

# A Psalm for the Sabbath (92:1-16)

## Bibliography

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## Translation

1	A psalm <sup>a</sup> : a song for the Sabbath Day.	
2	It is good to give thanks to Yahweh, <sup>a</sup>	(3+3)
3	to praise your name, O Most High, <sup>b</sup>	(3+2)
4	to declare your loyal-love <sup>a</sup> at dawn, <sup>b</sup>	(3+3)
5	and your faithfulness at night, <sup>c</sup>	
6	with zither <sup>a</sup> and lute, <sup>b</sup>	
7	with a song <sup>c</sup> on the harp.	
8	For you have made me glad by your work, O Yahweh, <sup>a</sup>	(4+3)
9	because of your handiwork I sing out!	
10	How great are your works, O Yahweh,	(3+3)
11	how <sup>a</sup> profound <sup>b</sup> are your designs! <sup>c</sup>	
12	(Only) a dunderhead <sup>a</sup> would not know (this), <sup>b</sup>	(3+3)
13	and (only) a fool would not understand it.	
14	When the wicked thrive, they are like grass <sup>a</sup> —	(3+3+2)
15	and when all the evildoers blossom out, <sup>b</sup>	
16	it is to be forever destroyed.	
17	But you are the One-who-is-on-High, <sup>a</sup>	(2+2)
18	forever, O Yahweh. <sup>b</sup>	
19	For lo, your enemies, O Yahweh, <sup>a</sup>	(3+3+3)
20	for lo, your enemies will perish, <sup>b</sup>	
21	all the evildoers will scatter. <sup>b</sup>	
22	As if I were a wild ox, you have raised my horn;	(3+3)
23	which I have rubbed <sup>a</sup> with fresh oil. <sup>b</sup>	
24	My eyes have gazed (in triumph) <sup>a</sup> at my attackers; <sup>b</sup>	(3+3+2)
25	when evil foes rose against me,	
26	my ears heard (them scatter). <sup>c</sup>	
27	The righteous will thrive like a date-palm;	(3+3)
28	grow like a cedar in Lebanon.	
29	Planted <sup>a</sup> in the house of Yahweh,	(3+3)
30	they will flourish <sup>b</sup> in the courts <sup>c</sup> of our God.	
31	They will still bear fruit <sup>a</sup> in old age;	(3+3)
32	they will (still) be green and full of sap, <sup>b</sup>	
33	declaring <sup>a</sup> that Yahweh is upright <sup>b</sup> —	(3+3)
34	my Rock, in whom there is no wrong-doing. <sup>c</sup>	

## Notes

- 1.a. See n. 51:1.a.
- 2.a. Dahood seeks to avoid having Yahweh addressed in the 3rd pers. in the first colon and directly in the second by parsing the ל as vocative and rendering "O Yahweh." However, a shift from 3rd pers. to direct address occasionally occurs in Hebrew poetry (e.g., see 66:8-10; 93:1-2, 4-5; 94:12-14).
- 2.b. The divine name עליון suggests the idea of "ascend," and connotes "the Highest" (cf. the adjective in 2 Kgs 15:35; Isa 7:3; 36:2). The name indicates the exalted status and power of God (e.g., Pss 47:2, 6-7; 83:19; 82:6; 91:1, 9; 97:9). It is an epithet of kingship (H.-J. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 28; T. N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names*, tr. F. H. Cryer [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988] 122).
- 3.a. See n. 51:3.a.
- 3.b. Lit., "in the morning."
- 3.c. Lit., "in the nights." Briggs (II, 286) takes the plural as intensive and understands as "in dark night," citing 134:1; Cant 3:1, 8. See L. C. Allen on Ps 134:1, n. 1.c. The simple plural "nights" or "night hours" (Dahood has "watches of the night") may be sufficient (see 16:7; though cf. Briggs, I, 121; Craigie, 154-55).
- 4.a. Lit., "on ten," apparently referring to a multiple stringed musical instrument; perhaps, something like the zither (זַב).  
4.b. The word נבל refers to a stringed musical instrument, usually appearing with כנור ("harp") and translated as "psaltery" or "viol" in KJV. See n. 57:9.b. LXX allows only one instrument in 3a: "on a psaltery of ten strings," a judgment followed in some translations (NEB, NJV, NIV; note 33:2; 144:9).
- 4.c. The verbal root דגדג refers to "uttering/speaking/musing." In the sense of "murmur/meditate," see Pss 1:2; 63:7; 77:13; 143:5. For the noun דגדג, which appears here, see Ps 19:15 and, in a negative sense, Lam 3:62. It is thought to refer to the sound of music produced by a harp in 92:4; cf. 9:17 (see Craigie, 116, n. 17b). It may, however, refer to soft or meditative singing or chanting to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument. Possibly, "strumming."
- 5.a. The extension of the psalm's dominant metrical pattern of 3+3 to 4+3 by the word "Yahweh" has led to suggestions for its omission (e.g., Briggs, Gunkel, Kraus). However, v 9 would also be too long on the basis of this judgment. See n. 9.b. below.  
6.a. The interjection in 6a does double duty.  
6.b. Lit. "exceedingly deep." On the usage of עמק, see A. A. Wieder, *JBL* 84 (1965) 162-63. In some contexts, עמק may carry the Ugaritic idea of 'mq, "strength/violence." The parallel with גדול ("great") may indicate that the meaning here is "strong/powerful."  
6.c. Or, "thoughts," as traditionally translated. If creation is the subject in the verse, "designs" seems better.  
7.a. Or, "brutish person"; see n. 94:8.a.  
7.b. The pronoun in 7b does double duty.  
8.a. See Job 27:14 for a similar construction (R. Gordis, *The Book of Job* [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978] 294). The last two words (כמו עשב) constitute an apodosis. Note the *passeeq* after בפרח רשעים.
- 8.b. The infinitive with a preposition followed by a consecutive imperfect usually denotes past tense (with כ, see Lev 16:1; 1 Kgs 18:18; Isa 38:9; Ezek 16:36; Ps 105:12-13; Job 38:7-8; with other prepositions, see Gen 24:30; 39:18; Josh 8:24; Jer 9:12-13). N. H. Sarna (*JBL* 81 [1962] 159-60) argues that past tense should be read in v 8 ("a particular event that has taken place in the past"). However, in the case of v 8 the tense is determined by the infinitives in 8a and 8c; i.e., it is an indefinite "whenever." The colon in 8b is parenthetical and adds to the description in 8a. For similar use of the consecutive imperfect, see Ps 29:5, 9; 50:16; 90:3 (note D. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung in den Psalmen* [Bonn: Bouvier, 1960] 41). Perhaps v 8 should be considered a variant type of the expanded colon, which is found in the tricolon in v 10. S. E. Loewenstamm ("The Expanded Colon in Ugaritic and Biblical Verse," *JSS* 14 [1969] 176-96; idem, "The Expanded Colon, Reconsidered," *UF* 7 (1975) 261-64) notes the variations and free development of ancient patterns in expanded colons (verses in which the sentence is interrupted and then expanded and completed in a second and/or third colon) in biblical verses. See also, Y. Avishur, "Addenda to the Expanded Colon in Ugaritic and Biblical Verse," *UF* 4 (1972) 170. Neither Loewenstamm or Avishur include 92:8, but it seems probable that it belongs to this category. The sentence in 8a is interrupted by 8c. For a similar verse structurally, see Ps 29:9, where the consecutive imperfect also appears. For the consecutive

imperfect after an infinitive, see Ps 50:16. An alternative translation would be: "When the wicked flourish like grass, / then all the evildoers blossom forth / to be forever destroyed."

9.a. Reading מרומ as a divine epithet, as in 56:3. Otherwise, the translation is "you are (on) high," as traditionally. LXX has ὑψιστος, "highest one"; cf. Isa 24:4, 21. See Dahood, II, 337. מן has "whereas you are supreme forever." Note the use of מרומ in 93:4.

9.b. As in n. 5.a., "Yahweh" is sometimes omitted. However, its retention in both places forms a frame for vv 5-9 and it should not be omitted.

10.a. V 10 is a tricolon with the pattern A+B+C/A+B+D/E+F+G (Dahood, II, 337), which has Ugaritic parallels, as in "Behold, thine enemies, O Baal, / Behold, thine enemies shalt thou crush, / Behold, thou shalt crush thy foes!" (though the pattern here is A+B+C/A+B+D/A+D+E). See, e.g., Kidner, II, 336, n. 1.; see also I, 2, n. 1. Cf. Exod 15:6, 11, 16 and several verses in Judg 5:2-31. See D. N. Freedman, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 188-89. As noted in 8.b. above, v 10 is an example of the use of the expanded colon in biblical verse, and any effort to reduce the verse to a bicolon (as in LXXB) should be eschewed (Loewenstamm, JSS 14 [1969] 193). The subsequent colons after the interruption of the sentence are expressive as well as informative. For examples of the use of expanded colons, see Pss 29:1-2, 5, 8; 67:4, 6; 77:17; 93:3; Judg 5:12; Hab 3:8; Cant 4:8.

10.b. The verbs אבד ("perish") and פדר ("divide/separate") are used in parallel in Job 4:11, on which see E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, tr. H. Knight (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1926, 1967), 48.

11.a. The word בלתי is frequently taken as a simple perfect 1 c.s. from בלל, "mingle/mix," and given the meaning, "I am anointed" (BDB, 117), a meaning not found elsewhere in the usage of the verb, which occurs mostly in the simple passive participial form. The word could be a piel inf. const. (with 1 c.s. suffix) from בלה, "become old/worn out/used up," thus, "my being used to the full/completely." This appears to be the basis for LXX's "But my horn shall be exalted . . . and my old age with rich mercy" (perhaps assuming simple inf. const., בלתי)—with the verb in 11a doing double duty. "You have exalted (raised up) . . . (exalted) my old age (my worn-outness) with fresh/luxuriant oil." Since a passive meaning of the perfect בלל is not found, translators frequently follow Syriac and Targum and read בלתי, "and you have anointed me"—assuming that בלל can mean "anoint." רסו has "thou has poured over me fresh oil"; the meaning "poured" may receive some support from the use of בלל in Exod 29:2. T. Booij (VT 38 [1988] 210-13) argues that there is no convincing interpretation of בלתי and proposes to assume the verb בלג, which means to "gleam/smile/look cheerful" (BDB, 114), appearing only in hiphil. Booij suggests that the verb in v 11 (an assumed imperfect for MT's hiphil, with LXX and Jerome) like that of the wild ox, I shine with fresh oil." S. E. Loewenstamm (UF 10 [1978] 211-13) has proposed that בלתי be read as "like a fresh oil-tree," arguing that שמן is equivalent to עץ ("oil-tree"), noting that זית ("olive") is used for "olive-tree(s)," and occasionally more explicitly with עץ (Hag 2:19), and rather frequently with שמן ("oil"; e.g., Deut 8:8; Isa 41:19 and Ps 52:10: באי ביתי אלהים; "I am like a fresh (green) olive (tree) in the house of God." He follows Symmachus in reading כשמן בלתי and the infinitive reading of בלתי (from בלה) to get: "My old age is like a fresh olive tree." Buttenwieser (842, n. 11) takes בלתי as "my old body" and reads רענן as the predicate ("fresh") with בלתי: "my old body will be freshened as if [כשמן] anointed with oil." The translation above assumes that the object of the verbal action in 11b is the "my horn" in 11a, as in the proposal of D. G. Pardee (UF 8 [1976], 252; idem, UF 7 [1975], 358): "You have raised my horn like that of a wild bull; I have smeared it (or myself) with fresh oil." The anointing of a horn is mentioned in an interesting way in a Ugaritic passage (UM 76.22, 23; IV AB 2.22, 23; CTA 10.2.21-23):

qrn dbātk btl't nt	Your powerful horn, girl Anat,
qrn dbātk b'l ymšh	your powerful horns will Baal anoint,
b'l ymšh hm b'p	Baal will anoint them in flight.

(See D. Pardee, "The Preposition in Ugaritic," UF 8 [1976] 252; G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, OT Studies 3 [Edinburgh: Clark, 1956] 116; E. Kutsch, *Salbung als Rechtsakt*, BZAW 87 [1963] 8; S. E. Loewenstamm, UF 10 [1978] 111, for translations.) The word dbātk is translated as "prowess" by Driver and as "strength" by C. H. Gordon (*Ugaritic Literature* [Rome: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1949] 50; also Kutsch, 8). In the Baal text, Anat is to be prepared for a fight by anointing her horns. The Ugaritic verb is mšh, which seems to correspond to the Heb. משח, commonly understood as "anoint." However, Kutsch (7-9) argues that כשח is basically "to make fat/make greasy/rub oil into," and thus

only in an extended sense "to anoint." The references to rubbing shields with oil in 2 Sam 1:21 (reading with qere) and Isa 21:5 are especially interesting. Leather shields had to be rubbed with oil to make them ready for use. In the case of Saul's shield in 2 Sam 1:21, it lay soiled on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, unrubbed with oil, and not ready for action (see the discussion of P. K. McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel*, AB 9 [1984] 75, 76). The parallel usage of בלל with כשח in such texts as Exod 29:2; Lev 2:4; 7:12; and Num 6:15 indicates that it can have the meaning of "make fat (with oil)/mix (oil) with," and then "to smear/rub on/anoint" (Kutsch, 10-11). With a small emendation of בלתי to בלתי, the colon in 11b would run in smooth parallelism with 11a: "You have rubbed/anointed it (my horn) with fresh oil." However, I have retained MT despite the strange meaning. See *Comment*.

11.b. For שמן רענן as "fresh, oil," see D. W. Thomas, "Some Observations on the Hebrew Word רענן" in *Hebraische Wortforschung*, FS Walter Baumgartner, VTSup 16 (1967) 387-97; Booij, 213, n. 1. Most contexts use the word with reference to trees (e.g., Deut 12:2; 1 Kgs 14:23; Job 15:32; Jer 11:16; Pss 37:35; 52:10) and the meaning is that of "thick with leaves, luxuriant, dense, spreading" (Thomas, 396); figuratively, "flourishing/thriving." The meaning "green" is a secondary meaning derived from the thick foliage of a thriving tree. The association of רענן with (olive) oil indicates that it is a fresh, high-quality oil (greenish-white in color); possibly "thick" or "rich" oil. Thomas, 396, notes Briggs, II, 285, who explains the language of 11b as "anointed so richly with oil by Yahweh that he will be saturated with it as are cakes when prepared for sacrifice," and who translates as "thou dost enrich me with fresh oil."

12.a. The verb ראה (hiphil of רבט, "look/gaze at") is used in the sense of "gaze at/over enemies in triumph" or "look in fulfillment of desire" or "gloating over." It is used several times with ראה ("see") in parallel, and the usage in v 12 corresponds to the usage of ראה in Pss 22:18; 37:34; 54:9b; 59:11; 112:8; cf. 52:8.

12.b. MT בשורי is a noun (masc. pl.) with a 1 c. s. suffix, plus a preposition, apparently from שור, II, "behold/regard"; thus, "my watchers." The emendation to בשורי (see BHS) is widely adopted (e.g., Kraus, II, 810). שורי is perhaps a polel participle from שור (with mem omitted; see BDB, 1004; note GKC 52s, cf. KB, 958). For usage of שורי, see 5:9; 27:11; 54:17; 56:3; 59:11 (see n. 56:3.a.). The translation in some cases may be "slanderers" rather than "watchers" (Dahood has "defamers," see II, 25). The context in Ps 92 suggests, however, that the meaning is "those who watch insidiously/those who lie in ambush"; cf. מארב in 59:4 (note 59:11); 10:8, 9; Lam 3:10; Judg 9:25; etc.—though the language of "rising up against" could easily refer to verbal or legal attacks. "My attackers" in v 12 corresponds to "your enemies" (אויבך) in v 10.

12.c. The subject of the hearing is not specified and various suggestions to fill the gap have been made: the plots of the evil foes, their fall/downfall, cries of terror. The context suggests a military expression such as "rout" (as in רוי), which would convey the noisy retreat of foes in disorder and defeat. A Qumran text has שמעה, simple perfect, for MT's plural imperfect (see BHS), which strengthens the case for reading the imperfect in 12b as past tense (LXX reads as future).

14.a. The verb שחל carries the meaning of "transplanted"; see Ps 1:3; Ezek 17:22, 23; 19:10, 12-13 (Dahood, I, 3-4).

14.b. Perhaps the verb should be read as simple imperfect, with 4QPs<sup>b</sup> (BHS), rather than MT's hiphil. Dahood (II, 338), however, suggests an elative hiphil with the denotation of "richly flourish" (on the elative function of hiphil, see E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB 1, 273). The reader of Ps 92 will note that the verb פרח ("sprout/bud/send out shoots") in vv 8 and 13 is translated as "thrive." Perhaps, "flourish" is elative enough for the hiphil in v 14.

14.c. "House" (temple) is understood. The addition of בית (see BHS) is unnecessary and makes the colon too long.

15.a. Usually taken as simple imperfect from נוט, "bear fruit." Also in 62:11; Prov 10:31. Dahood (II, 336) translates v 15a as "still full of sap in old age," assuming that נוט has the basic sense of "flowing" (see his note on 62:11).

15.b. Lit., "fat ones (רעניים) and thriving fresh ones (רעניים) they will be." For רענן, see v 11.c. above.

16.a. Reading לרנן as a circumstantial infinitive construct (see n. 61:9.b.; GKC 1140).

16.b. For this epithet of Yahweh see Deut 32:4, 18, 30, 31; 1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:3, 32, 47 (Pss 18:3, 32, 47); 2 Sam 23:3; Pss 19:15; 28:1; 31:3; 62:3; 78:35; 144:1; Isa 30:29; 44:8; Hab 1:12; cf. Deut 32:37; Pss 62:3; 73:26; 89:27; 95:1.

16.c. The *kethiv* עולתה is defective for the fuller form עולתה *qere*. The meaning of עולתה is usually given as "unrighteousness/evil/injustice/wrongdoing." The word suggests the idea of deviation (a contrast to ישר—"to go straight/level"), of coming up short/lacking, or failure. See 2 Chr 19:7; Zeph 3:5. The negative construction points to the positive dependability of God.

In terms of a general category, Ps 92 belongs to the genre of the thanksgiving psalms, especially in some verses. Vv 1-4 are more of a testimony and an encouragement for others to praise God, which is typical of the thanksgiving psalms, than a hymnic summons to praise. The recall of gracious action on the part of God toward the speaker in vv 5, 11-12 is an expected element in individual thanksgivings. On the other hand, vv 6, 9-10 are composed of descriptive praise of God, more in keeping with a hymn. Vv 7-8, 13-16 have the characteristics of wisdom poetry, setting forth the contrast between the fool (v 7) and the wicked (v 8) with the righteous (vv 13-16). H.-J. Kraus (*Psalms 1-59*, 51) remarks on "the confluence of several elements of form . . . clearly observable in Psalm 92" (also *Psalmen*, II, 810). He notes that individual songs of thanksgiving may take on didactic characteristics and be "shaped by wisdom poetry in both form and content (cf., e.g., Psalm 34)" (*Psalms 1-59*, 59). Thus Ps 92 is an individual psalm of thanksgiving (note the  $\text{לְהַלְלוֹת}$ -formula in v 2, "to give thankful praise to Yahweh"); Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 51.

The literary structure of the psalm is marked by the use of short double colons (or else a single colon) in v 9 to express the exaltation of Yahweh. Vv 1-4 provide an introductory section of praise for the goodness of the loyal-love ( $\text{חֶסֶד}$ ) of Yahweh. The position of v 9 in the center of the psalm suggests a balanced structure and a chiasmic arrangement is possible as follows:

- A vv 1-4
- B vv 5-7
- C v 8
- D v 9
- C' v 10
- B' vv 11-12
- A' vv 13-16

(suggested by R. M. Davidson, "The Sabbatic Chiasmic Structure of Psalm 92," paper delivered at SBL meeting, Chicago, IL, Nov. 18, 1988). The rejoicing in the work of Yahweh in vv 5-7 is continued in vv 11-12. The tricolon in v 10 matches the tricolon in v 8. The confident testimony regarding the future of the righteous in vv 13-16 complements the testimony of praise in vv 1-4. Also, some linguistic features assist in holding the psalm together. Note the use of Yahweh seven times in the psalm (vv 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, and 16)—perhaps a happy coincidence for a sabbath psalm? (See N. H. Sarna, *JBL* 81 [1962] 167-68.) The use of Yahweh in a four-part colon in 5a relates it to the four-part unit which constitutes v 9 and provides a literary frame for vv 5-9, which is enhanced by the use of Yahweh in v 6 (in the dominant 3 + 3 structure). The contrast between the depth of Yahweh's "designs/thoughts" in v 6 with this high status in v 9 adds further complementation, and, indeed, produces a merismic effect: how great is Yahweh from the depths to the heights; i.e., everywhere. The double colon in v 9 seems to find its parallel in 16b, possibly forming a verse which has been split for the insertion of the material in vv 10-16a. (The pattern is possibly that of an A X B insertion; see L. C. Allen, "Rhetorical Criticism in Psalm 69," *JBL* 105 [1986] 583, and *Form/Structure/Setting* of Ps 69). Also, v 16a could rather easily form a tricolon with v 15.

The title of Ps 92 in MT designates it for use on the sabbath day, the only psalm with this rubric in the Hebrew texts. In the Greek texts, however, seven psalms are associated with the sabbath week: 24; 48; 82; 94; 81; 93; 92—in this order for each of the days. The liturgical selection was designed to have a psalm to accompany the libations of wine after the daily *tamid* offering (see Sarna, 155; Mishnah, *Tamid* 7:4; S. Mowinckel, *PIW*, I, 2-3). The Greek psalter has sabbatic superscriptions for five of the seven psalms: 24; 48; 94; 93; 92; possibly also originally for 81; 82 (Sarna, 155, n. 3). The fact that only Ps 92 is specified for the sabbath in MT probably indicates that its selection for this liturgical use was earlier than that of the other six, being used with the *tamid* offering on sabbaths, or other sabbath worship, in the post-exilic temple in Jerusalem (Sarna, 156). Of course, the psalm probably had an earlier history unrelated to sabbath worship; most likely in thanksgiving services during festival times to commemorate the mighty works of Yahweh (J. H. Eaton, 225).

An analysis in terms of the literary characteristics applicable to the dating of Hebrew poetry, as spelled out in *Form/Structure/Setting* of Ps 93, indicates that Ps 92 qualifies for a moderately early dating; e.g., frequency of Yahweh as a name for God (with Elyon, but no Elohim), no prose particles, and the use of tricolons. The psalm is rather liberally supplied with conjunctions, however, which indicates that it is not of a very early date. In general, it probably originated during the monarchical period of pre-exilic Israelite history.

The speaker in the psalm is not identified beyond the generalized descriptions of one who has been delivered from the peril of evil foes by the gracious intervention of Yahweh. The assumption that the speaker should be given a primary identification as a royal figure lies close at hand, especially for commentators with a propensity for relating psalms to kingship. Thus, Dahood (II, 336) says that Ps 92 is "a royal song of thanksgiving to be classified with Ps. XVIII." J. H. Eaton (*Kingship*, 58-59) places Ps 92 among the "Psalms with clearly royal content" and argues that the psalmist is a king because of the way his victory (vv 11-12) is joined to Yahweh in triumph (vv 9-10): "God's foes and the king's are one." Further, "the figure of the horn is obviously appropriate of royal triumph" (citing 75:11; 89:25; 132:17; 1 Sam 2:10). He takes the term "righteous one" (v 13) as a reference to a king (see 151; 2 Sam 23:3; Zech 9:9; Ps 18:21; cf. Ps 101:2-4; G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, tr. D. M. G. Stalker [New York: Harper, 1962] I, 322), who is compared to strong and flourishing trees (see Judg 9:8-16; Ezek 17:22-24). The plural reference in v 14 ("our God") denotes the "participation of the community in the triumph of God and the king" (59); the royal vitality was a major communal interest. "Our God" in v 14 is matched by "my rock" in 16a, which Eaton argues refers to the royal covenant (cf. 28:1; 18:3, 47; 62:2, 7; 144:1).

The appropriateness of the language of Ps 92 for a king should not be doubted. It may very well have been composed with a king in mind; indeed, even for the victory celebration of some king. On the other hand, the shift of royal language to common worshipers in later usage of the psalms is beyond dispute. Any attempt to confine a psalm like this to royal situations should be rejected. Perhaps the speaker is a king, but any reader may fuse his or her identity with that of the speaker.

*An affirmation of thanksgiving to Yahweh* (92:2-4). The speaker in these verses sets forth the desirability of praising Yahweh for his loyal-love and faithfulness. Instrumental music (v 4) enhances the aesthetic satisfaction and pleasure of the praise (Kraus, II, 811). For the meaning of "loyal-love" (חסד), see note 51:3.b., and for "faithfulness" (אמונה), see 88:12. V 3 is sometimes interpreted as a reference to singing (or chanting) at the times of the daily burnt offering at the temple (the *tamid*), i.e., in the early morning and late afternoons (see N. M. Sarna, "The Psalm Superscriptions and the Guilds," in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History*, ed. S. Stein and R. Loewe [London: Institute of Jewish Studies, University of Alabama Press, 1979] 291; cf. 2 Chr. 29:20, 27; 1 Chr 16:40-42; 23:30-31; Sir 50:11-19). The absence of ערב ("evening") is, however, unexpected (note ערב in 1 Chr 16:40; 23:20; 2 Chr 2:3; 13:11; 31:3; Ps 141:2). The night is associated with such activities as watching for intruders or other dangers (Neh. 4:3 [9], 16 [22]; cf. Ps 90:4), visions (Job 35:10; Ps 77:7; cf. Ps 149:5-6), remembering the name of Yahweh (Ps 119:62), and the servants of Yahweh standing in the temple (Ps 134:1). Therefore it is unlikely that the primary reference in v 3 is to the *tamid*, and it is probable that "morning/dawn" and "night" form a merism which means to declare Yahweh's loyal-love continually, day and night. It may be, however, that in later usage, the verse was understood with reference to the *tamid*.

*The great works of Yahweh* (92:5-7). The speaker has been made glad by the experience of Yahweh's works. The singular "work" in v 5a could refer to specific help received by the speaker, but the parallels in 5b ("works of your hands") and 6a indicate that the statement is a general one. It is unlikely that two different divine activities are intended (as in Barnes, II, 448). The "works" of the hands of God may apply to creation (see Pss 19:2; 102:26) and to other actions as well (Ps 28:3, Isa 5:12). If read with the sabbath in mind, the expressions should most probably be understood in relation to creation. ("Your designs" seems better for מְחֻשְׁבֵּיךָ in 6b, rather than "your thoughts.") The meaning of the expression encompasses "plans" and can be equivalent to "ways" (cf. Isa 55:8, 9; 59:7; 65:2; 66:18; Jer 6:19; 18:12; Ps 56:6; Prov 19:21; Job 21:17). The "dunderhead" (traditionally, "brutish man"; rsv, "dull man") and the fool are not persons of "low I.Q., but . . . people who deliberately reject true wisdom, the beginning of which is the fear of Yahweh" (A. A. Anderson, II, 662). See Pss 77:12-13; 104:24; 106:2; 111:2. The knowledge of God's works is "unmindfully ignored" (Weiser) only by those who live like animals.

*The wicked are like grass* (92:8). The wicked are described as being like grass or green herbage (עשב) which springs up after rain, but which withers and dies in the heat and dryness that follow (see the comparison with grass in 90:5-6; 37:2; 103:15; Isa 40:6, 7, 8; also 76:16; 102:5, 12; Isa 37:27). The wicked blossom out like the flowers that accompany the growth of herbage but are soon destroyed; they bloom and are gone like wildflowers. The force of the simile is greater, of course, in climates where grass shoots up in luxuriant growth after a rain and then dies back quickly. The wicked are not identified, but they are generally all those whose behavior is disruptive of community life; behavior which is frequently violent (note Pss 94:3-6; 37:4; 119:110; 140:5; Jer 5:26-28; Hab 1:2-4).

*The exalted status of Yahweh* (92:9). This is the pivotal verse of the psalm. The word מְרוֹם refers to the realm where Yahweh lives and works and from whence he sends forth his power and help for those in need, or against those whom he punishes (e.g., Ps 18:17 // 2 Sam 22:17; 93:4; 102:20; 144:7; Isa 32:15; 33:5; 57:15; 58:4). The basic meaning of מְרוֹם is "height" and it serves as a synonym for the heavens where God dwells and is enthroned (93:2-4; Jer. 17:12). The conceptual field of מְרוֹם is undoubtedly inclusive of the idea of the cosmic mountain which is the dwelling place of deity. See *Comment* on 61:2-5. Yahweh is beyond any successful attack by human beings (cf., e.g., 9:8; 10:16; 11:4-6; 14:2; 68:34; 102:13; see Kraus, II, 812). He rules over the world as the "One-who-is-on-High."

*The fate of the enemies of Yahweh* (92:10). The expanded colons of 10b, c present the total failure which awaits the enemies of Yahweh, who are undoubtedly the wicked of v 8. V 10 is a verse from an old victory hymn, celebrating a triumph over foes. The reflexive form of the verb (פָּרַד) suggests the ideas of "disintegration/bursting/dispersion," though this element should not be over stressed. Note how the verbs of v 10 (אָבַד, "perish," and פָּרַד, "scatter") are used together of the dispersal of lions in Job 4:11.

*The raised horn* (92:11-12). The difficulty with the second colon of this verse has been set forth in note 11.b. The first colon refers to an empowering of the speaker, whose "horn" (strength and power) has been raised like that of a wild ox ready for combat. Rubbed with oil, the speaker's "horns" gleam with virility and health, as his head is lifted to look over his fleeing attackers, and his ears hear them running away in panic. V 11 probably does not refer to some sort of anointing ceremony (such as that of a king) or to the anointing of an honored guest on a festive occasion (Pss 23:5; 45:8; 133:2; cf. Isa 61:1-3), but the uncertain nature of 11b makes it unwise to exclude the possibility completely.

*The thriving of the righteous* (92:13-16). The future of the righteous in v 13 contrasts to that of the wicked in v 8. The wicked are like grass, springing up in profusion, but only to perish quickly. The righteous, on the other hand, will thrive like the fruitful date-palm and like the towering cedars of Lebanon. The contrast between the "wicked" (רשעים) and the "righteous" (צדיקים) is familiar in the wisdom literature (e.g., Prov 10:3, 6, 7, 11, 16, 20, 24, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32) and Ps 1. The righteous are like trees that grow in the courts of the temple (v 14). For trees in the temple courts see *Comment* on 52:10; Kraus, II, 813. The date-palm (תמר) is a tall, slender tree with a plume-like foliage at the top. Its deep tap roots seek out water in the ground, and it is associated with water sources and oases (Elim, Num 33:9; Jericho, Deut 34:3; Judg 1:16; 3:13). The fruit of the date-palm can be consumed as food, and a drink can be made from its sap. The leaves were used for roofs and woven into mats and baskets. Palm branches were used on festive occasions (Tabernacles, Lev 23:40; victorious entry into Jerusalem, 1 Macc 13:51; John 12:13; purification of the temple, 2 Macc 10:7). The palm tree is used as a metaphor for a beautiful woman in Cant 7:8[7], 9[8] and for Wisdom in Ecclus 24:13-14 (used along with the cedars of Lebanon). The "cedar" (ארז) of Lebanon is renowned in biblical references for size and quality (e.g., Judg 9:5; 1 Kgs 4:33 [5:13]; 2 Kgs 14:9; Ezra 3:7; Isa 2:13; 14:8; Ps 104:16). The deep-rooted coniferous tree lives to a great age and grows very high and large. The wood, durable and resistant to insects, is a prime choice for fine products, such as

musical instruments, chests, panels, and coffins. For the majestic and cosmic nature of a cedar of Lebanon, see Ezek 31:1-9, where the magnificent world-tree, drawing upon the rich waters of the primeval deep in the Garden of God, is a metaphor for the royal power of Egypt. Neither of these trees would likely have grown in the temple courts (v 14), though smaller cedars may have been there. The palm tree was at home around Jericho and in places of similar climate—most palm fronds are brought to Jerusalem from the Jordan Valley. We should not try to insist on the literal accuracy of the poetic and metaphorical language. Vv 14-15 probably allude to the idea of the courts of the temple as a paradise, a garden of God with ample water and highly productive trees (Gen 2:46-3:24; Ezek 28:13-14; cf. Ps 36:7-10; see J. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion* [Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985] 128-37). Those who are “planted in the house of Yahweh” have enduring vitality, even when old they will be like trees full of sap and with green foliage (v 15). The primal fertility of creation will mark their lives.

I have retained the traditional “upright” in 16a, but the word (ישר) should be understood in the sense of Pss 19:9; 25:8; 33:4. Yahweh’s “uprightness” is good (25:8) and involves a cluster of words and expressions descriptive of his character and works: “rejoices the heart” (19:9), perfect, trustworthy, pure, clean, true, and faithful. There appears to be some literary artistry in the relationship of v 16 to vv 2 and 9. V 16b provides a satisfactory parallel colon for v 9 (perhaps with “Yahweh” as a pivot word between the colons: a 3+1+3 pattern), and creates a frame for vv 9-16. In general, v 16 corresponds to vv 2-4 (note the use of the infinitive of נגד, “declare,” in vv 3 and 16). The alternation of descriptive language in 2a with direct address in 2b is matched by the direct address in v 9 and the descriptive language in 16b (ABB'A' pattern). Also, the descriptive language of 2a and the direct address of 2b is matched by the same pattern in 16a, b (ABA'B'). Thus the psalm is framed in a rather intricate manner.

The rocklike quality of God is expressed in terms of his lack of failure; i.e., in terms of his reliability and consistency (16b, traditional, “injustice/unrighteousness/wrongdoing”). The flourishing of the righteous (vv 13-15) is living testimony to this characteristic of God. The sense of this is expressed in Zeph 3:5:

The LORD within her is righteous,  
 he does no wrong [עולה],  
 every morning he shows forth justice,  
 each dawn he does not fail [עדר];  
 but the unjust [עורל] knows no shame. (RSV)

#### Explanation

The title of Ps 92 designates it as a psalm for the sabbath day. Most modern commentators consider the title to be a rubric, which reflects the practice of using the psalm for sabbath worship, but which has little or no connection with its content (Sarna, *JBL* 81 (1962) 158-59). Thus the psalm originally had nothing directly to do with the sabbath, being a *todah* (thanksgiving) psalm suitable for various occasions; perhaps, originally a victory song (vv 10-12). This conclusion is supported by the lack of anything *specifically* sabbatical in the psalm.

Nevertheless, one may assume that whoever introduced it into the sabbath liturgy “must have discovered something in it that intimately corresponded to the dominant themes of the day for which it was selected” (Sarna, *JBL* 81 (1962) 159). This assumption is strengthened by the fact that Ps 92 is the only psalm in MT with the sabbatical rubric; indicative of a deliberate choice (unless it was merely fortuitous, of course). Sarna (158-68) sets forth what he considers to be sabbath themes in the psalm. The first is that of creation. The association of sabbath with creation is well known in biblical texts (see Gen 2:1-3; Exod 20:11; 31:17). According to Exod 31:17, Yahweh ceased from his work of making the heavens and the earth on the seventh day and he was “refreshed” (רִיַּשׁ). Thus the presence of creation concepts in Ps 92 would be expected, but are they there? Vv 5-6 can be read as such, though the language is not very specific. The “work” (פַּעַל) of Yahweh in v 5 can encompass creation work, though it appears in 90:16 in terms of divine providence (see also 95:9; Isa 52:10; Job 36:24; Pss 44:2; 64:10; 77:13). For the sense of “work of creation,” see Isa 45:9, where פַּעַל appears with the “hands” of God. Note the “works” (מַעֲשֵׂי) of his hands in Ps 19:2 applied to the firmament (“work of your hands” in Ps 143:5, however, is probably that of deliverance and divine care). The context in 92:8-12 seems to suggest an action of deliverance from wicked foes rather than a work of creation. However, Sarna argues that vv 8 and 10 reflect the combat-victory motif (*Chaoskampf*) of creation; the overcoming of chaos is depicted in terms of the overcoming of rebellious forces. The events in v 8 (which Sarna takes as referring to past happenings) are those described in v 10 (162, 164), and v 10 is a “historicized, if fragmentary, version of the popular Israelite combat epic” (cf. Isa 17:12-14; 27:1; 51:9-10; Hab 3:8-15; Ps 74:13-15; Job 26:10; 38:8-21; Prov 8:27, 29). The exalted status of God in v 9 intensifies the combat motif, according to Sarna (cf. Isa 33:3, 10). The argument seems somewhat forced, but it is certainly possible for vv 5-6 to be read with reference to creation regardless of vv 8 and 10.

M. Weinfeld (“Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord,” in *Melanges biblique et orientaux*, FS M. H. Czales, ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor, AOAT 212 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981] 501-12) suggests another linkage of Ps 92 to sabbath in terms of the three-way relationship of creation-victory over enemies and temple. The temple was typically the house and resting place of the deity after combat and the work of creation (cf. Gen 2:1-3). The deity defeats enemies and is enthroned in his “dwelling place” (note Exod 15:17), which is a temple, as in the Babylonian accounts in which Marduk’s victory over his enemies (the forces of chaos) brings about his enthronement and a temple for him. In the Ugaritic Baal epic, the building of Baal’s sanctuary and his enthronement is associated with victory over the sea, which probably includes creation in its conceptual context, though the matter of the combat with the sea and creation in the Baal text has been the subject of debate: for an extensive survey, see C. Kloos, *Yahweh’s Combat with the Sea: A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Israel* (Amsterdam: G. A. van Oorschot, 1986) 70-93, whose conclusion is negative; J. Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 1-18, whose conclusion is positive. Much depends on what is meant by “creation” (see L. R. Fisher, “Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament,” *VT* 15 [1965] 313-24).

If "Creation" is understood as primarily *creatio ex nihilo* ("creation out of nothing"), then such concepts as "subduing," "separating," "fixing," and "ordering" are likely to be excluded. Regardless of the conclusion relative to the Baal texts, the association of the *Chaoskampf* motif with creation in the OT seems to be undeniable (see Pss 29:10; 74:12-17; 89:10-15; 93:1-5; 104:1-9; Job 9:5-14; 26:5-14; 38:7-11). The temple in which the deity finds rest follows victory over enemies and the establishment of order. The entry of Yahweh into his sanctuary is an entry into rest: "This is my resting place forever; / here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (Ps 132:14). Also, "Arise, O Lord, to your resting place / you and the ark of your might" (Ps 132:8). Thus, the interrelated ideas of creation and temple function to make Ps 92 appropriate for sabbath usage, regardless of its original compositional context.

Weinfeld (502-6) notes also the association of tabernacle/temple with sabbath in OT texts. The sabbath commandment in Exod 31:12-17 follows instructions for building the tabernacle; instructions which are framed by six commands with the formula "And Yahweh said to Moses" (Exod 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1). The seventh command is the sabbath command in Exod 31:12 (using *אָמַר*, as in 30:34, rather than *יָרַב* as in the others). The typological parallels between the completion of the tabernacle sanctuary in Exod 39:1-40:33 and Gen 1:1-2:3 are striking (Weinfeld, 503); also note the parallelism between the cloud-glory of Yahweh on Mount Sinai for seven days in Exod 24:15-16 and the cloud-glory of Yahweh covering and filling the tabernacle in Exod 40:34-Lev 1:1. Another form of the sabbath stipulation follows the interlude of the golden calf and begins the account of the building of the tabernacle in Exod 35:1-3. Note also Lev 19:30 ("You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary," rsv) and Lev 26:2 (N. M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus* [New York: Schocken Books, 1986] 214).

The idea of the temple courts as a paradise (see *Comment* on vv 13-16 above) is worth noting again because sabbath has something of the same quality. The account of the seventh day in Gen 2:1-3, which presupposes the sabbath, is marked by a lack of morning and evening. Thus the seventh day (sabbath) has no darkness; darkness in which malevolent works of injury and death are done by evil persons and malign powers (cf. Gen 32:27; Exod 4:24; 12:12, 22; Job 3:3-9; 24:13-17; 34:20-25; 36:20; see J. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988] 123). Without darkness the seventh day is a day of light and the powers of darkness are banished. The idea of the paradisiacal quality of sabbath is reflected in Isa 58:14 and in Jewish tradition. The Mishnah (*Tamid* 7:4) declares that Ps 92 is "a song for the time that is to come, for the day that shall be all sabbath and rest in the life everlasting." The Sabbath is a proleptic glimpse of the eternal life of the coming age: "Those who observe the Sabbath experience an earnest of the coming redemption" (J. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 183-84). So it is with the righteous in Ps 92:13-16; they both anticipate and experience the paradisiacal life.

The reader will readily recognize that the arguments for Ps 92 as a psalm for sabbath are rather subtle and indirect, and he or she may well ask: If this psalm was intended for use on the sabbath, why was it not written with more specific reference? As already indicated, the lack of direct relatedness to sabbath probably indicates that the psalm was composed for some other context and later

adopted for the sabbath (S. Mowinckel, *PIW*, II, 205-6). The original context was perhaps that of thanksgiving after victory (of a king?) or a festival occasion (perhaps at the close of such a celebration; Weiser, 614; J. H. Eaton, 225-26). Nevertheless, the title and liturgical tradition ask the reader to read it with a sabbath repertoire (a referential context of norms and allusions; the "familiar territory" of a text). We are not bound by this referential context and may prefer to shift the psalm to another. I doubt, however, that there will be much improvement over the ancient liturgical wisdom which asks us to read it with the Sabbath in mind.

## An Acclamation of the King Who Reigns on High (93:1-5)

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### Translation

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|----------------|--|----------|
| 1 <sup>a</sup> | <i>Yahweh reigns!</i> <sup>b</sup> <i>He has robed himself with majesty.</i><br><i>Yahweh has robed himself; belted himself with strength!</i><br><i>The world is firmly established;</i> <sup>c</sup> <i>immovable.</i> | (4+4+3)  |
| 2              | <i>Your throne was established long ago;</i><br><i>You are from eternity, (O Yahweh).<sup>a</sup></i>  | (3+2[3]) |
| 3              | <i>The floods<sup>a</sup> roared,<sup>b</sup> O Yahweh;</i><br><i>the floods roared with their thunderous voice;</i><br><i>the floods roared<sup>c</sup> with their pounding.<sup>d</sup></i>                            | (3+3+3)  |
| 4              | <i>(But) greater than the roar of many waters,</i><br><i>mighty (waters), breakers of the sea,</i><br><i>was the Mighty One on high, O Yahweh!<sup>a</sup></i>   | (3+3+3)  |
| 5              | <i>Your testimonies<sup>a</sup> are sure indeed;<sup>b</sup></i><br><i>holiness<sup>c</sup> befits<sup>d</sup> your house,</i><br><i>O Yahweh, for endless days.</i>   | (3+3+3)  |