was not fit is now like a weaned child, composed and silent (vss. 1 & 2). His victory over frivolous ambition results from trusting in the Lord. The meaning of *dhamam* is found in its comparison with *gamul* (weaned child, BDB). As a child is calm, content, submissive "upon" his mother, so the psalmist is *dhamam* (silent, calm, content, submissive) in the Lord. It is believed that the meaning of "silent" in this psalm of trust can also be applied to *dumiyah* in Psalm 62.

The LXX enables us to further probe the meaning of *dumiyah*. It translates *dumiyah* with the word *hupotagee*, which means "to subject oneself" or "to acknowledge someone's dominion or power."¹⁵ Even if some were to question this translation of the word, it gives a possible nuance of its meaning. With this understanding its essential content can be pinpointed even further and an element of surrendering or humbling oneself before God be recovered.

After much thought and meditation and after an evaluation of all his wealth and means of reliance, the psalmist emphatically declares, "Only in God can I be silent, confident, content, submissive." His conclusion did not come suddenly in one burst of meditative thinking. It had come through a long painful growth, a growth which is at any age painful but unlimited in rewards.

The word *nephesh* (soul) in this psalm, as elsewhere in the OT, is simply another way the psalmist refers to himself. It does not refer to a spiritual and immortal principle that enters the body at birth and leaves it at death. *Nephesh* has no existence apart from the body.¹⁶ After death the *nephesh* ceases to exist (Job 14:22). Any weakening of the bodily functions such as through hunger or thirst is also described as the pouring of the *nephesh* (Lam. 2:12). It is the usual term for a man's total nature, the Hebrew man being regarded as a unity and not composed of a physical and a spiritual separate from one another. When *nephesh* is not referring to the whole person, it means nothing more than a distinction between that which is living and that which is dead.¹⁷ "It is the unimportance of *nephesh* that is

¹⁵ Dellling, "hupotasso in the Septuagint," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), Vol. 8, p. 40.

¹⁶ Edmond Jacob, "The Anthology of the *nephesh*," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), Vol. 9, pp. 617-631.

¹⁷ Cf. Gen. 1:20, 24, 30; 9:12, 15, 16; Lev. 11:10, 46; Num. 19:13. These are some of many examples. The root *nphsh* means "to breath," "respire."

really significant for Christian belief."¹⁸

The psalmist assuredly concludes the verse by proclaiming "from him is my salvation." The restrictive idea of *'ak* in the first stich can be implied in this phrase as well. For him God alone is his salvation. *Yasha'* (to save) meant originally "to be roomy," "to make spacious," as opposed to "to be narrow" (*tsarar*--bind, tie, restrict BDB).¹⁹ As oppression is a kind of hemming in, so salvation is a moving out into the open. More room, or space, or freedom is gained through the saving intervention of a third party. So *yasha'* takes on the meaning of "to come to the rescue." It does not carry the thought of self help or of cooperation but is used in the psalms, and specifically Psalm 62, for the experienced help of the Lord against public or personal enemies. The help is such that the oppressed is lost without it. Generally speaking, the OT idea is usually salvation from external evils such as oppression, death, captivity and public and private enemies.²⁰ Only in a few instances is the concept of salvation from sin found in the psalms (e.g., 130:8, where the word is *Padhah*--ransom, BDB p. 804).

The tradition of God as Savior comes from the actual historical experiences of his deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Some would probably be inclined to say that this is the beginning of the tradition. But the idea of God as Savior goes back even to the book of Genesis.²¹ God has always been throughout history a God of salvation.

Though the salvation of the Lord generally refers to external factors (as it does in this psalm), the term does pass over into a religious or spiritual sense.²² In many cases one cannot distinguish between instances of ordinary, everyday empirical deliverances and deliverances from sin, in the same way as there is no dichotomy between *nephesh* and *baslar*. In a sense all Israel's history is *Heilsgechichte*. There is no distinction between secular and religious history in the Bible. In this psalm the psalmist has learned a great lesson from his own

¹⁸ David Stacey, "Man as Soul," *Expository Times*, 72(1961), 349, 350.

¹⁹ George Fohrer, "*sozo* and *soteeria* in the OT," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), Vol. 7, p. 973.

²⁰ BDB, p. 447, and Alan Richardson, "Salvation," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), both affirm this.

²¹ When God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, he may have intended a type of deliverance or escape from their present condition by giving to Eve a son (Gen. 4:1). His salvation is vividly portrayed in the story of Noah. Gen. 49:18 specifically refers to a salvation which belongs to the Lord.

²² Cf. BDB, p. 447, 2nd Para., #3, and Richardson, Vol. 4, p. 170.

experiences and from the tradition of his people. To him God's salvation is not some abstract idea as we many times make it to be. Rather it is an assertion of what God has done for him and for his people throughout all of history. It is a proclamation not a philosophy (cf. Ex. 12:26; 13:14; Deut. 6:21-23). The emphasis of the phrase in verse 2 seems to be this: There is no salvation apart from God. He alone is my deliverance—secular as well as religious, individual as well as national.

A large portion of space has been devoted to this verse because it forms the heart and core of the psalm. It contains three principal words that embrace its substance: *'ak* (only) is repeated, six times, *'elohim* (God) seven, and *y^eshu'ati* (my salvation) four.²³ Only God is my salvation. Because of this, man acquires that which he desires most: silence, security. It is significant that the next most frequently used words are "man" and "vapor."²⁴ When one sees that God alone is his salvation, then man becomes only a vapor. This is the message.

In verse 3 the psalmist resounds the message: "Only he is my rock and my salvation, my secure height, I will not totter greatly." *Tsur* (rock), *yeshah* (salvation), and *mis^eghabh* (secure height) are synonyms. *Tsur*²⁵ and *mis^eghabh* are used repeatedly through Psalms as figures of God's strength and faithfulness. The Hebrew people did not speak in abstract or unrelated terms. Their thoughts and ideas were built on practical, concrete observable events. God's strength and steadfastness were not some emotion or idea conceived only in thought. They were everyday observable occurrences. He was their rock of ages.

God is spoken of in a very personal way. He is not someone who is concerned only with a nation as a whole. He is also deeply involved in the life of the individual (cf. Ezek. 18:1-20). So this writer is able to proclaim assuredly "he is my rock and my salvation, my secure height."

²³ *'ak*, vss. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10; *'elohim*, vss. 2, 6, 8 (twice), 9, 12 (twice); *y^eshu'ati*, vss. 2, 3, 7, 8.

²⁴ *'ish*, vss. 4, 10, 13 and *'adham*, vs. 10; *hebh^el*, vss. 10 (twice), 11.

²⁵ *Tsur* is used nine times in Deut. 32 as a metaphor for God. Anderson says that *tsur* seems to be a figure of speech drawn from Palestinian scenery to portray strength and permanence. B. W. Anderson, "God Names of," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), Vol. 2, p. 415. Men homeless in an alien universe crave the permanent, something or someone to tie to. This idea of God as a rock brings out more vividly the words of a popular hymn: "Change and decay in all around I see; O, thou who changest not abide with me."

The result of God being his rock and salvation is that he will not be greatly shaken.²⁶ Shaking is linked to confusion, anxiety, and unrest of the human heart. Man is always in danger of wavering and it is sinful arrogance for him to think that he can stand fast alone. The righteous of this psalm knows that he has the divinely given unshakableness which keeps him stable in all the shattering experiences of life.

The mood changes with verses 4 and 5 and an element of lament is brought forth. "How long will ye rush²⁷ upon a man will ye slay, all of you, as a bent wall a tottering wall?"²⁸ The vague meaning of this verse is made somewhat clearer in the context with verse 5. Possibly the psalmist is saying, "How long will you assail me before I am destroyed?" It is interesting to note that even though the Lord is his mighty fortress the physical and verbal attacks are still agonizing. Because a person is God's servant does not immune him from suffering. The Lord never promised freedom from pain.

In verse 5 we obtain a little clearer picture of the situation at hand. "They only counsel to thrust him (him understood) down from his exaltation, they are pleased with falsehood, with their mouth (lit., his mouth) they bless but within them²⁹ they curse (Selah³⁰)." The first

²⁶ The root meaning oft is a sudden unexpected and disastrous shaking, any uncertain or aimless kind of movement. See George Bertram "*salvo, salos*," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), Vol. 7, p. 66. In the *niphal* BDB says that it is a figure of steadfast obedience. Cf. also Pss. 15:5; 16:8; 21:8; 30:7; 112:6.

²⁷ *Hathath*, according to Dahood (2:91) and Gesenius, is a *hapax legomenon*. Gesenius believes that it does not contain the idea of crying out but simply means "to break in upon," "to rush upon."

²⁸ Taylor argues for the omission of 2 and 3 on extremely poor grounds. One reason is that the particle *'ak* is not a normal way to begin. Another is that vss. 2 & 3 weaken the effect of vss. 6 & 7. See William Taylor, "Psalms, Exegesis," *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), Vol. 4, p. 322.

Kittle wants to solve some of the problems of interpretation by deleting *Khul^e Khem* (all of you). With the *athnach* in its present position the translation of the text would be "How long will ye rush upon a man, all of you are like a bent wall a tottering wall." Barnes supports this translation. He says it is not natural to speak of enemies coming on a man making him like a falling wall. Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1931), Vol. 2, p. 168. The KJV translates it this way. It however seems more natural that, since the enemies are the ones who are rushing upon the man, the result is that the man becomes like a tottering wall rather than the enemies. Therefore, I place the *athnach* after *Khul^e Khem*.

²⁹ The LXX translates *qerebh* with *kardia* and in this context simply refers to one's thoughts, feelings, or motives.

³⁰ *Selah* is possibly an instrumental interlude. It may refer to the raising of voices in Praise or their cessation. In any case, it involves some kind of break in the rendering of the psalm.

stich gives us a hint to the setting of the whole psalm (see introductory remarks). Most likely the individual of this psalm is in a position of authority, probably a king. His enemies are using deceptive means to overthrow him from office. They respect and bless³¹ him in the presence of the people, but their true feelings are contempt. These people delight in dealing falsely with the king.³²

One of the main problems in verses 4 and 5 is who are the ones opposing the king; who are the enemies? The solution must be within the context of this psalm and in no way a generalization from other psalms. Even though the enemies of the king in this psalm are probably also the enemies of the people, in these two verses they appear to be specifically occupied with him. They could be enemies within his own court, those who are envious of his position, or possibly political opponents. In any case, they are real humans and not some mythical power.

The situation involves more than just a personal quarrel. Since the writer is a man of righteousness, those who oppose him must automatically oppose what he stands for—righteousness. In this psalm, then, they are primarily enemies of the Lord and because the king is a godly man he automatically becomes their enemy. This point needs to be seriously considered and reflected upon by those who are set apart by the Lord. If a person is truly God's man, he will automatically be in battle with those of the world and rejected by those who are indifferent. How many Christians today are visibly despised and rejected by the world?

We cannot be dogmatic in saying who the enemies of the king are. They are, however, primarily the enemies of the Lord and secondarily political adversaries of the psalmist.

In verses 6 and 7 the message of the psalm is again joyously echoed. "Only for God be thou silent my soul, for from him is my hope. Only he is my rock and my salvation my secure height I will not be

³¹ Ledogar observes that when a man receives a blessing his honor is thereby increased. This is made even more evident when it is contrasted with *qalal* "to despise," "treat as of little value." R. J. Ledogar, "Verbs of Praise in the LXX Translation of the Hebrew Canon," *Biblica*, 48(1967), 52-55.

³² The noun *Khazabh* means "deception," "lie." See Hans Cozelmann "*Psudos*," *TDNT* Vol. 9, pp. 594-603. The same word is used in vs. 10. There it is directly parallel with *hebhel*, "vanity." Legally the worst offense against truth is perjury. Cf. Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20. Prov. 6:16-19 lists seven things that the Lord hates. One is "a false witness who scatters lies." Cf. also Pss. 4:3; 40:5.

moved.” There are a few differences between verses 2 and 6 but their thought is the same.³³

One interesting parallel is noted between *trig^eVati* (my hope)³⁴ and *yeshu’ati* (my salvation). In this context both take on similar meaning. Hope is also closely linked with trust.³⁵ It is general confidence in God's protection and help. His strength to endure does not come from his own manly courage or by his own perseverance or by just thinking positively. It comes rather from his silent hope in God behind which stands a concrete expectation of deliverance.

Verse 7 duplicates the words of verse 3 except for the omission of *rabhah*. In my opinion, its omission does not show the progressive growth of the writer's faith, it once being qualified but now expressed as an unqualified assurance. In both verses he is saying the same thing: Because the Lord is my salvation, I can maintain steadfast obedience; nothing will move me. The figure of "secure height" (i.e., *miseghabh*) in the OT may be traced back to the language of warfare. The "secure height" and the "strong rock" describe both natural and artificial protection afforded by the rocky landscape of Canaan's mountain regions. It means both a place to hide and a place to make a final stand. It is the strongest of all strong points.

The psalmist continues to multiply the metaphors to show his invincible defenses in God. "Upon God is my salvation and my honor, rock of my strength my shelter is in God." Not only is man's safety dependent on God but his honor is clearly a gift (cf. Ps. 8:6). The idea of honor is not so much concerned with an ideal quality but understood in accordance with its root meaning "as something 'weighty' in man which gives him 'importance.'"³⁶ It is all those gifts or blessings which extend and enhance the personality, which gives an individual "weight"—wealth, property, wisdom, status. Man's importance and impressiveness are found only in God. The writer uses still another synonym when he compares God with a shelter.³⁷ The

³³ *'el 'elohim* is changed to *le'lohim*; *dhum* is in the imperative; *ki* is added; *tig^eVati* is substituted for *yeshu’ati*

³⁴ The LXX translates it with *hupomonee*, "to hope," "to have confidence." See F. Hauchk, "hupomonee," *TDNT*, Vol. 4, pp. 581-588.

³⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, "The OT View of Hope," *TDNT*; Vol. 2, p. 523.

³⁶ Won Rad, "*Kabhodh* in the OT," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), Vol. 2, p. 238. Its root meaning is "to be heavy," "weighty" BDB.

³⁷ *Mach^eseh* is a common figure used throughout Psalms for God as the shelter of his people: 14:6; 46:21; 61:4; 71:7; 73:28; 91:2, 9; 94:22. It is also figuratively used for seeking shelter under the wings of the Lord: Ruth 2:12; Pss. 36:8; 57:1; 61:4; 91:4.

shelter does not involve a reciprocal relation between the one who seeks and the one who offers, but it emphasizes the place or the giver of shelter.

Throughout these verses the psalmist has emphasized the fact learned through his own painful experiences: that God only is his salvation. He had tried to find safety in other things but all failed him. It was only upon God that he found contentment and peace of mind.

With the beginning of verse 9 the situation in the psalm changes. In the previous lines the author was uttering a conviction in private devotion to the Lord. He now turns his attention to the community of believers. Verses 9-13 contain some wisdom material. Israel understood wisdom as a practical knowledge of the laws of life based on the accumulation of personal experience. Man's welfare is the goal of wisdom.³⁸ The purpose of the wise man was to reflect upon the practical affairs of everyday life and to offer the hearer(s) good judgments and counsel. This is what the psalmist does here. "Trust ye in him in all times oh people,³⁹ pour ye out your heart before him, God is a refuge for us (*Selah*)."

The psalmist cannot keep the great discovery in his personal life to himself. His experience must be shared. He found in his own personal struggles that God alone was his salvation, and now he must turn to help others in distress. What he found in his crisis he knows will avail "in all situations." The heart of his teaching to the people in these verses is "Trust⁴⁰ ye in him in all times." The feeling of being secure in God is the only certain support for human life.

He continues to exhort them to "pour ye out your heart before him"; that is, let your innermost thoughts and desires be made known to him. This is one of the main concerns of the psalms of lament, not with distress in and of itself, but taking human guilt and misery before God. This is one of the qualities of genuine prayer. It is the tendency of human nature to keep griefs to oneself. But until our hearts become tender so that our feelings and desires flow forth freely, we can never put our trust in the Lord.

"God is a refuge for us." Just as he had been the personal refuge

³⁸ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), Vol. 2, p. 421.

³⁹ The LXX reads "Trust ye upon him oh whole assembly of people."

⁴⁰ Jepsen says derivatives of the root have the meaning of "to feel secure," "be unconcerned." Alfred Jepsen, "batach," *TDOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), Vol. 2, p. 88.

and stronghold of the king, so he is a refuge for all who trust in him.

Trust in God is now contrasted with the futility of trusting in man. "Only a vapor are the sons of men, the sons of men are a lie, in the balances they go up they are all together made of breath."⁴¹ Man is only a vapor and a lie. These are figures of what is evanescent, worthless, and vain. When man is put on the balances with an empty pan, he flies up.⁴² Man has no substance or weight; he is simply "made of breath." It is only God who gives man "honor," "weight," "importance" (see vs. 8 above). The point is not so much that we have nothing to fear from man as that we have nothing to hope from him. There is no substance to man's power, or possessions, or achievements. No man is worthy of our trust.

The writer is still directing his thoughts to the community of believers when he says, "Do not trust in oppression and in robbery do not become vain, when wealth bears fruit do not set heart (upon them)."⁴³ There is a definite parallel between "do not trust," "do not become vain," and "do not set heart." The people are not to rely on oppressing and robbing others to accomplish their object. They are not to depend on wealth amassed by violence and wrong instead of trusting in the Lord. It is a warning against the old temptation to follow might rather than right. But not only that, when wealth increases through honesty and good hard labor, they are not to place their trust in it.⁴⁴

In the two concluding verses the writer summarizes the essential character of God. "One thing God has spoken two of these I have heard that power belongs to God. And to thee oh Lord is steadfast love, for thou will reward a man according to his deed." The phrase

⁴¹ There is no evidence in other parallel passages (cf. Ps. 49:3) for a distinction between *ish* and *adham*. The LXX translates both with *anthropan*. The NEB captures the true meaning by translating it "all men."

⁴² "Balances consisted of a beam either suspended on a cord held by the hand or mounted on an upright support. A pan was suspended by cords from each end of the beam" (O. R. Sellers "Weights and Measures," *IDB* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), Vol. 4, p. 829. "A plummet was in front of the upright support so that when the articles in the two pans were equal the exact vertical position of the plummet would be evident. . . . The Egyptians envisioned the use of balances by gods passing judgment on the deceased in the after life. There are scenes in which the heart of one being judged before the gods is in balance against the *ma'at* feather, the emblem of truth," O. R. Sellers, "Balances," *IDB* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), Vol. 1, pp. 342, 343.

⁴³ The verbs *ba'ach*, *habhal*, and *shith* are all *Qal* impf. 2nd ms. pl., but because of context translating them in the imperative seems to make more sense. The structure of this verse is an A-B-B-A-C-A pattern.

⁴⁴ *Chayil* means legitimate wealth as opposed to criminal extortion, Dahood 2:93.

"One thing . . . two of these . . ." is a Hebrew idiom which means "repeatedly" or "many times."⁴⁵ It is designed to emphasize what is said. Repeatedly he has learned this through his experiences from the Lord: "that power belongs to God and to thee oh Lord is steadfast love." As opposed to the pretended power of man, real power belongs to God.⁴⁶ To him also belongs steadfast love. The predominant meaning of *chesedh*, when used of God, is faithfulness, firmness, his "sure love."⁴⁷ "The most important of all the distinctive ideas of the OT is God's steady and extraordinary persistence in continuing to love the wayward Israel."⁴⁸ This is what the psalmist proclaims to the people. To him it is a fact of life that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

The result of God's power and steadfast love is that "thou wilt reward a man according to his deed." The writer is not so much preoccupied with the final judgment as with how God treats men in general (cf. Rom. 2:6). Because God deals impartially with man, they should confide in him. There is ground for confidence only in one who is impartial and just.

Man throughout time has relied on such things as financial security, social prestige, military power, intellectual achievement, and personal

⁴⁵ Wolfgang M. W. Roth, "The Numerical Sequence $x/x+1$ in the Old Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* 12(1962), 300-311. He says the sequence is not equivalent to the English "about," p. 300. It is a parallelism, either synonymous, synthetic, or antithetic, p. 306. He says Ps. 62:12 refers to a rather indefinite numerical value, p. 304.

⁴⁶ "'oz denotes the presence and significance of force or strength rather than its exercise." In the majority of instances it refers to the power of God. In some cases it denotes natural strength (cf. Deut. 8:17; Job 21:23) Wilhelm Michaelis, "Kratos," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), Vol. 3, p. 906.

⁴⁷ Norman Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: The Epworth Press, 1950), p. 95. Snaith surveys the use of the word *chesedh* by the kind and frequency of other words that are paralleled with it (pp. 100-102). Out of a total of 60 passages 48 times it is paralleled with the idea of being firm, keeping faith and covenant. Nine times it is paralleled with the idea of kindness. These are some of his results. Of the 43 cases where the noun *chesedh* is linked by the copula with another noun 23 are with some form of 'amen or 'emeth, 7 are *berith*. Of 18 cases of *chesedh* in parallelism 9 are with 'etneth and 'emunah (Is. 16:5; Hosea 4:1; Micah 7:20; Pss. 26:3; 88:11; 89:2; 92:2; 117:2); 4 are with the two righteous words *tsadha* and *mishpat* (Is. 57:1; Hosea 10:12; Micah 6:8; Ps. 36:10). In contrast to this in Ps. 109:12 it is parallel to "have pity" and Ps. 77:9, "compassion." "This definitely shows a preponderance in favor of the meaning 'firm' 'steadfast.'" At the same time it does not deny the element of "lovingkindness" (p. 101). According to Zimmerli *chesedh* is especially developed in the Pss. Of its 237 instances 127 are in the Psalms. Walter Zimmerli "chesedh," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), Vol. 9, pp. 381-387.

⁴⁸ Snaith, p. 102.

skill. But they all fall short. Only out of a confidence which comes from experience with God can a man acquire composure and learn to take difficulties in stride. Because of God's power and steadfast love he only is our salvation.

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