

A Modern Rendering of the Psalms

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By

Michael Boylan

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PREFACE

There are many reasons behind rendering the psalms into another language. In this case, the motivation is to present a text that seeks to render into English poetic forms native to English and American poetry. This includes the use of poetic stanza combinations as well as a versification that is colloquial and easy to understand. In those cases, in which there are esoteric historical references, footnotes are provided for context. It is assumed that the reader is familiar with the basics of the Jewish Story as set out in the Torah (though there are notes on more esoteric references).

The usage of language is meant to be accessible and modernized to our present era. For the most part pronouns referring to the Divine are capitalized. Pronoun usage, referring to the Divine, is asexual. When absolutely necessary to use a pronoun, “their” is the pronoun of choice. This should emphasize the transcendent nature of God. When it seems necessary to emphasize the personal interaction with God, “Yahweh” is the word of choice—so long as it is also the name used in the text.

When I felt that my rendering went beyond the literal text, I put my poetry into brackets [], so that the reader might know what was being interpreted instead of being literally rendered.

There are two appendices. The first is a “user’s manual” for those who want to turn to the psalms at particular times in their lives for input on that event. These include: Comfort and Assurance, Complaints about Life (Laments), Praise and Thanksgiving, Petition, Wisdom, Bodily and/or Spiritual Sickness, Assurance that it is a Moral World, Reflections on the History of Israel, and Morning or Evening Prayers. There are also categories for Bereavement and Nuptials. It is my hope that this appendix will help target for the reader the *right psalm* for the *right situation*. This is powerful stuff—especially for those who practice one of the Abrahamic Religions: Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. But it also has relevance for those who are seekers and want to explore what a certain group of worldview perspectives say about the perennial issues that concern living on earth.

The second appendix is for further study for those who want to take their exploration of the psalms to another analytical level.

My deepish wish is that this rendering of these poems will be useful to a variety of readers.

Michael Boylan
Marymount University

INTRODUCTION

The Psalms are a collection of 150 poems written at different times and by various authors. In Hebrew *The Psalms*, *tehillim*, can be translated as ‘praises.’¹ In the Greek the term *psalmos* can be rendered as “lyrics accompanied by music.”²

Traditionally, the psalms are divided into five groupings: **1.** Psalms #1-#41; **2.** Psalms #42-#72; **3.** Psalms #73-#89; **4.** Psalms #90-#105; and **5.** Psalms #106-#150. Each of the five sections seems to have a holistic design (including a conclusion) that is set out for that group. Some have various concentrations, according to each book, often with a design to dating the psalms (which is a very controversial subject). For example, Book 1 seems to have an emphasis upon the creation of the Covenant with YHWH (depicted in the renderings in this book as Yahweh).³ In Books 2 and 3 the Covenant breaks apart, creating problems that call for changes in behavior. In Books 4-5 those behavioral changes are set out as a model for the future.

For serious readers of the psalms, it might be useful to note these divisions and this possible scheme of development as they study the text. By doing this the student can use symmetry to interpret the meaning of some particular psalm partially from its membership within one of these groups (1-5) and partially through its predecessors and successors.

¹ The reader will note that in Appendix One, the largest number of poems that I have categorized under my personal reference system is “Praise and Thanksgiving” followed closely by “Petition for Self and Others”

² In Appendix One, I cite particular psalms which reference music explicitly, 12 psalms.

³ The point of depicting the sign of G-d as incapable of pronunciation is a sign of reverence (cf. the Third Commandment not to take the Lord’s name in vain). If one could pronounce God’s “name” then there is a degree of familiarity and leveling that could be interpreted as *heresy* and/or *blasphemy*. The renderings in this and every version with which this editor is familiar, fills in the vowels for the purpose of poetic expression. It is in no-way meant to be the “name” of G-d, but rather a “sign” that points in a particular direction.

The authorship of the psalms is a subject of dispute. One outline⁴ would set out Psalms #3-#41 as from David. Then of the sons of Korah⁵ Psalms #42-#49. Psalm #50 by Asaph.⁶ Then David again from #51-#65 and #67-#70. Psalm #72 is often associated with Solomon. Psalms #73-#83 as from Asaph. Psalms #84 and #85 by sons of Korah. Psalm #86 by David. Psalms #87-#88 by the sons of Korah. Psalm #89 by Ethan, the Ezrahite.⁷ Psalm #90 (possibly by) Moses. Psalms #91-#100 are perhaps orphans. Psalms #101, and #103 by David. Psalms #108-#110 by David. Psalms #113-#118 as Egyptian Hallel.⁸ Psalms #138-#145 by David. And #146-#150 as Hallel Psalms.⁹

The dating of the psalms is a function of the manuscript tradition and can be linked to known historical events and the use of particular modes of expression in different times.¹⁰ Each psalm first is regarded in the group in which it appears within the five books, and then how it is related to other psalms that may imitate it in style, grammar, or form. But for a wide sensibility, let us set the range as between 400 BCE and 1500 BCE (depending upon how psalm #90 is considered).

The manuscript tradition. The Masoretic Text was developed around 500-950 C.E. It preserved in a written form the oral tradition (*masorah*). In

⁴ This characterization owes itself to Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen Übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968).

⁵ The sons of Korah were the sons of Moses' cousin, Korah. Korah led an unsuccessful revolt against Moses (*Numbers* 16:31-33). Though Korah was killed, his children were not. They became a group of renowned singers of holy songs/liturgies (2 *Chronicles* 20:19).

⁶ It is said that Asaph was a descendant of Gershon, the son of Levi and thus a member of the Levites. He was one of three Levites given charge of singing in the temple. David appointed Heman as the lead on music and Asaph as second. Asaph also performed a musical, liturgical role in the dedication of Solomon's temple, 2 *Chronicles* 5:12.

⁷ Ethan, the Ezrahite was known as a wise man (though not as wise as Solomon, 1 *Chronicles* 2:6). He had four brothers and was descended from Zerah, 1 *Kings* 4:31. He was a Levite.

⁸ These poems are identified via their use. They are recited as a unit on joyous occasions including the pilgrim festivals: Passover (Pesach) and Weeks of Pentecost (Shavuot) and Tabernacles (Sukkot). In ancient times these would be times that believers would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. For a discussion of the unity of these psalms see: Elizabeth Hayes, "The Unity of the Egyptian Hallel: Psalms 113-118" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 9 (1999): 145-156.

⁹ In this context these are merely songs of praise. Thus, again they are recognized via their function.

¹⁰ For an introduction to some of these dynamics working together see Gillingham (2016): 206-236.

the Masoretic Text, they tried to accommodate the need to avoid pronouncing the name of G-d (so as not to “take the Lord’s name in vain”). This practice began in the time of Nehemiah. One strategy is to substitute the title, “Lord” (*adonai*), for the name Yahweh. The Masoretes took the consonants from *adonai* to populate YHWH into YaHWeH which came to be pronounced as Jehovah. In the Renaissance, it became popular to use “Jehovah” instead of Yahweh or the title Adonai. This dispute on pronunciation and identification of referents carries on even today.

The major Codices are: 1. British Museum Oriental 4445—a copy of the Pentateuch consonantal text (C.E. 850); 2. Codex Cairensis (C) copied by Aaron ben Asher (C.E. 895); 3. Leningrad MS—later prophets (C.E. 916); 4. Leningrad MS B-19A—entire (Ben Asher Masoretic Text, C.E. 1010; (copy of C.E. 980) basis for Kittel’s *Biblia Hebraica* (3rd and subsequent editions); 5. Samaritan Pentateuch in Nablus, C.E. tenth century; 6. Bologna Edition of the Psalter, C.E. 1477; 7. Second Bomberg Edition of the Old Testament, (C.E. 1525-26), a key source of many modern editions, contains text of Jacob ben Chayim =, with Masorah and Rabbinical notes.

The Qumran Manuscripts. The Qumran Manuscripts, aka The Dead Sea Scrolls, were discovered near the canyon of Wadi Qumran near the northwest coast of the Dead Sea. They are thought to represent manuscripts ranging from 8th century B.C.E. to 11th century C.E. Most of the texts are written in Hebrew with some in Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and Arabic. They are primarily written on parchment, some on papyrus, and one on copper. There were 981 different manuscripts discovered in 1947-47 and in 1956 from 11 Qumran caves.¹¹ So far as the Psalms are concerned #11Q Psalms is a key manuscript from cave 11 copied in such a way that seems to indicate the Herodian period. The psalms represented here are: #93, #101-#103, #105, #109, #118, #119, #121-#130, #132-#146, #148-#150, and #151 from LXX.

The Aramaic Targums. The word ‘Targum’ means “interpretation.” These documents served the purpose of interpretation of the tradition of the *Torah* during the Babylonian exile and the Persian Empire period. The first evidence of these documents is around 200 C.E.¹²

¹¹ For a little of the background of this see: Devorah Dimant, “Sectarian and Non-Sectarian Texts from Qumran: The Pertinence and the Usage of a Taxonomy” *Revue de Qumran* 24.1 (2009): 7-18, and Florentino Garcia Martinez, Claude Grenache, “The Great Battles over Qumran” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 63.3 (2000): 124-130.

¹² For further examination of this see this conference proceedings: Derek R.G. Beattie, Martin J. McNamara, *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in their Historical Context* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

The Septuagint (LXX). This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.¹³ The purpose of this translation was for Jews who did not know Hebrew, but knew Greek. It was called LXX because it was translated by around 70 Jewish scholars (72 as many say). This was a very common holy text in the ancient world especially around the time of the Christian *New Testament*. The translators of the Septuagint were said to be accurate so that this version is influential in establishing a modern text.¹⁴

The traditional categories used to group the psalms include these: *Psalms of Lament* (#44, #60, #74, #79, #80, #85, #86, #90); *Psalms of Praise* (#7, #28, #30, #34, #44, #50, #57, #89, #92, #95, #100, #103, #106, #107, #111, #118, #136, #138); and Psalms that focus upon the individual or upon the community. Within these broad categories it is often added: *Royal psalms* that make specific references to the king and his actions such as Psalms #2, #18, #20, #21, #45, #72, #101, #110, #132, and #144. Some would also include psalms in which the presence of the king is not explicit (such as enthronement psalms like #47, #93, #96, #97, #98, and #99).

Next are psalms of the past that are meant to make reference to the “present” (a sliding scale that can go back as far as two thousand years). These might include: #78, #105, #106, #135, #136.

Then there are the “wisdom” psalms which seek to make theological philosophy their primary aim—most prominent among these is the longest psalm #119. Next, are the *Zion Psalms* in which the topography of the land from Mount Zion to Jerusalem is prominent as a literal defense against enemies and also a metaphorical line of spiritual defense against evil.

The pilgrimage psalms and entrance liturgies are literally about pilgrims to the Jerusalem temple as they climb Mount Zion on their journey. But they can also be about the spiritual journey that all believers and inquirers make as they live their lives—psalms #120-134, primarily with some resonance in psalms #15 and #24.

The last category are the Messianic and eschatological psalms. These psalms predict the coming of the messiah. For Jews this is still an ongoing expectation. For Christians, it is a reference to Jesus. These psalms include #2, #22, #49, #89, #102, #110, and #118.

For those readers who want to explore the interpretation and background of the psalms, I have listed a few references for further study in Appendix Two.

¹³ The Septuagint has been very influential in this editor’s rendering of the psalms.

¹⁴ A good introduction to the Septuagint can be found in: Alison G. Salvesen and Timothy Michael Law, *The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

PSALM #1

“THERE IS JUSTICE WITHIN A MORAL UNIVERSE”

[1] Fortunate is the person who has not been captivated
By the sirens of false goals through setting designs on futile
Paths of self-interest, above all else. It is a blessing
To have forgone the ways of those who scorn goodness.
[2] But it is a delight to choose the way of Yahweh,
And to meditate on Yahweh's Law, day and night.

[3] Such a person is like a tree planted beside
A plentiful, nurturing stream,
That provides its fruit in season
And whose leaves never fall away.
So shall the good person prosper; [4] in contrast

To the wicked, who like the chaff,
Shall be scattered by the winds.
[5] When the wicked are judged, they
Will not stand nor will there be accommodation
Among the righteous. [6] For Yahweh is the way

Of the righteous, but the way of the wicked
Leads to certain, inevitable destruction.

PSALM #2

“RULERS: YOU AREN’T AS GREAT
AS YOU SUPPOSE”

[1] Why is there all this vain restlessness

Among the nations and their peoples?

[2] The politicians and rulers conspire against Yahweh’s

Anointed. [3] Let us cut through peoples’ fetters

And toss away their cords. [4] God, who sits in Heaven, laughs

At the persecutors, in scorn. [5] Then Yahweh will speak angrily at them,

And they will cringe in terror at God’s wrath. [6] “I have consecrated

My rulers on a holy mountaintop in Zion.” [7] Let me recount

The Words Yahweh said to me, “You are my Children.

Today, I have brought you forth. [8] Ask and I will bequeath to you and

“All the nations. Your possessions shall stretch to the ends of the earth.

[9] You will shatter your tormentors like an iron rod to clay pottery.”

[10] Therefore, rulers of the nations, take warning:

[11] Serve Yahweh with fear and trembling

[12] Lest the Lord grow angry and you perish.

Blessed are those who put their trust in the Yahweh.

PSALM #3

“LORD, PROTECT US: A MORNING PRAYER”

[1] O Yahweh, why are my enemies so numerous and rising against me?

[2] They claim that I will find no salvation from God, *Selah*.*

[3] But You, Yahweh, are my shield and my glory.

You lift my eyes upward [4] and I cry aloud for YOU.

The Master of the Universe answers me from the Holy Mountain, *Selah*.

[5] I have laid down and slept, but I awoke: Yahweh has sustained me.

[6] I am not afraid of even ten thousand people who might threaten me.

[7] Rise, O Yahweh, and save me, Lord.

You have punched my enemies in their mouths,

And the broken teeth of the wicked fall down [like rain].

[8] O Lord of salvation bless Your people! *Selah*.

* “Selah” is a term that I take to be an intensifier to end a poetic stanza. It allows a brief moment of pause for reflection. Along with this pause, the reader can also take it as a response meaning *assent* “forever.” The term is used 71 times in the *Psalms*.

PSALM #4

“EVENING PRAYER”

[1] Answer my petition O God of righteousness.
In the past, You have made wide the narrow places.

Be gracious to me now and hear my cry.

[2] How long will humankind insult my honor?
As they love what is worthless and seek after falsehoods, *Selah*.

[3] Yahweh knows the righteous, and hears my crying.

[4] We must tremble before Yahweh and turn from sin
In our hearts, as we lie on our beds. We must be silent, *Selah*.

[5] Sacrifice for justice, and put your trust in Yahweh.

[6] Many seek their own hedonistic pleasure.

Instead, they should lift their gaze to the light of Your Face.

[7] For You have put a rejoicing into my heart
That is greater than having fresh bread and rich wine.

[8] I will lie down peacefully because of You,
Who allow me to dwell safely in the world.

PSALM #5

“PROTECTION ALONG A DANGEROUS ROAD”

[1] O Yahweh, hear my suffering complaints.

[2] Attend to my pain, my Lord, for it is to You I pray.

[3] Hear my voice in the morning. I wait diligently.

[4] You are no lover of evil, and

You do not have sinners as Your guests.

[5] The boastful cannot face You.

[6] You scorn those bloodthirsty evil-doers,

Who speak and act falsely. [7] But I,

Because of Your love,

Have been welcomed into Your House of Worship,

Where I kneel in awe and reverence.

[8] O Yahweh, lead me safely along Your Just Path where

My enemies ambuscade. [9] There is nothing

True in their speech nor in their hearts.

These sycophants' deliverance is into an open grave.

[10] Judge them 'guilty' O God; let their designs

Unravel and may they fall from their positions,

For they have defiled You.

[11] Those who have sought Your protection

Will be glad at their just demise. For You shelter the righteous,

And they glory in Your name.

[12] For You bless those who strive to be good, and

Protect, and raise their spirits with beautiful music.

PSALM #6

“HELP ME, GOD”

[1] O Yahweh, please do not chastise me in Your anger,
Nor instruct me in a rage. [2] Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am spent.
Heal me, O Yahweh, for I am pained to the bone, and
[3] My soul is wracked with sorrow.

How long, O Yahweh, [4] until You return to me and
Rescue my soul? Save me through Your Steadfast Love.
[5] For were I to die, how could I remember You in Sheol?
[6] My groaning makes me weary. I flood my pillow with tears.

[7] My eyes are swollen from vexation and have grown old.
My adversaries surround me. [8] Can't they leave me alone?
They are rotten to the core. [9] But Yahweh has my back;
The Lord has heard me weeping and feels my pain.

God will accept my prayer, [10] and all my tormenters,
Suddenly dismayed, will retire in confusion and leave me in peace.

PSALM #7

“MAY THERE BE JUSTICE ON THE EARTH”

[1] O Yahweh, my God, I have sought refuge in You
From those who are after me. Come and rescue me
[2] Lest they rip me apart like a savage lion kills its prey.
Rescue me. [3] If my hands have done wrong,
[4] Or if I've returned evil for evil,
Or hurt my adversaries without just cause.
[5] Then, let them throw me into the ground
And grind my life and honor into dust, *Selah*.

[6] O Yahweh, rise up in Your displeasure
Against the fury of my foes. Awaken Your Judgment.
[7] Let the assembly of nations gather around You,
And Your position, high above us all. [8] For Yahweh
Is the judge of everyone. Judge me also, Lord,
According to my integrity and pure heart.
[9] May the evil of the wicked be extinguished.
Help the righteous stand firm in mind and heart, O God.

[10] God is the shield who protects me,
And nurtures my upright heart.
[11] God is a judge who is slow to anger.
The presence of the Divine continually threatens
[12] The wicked who will not repent.

God sharpens the sword of punishment
And takes aim with a bow. [13] The arrows
Have been barbed with fire. [14] For yonder is one
Who is pregnant with malice, and puts forth a façade of lies.
[15] For such a person, the Lord is digging a deep pit
That will contain such odious creatures.
[16] That the malice and lies will recoil back on the evildoer,
And this will cause him to tumble into the pit.

[17] Let me praise Yahweh's Justice and sing my song
To my wonderful Lord, the Most-High.

PSALM #8

“PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING”

[1] O Yahweh, our Lord, how great is Your name through all the earth.
Your majesty extends beyond the highest heavens.

[2] Children and infants breathe forth Your name,
And thus, Your enemies are confounded and silenced.

[3] When I look into the sky, I see the moon and the stars,
Your Handiwork. [4] What is there about humans that causes You
To be mindful and caring of us? [5] You have made us
Just-less-than-Yourself and crowned us with glory and honor.

[6] You have allowed us to rule over Your Handiwork.

[7] You have placed beneath us the cattle and
All wild beasts of the open spaces, [8] birds of the air,
And fish who traverse the waters of the many seas.

[9] O Yahweh our Lord, how great is Your name through all the earth.

PSALM #9

“DIVINE JUSTICE”

[1] I will praise You, Yahweh, with all of my heart.

Let me recount Your wondrous works.

[2] I will rejoice and be glad in You as I sing

Praises to Your name, Most-High.

[3] My enemies turn stumbling before You

And disappear. [4] You uphold the justice in my cause.

From Your bench, You make decisions based on what is right.

[5] You have rendered an order against egregious nations,

And You have sentenced the wicked to a nameless eternity.

[6] The enemy is finished: exiled to a wasteland

That is without cities; their memory is eviscerated.

[7] But Yahweh is empowered forever, sitting behind the bench

Of Law and Justice, [8] rendering decisions that affect

The world's people through righteous Truth.

[9] Yahweh sees the plight of the oppressed and is their refuge.

When things get tough, [10] those who know Your Name

Will put their trust in You because You do not abandon Your servants.

[11] Sing praises to Yahweh, who dwells in the Promised Land.

Proclaim to all, the works of The Master of the Universe.

[12] Yahweh avenges the blood of those who are mindful.

The Lord listens especially to the cries of the poor.

[13] O Yahweh, pity me; see my suffering. Lift me away

From the gates of death [14] so that I, at the gates of the city [of life],

May recount to the daughters of Zion the glories of Your salvation.

[15] The nations have fallen into a pit of their own making by a net with
Which they hoped to trap others, but ended ensnaring themselves.

[16] Yahweh has made known a judgment that by their own hands
The wicked shall be struck down, and they shall be made to see this,
Selah.

[17] The reckless evildoers will return to Sheol, as will

All the nations who have forgotten the honesty of God.

[18] And the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope

Of the lowly be forever in vain. [19] Rise up, O Yahweh, and let not

The powerful scions prevail. Judge the nations before You according to

Your Law. [20] O Yahweh, strike those in power with terror so that

They might come to know that they are merely humans, like the rest of us.

PSALM #10

“A PRAYER FOR THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED”

[1] O Yahweh, why are You so far away from me?

In these times when I’m hard up, I can’t find You.

[2] Poor folk are mocked by the powerful. When

Leaders hide their own abuse, poor folk *instead* are given the noose.

[3] The wicked boast about their material desires,

As they covet those richer than themselves. They spurn

[4] The sovereignty of the Lord saying, “I can get away with my crime.”

“My crew can outwit an absent God.” This is *their* worldview.

[5] These narcissists travel on what they see as an untroubled path.

The *way of God* is not on their travel plan.

They’ve always gotten to their destination *before* without God.

[6] So they are very *sure* of their itinerary.

[7] Their foul mouths are full of deceit and oppression.

Under their words lie harm and iniquity.

[8] They lie in ambush within the towns, hurting those

Innocents who cannot recover from the harm they cause.

[9] They wait like a pride of lions, in a lair, to attack

The poor, weak, and marginalized—to drag them away.

[10] They crouch in preparation to destroy their prey.

Society’s dispossessed are helpless against their privileged position.

[11] They think in their minds, “God isn’t watching;

God isn’t paying any attention to this. I’ve never had consequences.”

[12] O Yahweh, lift up Your hand to help the poor and outcast.

[13] Make the evil power-mongers eat their words when they

Claim that “God will not punish us; we can do as we please.”

[14] But You have seen the pain and the unjust suffering.

You are the hope of the orphans and society’s outcasts.

[15] Now is the time to break the power of the imposters,

[16] Who run things in the world. Punish them until they are crushed.

[17] O Yahweh, hear the cries of the poor and oppressed; strengthen their
Hearts and give them real hope for the future [18] so that these
Orphans and dispossessed might live free from mind-numbing terror.

PSALM #11

“GOD’S IMAGE WILL SUSTAIN THE JUST”

[1] In Yahweh I have sought refuge. My soul
Needs direction, like a bird flying toward its mountain rookery.

[2] Pay heed to the wicked. They are readying their bows
In the shadows to shoot arrows at us.

[3] Civil protections have disappeared for the righteous.

[4] The Lord is in a Holy dimension of time and space.
From that domain of eternity, the Lord can observe everything.

[5] God’s Law tests both the good humans and the bad.
Yahweh especially despises those who resort to unwarranted violence.

[6] The fire and sulfur of vengeance shall rain on those who are reckless.

[7] Yahweh loves those who strive to be pure and just;
They will be rewarded by having the image of God before them.

PSALM #12

“FAKE NEWS AND FAKE CELEBRITIES”

[1] O Yahweh, good people are vanishing quickly.

Truth is being replaced by *fake news*.

[2] The perpetrators of mendacity are having a field day.

Their lips express what is in their toxic hearts.

[3] So Lord, sew up those lying lips so that the false

Tongues that speak high-sounding verbiage might be silent.

[4] These human devils will cry out, “Our verbal currency
Is our strength. It belongs to us. Try to stop us, and we’ll sue.”

[5] But the Lord is there for the poor and the marginalized.

Their pain gets Divine attention; *they* will find solace.

[6] The words of Yahweh are like pure silver

Seven times refined from the smelter.

[7] Guard us, Yahweh, from this cadre of callous liars

Listen to our cries. You are our hope.

[8] The liars prowl about everywhere with their false vision,
And these worthless souls are honored and exalted before all.

PSALM #13

“EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY”

[1] O Yahweh, it seems like, You’ve forgotten me.
You conceal Yourself from me—how long will this continue?

[2] How long must I seek Your counsel in my soul
To relieve my daily existential agony? How long

Will my enemy prevail? [3] Come to me, Yahweh,
Illuminate my eyes to the Truth lest I fall asleep in death.

[4] In that case my enemy will crow, “I’ve bettered this fop.”
He will rejoice in my perceived failure.

[5] But I trust in Your constant, merciful compassion.
My heart rejoices in Your saving power.

[6] I sing thanksgiving to You, Yahweh, for Your goodness to me.
I will honor the name of the Most-High forever.

PSALM #14*

“A LAMENT”

[1] There are some who say, “There is no God.”
They mean that there is no force greater than humankind.
They oftentimes do terrible things because of this hubris.
Sometimes, it seems that there aren’t any good people left.

[2] Yahweh perceives from heaven the children of humankind
To ascertain who have it in their minds to pursue God.

[3] Sometimes it seems like everyone has become a skeptic.
This causes diminishment of their character.

[4] These poor and weakened souls
Chew up *normal people* regularly
As if they were having their daily dinner.
And they never pray to the Lord.

[5] Even the righteous tremble in fear.
(Though they have nothing to be afraid of since God is just.)

[6] Many may mock the poor person’s hope,
Whose only refuge is in Yahweh.

[7] The salvation of Israel may come from Zion,
When Yahweh delivers his people from slavery.
Then, Jacob will be glad, and Israel will rejoice.

* This psalm shares some similarities with Psalms # 10 & #12 contrasting the position of “the fool” with the ethical person of faith. Psalms #11 & #13 act as a counterpoint in that they are more intensely *personal* in their orientation.

PSALM #15

“A SNAPSHOT OF A GOOD PERSON”

[1] Yahweh, who will be invited to Your Tent and abide
With You at Your Holy Mountain Sanctuary?
[2] Surely, it will be a person of integrity,
Who seeks justice for all and speaks truthfully from the heart.

[3] Such a person does not slander others nor
Does such a person abuse their neighbor—
[4] Especially, one who is socially marginalized.
Instead, this individual honors those who show reverence

For Yahweh and those who honor their promises (even if it's against
Their own advantage). [5] This person does not charge interest
On a loan, and cannot be bribed to indict the innocent.
Such a human being will stand their ground forever.

PSALM #16

“THE PATH TO HAPPINESS IS IN THE LORD”

- [1] Protect me God, for I've given myself to You.
[2] I have made *You* my ultimate good for living.
[3] You are the source of all my real happiness.
[4] Those who choose *other* ultimate goods will find sorrow.

I will not follow their skewed devotions [to money and power].
Their false mantras will never pass my lips.
[5] Yahweh, You hold the cup of my sustenance,
And my life's inheritance is in You.

- [6] My lot is cast with You, and it is my delight.
I could not ask for any other heritage.
[7] I will bless Yahweh who gives me counsel,
And fashions my *intuitions*.

- [8] I keep Yahweh ever before me in my consciousness,
And that connection is my right hand; I stand firm.
[9] Therefore, my heart is glad and my body is secure,
[10] Because You will not abandon my soul to Sheol.

You do not allow Your followers to see the pit.
[11] You will help me to find my path in life.
The complete joy of Your presence is in my being,
And it will be my right hand of happiness forever.