# PSALM 9–10 — A TEXTUAL AND EXEGETICAL STUDY

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In spite of the Masoretic division there is an old tradition which links Psalm 9 and 10 together as a literary unit,[1] as is the case with Ps. 42–43. The basis for this view is the existence of an alphabetic acrostic, which appears every second verse, as in Ps. 37, with Ps. 9 containing the first half of the letters and Psalm 10, the unmistakable remnants of the remainder.

In Psalm 9 the acrostic is tolerably well preserved, each letter from Aleph to Kaph being represented in order, with the exception of the verse for *Dalet*. The second, non-alphabetic verse for *Gimel* (after v. 6) and for *Yod* (after v. 11) is also lacking in MT, but these omissions may simply be cases of misplacement, for following upon the letter *He* (v. 7) we have four verses beginning with *Vav* (vv. 8–11). One of these is needed as the non-alphabetic pendant for *He* and two are required for the letter *Vav*, leaving one in excess. This may have been the original non-alphabetic pendant for *Gimel*. It would be fatuous to insist upon a given allocation of these verses, but v. 8 would follow well upon v. 6, as its pendant, v. 9 would be equally appropriate after v. 7, and vv. 10 and 11, which manifestly belong together, would constitute *Vav* and its pendant. Similarly, v. 21 is superfluous in the present arrangement; if placed after v. 18, it would be an excellent pendant for *Yod*; note the pronoun להם (v. 21) which would

[1] So LXX, Vulgate, Jerome, Bar Hebraeus.





have its antecedent in רשעים and שכחי אלהים (v. 18). With these minor adjustments, the acrostic would be as well preserved as Ps. 145, where also one letter only, the *Nun*, is omitted, or Psalm 37, which lacks only the pendant verses to *Dalet*, *Ayin*,[2] and *Koph*.[3]

The situation is quite otherwise with regard to Psalm 10. Here the *Lamed* appears (v. 1) and at the close, the four concluding letters, *Koph*, *Reš*, *Šin* and *Tav* (vv. 12, 14, 16, 18): The verses for *Mem*, *Nun*, *Samekh*, *Ayin*, *Pe* and *Ṣade* have been either lost or mutilated, so that they do not appear in MT. Normally, an acrostic helps to preserve a text, but not always, as the mutilated form of the acrostic hymn in Nahum chap. 1[4] and later examples in the Jewish liturgy demonstrate.[5] The imperfect state of preservation of our acrostic is reflected in the general condition of the text. While Psalm 9 offers relatively few problems to the exegete, Psalm 10 bristles with difficulties.

Largely because of the Masoretic division, some commentators have insisted that the two sections are unrelated, in spite of the dovetailing of the acrostic. Psalm 9, it is argued, is concerned with foreign enemies of the nation (vv. 6, 9,

[2] *Ayin* occurs in v. 28c, where לעולם נשמרו is an error through haplography of the original עולים לעולם נשמרו וזרע רשעים נכרת.

[3] Only one stich of the pendant is lacking, the other having been preserved in v. 34d.

[4] Cf. e. g. G. B. Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (New York, 1915) and see T. H. Robinson - F. Horst, *Die zwölf Kleinen Propheten* (Tübingen, 1938), p. 157.

[5] Cf. the *Selihah*, אל אלהי ישראל recited in the Morning Service on Mondays and Thursdays, which still exhibits the poetic acrostic for the letters *Zayin*, *Heth*, *Teth* and *Yod* (perhaps also *He*, *Vav and Kaph*), while the rest of the present text is neither alphabetic nor poetic. The contention of I. Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Leipzig, 1913) pp. 18, 274 f., that the acrostics might not have been complete originally rests only upon the fact that in some cases defective acrostics have survived. But as an "art-form" an incomplete acrostic defeats its goal, and Elbogen himself cites fuller forms of some of these defective acrostics in variant liturgical rites.

12), so that even when the Psalmist speaks in the singular and refers to his foes (vv. 3, 4, 5), he is identifying himself with the group. Psalm 10, on the other hand, deals with purely personal enemies, domestic evil-doers (vv. 2, 3, 7, 8). Moreover, Psalm 9 is a hymn of thanksgiving for victory; Psalm 10 is a prayer for succor yet to be achieved.

Neither of these contentions is decisive. Recent research into biblical psychology has clarified the concept of "fluid personality" which is the key to the process of "identification" of an individual with a group, be it a party vis-à-vis its opponents, or the nation as against its external enemies.[6] This fruitful insight is the key to such phenomena as the interchange of singular and plural in the Psalter, in the moving acrostic elegy in Lamentations chap. 3[7] and in Deuteronomy,[8] as well as the common shifting from first person to third in the Prophets. Lacking this key to biblical psychology, modern scholars have found these changes disconcerting and have had recourse to the unnecessary atomizing of the text.

More complex phenomena in biblical literature are also solved by recognizing the phenomenon of "fluid personality." Thus the "Servant of the Lord" in Deutero-Isaiah is described in terms that are unmistakably personal in one passage, and is then identified clearly with Israel in another.

[6] Cf. H. W. Robinson, *The Cross of the Servant — A Study in Deutero-Isaiah* (London 1926) and "The Hebrew Concept of Corporate Personality" in *Werden und Wesen des A. T.*, ed. J. Hempel, 1936, pp. 49 ff.; O. Eissfeldt, *Der Gottesknecht bei Deuterojesaia* (Halle, 1933); H. H. Rowley, *The Servant of the Lord and other Essays* (London, 1952), esp. pp. 33 ff.; 38 f.; R. Gordis, "Hosea's Marriage and Message: A New Approach" in *HUCA*, vol. 25, 1954, esp. pp. 15 ff.

[7] We hope to publish a study of this text, highly important for biblical theology, in the near future.

[8] On Steuernagel's attempt to divide Deuteronomy into two sources "Plural" and "Singular," see the witty and devastating comment of A. B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel* (Leipzig, 1919), vol. II, p. 299.



All attempts to interpret the "Servant" as either individual or collective are inadequate, because he is both.[9] The same insight is the key to the understanding of the text of the opening chapters of Hosea, notably chapter 2, which identifies the prophet's personal tragedy with the Divine experience of betrayal by Israel.[10]

In view of the concept of fluid personality so richly documented in the Bible, it is not strange that the psalmist identifies his own enemies with those of his group, and, seeing his group of the "humble" and the "poor" as the authentic Israel, identifies these foes with the enemies of the nation. Moreover, it is clear that the opponents he has principally in view, שכחי אלהים, שנאים, רשעים are domestic, who attack the "poor" (דך, אביון, ענוים). There is therefore no need to emend גוים (9.6, 16) to נאים "the arrogant," in order to bring it into harmony with the other references to internal foes. In referring to "the nations" the Psalmist is invoking the aid of the God who has manifested Himself in history, judging the heathen nations by His standards of righteousness (9.9, 10) and chastising them for their sins (9.6, 16; 10.16). The implication is clear — God, who establishes justice in the world cannot suffer wickedness to triumph at home.

That Ps. 9 is basically a hymn of thanksgiving and Ps. 10 voices a plea for succor, also does not militate against the unity of the whole. The logic which dictates that God be praised for His saving acts in the past before He is implored to intervene in the present, is illustrated in such Psalms as 27 and 30. It became the standard pattern in post-biblical liturgy, as for example in the traditional *Amidah* and was codified as a principle of prayer:

[9] Cf. C. R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah* (Oxford, 1948) and Rowley, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-88.

[10] Cf. our study "Hosea's Marriage and Message" in *HUCA*, vol. 25, 1954, esp. pp. 9-35.

"A man should always first set forth his praise of the Holy One, blessed be He, and then offer his prayer."[11]

Moreover, the two chapters are not as sharply demarcated between thanksgiving and petition as has been suggested. Psalm 9 contains explicit petition in vv. 14, 18–21, while Psalm 10 stresses the note of assurance of victory in vv. 14 and 16, as will be noted below.

Finally, the stylistic affinities linking the two psalms are striking. Note עתות בצרה (9.10; 10.1), דרש, ידרש = "God the avenger" (9.13; 10.4, 13) the rare דך (9.10; 10.10, 18), אנוש = "mere man" (9.20, 21; 10.18), as well as the striking similarity in phrasing in the concluding verse of each half of the acrostic: 9.19, 20: תקות ענוים . . . אל־יעז אנוש 10,17.18: תאות ענוים . . . בל־יוסיף עוד לערץ אנוש.

In view of all these points of similarity and contact, it is clear that Ps. 9 and 10 constitute the two halves of a single alphabetic psalm.[12] The hymn begins with praise to the God of righteousness (9.2–5) who has revealed His saving hand in the affairs of nations (9.6, 7, 9, 8, 11, 12) and who cannot remain indifferent to the misery of the humble (9.13–15). By imposing His judgment upon the wicked (9.16–18.21) He will succor the poor from their afflictions (v. 19) and punish the wicked for their arrogance (9.20;

[11] T. Ber. 32a: לעולם יסדר אדם שבחו של הקב"ה ואחר כך יתפלל. Cf. also *ibid.*, 34a: לעולם אל ישאל אדם צרכיו לא בג' הראשונות ולא בג' האחרונות אלא באמצעית. The three opening Benedictions of the *Amidah* are accordingly dedicated to praise, the last three to thanksgiving; petition occurs only in the central blessings of the week-day *Amidah*.

[12] The alternatives, which some commentators have adopted, are considerably less plausible. One assumption has it that a different poet wrote Ps. 10, either because the author of Ps. 9 wrote only half an acrostic or because the second half of the original was lost. Equally unlikely is the view that 10.1–11 represents an independent poem descriptive of the wicked, which was inserted after the original section was lost, (ag. Kirkpatrick). Not only does this section contain several letters of the acrostic that can be recovered, but vv. 3 and 4 are directly cited in vv. 12 and 13.



10.1–3). For the sinner is emboldened to do evil, because he despises God, assuming that He is indifferent to injustice and will not disturb the complacent prosperity of the evil-doer nor interfere with his plots against the innocent (10.3–11). The Psalmist, however, calls upon God to arise (v. 12), knowing with the certitude of faith that the prosperity of the wicked is but temporary and that the vindication of the humble is assured (vv. 13–18).

Evidently, the lower half of the sheet containing the original Psalm in its entirety sustained considerable damage; hence the greater injury to the acrostic and the text as a whole in Ps. 10. The lower half of a ms. frequently exhibits greater physical damage. Similarly, the dittograph of Psalms 14 and 53 shows only a normal amount of variation in the opening section until שם פחדו פחד (14.5a; 53.6a) while the penultimate verse suffered substantial mutilation.[13]

Because of these difficulties, some scholars have been led to view the task as hopeless,[14] while many others have proceeded to radical emendations, excisions and transpositions in the text. We believe that it is possible to restore much of the original text, without recourse to extreme measures, though the disturbed character of the *textus receptus* makes it clear that the judicious use of emendations here is eminently justified.

A word is in order on the varied metric pattern of the Psalm. At this stage of biblical scholarship, it should not be necessary to argue against the two alternatives set forth

[13] The wide variations between 14.5 and 53.6 represent an effort to restore a text that must have become virtually illegible. That the closing verse in both recensions is identical (14.6; 53.7) indicates that it is a liturgical supplement, added after the textual damage to the previous verse had already taken place.

[14] Cf. Kittel on vv. 1–10: "Die gegebene Uebersetzung kann mehrfach nur als Versuch gelten."

by Cheyne and adopted by Briggs; the variations in meter indicate neither "the imperfect skill of the psalmist," nor "the interference of a second writer with the original poem."[15] What should have been expected *a priori* and indeed has been exhibited by biblical poetry, has now been conclusively demonstrated by Canaanite epic verse from Ugarit — a gifted poet will vary his meter, in order to avoid monotony, to heighten the interest, and to achieve a special effect.[16] Our psalmist is no exception to this principle, which is illustrated in the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15)[17] or in any other masterpiece of biblical poetry. The metric pattern of our psalm will be set forth at the end of our paper.

It should be added, however, that on the basis of the received text, it would seem that while the author used two, three and four-beat stichs, each verse is limited to distichs. There are no tristichs in Ps. 9, the better preserved half, while in Ps. 10 all the tristichs that appear in MT (vv. 3a (?) 5, 8, 9) are the result of the imperfect preservation of the text and the consequently erroneous division of verses. The only exception is the closing verse 18, the reason for which will be indicated below.

In view of the generally clear character of the text of Ps. 9, we shall preface these exegetical and textual notes on Ps. 10 with only one comment on Ps. 9, verse 7:

**9.7** — On the basis of Masoretic חֳרבוֹת, the first half of the verse is generally rendered "the enemy is destroyed, they are ruins forever" (so ICC), but the plural verb with a singular subject is difficult and the reference to enemies becoming ruins is forced. The various emendations proposed

[15] Cf. C. H. and E. G. Briggs, *ICC on Psalms* (New York 1906), vol. 1, p. 70.

[16] Cf. our study, "Al Mibneh Haširah Haivrit Haqedummah ("On the Structure of Ancient Hebrew Poetry") in *Sefer Hashanah Liychudei Amerika* (5705=1945), pp. 136–159, particularly pp. 143 f.

[17] Here we encounter 4:4 (v. 1), 3:3 (v. 2), 5:5 (v. 4) and 2:2 (v. 9).



are far-fetched. It is preferable to vocalize חֳרבוֹת, with *Pešita* and some Hebrew mss. The syntax, however, has not been understood, since we have here a rare form of the *casus pendens*.[18] Normally in this construction there is a suffix linking the clause to its logical subject. Thus in Ps. 103.15, אנוש כחציר ימיו the third person masculine suffix of ימיו refers back to אנוש. Here the reference is looser, the pronominal suffix being lacking; it is, however, explicit, linking חרבות with האויב. For other instances of this looser construction of the *casus pendens*, cf. *inter alia*, Jer. 44.16: הדבר אשר־דברת אלינו בשם ה' איננו שמעים אליך (בו *scil.*), Ezek. 10.11: כי המקום אשר־יפנה הראש אחריו ילכו (=אליו ילכו), Hos. 8.13: זבחי הבהבי יזבחו בשר ויאכלו (=יזבחו בשרם ויאכל).

The remainder of our verse consists of one clause, exhibiting the usual form of *casus pendens*. ערים is not "cities" but "enemy." Cf. I Sam. 28.16 ויהי ערך. The verb נתש is never used of cities, only of living things, generally of human beings (I Kings 14.15; Jer. 12.14, 17; II Chron. 7.20); and in one passage of a plant (Mic. 5.13).

For the close of the verse LXX, read *μετ' ἤχου* "with noise," = מְהֻמָּה which validates the reading מַהֲמָה.

The verse is accordingly to be rendered literally:

"As for the enemy, his swords have ceased forever,
And the foes Thou hast uprooted, the very memory has perished from them."

*Ps. 10*

**1.** ברחוק in MT is not to be emended to מרחוק; the *Beth* means "from" as in Hos. 7.14d; Ps. 6.8b; 18.14; 19.5a; 68.19, as, we now know, in Ugaritic, where the prefix means

[18] See the classic study of this construction in S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1892), pp. 264–73, esp. p. 267 for our special type of the construction.

both "in" and "from."[19] The Vss. (except *Pešita*, which clearly read the *Beth*), exhibit "levelling" when they render "from afar," not a bona fide textual variant. תְּעָלִים need not be emended to תִּתְעַלַּם or even revocalized as תֵּעָלַם. On the secondary conjugations developing a reflexive sense, cf. ויגלח (Gen. 41.14), תכסה (Deut. 22.12) and ברך and הלל in v. 3, on which see below.

**2.** בְּנָאוֹת need not be revocalized to בִּנְאוֹת. It is best taken as an absolute, with the old *Tav* ending (cf. שפעת II Kings 9.17; חכמת Isa. 33.6; ברקת Ezek. 28.13; and also Isa. 28.16; Ps. 61.1; 74.19a; Lam. 2.18). Its absolute character has been overlooked by the Masorah, which has inserted a *Makkeph*, exactly as in Jer. 8.9 וחכמת־מה להם, which is to be rendered correctly: "The word of the Lord have they despised and wisdom is nothing to them!"[20] רשע is thus the subject of ידלק, which need not be emended to a *Niphal*. Against the rendering: "They (i. e. the rightous) are taken in the devices they (i. e. the wicked) have imagined" is the shift of subject of the two verbs. Moreover, the use of the plural suggests that the clause is an imprecation by the Psalmist: "May they be taken in the devices they have imagined!" Cf. Job 21.16; 22.18 for a similar formula: "May the counsel of the wicked be far from me!"

**3.** הלל and ברך are here used reflexively (cf. note on v. 1), equivalent to the more familiar *Hithpael*, which occurs in Jer. 9.22 and Deut. 29.18, respectively. From v. 13, which

[19] Cf. J. H. Patton, *Canaanite Parallels in the Book of Psalms* (Baltimore 1944), p. 54.

[20] The usual renderings "What wisdom is in them" (AV, JPS, Moffatt, SRV), "What manner of wisdom have they" (Driver) are not borne out by the Hebrew, which would have been מה חכמה להם. The parallelism with מאסו makes it clear that here מה is the interrogative-rhetorical particle meaning "nothing," cf. *BDB*, s. v. Id, p. 553; see e. g. I Kings 12.16 as against II Sam. 20.1. חכמת is therefore to be construed as an absolute, in the sense of Divine wisdom (as in Prov. 9.10; 15.33; 30.3; Job 28.28).



is a quotation of our passage,[21] it is clear that נאץ ה' should be joined to v. 4, thus reading נאץ ה' רשע and creating the *Nun* verse in the acrostic.

This removal of the last two words does not leave a prose passage (ag. Briggs), if the caesura is placed in v. 3, after תאות, which is to be vocalized as תאותו and the *Vav* of ובצע is deleted as a dittography. נפש = "desire," cf. Deut. 21.14; 23.25; Ps. 35.25; Ezek. 16.27. בצע = "evil doer" cf. Job 27.8.

The verse then exhibits perfect synonymous parallelism in chiastic structure: a b c // c' b' a', and is to be rendered, literally:

> "The wicked boasts of his lust,
> Of his desire the evil-doer is proud."

It is worth noting that the metric problem for both vv. 3 and 4 is also solved by this slight change — the entire passage consists of 3:3 meter. See below.

**4.** The quotation in v. 13 makes it clear that the subject of בל־ידרש is God. The clause is therefore a quotation without a *verbum dicendi*:[22] "He says: 'God does not exact retribution.'" The sinner is voicing ancient disbelief in its most characteristic form, which did not negate the existence of Divine beings, but doubted their intervention in human affairs. Cf. e. g. Mal. 3.13–15; Ps. 14.1; Job 22.11–14; Eccl. 9.2 f.

**5.** יחילו "be powerful, endure," cf. Job 20.21. MT מרום

[21] On this widespread rhetorical device, see our study, "Quotations as a Literary Usage in Biblical, Oriental and Rabbinic Literature" in *HUCA*, vol. 22, 1949, pp. 157–219.

[22] Not an exact citation, נאץ רשע אלהים appearing as נאץ ה' רשע and בל ידרש as לא תדרש. Quotations, particularly in polemic contexts, will often not be exact; note Job's final words (42.6) where he cites the Lord's speech out of the whirlwind (38.2 f.) with minor variations. See p. 218, n. 106 of the study cited in note 21 above. Similarly, refrains are often repeated with minor variations, and are not to be levelled to uniformity, cf. e. g. Ps. 49.13, 21 and Job 28.12, 20.

is taken virtually as a predicate adjective by most commentators: "Thy judgments are too high for him, i. e., remote," but the usage remains strange. Hence the opening word is emended to מורמים "are lifted up," and is given the same nuance. The two clauses are then inverted so as to supply the *Mem* of the acrostic.

Actually its present position (after *Nun* v. 2 and before *Pe*, v. 7, and *Ayin* v. 8, see below) suggests that we have here the remnants of the *Samekh* line. For the inherently difficult מרום משפטיך read סרו משפטיך, the final *Mem* of מרום being a dittography of משפטיך and the first *Mem* an error for *Samekh*. The similarity of *Mem* and *Samekh* is noticeable in later rather than in earlier scripts, but it is very close in the Phoenician inscriptions from Athens, Piraeus, Carthage and Thugga, as well as in several Aramaic texts.[23] The confusion of these two letters is demonstrated as early as the LXX, cf. Isa. 30.4 חנס read as חנם by LXX (*μάτην* "in vain"). Cf. also the common talmudic לסטם "robber" from Greek *λῃστης*, which becomes a denominative verb מלסטם (Sanh. 72a). סרו משפטיך מנגדו means lit. "Thy judgments are turned away from before him," i. e. "He turns away from thy judgments."[24] It represents the opposite of the conduct of the saint, cf. 16.8 שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד "I have set the Lord always before me"; Ps. 18.23: כי כל משפטיו לנגדי וחקותיו לא אסיר מני; and Ps. 119.120 ממשפטיך לא סרתי. Note the use of סור and the difference between לנגדי "before me" and מנגדו "away from him."

[23] Cf. G. A. Cooke, *Text-book of North-Semitic Inscriptions* (Oxford, 1903) Plates XII and XIII.

[24] Biblical Hebrew expresses the idea of separation, either by the removal of the person from the object or of the object from the person. Cf. Job 24.4 יטו אביונים מדרך as against Amos 2.7 ודרך ענוים יטו and see the two parallel stichs in Isa. 10.1 a, b. Cf. also Job 36.16, where הסיתך מפי-צר is a transposition for הסית צר ממך, as Tur-Sinai (*The Book of Job*, Jerusalem 1957), p. xxiii has noted.



Since stich b is the beginning of the *Samekh* verse, it seems plausible to join 4c and 5a as a separate verse. There are several additional grounds for doing so: 1) the metric pattern of the Psalm throughout (see above and the comments on vv. 8, 9) is the distich, not the tristich. 2) in v. 13, only the first two stichs of v. 4 are cited, not the third. 3) The newly constituted verse is needed as the non-alphabetic pendant for the restored *Nun* verse. Perhaps ויחילו should be read instead יחילו, by haplography from מזמותיו. יפיח בהם = "he puffs at them, contemns them"; cf. והפחתם אתי, Mal. 1.13.

**6.** In stich b, which requires a verb, vocalize אֶשָּׁר as אֶשּׁוּר לא בָרָע (from the root שור "see, behold") hence, "I shall not experience any trouble." Cf. the use of its prose synonym ראה "experience" (in Num. 22.9 ואל אראה ברעתי and its frequent use in Ecclesiastes, as e. g. Eccl. 6.17 לראות טובה; cf. also 1.16; 6.10; 9.9). On שור, as parallel to ראה, cf. Num. 23.9; 24.17.

**7.** The opening noun אלה must be deleted, thus restoring a 4:4 meter and revealing the *Pe* verse in the acrostic. Efforts to discover its original position in the Psalm have proved unsuccessful.[25] It may have entered our passage as a scribal reminiscence of the catalogue of sins in Hos. 4.2: אלה וכחש ורצח וגנב ונאף.[26] The *Vav* of ומרמות was added after the additional noun entered the text. תחת לשונו = not "on his tongue," but "under his tongue, i. e., as a delicacy," cf. Job 20.12 יכחידנה תחת לשונו.

**8.** Verses 8 and 9 in MT contain 3 stichs each. Since עיניו is, as most scholars have recognized, the beginning of

[25] Countless instances may be found in the commentaries of Briggs, Gunkel, Kittel and Schmidt, *inter alia*.

[26] Or it may be an error for סלה and would belong to the previous verse, cf. 9.17, 21. Undoubtedly, this musical notation fell out of the text at several other points in the psalm.

the *Ayin* in the acrostic, the six stichs are to be divided into 3 distichs of 3:3 meter. The *Ayin* follows *Pe* here in the alphabet as in Lam. chap. 2.3, 4 and in the original form of Ps. 34. On 9a, see below. חצרים has proved a *crux interpretum* from the days of the LXX which read עשירים, an impossible reading which probably arose by contrasting the righteous poor with the rich sinners, cf. Isa. 53.9 in the MT. Such emendations as כמרצחים (Schmidt) are inept and graphically distant. חצרים is an unwalled settlement (defined as such in Lev. 25.31), a peaceful village where violence is not normally expected and hence not guarded against. נקי is its parallel, meaning "innocent" in its etymological sense, "doing no harm," actually "unarmed." So Ehrlich. Cf. Prov. 1.11 נצפנה לנקי חנם and the Mishnic usage נקי מנכסיו "empty-handed," Pes. 22b). The passage emphasizes the enormity of the crime, against which no precautions have been taken. MT יצפנו is to be retained on the principle of *difficilior lectio* instead of יצפיו (ag. Saadiah *apud* Ibn Ezra, and many moderns), cf. Ps. 56.7; Prov. 1.11.

**9.** In 9a, which belongs with 8c as an independent verse, במסתר is redundant after יארב and disrupts the three-beat meter. It is therefore to be deleted as a dittography from במסתרים in v. 8. In stich c, the two closing words, usually rendered "when he pulls him into his net" are too prosaic and likewise disturb the three-beat meter, which occurs in the entire section. ברשתו is to be attached to v. 10 with LXX, for reasons of meter and parallelism, as will be indicated below.

במשכו to be rendered, not as an infinitive construct, "when he pulls him" but as a noun "in his bag," cf. Ps. 126.6 משך הזרע "bag of seed," which is derived not from "drawing, trail" (*BDB*) but from משך="seize," Arabic مسك I, IV, "grasp, hold." Cf. Ex. 12.21; Judg. 20.37 and



Job 40.25.[27] מָשְׁךְ would be one more biblical term for "trap," cf. מִלְכֶּדֶת from לכד, "capture, seize" (Job 18.8–10) and five other terms for this instrument of the hunter used by the poet. In Job 28.18 מְשֹׁךְ="price" not "drawing forth." On the metaplastic forms of the segolate noun מֹשֶׁךְ and מָשְׁךְ, cf. עֹצֶב (Ps. 139.24; I Chron. 4.9) and עִצָּבוֹן (Gen. 3.16; Prov. 10.22; 14.23 etc.).

**10.** The MT is difficult both with regard to meter and to meaning. A closing stich that is longer than the opening is highly irregular if not impossible.[28] The usual views of בעצומיו="through his strong ones" or "through his strength" are also unsatisfactory. With LXX attach the last word of v. 9 to v. 10. The MT may have arisen by an erroneous reading of the original בְּלִי־רָאָה as בְּלֵי־רָאָה, reproduced as בִּלְרָאָה. On the confusion of *bal* and *bli*, see the *Kethib-Qere* in Hos. 9.16. The *Kethib*, the *Vav* of which is to be deleted as a dittography, is to be vocalized דְּכָה, a variant orthography for דכא (Isa. 57.15; Ps. 34.19).[29] That בעצומיו must contain a noun meaning "trap" and paralleling ברשתו was acutely recognized by Duhm, but it is not necessary to emend with him to בצמימיו (cf. Job 18.9). עצם means "close," (cf. Isa. 29.10; 33.15 and often in Mishnic Hebrew.[30]) עצומים would therefore mean "pincers, trap." The

[27] Cf. H. Tur-Sinai, *Halashon Vehasepher, Kerekh Halashon* (Jerusalem 5708 = 1948), pp. 383 ff.

[28] We believe that a closing stich will be longer than the opening one only at the end of a composition or of a section, or a poem composed in distichs will end in a tristich, in order to create a powerful conclusion, corresponding to a *fortissimo* in music. Cf. the evidence assembled on pp. 141 f., note 16 of the study cited in note 16 above.

[29] Cf. מורה in 9.21 which most scholars regard as an aberrant orthography for מורא. The noun may also be vocalized דַּכָּה.

[30] Cf. M. Shab. 23.5, B. Kid. 32b. The root is always used in biblical, rabbinic and medieval Hebrew of closing the eyes, bringing the eyelids together. Cf. E. Ben Jehuda, *Thesaurus*, vol. 9, p. 4654a for this meaning and examples. It would therefore be most appropriate for a trap closing on its victims.

entire verse is in 3:3 meter and exhibits perfect parallelism: a b c // c' a' b':

"In his trap the poor is brought low,
And in his pincers the afflicted fall."

**11.** With most moderns, בל־ראה should be read בל־יראה.

**14.** The usual rendering of the first half of MT: "You deem it proper to look upon sin and iniquity" is both involved in sense and cumbersome in meter. כי אתה is to be omitted as an erroneous dittography for ראתה; note the orthography. The infinitive in לחת has its exact syntactic and semantic parallel in Ps. 92.8: "The wicked may spring up as the grass and the workers of iniquity may flourish, (לחשמדם) with the result that they be destroyed forever." Similarly here, "Thou seest wrong-doing and lookest quietly upon evil, only that they may be given over into thy hand." The second half of the verse in MT is the pendant for *Resh* in the acrostic.

**15.** The first stich can hardly mean: "Break the arm of the wicked and the evil-doer" which is tautological, or "the arm of the wicked and (his) evil" since זרוע is always used of persons. Hence ורע is best deleted as a dittography. In stich b we expect to find a statement that the sinner will have disappeared by reason of God's retribution, not that his sin will be gone. (Cf. Job 8.18; 15.34; 18.18 ff.; 20.9 etc.) Hence read: תדרוש־רשע ובל תמצא. The second person may be impersonal, "one may seek the sinner, but not find him," cf. Prov. 19.23; 30.28; Job 7.21 and the idiomatic באכה (Gen. 10.19 etc.).[31]

**17.** תאות, best taken not as "desire" for which שמעת is inappropriate, but as "cry," a derivative from the exclamation אוי; cf. Ps. 38.10 תאותי || אנחתי and Jer. 17.16 יום אנוש לא התאויתי "In the day of mortal pain, I did not cry out." שמעת is a precative perfect, cf. *inter multa*, Ps. 4.2; 6.10; Lam. 1.21. In stich b, לבם has been emended to לבך, but the phrase is used of only man (Ps. 51.12; 57.18; 112.7, cf. also Prov. 2.2), and is inappropriate to God. But if לבם is retained, the parallelism requires a noun before it. LXX and P accordingly render תכין as "preparation" (ἑτοιμασίαν, ܬܟܣ). There is no need to emend to תכן or תכונת (Schleusner). The *kâtîl* form (cf. קצִיר, שָׁמִיר) occurs in our root in Ps. 65.10 כי כן תכינה, which also rendered as a noun by LXX and V. The noun means "content, substance." Read the construct: תְּכִין לִבָּם.

**18.** While ערץ is usually intransitive, its transitive use, induced by the paranomasia with ארץ, is well attested by Isa. 2.21; Job 13.23 and by the common noun עריץ lit. "terrorizer." Stich b may be rendered in one of two ways: "that he (i. e. the enemy) may no longer terrorize man off the earth (*Pešiṭa*, similarly Ehr.) or "so that mere man of earth may no longer spread terror" (so LXX, V, etc.). The latter idea has its parallel in the close of the first half of the Psalm (9.20, 21) and is therefore preferable. By ending the poem with a tristich (3:3:3), the psalmist gives a powerful close to the hymn.[32]

[31] Cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Hebraeische Grammatik* (25 ed.), Leipzig, 1889, sec. 144c, for other examples of this impersonal use of the 2nd person, and see now Tur-Sinai, *op. cit.*, p. xxiv.



*Lamed*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| v. 1 4:3 | תעלים לעתות בצרה | למה ה' תעמד ברחוק |
| v. 2 4:4 | יתפשו במזמות זו חשבו | בגאות רשע ידלק עני |
| v. 3a, b 3:3 | נפשו בצע ברך | כי הלל רשע על תאותו |

[32] Cf. note 28 above. The same stylistic procedure is to be found in Ps. 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 37, 47, 53, 55, 63, 73, 90, 94, 103, 104, 111, 119, 125, 129, 140; Job, chaps. 10, 11, 19, 26.

*Nun*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| נאץ ה' רשע | כגבה אפו בל ידרש | v. 3c, 4a–3:3 |
| אין אלהים כל מזמותיו | וְחָילו דרכיו בכל עת | v. 4b, 5a–4:4 |

*Samekh*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| סרו משפטיך מנגדו | כל צורריו יפיח בהם | v. 5b, c–3:3 |
| אמר בלבו בל אמוט | לדר ודר אָשוּר לא ברע | v. 6 4:4 |

*Pe*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| פיהו מלא מרמות ותך | תחת לשונו עמל ואון | v. 7 4:4 |
| ישב במארב חצרים | במסתרים יהרג נקי | v. 8a, b 3:3 |

*Ayin*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| עיניו לחלכה יצפנו | יארב כאריה בסכה | v. 8c, 9a 3:3 |
| יארב לחטוף עני | יחטף עני במשכו | v. 9b, c 3:3 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ברשתו דַּכָּה ישח | ונפל בעצומיו חלכאים | v. 10 3:3 |
| אמר בלבו שכח אל | הסתיר פניו בל יראה לנצח | v. 11 4:4 |

*Koph*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| קומה ה' אל נשא ידך | אל תשכח עניים | v. 12 4:3 |
| על מה נאץ רשע אלהים | אמר בלבו לא תדרש | v. 13 4:4 |

*Reš*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| רָאִתָה עמל וכעס תביט | לתת בידך | v. 14a, b, c 4:2 |
| עליך יעזב חלכה | יתום אתה היית עזר | v. 14d, e 4:4 |

*Sin*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| שבר זרוע רשע | תדרוש רִשְׁעָ ובל תִּמְצָא | v. 15 3:3 |
| ה' מלך עולם ועד | אבדו גוים מארצו | v. 16 3:3 |



*Tav*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| תאות ענוים שמעת ה' | תָּכִין לבם תקשיב אזנך | v. 17 4:4 |
| לשפט יתום ודך | בל יוסיף עוד לערץ | v. 18 3:3 |
| | אנוש מן־הארץ | 3:3 |

Why, O Lord, dost Thou stand afar off,
Hiding Thyself in times of trouble?
In arrogance, the wicked pursues the poor —
May they be seized in the schemes they have concocted!

For the wicked boasts of his lust,
The evil-doer is proud of his appetite.
The wicked despises the Lord,
In his arrogance he says, "God exacts no penalty,"
"There is no God" — are all his thoughts,
While his paths prosper in every season.
Thy judgments are far removed from him,
And all his foes he contemns.
He says in his heart, "I shall not stumble,
For all time, I shall experience no trouble."
His mouth is filled with deceit and oppression,
Beneath his tongue lurk iniquity and sin.
He waits in ambush even in open villages,
In the secret places he slays the unarmed.
His eyes peer out for the afflicted,
He waits in ambush like a lion in his lair.
He lies in wait to seize the poor,
He seizes the afflicted in his trap.
Into his net the poor tumbles,
And the afflicted fall into his pincers.
He says in his heart, "God has forgotten,
He has hidden His face, He never will see."

Arise, Lord God, lift up Thy hand,
Forget not the humble.
Why should the wicked despise God,
Saying in his heart, "Thou dost not exact any penalty."
Thou hast indeed looked upon evil and gazed upon iniquity,
Only that they might be given over unto Thy hand.
To Thee the afflicted entrusts his all,
Of the orphan hast Thou been the Helper.
Shatter the arm of the wicked,
So that one may look for the wicked and not find him.
The Lord is King forever and ever;
The nations are destroyed from his earth.
The cry of the humble Thou must surely hear,
The contents of their hearts Thine ear must heed.
That the orphan and the weak may find justice,
And mere man, made of earth, may no longer spread terror.

# HISTORICAL INQUIRIES:

## I. *Heber Ir*
## II. City-Square

By SIDNEY B. HOENIG, Yeshiva University

## I

*Heber Ir* (חבר עיר) is a term which has intrigued both mediaeval and modern scholars.[1] Some have interpreted it as referring to a select individual or scholarly leader;[2] others, to a group of distinguished heads of the city,[3] or to an official committee designated to administer communal affairs.[4] It has also been associated with the "ten batlanim," (men of leisure).[5]

We note that *Heber Ir* is mentioned in the tannaitic

[1] Cf. J. Horowitz, חבר עיר in *Festschrift zum 70 Geburtstage J. Guttmans*, Leipzig 1915, p. 127 and L. Ginzberg, פירושים וחדושים בירושלמי, III, pp. 411 ff. for full review of earlier notions. Cf. M. Weinberg, חבר העיר, *Wohlgemuth's Jeschurun*, XVI, (1929), nos. 5–6, pp. 210 ff. See also P. Chertoff, חבר העיר and עשרה בטלנין, *JQR*, XXXIV (July, 1943), p. 87. Note also the usual interpretations in J. Klausner, הספוריה של בית השני, 3rd ed., III, p. 97; S. Baron, *Social and Religious History*, 2nd ed., II, p. 404; *ibid.*, *Jewish Community*, I, 134; III, 26 n. G. Alon, תולדות היהודים, I, 109.

[2] Maimonides, Commentary on Mishna Berakot (following R. Hananel): חבר עיר חכם המדינה והוא כנוי בעד תפלת הקהל שלא יתקבצו אלא לפני החכם. See also Commentary of *Mordecai*, B. B., תרנ"ח: חבר עיר היינו חכם המתעסק בצרכי צבור. Cf. B. M. Lewin, אוצר הגאונים — פירושים on Meg. 26, p. 81: נדול העיר אשר יועדו אליו כל הזקנים שנא' כל אלה חברו. פ' אחר צבור מקום שמתחברין בני העיר להתפלל בו. See below note 65.

[3] Rashi, Ber. 30a (following Hai Gaon). See also Rashi, R. H. 34b: אלא בחבר עיר — חברות צבור. Cf. Kohut, *Aruk*, חבר; Krauss, *JJLG*, XVII (1926), pp. 195–240.

[4] Ginzberg, *ibid.*

[5] Chertoff, *ibid.*, p. 93: "the עשרה בטלנין is identical with the חבר עיר." The basic references to עשרה בטלנין are: Meg. 1.2; Yer. Meg. 70b B. T. Meg. 5a, B. K. 82a, Sanh. 17b.