

Psalm 7

S. David Sperling

Hebrew Union College-JIR, New York

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 שְׁגִיזוֹן לַדָּוִד אֲשֶׁר-לַיהוָה עַל-דְּבַר-כּוֹשׁ בֶּן-יִמִּינִי:

2 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי בֶדֶךְ חֲסִיתִי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִכָּל-רָדְפִי וְהַצִּילֵנִי:

3 פְּזִיטְרִי בְּאֶרֶץ נַפְשִׁי פָּרַק וְאֵין מַצִּיל:

4 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אִם-עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת אִם-יֵשׁ-עוֹל בְּכַפִּי:

5 אִם-גָּמַלְתִּי שׁוֹלְמִי רַע וְאַחֲלָצָה צוּרֵי רִיקָם:

6 יִרְדֹּף אוֹיֵב | נַפְשִׁי וַיִּשָּׁג וַיִּרְמָס לְאַרְצֵי חַיִּי וּכְבוֹדִי | לְעַפְרָן יִשְׁכֵּן סֵלָה:

7 קוֹמָה יְהוָה | בְּאַפָּךְ הַנָּשָׂא בְּעִבְרוֹת צוּרֵי וְעוֹרָה אֵלֵי מִשְׁפַּט צוֹיֵת:

8 וַעֲדַת לְאֻמִּים תִּסּוּבְּךָ וְעָלְיָה לְמָרוֹם שׁוּבָה:

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 יִדְּיוֹן עַמִּים שְׁפִטְנֵי יְהוָה בְּצִדְקִי וּכְתַמִּי עָלַי:
- 10 יִגְמַרְנָא רַע | רְשָׁעִים וְתִכְוִנוּן צִדִּיק וּבְחֵן לְבָבוֹת וּכְלִיזוֹת אֱלֹהִים צִדִּיק:
- 11 מִגְנֵי עַל־אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
- 12 אֱלֹהִים שׁוֹפֵט צִדִּיק וְאֵל זֶעֶם בְּכָל־יוֹם:
- 13 אִם־לֹא יָשׁוּב חֲרָבוֹ יִלְטוּשׁ קִשְׁתּוֹ דָּרֹךְ וַיִּכְוִנְנָה:
- 14 וְלוֹ הֵכֵן כְּלִי־מוֹת חֲצִיו לְדֹלָקִים יַפְעֵל:
- 15 הִנֵּה יַחַבְל־אֹנֹן וְהָרָה עֲמָל וַיֵּלֶד שָׁקָר:
- 16 בּוֹר בָּרָה וַיַּחַפְּרֶהוּ וַיִּפֹּל בְּשַׁחַת יַפְעֵל:
- 17 יָשׁוּב עֲמָלוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְעַל קִדְקִדּוֹ חֲמָסוֹ יֵרֵד:
- 18 אוֹדָה יְהוָה בְּצִדְקוֹ וְאִזְמָרָה שֵׁם־יְהוָה עַלְיוֹן:

Psalm 7: Emended text

- 1 שְׁגִיזוֹן לְדָוִד אֲשֶׁר־שָׁר לַיהוָה עַל־דְּבָרֵי־כוֹשׁ בֶּן־יִמִּינִי:
- 2 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי בֶן חֲסִיתִי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִכָּל־רֹדְפֵי וְהַצִּילֵנִי:
- 3 פְּוִיטְרָף בְּאֲרִיָּה נַפְשִׁי וְאֵין פֶּחַק וּמַצִּיל:
- 4 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אִם־עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת אִם־יִשְׁעֹל בְּכַפִּי:
- 5 אִם־גָּמַלְתִּי שׁוֹלְמִי רַע וְאֶחֱלָצָה צֹרְרוֹ:
- 6 יִרְדֹּף אוֹיֵב | נַפְשִׁי וַיִּשָּׁג וַיִּרְמָס לָאָרֶץ חַיִּי
וּכְבוֹדִי רִיקָם לְעֶפֶר יִשְׁכֵּן וְסִלָּה:
- 7 קוֹמָה יְהוָה | בְּאַפִּי הִנָּשָׂא בְּעִבְרוֹת צוֹרְרֵי וְעוֹרָה אֵלֵי מִשְׁפָּט צוֹיֵת:
- 8 וְעֲדַת אֱלֹהִים תִּסּוּבְּךָ עָלֶיךָ לְמָרוֹם | שְׁבִית שְׁבִי:
- 9 יְהוָה יִדְּיוֹן עַמִּים
- שְׁפִטְנֵי יְהוָה³ בְּצִדְקִי וּכְתַמִּי עָלַי

10 יִגְמְרֶנָּה רָע | רָשָׁעִים וְתִכּוֹנֵן צְדִיק

וּבִתֵּן לַבּוֹת וּכְלִיּוֹת אֱלֹהִים צְדִיק:

11 מִגִּנִּי עַל־אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

12 אֱלֹהִים שׁוֹפֵט צְדִיק וְאֵל יִזְעַם בְּכָל־יוֹם:

13 אִם־לֹא יֵשׁוּב חֲרָבּוֹ יִלְטֹשׁ קִשְׁתּוֹ דָּרֹךְ וַיִּכּוֹנֶנֶה:

14 וְלוֹ הֵכֵן כָּל־מֹות חֲצִיו לְדֹלָקִים יַפְעַל:

15 הִנֵּה יַחְבֵּל־אֹן וְהִרָה עֵמֶל וַיֵּלֶד שָׁקָר:

16 בּוֹר בָּרָה וַיַּחְפְּרֶהּ וַיַּפֵּל בַּשַּׁחַת יַפְעַל:

17 יֵשׁוּב עֵמֶלּוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְעַל קִדְקֹדוֹ חִמָּסוֹ יֵרֵד:

18 אֹדָה יְהוָה בְּצִדְקוֹ וְאִזְמֶרָה שֵׁם־יְהוָה עֲלִיּוֹן:

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; אַחֲלָצָה of v. 5 corresponds to חֲלָצָה in 6:5; נַפְשִׁי of 7:3, 6
 corresponds to נַפְשִׁי of 6:5; צוֹרְרִי of 7:5⁷ and צוֹרְרִי of v. 7 correspond to צוֹרְרִי of
 6:8; בְּאַפְּךָ of 7:7 corresponds to בְּאַפְּךָ in 6:2. Internally, links are supplied by
 verbal repetition. Thus, נָצַל (vv. 1-2); שָׁפַט (vv. 3, 6); יֵשַׁע (vv. 2,11); צָרָה (vv. 5,
 7); רָעָה (vv. 5, 10); בּוֹן (vv. 10, 13, 14); צָדֵק (vv. 9, 10, 12). The measure for
 measure self-curse in vv. 4-6 is expressed by the repetition of רָדַף in vv. 2, 6.
 Measure for measure is also verbally expressed in the play between אֵם-לֹא יָשׁוּב

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 Kommentar über die Psalmen* (Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1883), 16-
 17.

⁷ Or as emended, צוֹרְרוּ.

(v. 13a) and יָשׁוּב עִמָּלִי בְּרֹאשׁוֹ (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: שָׁפַט (vv. 7, 9, 12); יָשַׁע (vv. 2, 11); צָדַק (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

שָׁגִיזוֹן: The only other occurrence of the term is the rubric to Hab 3:1: תִּפְלֶה שָׁגִיזוֹן. 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, שָׁגִיזוֹן is a musical notation. The Syro-Hexaplar, following Greek Πσαλμὸς, translates *mzmrw'*, which is its regular translation of Heb. מְזֻמֹּר. שָׁגִיזוֹן 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 *šegû*, *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. גִּמְטְרִיא, a method of midrash that plays on the numerical values of Hebrew words. Though derived from Greek γεωμετρία, גִּמְטְרִיא 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 = כּוּשִׁי.) Given the attribution of the psalm to David and the similarity of Kush (כּוּשִׁי) 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 Qatan* 16b, Targum, Rashi, and Qimhi. In contrast, Ibn Ezra refers to that identification as רחוק, “distant,” i.e., unlikely.

V. 2

הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִכָּל-רִדְפֵי וְהַצִּילֵנִי: 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 פָּרַק 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 פָּרַק 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. M. 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: וְהָיָה שְׂאֵרִית יַעֲקֹב בְּגוֹיִם בְּקֶרֶב עַמִּים רַבִּים כְּאַרְיֵה בְּבִהְמוֹת יַעַר כְּכַפִּיר בְּעֵדְרֵי צֶאֱן אֲשֶׁר אִם עֶבֶר וְרֵמֶס וְטָרֵף וְאֵין מַצִּיל “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

אֶם-יִשְׁעוּל בְּכַפִּי : Ginsberg long ago compared עוּל 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 שוּלְמִי 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. פָּרַק “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 ויפרקנו מצרינו in Ps 136:24 EBH (Early Biblical Hebrew) would have had ויצילנו (e.g., Judg 8:34), while Lam 5:8 פָּרַק מִידֵּם would have had מַצִּיל (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: לִמְעַן לֹא יִשְׁלַחוּ הַצַּדִּיקִים בְּעוֹלָתָהּ: יְדִיהֶם, “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 בשולמיו.

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

V. 6

יִרְדֹּף: On this anomalous vocalization see Ḥakham's commentary.²⁷

יִרְדֹּף אוֹיֵב | נִפְשִׁי: The only other example of רִדָּף נִפֵּשׁ is Ps 143:3.

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

וּכְבוֹדִי: my body; so, correctly, NJPS.²⁸ See Ps 57:9, where עוֹרָה כְּבוֹדִי must be translated, "Arise O my body." This is the sense of the term in Moses's request of God: הֲרַאנִי נָא אֶת כְּבוֹדְךָ, "Please show me your body" (Exod 33:18).²⁹

*וּכְבוֹדִי רִיקָם לְעֶפֶר יִשְׁכֵּן: רִיקָם makes no sense in v. 5, which is why Tigay translated it by three dots.³⁰ Although some translators perpetuate the mistaken notion that רִיקָם means "without cause" (i.e., חֵנֶם = רִיקָם),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) רִיקָם 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 $\sqrt{\text{slm}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{šlm}}$ 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. Ḥakham, *Psalms* (2 vols.; Da'at Miqra; Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 2003), 1.34.

²⁸ Ibn Ezra attributes the interpretation of כְּבוֹדִי 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; Ḥakham, *Psalms*, 33; Basson, *Metaphors*, 63; R. Alter, *The Book of Psalms* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 18; Y. Berger, "The David-Benjaminite 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 חֵנֶם "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 עברות, “anger,” “fury,” “rage,” an archaic singular on the pattern of אַשְׁפַּת (Ps 113:7) and חִבְמוֹת (Prov 1:20; 9:1). Biblical Hebrew tends to use physical language to describe emotional states.³⁴ Thus אף, paired here with עברה, as it often is (Gen 49:7; Isa 14:6; Hos 13:11; Amos 1:11; Hab 3:8), is elliptical for חרוֹן אף, literally, “burning of nose,” also paired with עברה (e.g., Isa 13:9; Ps 78:49). The physical sense holds for עברה 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 עבר√, “become pregnant.”³⁵ Not only are אף and עברה a regular parallelism but so are נשא√ and קום√ (Num 23:24; Ps 10:12). That parallelism aids in deciphering our verse: *קום...באף is parallel to הנשא בעברות. Accordingly, in both stichs the anger in question is that of YHWH. The preposition *beth* of בעברות also serves צוררי.

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

Arise O YHWH: The verb קום 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).

אֵלֵי: With LXX ὁ Θεός μου and Vulgate *Deus meus*, read אֵלֵי. 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. עובר; *DJBA*, 841; *DJPA*, 442.

call on the sleeping Hebrew divinity to awaken,³⁶ cf. Ps 44:24: עורה

למה תישן אדני, “Awake; why do you sleep O Lord?” See also 1 Kgs 18:27.

V. 8

וְעֵדֶת לְאֻמִּים תְּסֻבְּבֶנָּה וְעָלֶיהָ לְמָרוֹם שׁוּבָה: 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 עליה for עליה.) 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 שׁוּבָה to some form of יִשְׁבֹּךְ.³⁷ Our emendation of וְעֵדֶת לְאֻמִּים to וְעֵדֶת אֱלֹהִים 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 עֵדֶת אֱלֹהִים. Proper judgment is the theme of both Psalm 7 and Psalm 82, which makes the presence of the divine assembly appropriate here.

עָלֶיהָ לְמָרוֹם | שְׁבִיתָ 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 עָלֶיהָ לְמָרוֹם of MT is a corruption of שְׁבִיתָ 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), xlii.

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: *ina 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 כְּצַדִּיקִי וְכִתְמִי: my blameless righteousness—a hendiadys.

עֲלִי: This epithet of uncertain vocalization meaning “most high” was originally applied to Baal in Ugaritic.⁴³ The pairing of $\sqrt{\text{dyn}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{tpṭ}}$ mirrors Ugaritic $\sqrt{\text{dyn}} // \sqrt{\text{tpṭ}}$.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 לב (ב), “heart,” refer to it as the seat of reason.⁴⁵ This is true as well of כליות, 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 כליות. 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. wlbh*, “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.

בְּנִי־אֱמַחֲכֶם לִבִּי יִשְׂמַח לְבִי גִם־אֲנִי

וְתַעֲלֶזְנָה כְּלִי־יָדִי בְּדִבְרֵי שְׁפָתַיִךְ מִיִּשְׁרָיִם

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.

אֱלֹהִים צַדִּיק : 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: וַיְהוָה צָבָאוֹת בָּתֵּן צִדִּיק רְאָה כְּלִיֹּת וְלֵב: “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 *hāiṭ libba nišī*, “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 *barû*, “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 *bārû*, for example, was trained to read the innards and to decipher their information.⁵⁰ The expression רָאָה בִּכְבֵּד, “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. כְּלִי*) is reported in *SAA* XIII, 131: rev.12-19.

V. 11

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

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

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

יִשְׂרֵי־לֵב: The phrase recurs in Ps 11:2; 32:11(// צדיקים); 36:11 (// ידעיד); 64:11(// צדיק); 94:15; 97:11 (// צדיק). See also 2 Chr 29:34 (ישרי לֵבב).

V. 12

אלהים שופט צדיק: My translation, which takes צדיק as the object, follows Qimhi:

“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 שופט as a verb provides a balance both with MT זעם and emended יזעם.

***will not always damn:** LXX $\mu\eta\ \acute{o}\rho\gamma\epsilon\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\alpha}\gamma\omega\varsigma$, “does not bring on wrath,” and Peshitta’s *l’ rgz* show that they construed אל as אֵל. We translate \sqrt{zcm} by “damn” on the basis of the parallelism \sqrt{zcm} // \sqrt{ar} in Num 23:7.

V. 13

חֲרַבּוֹ יִלְטֹשׁ: Cf. Ug. *hrb ltšt*, “sharpened sword” (*KTU*³ 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 קשת דרך 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,” *Erlsr* 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: *uṣaznin nablī mulmullī eli malkī ša napḥar 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

יִחְבֹּל: For חָבַל in the context of conception and birth, see Song 8:5. For the pairing of עָמַל and אָוֶן, see Avishur, *Word-Pairs*, 58. For הָרִי paired with יָלַד 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

בְּשַׁחַת, “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. ⁵⁴שַׁחַת is the etymological and semantic equivalent of Akk. *ḥaštu*.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 רָאָשׁ and קִדְקִד, see Gen 49:26; Deut 33:16; Ps 68:22. The same parallelism is found in Ugaritic and Akkadian.⁵⁶

V. 18

⁵⁴ שַׁחַת appears as *saḥātu* 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 Festshcrift*, 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 $\sqrt{\text{יד}}'$ and the *pi'el* of $\sqrt{\text{זמר}}$ 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// *nādu*, “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 nišī rabīt Igigi

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

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

$\sqrt{\text{זמר}}$ with $\sqrt{\text{שם}}$ 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 ql yšr 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, יהוה and עליון occur in parallelism in Ps 18:14 (= 2 Sam 22:14); 21:6; 92:2. On Elyon, see E. Elnes and P. Miller, “Elyon עליון,” *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, “Atthartu'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.