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Psalm 11

Phase 1: ORAL



Step 1: Listen

Listening to a guide translation and versions of the psalm

There are two guide translations in Appendix A:

1. **Hebrew-mirror** - copied from the Exegetical Layout and adjusted for minimal readability,
2. **Hebrew-tight** - the literal, type 1 corresponding (but more readable) translation, exegetically the same as Hebrew-mirror.

Activity: Read the Hebrew-mirror and the Hebrew tight version in Appendix A. One reader per translation or one reader for all translations (as skills permit). Others to listen with closed books. Consider 'how to listen' – posture? with responses? in silence?



Step 2: Familiarise

Explaining and discussing the meaning and beauty of the psalm

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE PSALM

After listening to the guide translations, please respond to any of the following questions:

- What do you like about the psalm?
- What do you find difficult?
- **How does the psalm make you feel?**
- Which verse do you find particularly important in this psalm?
- What does this psalm teach you about the LORD? What is the LORD like?
- What is repeated a lot in this psalm?



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CREATIVE RESPONSES

Discuss:

- What emotions are being expressed by the speaker in the psalm?

Creative Activity 1: Imagine facing a terrible and inescapable situation. What adjectives would you use to describe your feelings? What figures of speech do people use in your community to describe desperation?

Discuss:

- How do people talk about righteousness and unrighteousness in your community?

Creative Activity 1: Are there ways to speak about punishment in your language? In English we might say, 'get their just deserts' or 'get what's coming to you' or 'throw the book at someone'. What idioms do you have in your language?

ENGAGING WITH THE WHOLE PSALM

Address the following topics:

- *The participants in the psalm, the different “speakers” and “audiences”*
- *The theme and flow of the psalm*
- *The peak or peaks of the psalm*
- *The patterns of images, like metaphors, if relevant*
- *The genre and purpose of the psalm*
- *The historical background and the context of the psalm, the story behind the psalm, if relevant*
- *Key poetic features of the psalm, but only those relevant to the big picture*

Discuss:

- When would this psalm be sung in the life of the people of Israel?
- Who is the main speaker in the Psalm?
- Who are they speaking to?
- Who are they speaking about?

Activity: Take some time to act out the scenes in this psalm as a whole group. First, list all the characters you remember, as a group. Then describe their actions, as a group. Then act out the actions, as a group. It's ok if you don't remember all the characters and actions the first time. Act it out once from what you remember. The second time listen to the psalm again (read by the facilitator) and then act. The third time, act out the psalm as someone (facilitator) reads out the psalm.

Discuss:

- What movement can you feel in this psalm? How does the mood change as you go along? Is the change gradual or does it surprise you?



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- Are there any repeated ideas or words in the psalm? What are they?

Activity: Now that you have a better understanding of the characters and their actions, describe to each other the emotions each character might have felt. You could act out these emotions as a group. What emotions did the psalmist experience? How would you express those with your body?

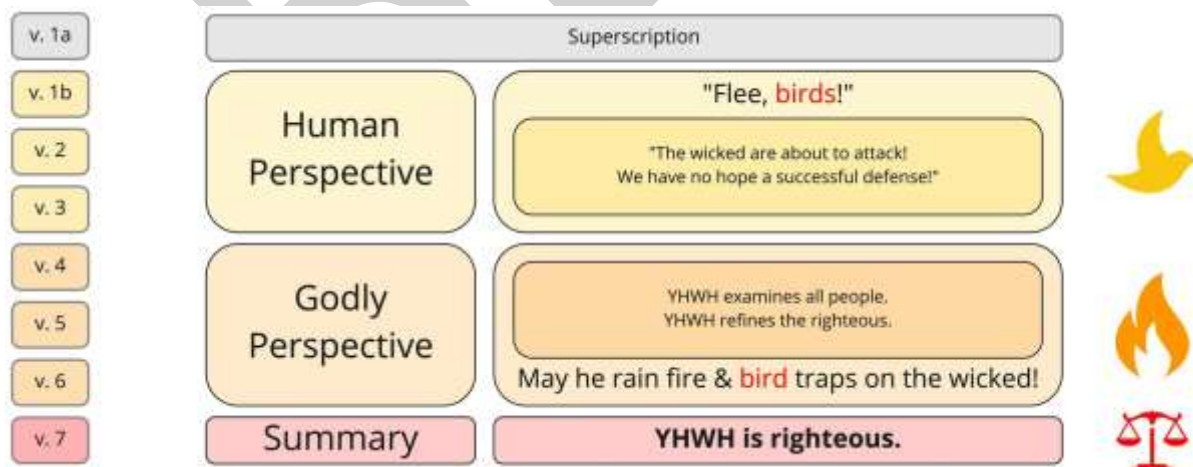
Discuss:



- Look at these images. What do they represent to you?
Do they have significance in your culture? If not, the facilitator can explain what they might mean in the facilitator's culture and in the culture of Scriptura, the organisation that created the images¹. Then the group can re-design the images that match their culture.

Activity: If each of these images represented a part of the psalm, in what order would you put them in? Why? (Use printouts or the projector.)

- Now look at this diagram (on the projector). Did you put the images in the same order?
 - The diagram has a suggested stanza layout. Do you agree with it?
 - See the note in the Exegetical Layout section on the possible reading of the text critical issue in vs 6.



¹ Psalms Layer by Layer, Psalm 11. https://psalms.scriptura.world/w/Psalm_11



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Theme and Flow of the Psalm

The psalm moves from an initial place of assurance, then quickly moves to a place of desperation, and finally back to a place of assurance and confidence. The main character stands before his enemies believing he will soon be defeated. But as he rebukes those people who advised him to flee, and he remembers the LORD's righteousness. He knows that because the LORD is righteous, the LORD will rightly punish the wicked and rescue the righteous.

- What type of song or prayer is this psalm? Do you have something similar in your language?
- What triggered the psalmist to compose it?
- What did the psalmist want to achieve? Or hope to achieve for himself or for his audience? Why did he want to say what he said in the psalm? What motivated him to say it?

Genre and Significance of the Psalm

The relation of genre of the Hebrew poem to local genres (of poetry and music) should be explored early and helps participants to carry ideas known from that genre into their thinking in Steps 5 and 10.

- What is the story behind this psalm? What is its historical context?

Historical setting of the psalm

There's no definite historical setting for this psalm. It could easily fit the scenario of a king facing a battle where enemies have surrounded his city and threaten the foundations of his walls. Or it may reflect a more everyday occurrence where a person is dealing with a difficult and discouraging situation where they feel like they are being attacked. If David wrote it, perhaps was reflecting on the time Saul attempted to harm him recorded in 1 Samuel.

UNLOCKING SOME OF THE BIG PICTURE OBSTACLES TO THE PSALM

- What do birds symbolize in your community? What do you think the psalmist was trying to communicate with the sentence, "Flee to your mountain like a bird."
- Do you use a bow and arrow as a weapon in your community? How do you describe the process? There are three verbs in vs 2. (Does it sound strange to shoot when it is dark?)
- Do you think the foundations in vs 3 are real or metaphorical, or both?
- What does it mean to 'see his face' in vs 7?

SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

The psalm has 3 stanzas and a summary line. It starts by stating the problem from the human perspective then moves to describing the LORD and what he will do with the problem, and in doing so it describes the situation from a godly perspective. The final verse is a summary statement of encouragement. (Guide #2)

Verse 1-3



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Verses 4-5

Verse 6

Verse 7

FINAL SUMMING UP

To summarise the Psalm, discuss the following questions:

- In summary, what is the main point/message of the psalm?
- What does this psalm teach you about the LORD?
- How could your church (or you) use this psalm?
- What heading or title would the group suggest for this psalm?



Step 3: Internalise

Absorbing the big picture of the psalm

In this section we look at the whole psalm so that we can retell the message of the entire psalm. This is not an attempt to memorize the psalm, but to be able to understand the whole message and to express it in the target language. The facilitator should do at least the first two activities and consider doing the third activity, if desired.

CREATIVE RESPONSES

Internalisation Activity 1: (e.g.) Drawing – There are two kinds—one big picture that captures all the events or elements of a set; or, a separate image/drawing for each event/element). Translators can each do their own, or they can work together to create one for the team. Display these drawings where they can be seen to jog memory as translators practice and record their oral drafts.

Example: Choose three people. Each person draws one image. The first person draws an image to represent Stanza 1. The second, stanza 2 and the third stanza 3. Show the images to the whole group. Elicit one word from the group that represents the image and the main message of the stanza.

Internalisation Activity 2: (e.g.) Skits—act out what's happening in the set. Encourage them to use facial expressions, body language, motions, movement to try to experience the emotions and the sequence of events. They can also use this opportunity to try out how they will say any dialogue (direct speech) in the set.



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Internalisation Activity 3: (e.g.) Gestures/hand motions/body poses—translators choose a pose or motion to represent each event/element of the set, in order. Then they do these motions as they retell the set.

Example: Split into three groups and give each group one stanza each. In each group one person reads a line from the stanza and as a group decide on one word or action that represents that line.

Internalisation Activity 4: Come back together as a group and present your drawings and your words. You should have 3 words and images to represent the meaning of each of the three stanzas. You should also have 19 key words (or action) that represent one line each. Try to memorize the words and chant them as a group. If you chose the action option, perform the actions and the group call out the words you are miming.



Step 4: Compose

Crafting a song of the psalm

Once the artist-translators have sufficiently internalised the psalm in the workshop setting, compose a song, poem, rap, chant, or prayer to capture as much of the psalm as possible. This could be a further refinement of a song, if that was done in Step 3.

Activity: Participants are to choose a style or genre that is relevant for the psalm, and to set the whole psalm or sections to a rhythm or music.

Activity: Make a recording of the composition(s).

Discuss:

- What genres of poetry, song or dance have you discussed so far?
- In your community, how do you sing songs of encouragement? With an exciting and fast beat? Slowly? What part do you repeat?

SUGGESTIONS

- The first part of vs 1 is a strong statement of truth and encouragement. How can you say something like this with confidence in your language? Perhaps as a call and response? It's a punchy two-word statement in Hebrew.
- In vv 4-5 can you experiment with your poetry or melody to express the two sets of parallel lines? Is there a kind of repetition that will show this?
- Verse 6 is the high point in the drama. Instead of the psalmist experiencing bows and arrows, the fight will turn on the enemies and they will experience coals and fire raining down on them from the sky. Can you experiment with the rhythm or melody to show the action?



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- The psalm ends with confidence. How can your song or melody express confidence? Do you get louder or softer? Do you end with excitement or peace?



Step 5: Draft

Translating stanza-by-stanza

To take full advantage of the oral form, avoid reverting to written Biblical text at this point. Divide into smaller groups and let one in each group read through guide translation #2: Hebrew-tight (or play a recording) while others translate. The oral draft can at that point be recorded and/or immediately written down (Step 6 merged with Step 5).

Activity: Have a look in the poems of your language and look for instances where there is a strange word-order, not the usual. Sometimes it would work to use some unusual word-order in your language as well. Experiment a bit with different word-orders and see what sounds the most beautiful, the most poetic.

STANZA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Often it speeds the work to have different groups do different stanzas. If you do this, make sure you all hear the psalm from top to bottom and to make suggestions to other groups when you come together...

Stanza 1: Verses 1-3

1 In Yahweh I take refuge.

How will you say to my soul,

“Flee to your mountain bird.”

2 For look, the wicked bend a bow,
they have set their arrow on a bowstring
to shoot in darkness at the upright of heart.

3 When the foundations are destroyed,
what will righteous one do?”

1 In the LORD I take refuge.

How will you say to my soul,

“Flee to your mountain like a bird.”

2 For look, the wicked bend a bow
they have set have their arrow on a bowstring
to shoot in darkness at the upright of heart.

3 When the foundations are destroyed
what will a righteous one do?

Discuss:

- How can you describe getting a weapon ready in short, sharp phrases like this? The psalmist is trying to build a scene of increasing fear. The enemies are getting ready for battle! They sneak under the cover of darkness.
- There are two conjunctions: ‘for’ and ‘when’. They are introducing two pieces of information as grounds for the speech act in 1c. How do you translate this kind of structure?



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- There are two groups of people in this stanza: the righteous (singular) and wicked (plural). Can you keep the singular and plural difference in your translation? Who do you think the singular righteous person is?
- There is a text critical note in vs 1. See Appendix D for more details.

Creative activity: Make a poetic oral translation of these verses and record it.

Stanza 2: Verses 4-5

4 Yahweh is in his holy temple;
Yahweh is in the heavens—his throne.
His eyes see;
His eyelids test the sons of man.
5 Yahweh tests a righteous one.
But the wicked and lover of violence
his soul hates.

4 The LORD is in his holy temple.
The LORD is in the heavens—his throne.
His eyes see.
His eyelids test the sons of man.
5 The LORD tests a righteous one
but the wicked and lover of violence
his soul hates.

Discuss:

- There are two sets of parallel lines in verses 4-5: one describes where the LORD is and the second describes what he does. Can you find a way to keep the parallelism?
- What kind of word would you use for the idea of 'test' or 'examine'? What do you understand by this verb?

Creative activity: Make a poetic oral translation of these verses and record it.

Stanza 3: Verse 6

6 May it rain on wicked ones—coals, fire, and sulphur
and a wind of scorching be the portion of their cup

6 May it rain coals, fire, and sulphur on the wicked
and let a scorching wind be the portion of their cup.

Discuss:

- How do you ask the LORD for justice? This verse is a call on the LORD for right punishment on wicked people.
- What kinds of punishment do you ask for? The psalmist is asking for something like what happened to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24) where terrible things fell from the sky and killed people.
- The 'scorching wind' suggests the destruction a drought brings to the land combined with hot winds. Do you have a specific word for that kind of hot wind?
- The facilitator can discuss the text critical issue. See Appendix D for details.



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Creative activity: Make a poetic oral translation of these verses and record it.

Stanza 4: Verse 7 – Summary Verse

7 For righteous is Yahweh.
Righteous deeds he loves.
The upright one will see his face.

7 For righteous is the LORD.
Righteous deeds he loves.
The upright one will see his face.

Discuss:

- This is the final summary statement. It connects to the first part of vs 1. The psalmist can take refuge in the LORD because he knows he is one of the upright. How can you make a connection to the first verse here?
- As a summary statement nearly all the key terms/verbs in the psalm are in this verse. Are you able to repeat the same words as well?
 - 'righteous' (vv. 3a, 5a)
 - 'the LORD' (vv. 1a, 4ab, 5a)
 - 'loves' (v. 5b)
 - 'upright' (v. 2c)
 - 'looks at' (v. 4c)
- Do you have an idiom like the Hebrew one for 'seeing his face'? It means to be close to the LORD and be in his presence.
- 'upright' and 'righteous' are two different words in Hebrew. Can you experiment with two different words, or do you need to use the same word?

Creative activity: Make a poetic oral translation of these verses and record it.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Activities:

- 1) Listen again to the recordings of each verse/section.
- 2) Think about how to use ideas from the previous creative activities, and try to include the different ideas you've had so far.
- 3) Make a poetic oral representation of the complete psalm and then record it.



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Phase 2: TEXT



Step 6: Transcribe

Make a written draft

Activity: Transcribe the recordings of each section/stanza onto paper or a computer.

Before moving on to the exegetical check, check the transcribed draft for the following. This should be done as a whole group, looking at the psalm projected onto a screen or wall. It is up to the facilitator to make this step move on at a good pace, but getting this out of the way at the beginning will help the exegetical and poetical checks that follow to stay focused on essential matters.

1. **Versification:** put the verse numbers into the psalm.
2. Check that the number of the psalm, and any **superscription**, are in place at the top. (Superscriptions are often left out completely according to team policy, but they are recommended to be put in the written text but not the song.)
3. Put in the **stanza breaks** (blank lines usually).
4. Correct the **punctuation**, in particular finding out where the sentences should end. Different groups use different approaches. Our recommendation is to use capital letters only for the beginning of sentences, not for the beginning of each poetic line.
5. Correct the **spelling**. You may find that there is a lot of discussion over this. The group needs to have consistency but also needs to abide by any government guidelines.
6. Raise any questions you have about the **back translation** at this point. The back translation just needs to be comprehensible; it does not need spell checks etc. You, the facilitator, are the only person who needs it. However, without a good back translation you cannot understand what is going on. As a bonus, at least a couple of exegetical questions you've prepared usually turn out to be unnecessary after this step.
7. Check the **line divisions** (this refers to how the power is broken up into lines and where to make those breaks).



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Step 7: Contents Check

Checking exegetical faithfulness

The purpose of this step is to check the content of your draft for faithfulness and trustworthiness as you compare it to the guide translations found in Appendix A and details in Appendix B.

Activity: Review the draft translation in detail, using the oral recording of Step 5 or the transcription of Step 6. Do an exegetical check by comparing the draft with the guide translations given in Appendix A and the exegetical layout in Appendix B and adjust the text as necessary.

EXEGETICAL CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- The two conditional statements in verses 1-3.
- The text slows down to describe each step of weapon preparation in verse 2. It would not be advisable to summarise the activity into just one verb.
- The parallelisms and idioms in verse 4.
- How to translate 'righteous' and 'upright' in verse 5 and 7. They are different words in Hebrew but perhaps the target language uses the same word.
- The jussive verb in verse 6. You need to check that the target language has a similar form. It is not an imperative but a prayer-wish type of form of the verb.



Step 8: Poetry Check

Compare and weigh the poetic features

Attention now needs to be given to the poetic devices found in the Hebrew, as well as poetic devices found in the receptor language that might not have been used in the Hebrew text (or might have served a different function).

Activity: Consider the poetic features of your translation. Compare also the compositions from Step 4 with the draft. See if there are any features from the compositions that can be used in the final official version.

POETIC CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- The word or syllable count. In the Hebrew the longest line is verse 6.
- The many repeated words and word pairs.



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- 'wicked' (5b & 6a)
- 'test' (4b) and 'tests' (5a)
- 'righteous' (3b, 5a, 7a) and 'upright' (7b)
- 'lover' (5) and 'loves' (7a)
- 'soul' (1b & 5b) which can be translated more idiomatically like the NIV does.
- The pair of three items: verse 2 ('bend', 'have set', 'shoot') and verse 6 ('coals', 'fire', 'sulphur').
- The 2 sets of parallelisms in vs 4.
- Nearly every root in the psalm is repeated in verse 7. It's a summary statement.
 - 'righteous' (vv. 3a, 5a)
 - 'the LORD' (vv. 1a, 4ab, 5a)
 - 'loves' (v. 5b)
 - 'upright' (v. 2c)
 - 'see' (v. 4c)



Step 9: Finalise

Preparing the final version of an authenticated translation

Preparation of the final version which will serve as an authorized translation, that in turn will serve as the basis for performing the psalm in the community.

Activity: Check the spelling of your transcription.

Activity: Recheck the punctuation, for instance whether there are appropriate commas for pauses, the in-setting, and the layout of paragraphs to represent stanza segmentation.

Activity: Recheck the line divisions of your transcription and recheck the essential accuracy of the back translation (not worrying about spelling).

Activity: In AVTT, open a new passage for Step 9 and make a blank recording (a second or two without any speech). This will open transcription and back translation boxes in that passage. Copy the transcription and the back translation of your translation into the new step. This will be the place you make changes as you go through Steps 7 and 8 and edit your translation. The performances will be based on this version.

Activity: Copy the final written text into Paratext.



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Phase 3: PERFORMANCE



Step 10: Perform

Performing the psalm in your community

Introduction to the creative performances. Different groups can do different performances.

Psalm-specific ideas:

- Possible song title: *Confidence in Crisis*²

Activity: Complete a transcript and back translation for the lyrics of any song created by the team to be checked before recording.

FINAL CHECKLIST

In the end of each psalm, there should ideally be four products:

1. Transcription: An authorized, authenticated, or officially written draft in AVTT and Paratext.
2. Dramatic Reading: A recording of a dramatic reading or recitation of the whole psalm, using the authenticated version word-for-word, recorded in AVTT.
3. Whole Psalm Performance: A recording of a performance of the whole psalm, using the entire authenticated version but with freedom to adapt it for authentic performance, including poetic and dramatic features beyond the authenticated version, recorded in AVTT.
4. Song or Hymn: A recording of a performance of part of the psalm including the main idea of the psalm (this could be from v 2 as mentioned in Psalm-specific ideas above), in the form of a song or a hymn, with or without drama, with freedom to adapt it for authentic performance and to make it easy to sing and remember, recorded in AVTT. An improved version of the Step 4 composition could be used here.
5. Chorus: A recording of a short chorus of a main verse of the psalm. Something catchy and highly memorable, recorded in AVTT.

² Peter C. Craigie, [Psalms 1–50](#), 2nd ed., vol. 19 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 131.





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Appendix A: Guide Translations

Guide Translation #1 (Hebrew-mirror)

Psalm 11

For the director. Of David.

1 In Yahweh I take refuge.

How will you say to my soul,
“Flee to your mountain bird.”

2 For look, the wicked bend a bow,
they have set their arrow on a bowstring
to shoot in darkness at the upright of heart.

3 When the foundations are destroyed,
what will righteous one do?”

4 Yahweh is in his holy temple;
Yahweh is in the heavens—his throne.
His eyes see;

His eyelids test the sons of man.

5 Yahweh tests a righteous one.
But the wicked and lover of violence
his soul hates.

6 May it rain on wicked ones—coals, fire, and
sulphur
and a wind of scorching be the portion of their
cup

7 For righteous is Yahweh.
Righteous deeds he loves.
The upright one will see his face.

Guide Translation #2 (Hebrew-tight)

Psalm 11

For the director. Of David.

1 In the LORD I take refuge.

How will you say to my soul,
“Flee to your mountain like a bird.”

2 For look, the wicked bend a bow
they have set have their arrow on a bowstring
to shoot in darkness at the upright of heart.

3 When the foundations are destroyed
what will a righteous one do?

4 The LORD is in his holy temple.
The LORD is in the heavens—his throne.
His eyes see.

His eyelids test the sons of man.

5 The LORD tests a righteous one
but the wicked and lover of violence
his soul hates.

6 May it rain coals, fire, and sulphur on the
wicked
and let a scorching wind be the portion of their
cup.

7 For righteous is the LORD.
Righteous deeds he loves.
The upright one will see his face.





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Appendix B: Exegetical Layout

The genre of Psalm 11 is a psalm of encouragement.

The theme is confidence in the LORD. The psalmist is sure the LORD answers prayer, rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked.

SUGGESTED HEADING

Confidence in the LORD OR The LORD is Righteous

Coding for TAM Verbs and Hebrew features:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qatal perfective = blue Yiqtol imperfective = red | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infinitive construct = purple Wayyiqtol waw+imperfective = pink Jussive/cohortative = light brown | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imperative = brown Participle = green Weqatal = navy |
|--|---|--|

לְמַנְצֵחַ	1 for.the.director
לְדָוִד	of.David
בִּיהוָה חֲסִיתִי	in.Yahweh I.take.refuge ³
אֵיד תֹּאמְרוּ לְנַפְשִׁי	⁴ how ⁵ you.say to.my.soul ⁶

³ The introductory statement is made up of a short, sharp two-word colon. There is a marked difference between this line and the next.

⁴ This interjection is the start of a question.

⁵ It is unclear who this 'you' is. Perhaps it is a taunt from the enemy or perhaps it is advice given to the psalmist from someone in his own community.

⁶ While this literally says 'my soul' you can translate it as 'to me'. It's important to point out that 'נַפֶּשׁ' (soul) is repeated in verse 5. Literally 'my soul' but it means 'my whole self' or just 'me'.



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נוֹדוּ ⁷ הַרְכָּם צְפוּר:	⁸ flee your.mountain like bird ⁹
כִּי הִנֵּה הַרְשָׁעִים	2 for ¹⁰ look ¹¹ the.wicked
יִדְרְכוּ קֶשֶׁת	¹² they.bend a.bow
כּוֹנְנוּ חֶצֶם עַל-יָתֵר	they.set their.arrow on-a.bowstring
לִירוֹת בְּמוֹ-אֶפֶל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל:	to.shoot in. ¹³ darkness at.upright.of-heart
כִּי הִשְׁתּוֹת יִהְרָסוּ	3 when ¹⁴ the.foundations destroyed
צַדִּיק מֶה-פָּעַל:	a.righteous(one) ¹⁵ ¹⁶ what-he.has.done

⁷ This word does not make sense in Hebrew because it is a Qere-Ketiv. The guide writer is using the Qere. See Appendix D for more information.

⁸ It's not clear where this discourse ends. Perhaps the psalmist continues quoting what is said to him until the end of verse 3. Or it could finish at the end of verse 1 with the psalmist speaking himself from verse 2.

⁹ The image of the scared bird flying away was an insult in the ancient near east. King Tilgath-Pileasar was recorded as saying that his defeated enemies were frightened by his attack and flew away to mountains like birds.

https://www.academia.edu/29044459/The_Bird_and_the_Mountains_A_Note_on_Psalm_11_VT_67_Fasc_3_2017_470_79

¹⁰ Verse 2 and verse 3 start with the particle כִּי. They are conjunctions introducing the grounds for the speech act in 1c.

¹¹ הִנֵּה is a particle that is often translated as 'look' or 'behold' in English Bibles even though it is not the verb 'to look'. It is drawing attention, or pointing to, what is coming next.

¹² This verse has three verbs describing a mini narrative where the wicked are preparing their weapons. The flow of the psalm slows down to describe in detail the activities of the wicked. To create a contrast between the yiqtol in the previous line and the qatal here, you might understand the yiqtol as customary action, and the qatal as something specific: "They bend a bow... they have set an arrow." Or the yiqtol as imperfective and the qatal as perfective: "They are bending a bow... they set their arrow." The guide writer has chosen the first option for the guide translations to highlight the storytelling flow. But the translators have freedom to choose between these options.

¹³ There is an interesting parallel between the actions the wicked do the dark and the idea that Yahweh can even see when his eyes are closed (verse 4). The actions of the wicked are not unknown to Yahweh.

¹⁴ The foundations may be a metaphor for something like law and order in a society or a reference to a physical construction like the walls of a city.

¹⁵ Singular, same in verse 5. But the wicked are all plural. It could be referring to just the psalmist or a metaphorical single righteous person against the hordes of wicked.

¹⁶ It is unusual to have a qatal verb used in a question rather than a yiqtol. The guide writer has kept the Masoretic Text even though it is not the expected verb and treated like a yiqtol i.e., 'what will he do'.





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APP. A



APP. B

יְהוָה בְּהִיכֹל קֹדֶשׁוֹ	4 Yahweh (is) ¹⁷ in.the.temple.of his.holy
יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם בִּסְאוֹ	Yahweh (is) in.heavens his.throne
עֵינָיו יִחְזוּ	his.eyes see
עִפְעָפוּ יַבְחָנוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם:	his.eyelids test ¹⁸ the.sons.of man ¹⁹
יְהוָה צַדִּיק יִבְחֶן	5 Yahweh a.righteous.(one) tests ²⁰
וְרָשָׁע וְאַהֲבָה חָמָס שִׁנְאָה נַפְשׁוֹ:	but.the.wicked and.lover.of violence ²¹ it.hates his.soul ²²
יִמָּטֵר עַל־רָשָׁעִים פָּחִים	6 may.it.rain ²³ on-wicked.(ones) coals ²⁴
אֵשׁ וְגַפְרִית	fire and.sulphur
וְרוּחַ זֹלַעְפוֹת	and.a.wind.of scorching ²⁵ (be)
מִנֶּת בּוֹסָם:	²⁶ the.portion.of their.cup
כִּי־צַדִּיק יְהוָה	7 ²⁷ for-righteous (is) Yahweh

¹⁷ There is a parallelism between ‘temple’ and ‘holy place’. It could mean a sense of totality. Yahweh is present on earth and Yahweh is present in heaven. This sets up the next parallelism in in 6b where Yahweh can see everything. The syllable rhythm is almost the same in the Hebrew in the two lines and in the next two.

¹⁸ The Hebrew literally says ‘eyes’ and ‘eyelids but all published translations do not maintain ‘eyelids’. Perhaps the idiom means that Yahweh can even see while his eyes are closed.

¹⁹ ‘Sons of man’ is an example of metonymy where the phrase means all of humanity.

²⁰ The same verb is used in 4b and 5a. Yahweh tests the people and Yahweh tests the righteous one. The verb could have the connotation of refining like you do to precious metals (Zech 13:9) but usually is the idea of examining anything.

²¹ This is the longest line in the verse with multiple punishments. It is in parallel with the 3 actions of the wicked who bend their bow, have set their arrows and shoot. But here the punishment is so devastating it affects the people and the land.

²² It is possible to translate נַפֶּשׁ (soul) as ‘with all his being’. The NIV says, ‘with a passion’. It cannot mean ‘his soul hates the wicked’ because the noun is modifying the verb. Also note that the soul is the subject of the verb and belongs to Yahweh, not the wicked.

²³ This image is an allusion to what happened in Genesis 19:24 to Sodom and Gomorrah.


²⁴ See Appendix D for a discussion on the text critical issue.



²⁵ This could recall to the audience Yahweh’s breath of judgement (Isaiah 30:33). More literally it could be a reference to a hot wind commonly experienced during drought.



²⁶ ‘the portion (of) their cup’ is an example of metonymy where the concrete image represents an abstract concept. The phrase is referring to deserved punishment.



²⁷ This final כִּי coordinating conjunction marks the reason or grounds for what the psalmist has said in verses 1-6.








Psalms that Sing
 Psalm 11



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 APP. A
 APP. B

צְדָקוֹת אֱהָב	²⁸ righteous.deeds he.has.loved
יֵשֶׁר יִחְזוּ פָנָיו:	an.upright(.one) will.see his.face ²⁹

²⁸ It is possible to translate this as ‘justice’ following the NIV or ‘righteousness’ following the ASV.

²⁹ Final statement is a tricolon. Yahweh is faithful to righteous deeds. The wicked are faithful to violence (verse 5). Nearly all the verb roots from the psalm are repeated in the final verse.



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APP. A



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APP. B



Appendix C: Flower Garden

The repetitions and patterns below are placed upon guide translation #2 (Hebrew-tight). Read the commentary at the end of this Appendix which explains insights into these patterns.

Colour Code:

- Sets of parallel items
- Repeated words/concepts
- Repeated words/concepts
- Repeated words
- Matching opposite concepts
- Repeated words
- Repeated ideas

See the commentary below concerning the themes, colours, and patterns in this section.

Psalm 11

For the director. Of David.

1 In the LORD I take refuge.

How will you say to my soul,

“Flee to your mountain like a bird.”

2 For look, the wicked bend a bow

they have set have their arrow on a bowstring

to shoot in darkness at the upright of heart.

3 When the foundations are destroyed

what will a righteous one do?

4 The LORD is in his holy temple.

The LORD is in the heavens—his throne.

His eyes see.

His eyelids test the sons of man.

5 The LORD tests a righteous one

but the wicked and lover of violence

his soul hates.

6 May it rain coals, fire, and sulphur on the wicked

and let a scorching wind be the portion of their cup.

7 For righteous is the LORD.

Righteous deeds he loves.

The upright one will see his face.





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APP. B



Appendix D: Text-Critical Issues

Understanding key text-critical issues that result in different published translations.

Verse 1

There is a Qere-Ketiv in vs1. There is a choice in the Hebrew text for either the Ketiv (נוֹדֶה, qal impv mpl) or the Qere (נִוֶּה, qal impv fs). The problem with the Ketiv is it does not make sense who is being addressed. Presumably the Psalmist's enemies are saying, "Flee to the mountain" in which case a plural imperative does not make sense. The singular imperative (feminine) would make the soul the subject of the imperative saying, "Flee to your mountain, soul." The problem with that reading is that the suffix on mountain is plural. So, there's not an easy resolution.

The solution is probably to accept the Qere, and to emend the following word, following the evidence of the LXX which looks like it may have had a Vorlage something like:

נוֹדֶה הָרָה כְּמוֹ צִפּוֹר

"Flee to the mountain like a bird."

Notice that הָרָה -> הָרָה is a change of only an additional letter and word division.

Guide translations #1, #2 and the interlinear use the Qere option in the English but the Hebrew is left as it appears in the Masoretic Text.

Verse 6

In vs 6 the Hebrew text in the BHS has the consonants for a word that can be translated as either 'coals' or 'bird traps'. The text critical note in the BHS makes the word say 'bird traps'. But other ancient translations, like Symmachus, and modern English translations, don't follow this variation. Those texts follow vowels that make the word read as 'coals'.

If you translate the word as 'bird traps' you make a nice word pair with the birds in verse 1. However, we recommend you don't translate it as 'bird traps' so that you can be in line with other mainline published translations. See more here: https://psalms.scriptura.world/w/Psalm_11_Poetics

