

Psalm 7

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It is my distinct pleasure to dedicate this study to my friend and colleague David Marcus.¹ In addition to being an outstanding wide-ranging scholar, David is an exemplary teacher. I remain ever grateful that he introduced me to Akkadian and Syriac.

The present study attempts to solve some longstanding problems in Psalm 7 and to offer some new interpretations.² For the convenience of the reader I provide an emended text alongside the Masoretic version.

Psalm 7: Masoretic text

1 שְׁגֹן לְדוֹד אֲשֶׁר־שָׁר לִיהְוָה עַל־דְּבָרִים־בּוֹשׁ בְּזִימִינִי:
 2 יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִי בָּךְ חָסִיתִי הַשִּׁיעָנִי מִכְלָדְךָ פִּי וְהַצִּילָנִי:
 3 פּוֹזִיטָרְךָ בְּאַרְיָה נְפָשִׁי פָּרָק וְאַנְּ מַצִּיל:
 4 יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִי אָסְמָעָשִׁיתִי זוֹאת אָסְמִישָׁעָוֵל בְּכַפְּיָה:
 5 אָסְגָּמְלָתִי שָׁלֹמִי רָע וְאַחֲלָצָה צָוָרָי רִיקָּם:
 6 יַרְדֵּף אֹזֵב | נְפָשִׁי וַיְשַׁגֵּן וַיְרַמֵּס לְאָרֶץ חַיִּים וּכְבוֹדִי | לְעַפְרֵן יַשְׁבֵּן סָלָה:
 7 קָוָמָה יְהֹוָה | בְּאָפָּךְ הַנְּשָׂא בְּעַבְרוֹת צָוָרָי וְעוֹרָה אַלְיִ מִשְׁפָּט צָוָת:
 8 וְעַדְתָּ לְאַמִּים חַסְכָּבָךְ וְעַלְתָּה לְמִרְום שָׁוְבָה:

¹ For a fairly recent study of Psalm 7 with ample references to secondary literature, see A. Basson, *Divine Metaphors in Selected Psalms of Lamentation* (FAT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2006), 63-85.

² I am preparing a new philologically based translation and commentary on Psalms 113-118, the “Hallel Psalms.” The work in progress calls attention to authorial literary devices and ancient Near Eastern parallels. For now see S. D. Sperling, “A Study of Psalm 2,” *UF* 43 (2011), 435-45; *idem*, “Psalm 6 in Comparative Perspective,” *JANES* 33 (2018), 187-202. Assyriological abbreviations follow the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*.

9 יהוה ידין עמים שפטני יהוה בצדקי ובתמי עלי:

10 יגמר נא רע | רשעים ותכוון צדיק ובחן לבות וכליות אלhim צדיק:

11 מגני על אלהים מושיע ישירילב:

12 אלהים שופט צדיק נאל זעם בבליזם:

13 אסלא ישוב חרבו יתמוש קשתו דרך ויכוננה:

14 ולו הכנ בליימות חציו לדלקים יפעל:

15 הנה יחבלאון והרה עמל וילד שקר:

16 בור ברה ויחפרהו ניפל בשחת יפעל:

17 ישוב עמלו בראשו ועל קדקהו חמסו ירד:

18 אזהה יהוה בצדקו אזהרה שם יהוה עליז:

Psalm 7: Emended text

1 שגון לדוד אשר שר ליהוה על-דברי-בוש בזימני:

2 יהוה אלהי בך חסתיי הושענני מצל-רדפי והאלני:

3 פזירך באירה נפשי ואין פרך ומאיל:

4 יהוה אלהי אס-עשיתי זאת אס-ישען בכפי:

5 אס-אמלתי שלמי רע ואחלצה צורו:

6 ירדך אזיב נפשי ויישג וירמס לארץ חי

ובבוז ריקם לעפר ישבען וסלה:

7 קומה יהוה | באפק הנשא בעברות צוראי ועורה אליו משפט צוית:

8 ועת אלים תסובב עליית למרום | שביית שבי:

9 יהוה ידין עמים

שפטני יהוה³ בצדקי ובתמי עלי

10 יִגְמַרְגֵּא רָע | רְשָׁעִים וַתְּכַוֵּן צְדִיק

וּבְתִּחְנוּ לְבֹות וּכְלִיוֹת אֱלֹהִים צְדִיק:

11 מְגַנֵּנִי עַל־אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׁרִיאֵלְבָ:

12 אֱלֹהִים שׁוֹפֵט צְדִיק וְאֶל יְעַם בְּכָל־יּוֹם:

13 אָסְלָא יִשּׁוֹב חַרְבּוֹ יְלַטּוֹשׁ קְשַׁתּוֹ דָּרְךָ וַיְכּוֹנַהָ:

14 וְלֹו הַכִּין בְּלִידָמֹת חַצִּיו לְדָלְקִים יִפְעַלְ:

15 הַנֶּה יְחַבֵּל־אָנוּ וְהַרְהָעָמֵל וַיָּלֶד שָׁקָרְ:

16 בָּור בָּרָה וַיְחַפְּרָהוּ וַיַּפְלֵל בְּשַׁחַת יִפְעַלְ:

17 יִשּׁוֹב עַמְלֹו בְּרָאָשָׁו וְעַל קְדָקָדוֹ חַמְסָו יִרְדְּ:

18 אָזְדָה יְהֹוָה כָּאֶזְקָה וְאָזְמָרָה שְׁמִיְתָהוּ עַלְיוֹןָ:

Translation³

1 A *shigayon*-prayer by David which he sang to YHWH in the matter of Kush, a Benjaminite.

2 O YHWH, my god, in you have I sought shelter.

Save me from all my pursuers and rescue me.

3 Lest one tear me like a lion *with none to deliver and save.

4 O YHWH my god, if I have done this—if there be wrongdoing in my hands,

5 if I requited my ally with treachery and saved *his foe,

6 may an enemy pursue and catch me, and trample my life to the ground and set my body *empty in the dust. *Selah*.

7 Arise O YHWH in your anger, raise yourself in fury against my foes and arouse yourself *my God. You have ordained justice.

8 *For the divine assembly surrounds you.

You ascended to heaven and took captives.

9 YHWH judges the peoples. Grant me justice O YHWH,

in accord with my blameless righteousness *O Most High.

³ Asterisks indicate emended text.

10 May evil bring an end to the wicked and may you establish the righteous.
 For God examines the hearts and minds of the righteous.

11 My request is of God, savior of the upright in heart.

12 God vindicates the righteous and *will not always damn.

13 If one does not repent, he (God)⁴ will sharpen his sword,
 string his bow and aim it,

14 and make for himself instruments of death, make his arrows fiery.

15 See, he⁵ had conceived evil, was pregnant with iniquity and gave birth to lies.

16 He dug a pit, excavated it; he fell into that pitfall he made.

17 May his iniquity turn back to his own head;
 his violence come down on his own skull.

18 I will praise YHWH in accord with his righteousness. And let me hymn the name YHWH-Elyon.

There are several verbal links between Psalm 7 and Psalm 6.⁶ הושיעני occurs in Ps 7:2 and 6:5; אחלצה of v. 5 corresponds to חלצה in 6:5; נפשי of 7:3, 6 corresponds to נפשי of 6:5; צורתי of 7:5⁷ and of v. 7 correspond to צורתי of 6:8; באנך of 7:7 corresponds to באנך in 6:2. Internally, links are supplied by verbal repetition. Thus, נצל (vv. 1-2); שפט (vv. 3, 6); יע (vv. 2, 11); צר (vv. 5, 7); רע (vv. 5, 10); בז (vv. 10, 13, 14); צדק (vv. 9, 10, 12). The measure for measure self curse in vv. 4-6 is expressed by the repetition of √רՃ in vv. 2, 6. Measure for measure is also verbally expressed in the play between אס-לְאַיְשֵׁב

⁴ Cf. NJPS note *g-g*.

⁵ Note the female imagery applied to the male sinner.

⁶ Verbal connections often prompted the compilers of the book of Psalms to place two psalms in sequence on the principle of what Delitzsch called *Gleichartigkeit*, "similarity." See F. Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar über die Psalmen* (Leipzig: Dörrfling und Franke, 1883), 16-17.

⁷ Or as emended, צוררו*.

(v. 13a) and שׁוֹב עַמְלֹו בְּרָאָשׁוּ (v. 17). Among other poetic devices, the worshipper's belief in his innocence and his prayer for divine vindication are expressed by the repetition of verbal roots at home in the field of law: √טְפֵשׁ (vv. 7, 9, 12); √עַשֵּׂי (vv. 2, 11); √קְדֵץ (vv. 9, 10, 12, 18). Another internal unifying device is the alliteration of *šin*, missing only from v. 14.

Notes to Psalm 7

V. 1

שְׁגִינָה: The only other occurrence of the term is the rubric to Hab 3:1: **תְּפִלָּה שְׁגִינָה**. But Psalm 7 and Habakkuk 3 are very different in their content. Habakkuk 3 is a theophany full of mythical elements,⁸ while Psalm 7 is a plea for deliverance, a protestation of innocence, a call for divine justice and for punishment of the worshipper's foes. Possibly, שְׁגִינָה is a musical notation. The Syro-Hexaplar, following Greek Πσαλμὸς, translates *mzmwr'*, which is its regular translation of Heb. שְׁגִינָה. מְזֻמָּר has long been compared with the Akkadian prayer term, *šigû*,⁹ “lamentation.”¹⁰ *Pace* Andersen,¹¹ the mood of the *šigû* prayers is confession, and contrition¹² for sins committed.¹³ Quite the opposite is true of Psalm 7, in which the worshipper vigorously defends his innocence. If indeed borrowed from Akkadian *šigû*, the Hebrew term has lost the original sense.¹⁴

⁸ If our emendation is correct there is a mythic reference in Ps 7:8.

⁹ Also attested as *segû*, *šimgû*. See CAD Š/2, 413.

¹⁰ For a recent comparison, see S. Ahituv and M. Cogan, *Nahum Habakuk [sic] Zephaniah* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006), 53 [Hebrew].

¹¹ F. Andersen, *Habakkuk* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 272.

¹² Psalm 51 reads like a *šigû*.

¹³ See the citations from *šigû* texts in Mayer *Gebetsbeschwörungen*, 111-13; See further the *šigû* addressed to Marduk in T. Oshima, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 298-99; See also A. Lenzi (ed.), *Reading Akkadian Prayers and Hymns* (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 18 n. 45 and 41 with n. 139.

¹⁴ For a similar example, cf. MH גַּמְטָרִיא, a method of midrash that plays on the numerical values of Hebrew words. Though derived from Greek γεωμετρία, גַּמְטָרִיא has nothing in common with its Greek source which means “land measurement,” “geometry.” See D. Derovan, in *EncJud*² 7:427; Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 346.

Kush, a Benjaminite: An otherwise unknown figure. (LXX reads Χουσι = כּוֹשִׁי.)

Given the attribution of the psalm to David and the similarity of Kush (כּוֹשׁ) to Kish (קִישׁ),¹⁵ father of King Saul the Benjaminite, it was only natural that much Jewish tradition would identify Kush with Saul. See *b. Mo‘ed Qaṭan* 16b, Targum, Rashi, and Qimhi. In contrast, Ibn Ezra refers to that identification as *רָחוֹק*, “distant,” i.e., unlikely.

V. 2

הוֹשִׁיעַנִי מִכֶּלֶרֶךְ פִּי וְהַצִּילַנִי: Cf. Ps 31:16; 142:7.

V. 3

like a lion: For leonine imagery in Psalms, see Ps 10:9-10; 17:12; 58:7.¹⁶ The lion similes (Ps 7:3; 10:9-10; 22:14, 22) and metaphor (Ps 58:7) in Psalms refer to the wicked and are, accordingly, negative.¹⁷ In contrast, lion similes and metaphors in the Assyrian annals (see *CAD* L, 23, s.v. *labbiš*; *ibid.*, 24, s.v. *labbu*; N/1, 60b, s.v. *nadāru*) are first-person references to the Assyrian king who boasts that he has the power and rage of a lion.¹⁸ Outside of Psalms, we find positive similes closer to the Assyrian ones in Gen 49:9; Deut 33:22.

***with none to deliver and save:** So LXX and Peshitta. This seems preferable to MT for several reasons: 1) Heb *פְּרֹק* in the sense “break” takes a direct object; see Gen 27:40 (yoke); Exod 34:2 (earrings); 1Kgs 19:11 (mountains); Zech 11:16 (hooves). 2) The sense “save” for *פְּרֹק* is very common in Aramaic¹⁹ but

¹⁵ By rabbinic times there was no distinction between *kaph* and *qoph*.

¹⁶ See further O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 85-86.

¹⁷ The lion imagery is especially directed at the foes who make false accusations. See K. van der Toorn, *God in Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 182. For a detailed study of lion imagery, see B. Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Imagery in the Bible and in the Ancient Near East* (OBS 212; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2005). See further *idem*, “*kepir’arāyot* in Judges 14:5,” *VT* 59 (2009), 150-58.

¹⁸ Assyrian Kings regularly boast verbally and iconographically of killing lions. See P. Albenda, “Lions on Assyrian Wall Reliefs,” *JANES* 6 (1974), 1-27; B. Batto, “The Divine Sovereign: The Image of God in the Priestly Creation Account,” in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. J. Roberts*, ed. B. Batto and K. Roberts (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 143-86.

¹⁹ See, e.g., M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (DJBA; Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002), 937; *idem*, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (DJPA; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2017), 511; *idem*, *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan:

very rare in Biblical Hebrew.²⁰ 3) Our verse is very similar to Mic 5:7: *וְהִיא שָׁאָרִית יַעֲקֹב בָּגָזִים בְּקָרְבָּם עָמִים רַבִּים פָּאָרִיה בְּבָהָמוֹת יָעַר בְּכָפֵר בְּעָדָרִי צָאן אֲשֶׁר אָמַר עַבְרִים*

שָׁאָרִית יַעֲקֹב בָּגָזִים בְּקָרְבָּם עָמִים רַבִּים פָּאָרִיה בְּבָהָמוֹת יָעַר בְּכָפֵר בְּעָדָרִי צָאן אֲשֶׁר אָמַר עַבְרִים וְרַמָּס וְטַרְף וְאַיִן מַצְאֵל “The remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations like a lion among wild beasts, like a fierce lion among flocks of sheep, which tramples and tears, with none to save.”

V. 4

אָמַשְׁיַשְׁ-עַוְל בְּכָפֵי : Ginsberg long ago compared *עַוְל* with Ug. *glt* as found in *KTU*³ 1.16 vi 44-45: *šqlt bglt ydk*, “You have let your hand fall into wrongdoing.”²¹ In the present verse the wrongdoing is in both hands.

Vv. 5- 6

The psalmist's oath is solemnized by the self-curse of measure for measure.²² Just what is the measure alleged against the worshipper that he denies under penalty of self-curse? Tigay some forty years ago demonstrated that Ps 7:5 reflects ancient international treaty obligations according to which one was forbidden to provide aid and comfort to the enemy of his ally.²³ Our translation follows Tigay in understanding *שׁוֹלְמִי* as “my ally,”²⁴ on the basis of Ras Shamra

Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003), 74; idem, *A Syriac Lexicon* (Winona Lake, IN Eisenbrauns, 2009), 1250; idem, *A Dictionary of Christian Palestinian Aramaic* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 341.

²⁰ Heb. “deliver” occurs only in Ps 136:24 and Lam 5:8 and in our text as emended. Both of these other texts are demonstrably late. Ps 136:6-9 are based on Genesis 1 and are accordingly posterior to that late text. Lamentations is at least exilic. See Lam 1:3. For Ps 136:24 EBH (Early Biblical Hebrew) would have had *וַיַּצְלִין* (e.g., Judg 8:34), while Lam 5:8 *פרק נ* would have had *אֵין מִידָם* (e.g., Deut 32:39).

²¹ H. L. Ginsberg, *The Legend of King Keret* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1946), 49. Ginsberg compares the Ugaritic passage with Ps 25:3: *לֹמַעַן לֹא יִשְׁלַחו הַצְדִיקִים בַּעֲוָלָתָה* “the righteous not set their hands to wrongdoing.”

²² “Oaths are nothing other than a form of conditional self-cursing”; A. M. Kitz, “An Oath, Its Curse and Anointing Ritual,” *JAOS* 124 (2004), 315; see further idem, *Cursed Are You. The Phenomenology of Cursing in Cuneiform and Hebrew Texts* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 96-133. For extensive examples of oaths and protestation of innocence affirmed by the self-curse, see Job 31:5-40.

²³ J. H. Tigay, “Psalm 7:5 and Ancient Near Eastern Treaties,” *JBL* 89 (1970), 178-86.

²⁴ In Ps 55:21 perhaps read *בְּשׁוֹלְמִי*.

Akkadian *šallāmu*.²⁵ We also accept his emendation *צָרְדוֹ**.²⁶ As for, its proper place is in v. 6.

V. 6

רִיקְם: On this anomalous vocalization see Hakham's commentary.²⁷

רִיקְם נְפָשׁ אָזֵב | נְפָשִׁי: The only other example of *רִיקְם נְפָשׁ* is Ps 143:3.

רִיקְם: This resumes the lion imagery of v. 6. Both $\sqrt{\text{טְרַף}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{רְמַס}}$ refer to the actions of a lion in Mic 5:7.

עֲוָרָה כְּבָדִי : וּכְבָדִי : my body; so, correctly, NJPS.²⁸ See Ps 57:9, where must be translated, “Arise O my body.” This is the sense of the term in Moses's request of God: “*הָרָאַנִי נָא אַת כְּבָדָךְ*,” “Please show me your body” (Exod 33:18).²⁹

רִיקְם : *וּכְבָדִי רִיקְם לְעַפֵּר יְשַׁׁקֵּן makes no sense in v. 5, which is why Tigay translated it by three dots.³⁰ Although some translators perpetuate the mistaken notion that *רִיקְם* means “without cause” (i.e., *חַגְם* = *רִיקְם*),³¹ that was long ago disproved by Ehrlich.³² In every instance (e.g., Gen 31:42; Exod 3:21; 23:15; Deut 16:16; Ps 25:3; Ruth 1:21) *רִיקְם* means “empty handed,” “without result.” The Hebrew term corresponds etymologically and semantically to Akk. *rīqūtu*, “emptiness,” which with possessive suffixes has the adverbial sense “empty-handed.”³³

²⁵ For the vocalization, see *AHW*, 1148. The term *šallāmu* corresponds to standard Akkadian *salmu*; see *CAD S*, 104-5. On the coalescence of the roots \sqrt{slm} and $\sqrt{šlm}$ in peripheral Akkadian, see loc. cit. See further the literature cited in Koehler-Baumgartner, *HALAT*, 1418.

²⁶ Tigay, “Psalm 7:5,” 181-82, with credit to E. J. Kissane.

²⁷ A. Hakham, *Psalms* (2 vols.; Da'at Miqra; Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 2003), 1.34.

²⁸ Ibn Ezra attributes the interpretation of *כְּבָדִי* as “my body” to the eleventh century commentator Judah Ibn Bal'am, but he rejects it.

²⁹ So already J. Morgenstern, “Biblical Theophanies,” *ZA* 25 (1911), 139-93, esp. 189-90.

³⁰ Tigay, “Psalm 7:5,” 179, n. 6.

³¹ E.g., NKJV, 1011; Revised English Bible, 468; Hakham, *Psalms*, 33; Basson, *Metaphors*, 63; R. Alter, *The Book of Psalms* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 18; Y. Berger, “The David-Benjaminites Conflict and the Intertextual Field of Psalm 7,” *JSOT* 38 (2014), 279-96.

³² Cited in Tigay, “Psalm 7:5,” 179, n. 6.

³³ See *CAD R*, 373. The Akkadian equivalent of *חַגְם* “for no reason” is *ina lā idi*. For examples, see *CAD I/J*, 1, s.v., *idu* B.

V. 7

in fury against my foes: This is the only biblical attestation of עֲבֹרוֹת, “anger,” “fury,” “rage,” an archaic singular on the pattern of אֲשֶׁפֶת (Ps 113:7) and חִכְמֹת (Prov 1:20; 9:1). Biblical Hebrew tends to use physical language to describe emotional states.³⁴ Thus נָא, paired here with עֲבָרָה, as it often is (Gen 49:7; Isa 14:6; Hos 13:11; Amos 1:11; Hab 3:8), is elliptical for חִרּוֹן נָא, literally, “burning of nose,” also paired with עֲבָרָה (e.g., Isa 13:9; Ps 78:49). The physical sense holds for עֲבָרָה as well. Its cognate verb in the *hitpa’el* (e.g. Deut 3:26; Ps 78:21, 59; 89:39), “to be furious,” means literally, “to swell up,” as shown by MH, JBA, JPA נָעַר, “become pregnant.”³⁵ Not only are נָא and עֲבָרָה a regular parallelism but so are קָוָם and נָשָׂא (Num 23:24; Ps 10:12). That parallelism aids in deciphering our verse: קָוָם...בְּנָא* is parallel to הנָשָׂא בְּעֲבֹרוֹת. Accordingly, in both stichs the anger in question is that of YHWH. The preposition *beth* of בְּעֲבֹרוֹת also serves צוֹרְרִי.

ordained: “set up,” “ordain,” is the primary sense of צוֹרְרִי. See, e.g., 1 Sam 25:30; 2 Sam 7:11; 17:14; Ps 119:138.

Arise O YHWH: The verb קָוָם is regularly found in the Bible in military contexts (e.g., Num 10:35; Judg 18:9; 2 Sam 17:1; Ps 3:8; 35:2; 68:2; 74:22). As such, it is appropriate to our psalm with its foes, enemies, the language of military pursuit (vv. 2, 5, 7); captives (v. 8 as emended); sword, bow (v.13), and arrows (v. 14).

וְעִזָּה אֱלֹהִים: With LXX ὁ Θεός μου and Vulgate *Deus meus*, read אֱלֹהִים. For the direct

³⁴ For examples, see the classic study of E. Dhorme, *L’emploi métaphorique des noms de parties du corps en hébreu et en akkadien* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1923); M. I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980); and see also A. L. Oppenheim, “Idiomatic Accadian,” *JAOS* 61 (1941), 251-71.

³⁵ See Jastrow, Dictionary, 1040. See also *ibid.*, 1047, s.v.; שָׁׁבֵר; *DJBA*, 841; *DJPA*, 442.

call on the sleeping Hebrew divinity to awaken,³⁶ cf. Ps 44:24: עורה למה תישן אָדָנִי, “Awake; why do you sleep O Lord?” See also 1 Kgs 18:27.

V. 8

וְעִדָּת לְאַمִּים תִּסְׁבֹּבְךָ וְעַלְיהָ לִמְרוּם שׁוֹבָה: The translations of this verse beginning with LXX and continuing into the twenty-first century do not inspire confidence. KJV is typical: “So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about; for their sakes therefore return thou on high.” (LXX, Vulgate and Peshitta apparently read עלייהם for עלייה.) NJPS’s “Let the assembly of peoples gather about You, with You enthroned on high,” hardly reflects the Hebrew, and seems to be an unacknowledged emendation of שׁוֹבָה to some form of שׁבָּבָךְ.³⁷ Our emendation of וְעִדָּת לְאַמִּים to וְעִדָּת אָלִים is based on the existence of the divine assembly known in Ugaritic as ‘dt ilm (KTU³ 1.15:ii: 7) and in Ps 82:1 as עִדָּת אֱלֹהִים. Proper judgment is the theme of both Psalm 7 and Psalm 82, which makes the presence of the divine assembly appropriate here.

וְעַלְיִת לִמְרוּם | שׁבָּית שְׁבִי: There are numerous instances in the Book of Psalms in which phrases and entire verses from one psalm recur in another, sometimes slightly altered (e.g., 113:1=135:1), sometimes severely corrupted. Compare Ps 14:1-6 with Ps 53:2-6 and Ps 31:2-3 with Ps 71:2-3.³⁸ It is apparent that עַלְיִת לִמְרוּם of MT is a corruption of שׁבָּית שְׁבִי found in Ps 68:19, a probable reference to some lost myth.³⁹ The suppliant is making the point that if God was able to perform heroic deeds in the mythic past, he can

³⁶ On this motif, see B. Batto, “The Sleeping God: An Ancient Near Eastern Motif of Divine Sovereignty,” *Biblica* 68 (1987), 153-77; A. Mrozek and S. Votto, “The Motif of the Sleeping Divinity,” *Biblica* 80 (1999), 415-19.

³⁷ NJPS often does not acknowledge its emendations; the review by K. Cathcart in *Orientalia* 33 (1984), 152-53; S. D. Sperling, *Students of the Covenant* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 152.

³⁸ See N.H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1967), xlvi.

³⁹ Cf. N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Language and the Book* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1955), 3. 405 (Hebrew); M. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 180.

surely provide justice and salvation in the present.⁴⁰

V. 9

Grant me Justice: Biblical writers taught that God judges each individual and determines each one's success or failure in life.⁴¹ Accordingly, worshippers regularly pray for divine justice, viz., personal vindication and success, often at the expense of their enemies, regularly depicted as adversaries at law.

A similar concept is attested in Akkadian prayer literature. Note the formulae collected by Mayer: *īna dīniya izizzama*, “defend me in my case”; *dīni dīn purussāya purus*, “judge my case, render my decision”; *ana dīniya qūlamma*, “pay attention to my case”; *šimā dabābi... adabbub dīni*, “hear my suit... I present my case.”⁴² בְּצַדְקִי וּבְתִּפְאָרָת: my blameless righteousness—a hendiadys.

עלי: This epithet of uncertain vocalization meaning “most high” was originally applied to Baal in Ugaritic.⁴³ The pairing of $\sqrt{עַל}$ and $\sqrt{שְׁפָט}$ mirrors Ugaritic $\sqrt{dyn} // \sqrt{tp̄}$.⁴⁴

V. 10

May evil bring an end to the wicked: See Ibn Ezra ad loc.

For God examines the hearts and minds of the righteous: Many biblical occurrences of (בָּבָב), “heart,” refer to it as the seat of reason.⁴⁵ This is true as well of **כָּלִיוֹת**, literally, “kidneys.”⁴⁶ Sometimes in the interests of clarity a translator will avoid translating **לב** as “heart” altogether, when it refers to emotions and thoughts in the same verse, or when it is paired with **כָּלִיוֹת**. A good example of both is Prov 23:15-16:

⁴⁰ For the same technique, see Ps 74:19-23.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Ps 1:5.

⁴² Mayer, *Gebetsbeschwörungen*, 221. On the metaphor of God as judge, see Basson, *Divine Metaphors*, 80-82; see further S. E. Holtz, “Praying as a Plaintiff,” *VT* 61 (2011), 258-79.

⁴³ See *KTU*³ 1.16:iii:4-8, and P. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 98.

⁴⁴ See Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures* (AOAT; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker), 15, 772.

⁴⁵ See Koehler-Baumgartner, *HALAT*, 489.

⁴⁶ E.g., Ps 16:7; 26:2; In their physical sense the pair occur together in Ugaritic: *yr. klyth. wlhb*, “he fires at his kidneys and his heart” (*KTU*³ 1.82:i:3). See G. del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 374.

בְּנֵי-אָס-חָכָם לְבָקָשׁ יִשְׁמַח לְפִי גַּם-אָנִי

וְתַּעֲלֹזָה כְּלִוָּתִי בְּדָבָר שְׁפָתִיךְ מִשְׁרִים

My son if your mind has got wisdom, surely my heart will rejoice. And my heart (lit., kidneys) will be gladdened when your lips speak right things.

אלֹהִים צָדִיק : This phrase is generally translated as “righteous God,” “God the righteous,” or the like.⁴⁷ In fact, Ps 7:10 is anastrophic and conveys the same notion as Jer 20:12: “יְהוָה צְבָאֹת בְּתִין צָדִיק רָאָה בְּלִוּזָת וְלֹבֶן” “YHWH Sebaoth examines the righteous, looking into the minds and heart.” Cf. Ps 11:5; 26:2. See further Jer 11:20; 17:10. As such, YHWH can determine the worshipper’s guilt or innocence. In Mesopotamia the sun god Shamash is called *ḥāit libba niši*, “examiner of the heart of humanity” (VAB 4, 254:12). The origin of the notion that gods examine our inmost parts is rooted in the divinatory procedure of extispicy. When Nabopolassar writes of Marduk, *ša libbiya ibrēma...iškunanni ana rēšēti*, “who examined what was in my heart and made me preeminent” (VAB 4:66, No. 4:12),⁴⁸ he uses the verb *barū*, “inspect, observe, examine,” which is regularly used in extispicy.⁴⁹ The ancients believed that the gods regularly provided indispensable information to humankind in, among other locales, the innards of animals. The Mesopotamian *bārū*, for example, was trained to read the innards and to decipher their information.⁵⁰ The expression *רָאָה בְּכָבֵד*, “examined the liver” (Ezek 21:26), shows that the Hebrews were aware of extispicy.⁵¹

⁴⁷ E.g., Targum, Peshitta, NJPS, NRSV, NEB.

⁴⁸ For other references, see CAD B, 116.

⁴⁹ See CAD B, 117.

⁵⁰ See conveniently A. R. George, Review of U. Koch-Westenholz, *Liver Omens*, BSOAS 65 (2002), 379-80.

⁵¹ The examination (*amāru* = Heb. *רָאָה*) of a lamb’s kidney (Akk. *kalītu* [UZU.BIR] = Heb. **כָּלִיה*) is reported in SAA XIII, 131: rev.12-19.

V. 11

מַגְנִי: I take as “my request” in light of Ugaritic \sqrt{mgn} , “beseech,” “entreat,”⁵²

and the Hebrew מַגְנִי אִישׁ, “beggar-man,” in Prov 6:11; 24:34.⁵³

מוֹשִׁיעַ: Given the juridical context of vv. 9-12, the *hiph'il* of \sqrt{ysh} has the legal sense attested in, e.g., 2 Sam 14:4-7; 2Kgs 6:26-29; Obad 21.

יְדַעַּד-לְבָבָךְ: The phrase recurs in Ps 11:2; 32:11(//); 36:11 (//); 64:11(//); 94:15; 97:11 (//). See also 2 Chr 29:34 (ישְׁרִי לְבָבָךְ).

V. 12

אֱלֹהִים שׁוֹפֵט צִדְיקָהוּ: My translation, which takes צִדְיקָהוּ as the object, follows Qimhi: “כְּמוֹ שְׁפַטְנִי יְיָ צִדְקִי וּפִרְוּשׁוֹ אֱלֹהִים שׁוֹפֵט הַצִּדְיקָה בְּצִדְקָתָהוּ” “This is in accord with ‘Judge me, Lord, according to my righteousness’ (v. 9). It means that God judges the righteous individual in line with his righteous behavior.” In addition, parsing שׁוֹפֵט as a verb provides a balance both with MT שׁוֹפֵט and emended שׁוֹפֵט.

***will not always damn:** LXX μή ὁργὴν ἐπάγων, “does not bring on wrath,” and Peshitta's *l' rgz* show that they construed אל as אל. We translate שׁוֹפֵט by “damn” on the basis of the parallelism \sqrt{ysh} // \sqrt{sh} in Num 23:7.

V. 13

חֶרְבּוֹ יְלַטּוֹשׁ: Cf. Ug. *hrb l̥ṣt*, “sharpened sword” (KTU³ 1.2: i:32). In Akkadian literature *kakkē šēlu*, “sharpening the weapons,” is a cliché describing preparation for hostilities. For references see CAD Š/2, 275, s.v. *šēlu*.

string his bow: For this interpretation of דָּרְךָ קָשְׁתָה see J. A. Emerton, “Treading the Bow,” *VT* 53 (2003), 465-86. As Emerton observes (p. 483), since the first

⁵² See *DLU*, 2.264.

⁵³ For the interpretation of these verses, see W. F. Albright, “Some Canaanite- Phoenician Sources of Hebrew Wisdom,” in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East Presented to Professor Harold Henry Rowley*, ed. M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas (VTSup 3; Leiden: Brill, 1955), 9-10; M. Held, “Rhetorical Questions in Ugaritic and Biblical Hebrew,” *ErIsr* 9 (1969), 75, nn. 36, 37.

part of the verse describes preparing the sword for battle, the second part should refer to preparing the bow for battle, namely stringing it.

V. 14

make his arrows fiery: For the use of fiery arrows, compare the boast of Assurnasirpal II: *ušaznin nablī mulmullī eli malkī ša naphar ālāni*, “I made fiery arrows rain on the rulers of all the cities” (RIMA 2/I, 225:22) See also Ps 120:4

V. 15

חַבְלֵל: For $\sqrt{\text{חַבְלֵל}}$ in the context of conception and birth, see Song 8:5. For the pairing of $\sqrt{\text{עַמְלֵל}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{עַזְלֵל}}$, see Avishur, *Word-Pairs*, 58. For $\sqrt{\text{הַרְיֵל}}$ paired with $\sqrt{\text{לְדִלְלֵל}}$ see *ibid.*, 577. For a similar sequence of the conception and birth of evil, see Isa 59:4; Job 15:35; and cf. further James 1:14-15.

V. 16

בָּשְׁחַת: “pitfall,” occurs in the Bible only in poetic texts. In Psalms it recurs in 9:16; 16:10; 30:10; 35:7; 49:10; 55:24; 94:13; 103:4. (Cf. Ps 107:20). Heb. ⁵⁴**שָׁחַת** is the etymological and semantic equivalent of Akk. *haštu*.⁵⁵ In light of v. 17, v. 16 should be understood in the optative sense of making a wish.

V. 17

For the parallelism of $\sqrt{\text{רָאשֵׁ}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{קָדֵם}}$, see Gen 49:26; Deut 33:16; Ps 68:22. The same parallelism is found in Ugaritic and Akkadian.⁵⁶

V. 18

⁵⁴ **שָׁחַת** appears as *sahātu* in Mari letter *ARM* 14:2. See *CAD* R, 54.

⁵⁵ See M. Held, “Pits and Pitfalls in Akkadian and Biblical Hebrew,” in *The Gaster Festchrift*, ed. David Marcus (*JANES* 5 [1973]), 173-90, for a comprehensive survey of terms for pits and pitfalls in the Semitic languages. Ugaritic *ḥšt* seems to be related. See *DLU*, 201; For a wide ranging study of the imagery of poetic justice in the Bible and elsewhere, see M. H. Lichtenstein, “The Poetry of Poetic Justice,” in *ibid.*, 255-65.

⁵⁶ See Avishur, *Word-Pairs*, 564-65.

The *hip'il* of $\sqrt{\text{נִיר}}$ and the *pi'el* of $\sqrt{\text{זָמַר}}$ occur regularly in parallelism, especially in Psalms. See, e.g., Ps 18:50; 30:5; 33:2; 57:10; 71:22; 92:2; 108:4; 138:1. There is a similar semantic parallelism *zamāru*⁵⁷// *nâdu*, “to hymn”// “to praise” in Akkadian prayer literature. For example, the opening of an Old Babylonian hymn to Ishtar reads:

[il]tam zumrâ rašubti ilātim, litta'id bēlit niši rabīt Igigi

Ištar zumra rašubti ilātim, litta'id bēlit išši rabīt Igigi

Hymn Ishtar, most awesome of goddesses!

Praised be the mistress of mankind, great one of the Igigi!

Hymn Ishtar, most awesome of goddesses!

Praised be the mistress of women, great one of the Igigi.⁵⁸

With זָמַר as object either direct (Ps 9:3; 61:9; 68:5) or indirect (Ps 92:2; 135:3) is attested only in Psalms. A recently published Ugaritic song begins: *šm 'ttrt qlyšr idmr šm lbi šm tkšd l [...]*. Pardee translates: “The name of ‘*Attartu* my voice will sing. / Let me sing the name of the lioness; by (her) name she is victorious over [...].”⁵⁹ Note the cognate expression *dmr šm*, “sing the name.”

YHWH-Elyon: This combination is found again only in Ps 47:3. However, הָוָה and עַלְיָן occur in parallelism in Ps 18:14 (= 2 Sam 22:14); 21:6; 92:2. On Elyon, see E. Elnes and P. Miller, “Elyon עַלְיָן,” *DDD*, 293-99.

As one can see, a comparative approach to the study of this psalm both contributes to its interpretation and clarifies its nuances and adds to what we

⁵⁷ Akkadian *zamāru* is also a noun meaning “hymn.” See the discussion in T. Oshima, *Babylonian Hymns to Marduk* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 33-37. Oshima observes (p. 36), that although moderns refer to *Enuma Elish* as an “epic,” the Babylonians referred to it as *zamāru*.

⁵⁸ F. Thureau-Dangin, “Une hymne à Ištar de la haute époque babylonienne,” *RA* 22 (1925), 172; Our translation follows M. Streck and N. Wasserman in *SEAL* 2.1, 43; cf. B. R. Foster, *Before the Muses* (Bethesda: CDL, 2005), 85.

⁵⁹ D. Pardee, “Preliminary Presentation of a New Ugaritic Song to ‘*Attartu* (RIH 98/02),” in *Ugarit at Seventy-Five*, ed. K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 27-39. For the translation of the two lines, see *ibid.*, 30. The text is now available as *KTU*³ 1.180. For a recent treatment, see T. Lewis, “*Attartu*’s Incantations and the Use of Divine Names as Weapons,” *JNES* 70 (2011), 207-27, esp. 226-27.

already know of the shared conventions and outlooks of ancient Near Eastern and biblical prayer literature.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Cf. S. D. Sperling, "Psalm 6 in Comparative Perspective," *JANES* 33 (2018), 187-202.