

Psalm 1: Text, Translation, and Interpretation
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The Psalter is more than a collection of prayers and hymns appropriate for use in the Temple or on the way to the Temple. As Ps 1 demonstrates, it is designed to be a book of consolation for the one who seeks to be a צדיק *righteous person* against all odds. The Psalter comes across a collection designed for use by those with musical, instructional, and judicial responsibilities vis-à-vis both king and people. Levites seem therefore in mind, to judge from the superscriptions taken together with Deut 10:7-8; 17:18-19; 21:5; 26:11-12; 27:9-10, 31:9-13; 33:10; 1 Chr 6:16-24; and 2 Chr 17:7-9.

1	1	The blessings of the one who has not walked in advice of the wicked,	אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִלְךָ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים
	2	in the way of the errant has not stood,	וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד
	3	in the seat of scoffers has not sat!	וּבְמוֹשָׁב לְצִים לֹא יָשָׁב:
2	4	On the contrary, יהוה's direction is his delight, and he repeats his direction day and night.	כִּי־אִם־בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה חִפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה:
3	5	He shall be like a tree planted by channels of water	וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שְׁתוּל עַל־פְּלִיגֵי מַיִם
	6	where he will yield his fruit in season,	אֲשֶׁר פְּרִיֹו יִתֵּן בְּעִתּוֹ
	7	his foliage will not fade, and all he does will thrive.	וְעָלְהוּ לֹא יִבּוֹל וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה יַצְלִיחַ:
4	8	Not so the wicked. On the contrary, they are like chaff the wind drives away.	לֹא־כֵן הַרְשָׁעִים כִּי־אִם־כְּמֶמְצָן אֲשֶׁר־תִּדְפְּנוּ רוּחַ:
5	9	So it is that the wicked in judgment will not stand, the errant in the assembly of the righteous.	עַל־כֵּן לֹא יִקְמוּ רְשָׁעִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט וְחַטָּאִים בְּעֵדַת צְדִיקִים:
6	10	For יהוה takes note of the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked will perish.	כִּי־יִזְדַּע יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ צְדִיקִים וְדֶרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד:

The claims of this psalm are counterfactual. It is not the case that the wicked are like chaff the wind drives away. It is not the case that the righteous are verdant and fruitful trees, successful in everything they do. But it should be.

Ethical discourse speaks of truths as self-evident even if they are not. We say, for example, that all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In point of fact, people are created in unequal circumstances. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, furthermore, are *alienable* rights. They can be taken away. They often are. But they shouldn't be.

Truth greater than fact is inscribed in this psalm. The psalm only makes sense in the heat of conflict. Imagine its words on the lips of children on their way to the gas chambers. Then you will understand that they are fighting words.

Ps 1:1. *O the blessings of* is the way a blessing or *macarism*¹ begins in Hebrew. Ps 1 is an extended macarism. *Blessings* refer to more than concrete benefits that accrue or not accrue; it refers to *the happiness of the one* who enjoys particular benefits. *The happiness of the one* who has not gone the usual way but delights in another way is the subject of this Psalm. Pss 112 and 119 may also be understood as extended macarisms.

The unassailable happiness that attends the one who prefers God's wisdom to that of the unscrupulous is contained in that one's relationship with God. God notes the path she undertakes. The path of the unscrupulous, on the other hand, is deprived of God's concern. It will peter out. It leads to the abyss.

Ps 1 is a recipe for unassailable happiness. It is a fitting introduction to the Psalms, because the Psalms are all about the movement from despair to hope, and the happiness this Psalm praises is of the kind that hopes in the face of unhelpful circumstances.

Walk in advice, truth etc. is an idiom that occurs with a certain frequency in ancient Hebrew, and Greek influenced by it. Someone may walk, metaphorically, in light or darkness (Isa 2:5; John 8:12; 1 John 2:11), in truth (1 Kgs 2:4; 3 John 1:4).

רשע *wicked* and צדיק *righteous* are adjectives that serve to designate classes of people. Moral categories are in view. The unprincipled, the unscrupulous, are termed רשעים; the principled and scrupulous are termed צדיקים. The terms reference a black-and-white distinction, like our forensic terms 'guilty' and 'innocent.' In some contexts, רשע and צדיק are best translated with precisely those terms. Will God destroy צדיק עם־רשע 'the innocent along with the guilty?' (Gen 18:25). רשעים *the wicked* are those who violate the divinely established moral order, people whose actions are wanton and despicable. צדיקים *the righteous* are those who are innocent of such wrongdoing, faithful to God-given mores. A צדיק is more than a blameless person. A צדיק is a benevolent person, active in good deeds. Job recalls the positive qualities of a צדיק or תם וישר *blameless and upright one* when he protests his innocence (Job 29-31).

The translation equivalents *wicked* and *righteous* allow for concordant translation of a number of cognate terms, 'wickedness,' 'the right,' and 'righteousness' included. The terms apply equally well to God and men though in the final analysis, God alone is צדיק. However, *wicked* and *righteous* have "Bible" stamped all over them. Outside of religious discourse, *righteous* in particular is not a productive word. The contrast in the text is

between the wanton and the innocent; the devotees of evil, and the one intent on good; between those who engage in reprehensible acts, and the one who prefers the wisdom of God. *The assembly of the righteous* is a term for the community of the faithful, those who are pledged to the truth of God. One's membership in the assembly of the righteous - a given, not a prize - entails (1) participation in worship; (2) the shaming of the wicked; and (3) the edification of the upright. All three responsibilities are exercised throughout the Psalms. Psalm 1 aims to edify the righteous, shame the wicked, and prepare those who would for the worship of praise.

Stood in the way is a metaphor for sticking to a particular pattern of behavior. In ancient times, one *sat in a seat* (*cathedra*, as in *ex cathedra*) to judge or teach. *Scoffers*: those who laugh at the moral order attributed to God, convinced that he does not enforce it. They mock those who conform themselves to it.

Ps 1:2. *Delight*, with an emotional overtone, not merely *preference* or *preoccupation*. *Delight* echoes *blessings* at the head of the composition. *Repeat*: repeat out loud; specifically, portions thereof.

Direction or *instruction* is a better translation of תורה than *law*. After all, *torah* in the Bible is the term used for a mother's *instruction* of her child (Prov 1:8). To be sure, *law* with reference to God's instruction has the advantage of equivalence with Greek *nomos* in the sense of a body of norms, used of יהוה's law / the law of Moses in the Old Greek Pentateuch and thereafter. NJPSV and Alter have *teaching* in Ps 1:2. NJPSV has *instruction* in Josh 1:8. Buber-Rosenzweig translate *torah* with "Weisung" = *direction*.

The advice of the wicked is contrasted with *direction* or *counsel* whose source is God. The counsel of יהוה is in textualized form. Compare Deut 17:18-19:

It shall be,
when he sits on the throne of his kingdom,
that he shall write himself
a copy of this corpus of direction in a book
under the supervision of the levitic priests.
He shall have it with him,
and he shall read aloud from it
all the days of his life.

וְהָיָה
כְּשִׁבְתוֹ עַל כִּסֵּא מַמְלַכְתּוֹ
וְכָתַב לוֹ
אֶת־מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת עַל־סֵפֶר
מִלְפָּנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם:
וְהָיְתָה עִמּוֹ
וְקָרָא בּוֹ
כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּו

Josh 1:8:

Let not depart
this book of direction^a from your mouth,
but repeat it day and night,
so that you will take care
to act according to all that is written in it,
for thus you will make your way thrive
and thus you will succeed.

לֹא יִמוּשׁ
סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ
וְהִגִּיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה
לְמַעַן תִּשְׁמַר
לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל־הַכְּתוּב בּוֹ
כִּי־אֲזַ תְּצַלִּיחַ אֶת־דְּרָכֶיךָ
וְאֲזַ תִּשְׁכַּל

^a "The entire body of direction Moses my servant made compulsory for you" (1:7)

Isa 59:21:

On my part, this is my covenant with you,
said יהוה,
My spirit that is on you
and my words that I put in your mouth
will not depart from your mouth,
from the mouth of your offspring,
or from the mouth of your offspring's offspring,
said יהוה,
now or ever.

וְאֲנִי זֹאת בְּרִיתִי אִוְתָם
אָמַר יְהוָה
רוּחִי אֲשֶׁר עָלַיָּךְ
וּדְבָרֵי אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמֵתִי בְּפִיָּךְ
לֹא־יִמּוּשׁוּ מִפִּיָּךְ
וּמִפִּי זֶרְעֶךָ
וּמִפִּי זֶרַע זֶרְעֶךָ
אָמַר יְהוָה
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם:

Some interpreters think Ps 1:2 refers to “heart-recitation” = meditation rather than “mouth-recitation” = out-loud repetition, but Josh 1:8 and Isa 59:21 “from your mouth,” and Deut 17:18-19 in which קרא means to “read aloud,” suggest otherwise. There are no grounds for holding that the verb הגה references murmured speech. A lion’s roar reverberates (הגה) over its prey (Isa 31:4); the mournful cry of a people reverberates (הגה) like the song of doves (Isa 59:11); the mouth of a principled person reverberates (הגה) with wisdom, and his tongue speaks (דבר) justice (Ps 37:30). In all these cases, the verb הגה references reiterative sound without regard to volume.

יהוה’s direction, like that of a mother (Prov 1:8), is full of warning. On a par with the two passages quoted, it is natural to think of the תורה *direction* of יהוה as that found in Deuteronomy, which one generation was to impress on the next, המצוה *the body of injunctions* to be repeated home away and away, “when lying down” and “when getting up” (Deut 6:7) – day and night in Ps 1:2.

However, given Ps 1’s placement at the head of the Psalter, it is also natural to think of the Psalter as the instruction of יהוה in which one is to delight, a fit object of memorization and recitation, morning, noon, and night.

Parallelisms establish equivalences. The strictest equivalences are not necessarily contiguous. Thus בעצת רשעים *in advice of the wicked* finds its closest echo in the relatively non-contiguous יהוה בתורת יהוה *in the direction of יהוה*. The expected oppositional counterpart of רשעים *wicked*, צדיקים *righteous*, does not appear until the end of the composition, in vv 5-6. In v 6 רשעים is repeated, forming an *inclusio*.

After an onset construction whose constituents occur in canonical order of verb + argument, the repeated fronting of *the argument* of the verb in the unit’s successive constituent clauses – a ב-introduced prepositional phrase in every case, with or without one or more preposed syntactic operators – draws attention to it. The fronting in v 1 prepares the way for and allows the fundamental contrast of the unit, signaled by כי אם, to be more sharply drawn.

הלך עמד ישב is a semantic sequence that builds to a crescendo of increasing compromise with the advice and behavior of the unprincipled. The crescendo sets the

stage for the reversal introduced by **כי אם**. **רשעים חטאים לצים**, on the other hand, is not a crescendo. The first two items are on a par. They are synonyms. The first is the standard oppositional counterpart to **צדיקים**, the second no less general of a term, but not used in a trope with **צדיקים**. **לצים** is an example of parallelism of specification. A thematically affine passage, Ps 26:4-5, takes the opposite tack, in which **מרעים** and **רשעים** are an example of parallelism of generalization relative to the preceding **מת־שוא** and **נעלמים**:

I have not sat with scoundrels,
I will not go in with dissemblers.

לֹא־יִשְׁבְּתִי עִם־מְתֵי־שׂוֹא
וְעַם־נְעֻלְמִים לֹא אָבוֹא:

I hate the company of evil men,
with the wicked I will not sit.

שְׂנֵאתִי קְהַל מְרָעִים
וְעַם־רְשָׁעִים לֹא אֵשֵׁב:

Tense-switching is a feature of vv 1-3. The *qatals* of 1:1 encode a past tense relative to the non-past tense markup in the embedded clauses of 1:2 - a nominal clause followed by a *yiqtol* clause with a temporal argument **יומם ולילה**. The temporal argument encodes aspect (durativity).

What blessings accrue to the one who has not done *x*, *y*, and *z* in *the past!* - the *qatals* **הלך עמד ישב תורת יהוה** mark the fact. In *the present* (without excluding the past), **יהוה** is the subject's delight. The nominal clause is open to this understanding, and serves to encode it in context. Now and in *the future*, the subject will repeat out loud passages from the corpus of direction in which he delights. A *yiqtol* marks this.

All the referenced actions and attitudes in vv 1-3 are continuous in nature. All are viewed in their wholeness. Apart from **יומם ולילה**, any supposed contrast in aspect would not fit the semantics of the case. *Qatal* **הפץ** in lieu of the nominal **הפצו** was conceivable. In that case tense-switching would not have occurred. If *yiqtol* served to encode imperfectivity, as aspect-prominent analyses of classical Hebrew suggests, one might have expected a string of *yiqtol*s in vv 1-3. In point of fact, a *yiqtol* tends to be found in an **אשרי** construction after an imperative. In that case, *yiqtol* encodes a future tense relative to the reference point (now) implied by the imperative. Ps 34:9:

Taste and see
that **יהוה** is good!
The blessings of the man who takes refuge in him!

טַעֲמוּ וּרְאוּ
כִי־טוֹב יְהוָה
אֲשֶׁר־יִחְסֶה־בּוֹ

Tense-switching – not aspect-switching – is no less obvious in Ps 137:8-9. Tense-switching in parallelism is a form of merismus. In the past as in the non-past, particular acts or attitudes characterize a particular subject (e.g. Ps 26:4-5 quoted above; Pr 3:13).

Ps 1:3. *He will be like a tree planted by channels of water where he will yield his fruit in season; whose foliage will not fade, and all he does will thrive.* Cf. Ps 92:13-14. *He* is spoken of, not *she*, per the usual in ancient literature, and in modern literature until recently. The use of the third masculine pronoun foregrounds but does not limit the application of the psalm to those of masculine gender. The tree and the individual who is

faithful to יהוה merge in the course of the simile. My translation seeks to bring that out. In a parallel passage, Jer 17:7-8, the tenor-vehicle distinction is likewise blurred.

Blessed is the man	בְּרוּךְ הַגֵּבֶר
who will trust in יהוה,	אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בַּיהוָה
whose source of trust will be יהוה!	וְהָיָה יְהוָה מְבִטְחוֹ:
He shall be like a tree transplanted by water,	וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שֶׁתוּלַע לְעַלְמִים
by a stream he shall send forth his roots.	וְעַל-יּוֹבֵל יִשְׁלַח שְׁרָשָׁיו
He shall not notice when heat comes,	וְלֹא-יִרְאֶה כִּי-יָבֵא חֹם
his foliage shall be verdant.	וְהָיָה עָלָיו רֵעָנָן
In a year of stress he shall not pine,	וּבְשָׁנַת בְּצָרָת לֹא-יִדָּאָג
and he shall not be deterred from producing fruit.	וְלֹא-יִמְשַׁח מִמַּעֲשׂוֹת פְּרִי:

Ps 1:4. *Not so the wicked. On the contrary, they are like chaff that the wind drives away.* The fates of the wanton and the innocent are intertwined. The wicked are so called because they prey on the innocent. There is no way that the innocent can *stand* (persist) unless the malevolent are *driven away* from their feasting on them. For a prayer to the same effect and with identical imagery, see Ps 35:4-5.

In Job 21:17-18, Job asks how often the wicked receive their just reward. He implies that he thinks, “not often enough.” Job desires that they receive it, because as long as they do not, the innocent are at their mercy. The imagery is similar to that of Ps 1:

How often is the lamp of the wicked extinguished,	כַּמָּה נִרְרָשְׁעִים יִדְעוּךָ
and their doom come upon them?	וַיָּבֵא עֲלֵימוֹ אֵיֶדֶם
(How often) does he apportion lots in anger?	תְּבַלִּים יַחֲלֵק בְּאַפוֹ
Let them be like straw before wind,	יִהְיוּ כְּתֶבֶן לְפָנֵי-רוּחַ
like chaff a storm stole away!	וּכְמֶזְצָא גָּנְבָתוֹ סוּפָה:

Ps 1:5. *The wicked in judgment will not stand.* The reference is to the judgment phase of a trial. **במשפט** *in the judgment = in judicial proceedings* is a securely attested idiom: Pr 18:5; Lev 19:15, 35; Deut 1:17 – the last passage is telling:

You shall be no respecter of persons in judgment.	לֹא-תִכְבְּרוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט
Small and great alike you will hear.	כְּקוֹטָן כְּגֹדֵל תִּשְׁמָעוּן
You shall be terrified of no man,	לֹא תִגְוְרוּ מִפְּנֵי-אִישׁ
for judgment belongs to God.	כִּי-הִמְשִׁפֵּט לְאֱלֹהִים הוּא
The case that is too hard for you	וְהִדְבֵּר אֲשֶׁר-יִקְשֶׁה מִכֶּם
you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.	תִּקְרְבוּן אֵלַי וְשִׁמְעֵתִיו:

In judgment is not a reference to judgment in the sense of *the wind driving away* the wicked in whatever circumstance, but to the determination of judgment in judicial proceedings. The thought of the psalm transits from the general in v 4 to the particular in

v 5. In the context of law grounded in sought communion with the Guarantor of law, the promise is that God will ensure that those committed to breaking the law do not prevail *in judgment*. Such individuals are to be cut off from the number or *assembly* of the faithful.

The non-success of the wicked in judicial proceedings and their excommunication from polite society are necessary if the prey of the wicked are to be protected.

In a legal system worth its salt, commitment to justice involves ensuring that (1) the wicked do not prevail in the very place the innocent seek redress, a court of law; and (2) predators are segregated from actual and potential victims. Law and order that is devoid of such practical consequences is not law and order at all.

According to Psalm 1, יהוה stands behind commitment to justice in the above sense. יהוה actively pursues it in ways that befit deity, in collaboration with, not in lieu of, human engagement to the same end.

When God's proactive commitment to justice is not shared by a society, the future of that society is put at risk. According to the teaching of the prophets, intervention on the historical plane will follow. The situation will be forced through a cataclysm of the kind that zeroes out the known world, and ushers in a new one. Zeph 3:11b-12:

For then I will rid from your midst
your proudly arrogant.

כִּי־אֲזַק אֶסִיר מִקִּרְבְּךָ
עַל־יְדֵי גְאוֹתְךָ

You shall no longer be high and mighty
on my holy mountain.

וְלֹא־תוֹסֵפִי לְגִבְהַה עוֹד
בְּהַר קִדְשִׁי:

I will leave a remnant in your midst,
a poor and humble people,
who will take refuge in יהוה's name.

וְהִשְׁאַרְתִּי בְּקִרְבְּךָ
עַם עָנִי וְדָל
וְחָסוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה:

Ps 1:6. *For יהוה takes note of the way of the righteous, and the way of the wicked will perish.* The conceptualization of the moral imperative as a choice between two "ways" is a prominent trope of ethical instruction. Prov 4:14-15.18-19:

The path of the wicked do not take,
do not set foot in the way of evil men.

בְּאֶרֶח רְשָׁעִים אַל־תֵּבֵא
וְאֶל־תֵּאֲשֶׁר בְּדֶרֶךְ רָעִים:

Let it go, do not traverse it,
veer away from it, pass it by. . . .

פָּרַעְהוּ אֶל־תַּעֲבֹר־בוּ
שִׁטָּה מֵעֲלָיו וְעָבֹר . . .

The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
ever lighter until the break of day.

וְאֶרֶח צְדִיקִים כְּאוֹר־נֶגְהָ
הוֹלֵךְ וְאוֹר עֵד־נִכּוֹן הַיּוֹם:

The way of the wicked is like murk,
they do not know what trips them up.^a

דֶּרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים כְּאֶפְלָה
לֹא־יָדְעוּ בְּמָה יִכְשְׁלוּ:

^a Lit., *what they trip on*.

The horns of conflict a passage like this take for granted sound trite unless they are filled with specific content found elsewhere in ethical instruction of the same milieu. The combat a *צדיק* engages in is laid out in Job 29:12.15-17. Job remembers his past, before

he lost his estate, his children, and his health. In so doing, he describes himself as a צדיק or תם וישר *blameless and upright one*:

I would rescue the poor man who cried out,
the orphan, the one with no one to help him. . . .

אֲמִלֵּט עֲנֵי מְשׁוּעַ
וַיִּתּוֹם וְלֹא־עֹזֵר לוֹ . . .

I became eyes to the blind,
feet to the lame.

עֵינַיִם הָיִיתִי לְעֵוֵר
וַרְגְּלַיִם לַפֶּסֶחַ אָנִי:

I was a father to the needy,
the dispute I was unfamiliar with, I would
investigate.

אָב אָנֹכִי לְאֲבִיוֹנִים
וְרֵב לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי אֶחְקַרְהוּ:

I broke the jaws of the wrongdoer,
I would wrest prey from his teeth.

וְאֲשַׁבְּרָה מִתְלַעוֹת עוֹל
וּמִשְׁנֵי אֲשֻׁלֵּי־טָרֶף:

It is the path of the righteous *in this sense* that is, or should be, like the light of dawn, ever lighter till the break of day (Prov 4:18; compare Prov 10:28). Ps 112, which covers much the same ground as Ps 1, understands the identity of the righteous in the same way, and in conjunction with Ps 111, models it directly on the identity of יהוה. Whoever is not thus engaged has no right to call herself a צדיק. The promise of Ps 1, the vision of a tree planted by channels of water, whose foliage never fades, is not hers to claim.

People like to think of themselves as followers of a more excellent way compared to that laid out in the ethics God gave to Israel of old.

That would be the case if people followed the blueprint of the Sermon on the Mount or that of the rabbis evoked in Pirkei Avot, blueprints that embrace all of the above, and up the ante still.

Few follow either way, or consider them models. In place of a way of life that is an expression of a proactive commitment to justice and that involves table-fellowship with the poor and hands-on advocacy on their behalf, one person at a time, most prefer a "virtual" form of ethics which consists of adjusting one's thought life to whatever is considered politically correct in one's milieu. This provides ideological cover for a concomitant, single-minded pursuit of personal peace and prosperity.

In Ps 92:3-9, the pushmi-pullyu quality of the destiny of the wicked is highlighted:

For you have made me glad, יהוה,
by your accomplishment,
I put to melody the work of your hands.

כִּי־שִׂמְחַתְנִי יְהוָה בְּפַעְלֶיךָ
בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֲרַנֵּן:

How great, O יהוה, are your works,
very deep are your designs.

מִה־גָּדְלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיֶיךָ יְהוָה
מְאֹד עֲמֻקּוֹ מַחְשְׁבֹתֶיךָ:

Only a brute cannot know,
only a fool cannot grasp the following:

אִישׁ־בְּעֵר לֹא יָדַע
וּכְסִיל לֹא־יָבִין אֶת־זֹאת:

when the wicked shot up like wheat,
and the run of evildoers blossomed,
their being smashed for all time was the purpose,
with you above all, forever יהוה!

בְּפִרְחֵ רְשָׁעִים כְּמוֹ־עֵשֶׂב
וַיִּצְיָצוּ כָל־פְּעֻלֵי אֹן

וְאַתָּה מְרוֹם לְעֵלְמָם יְהוָה: לְהִשְׁמָדָם עַד־עַד:

This emphasis is extraneous in Ps 1, but not incompatible with it.

Psalm 1 is characterized by a dense web of semantic, syntactic, morphological, and sonic parallelisms. Here is a partial color-coded inventory:



אשר האיש אשר is a sound unit whose thrice repeated sounds (a, š^c, r, ē/ī/e) are tantamount to a musical flourish at the beginning of a symphony. The harmonic sound unit is at one and the same time a syntactic unit that introduces the entire composition. It is “the odd man out” in that it does not stand in parallelism with subsequent text units. As such it stands out, as does יומם ולילה at subunit end.

Rhymes are more pervasive in ancient Hebrew poetry than often noted, but the location of rhymed elements is not fixed. For example, לא הלך לא עמד לא ישב constitute a sound rhyme – not to mention a syntactic and morphological rhyme – in reinforcement of the semantic rhyme. But the rhyme occurs once in the middle of a line and twice at the end of lines.

Another rhyme: רשעים חטאים לצים. במושב לצים. בתורת יהוה which is carried forward by בתורתו יהגה. The probable pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, ending in ey, must be recalled.

Lexical chains stand out if one looks out for them.

עצה דרך מושב תורה משפט דרך דרך
לא יבול יצליח תאבד

¹ אשרי-macarisms in the Pss: 1:1; 2:12; 32:1.2; 33:12; 34:9; 40:5; 41:2; 65:5; 84:5.6.13; 89:16; 94:12; 106:3; 112:1; 119:1.2; 127:5; 128:1; 137:8.9; 144:15.15; 146:5; in Prov: 3:13; 8:32.34; 14:21; 16:20; 20:7; 28:14; 29:18. Compare also: Job 5:17; Isa 30:18; etc.