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# Psalm 1

## 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

Facilitator: After the group listens to the guide translations, have them respond to 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

**Discussion:** Who are the two groups mentioned in Psalm 1?

**Creative Activity 1:** Reread the Hebrew mirror and the Hebrew tight versions, or both, and answer these questions:

- [1] Which group is the main subject of verses 1-3? ... and contrasted with whom?
- [2] Which group is the main subject of verses 4-5?
- [3] Who are the two groups mentioned in either v 5 or v 6?

Facilitator: This can be a group activity done together or divide into groups and then come together to discuss/compare.

Notice that v 6 acts as a kind of conclusion to the psalm and v 5 prepares the way, acting as a kind of bridge to the conclusion in v 6.

**Creative Activity 2:** Divide into groups and discuss briefly these questions for 5-10 minutes:

- 1) According to your culture: describe a person who does what is right (righteous) and a person who does what is wrong (wicked). (To the facilitator: look for responses in terms of actions, character, and beliefs). This will be developed more in step 3. Write down some brief ideas for now.
- 2) What does your culture teach about the destiny of the righteous and wicked people?

Summarize your conclusions in the big group. Do all agree?

## 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*

### **Background of the Psalm**

Psalm 1 (along with Psalm 2) is almost certainly the “introduction” to the book of Psalms. Theologians surmise that Pss 1 and 2 were placed where they are to act as an introduction to the entire book of Psalms. These two psalms seem to have that function as they deal with important themes covered in the rest of the book of Psalms.

Ps 1 and Ps 2 could well have existed as known psalms that were then intentionally placed to provide an introduction. They could have then been slightly edited as there are some literary



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connections between Ps 1 and Ps 2. But this is all speculation which seems to make good sense in light of the existing texts that have come to us. (See more details in Appendix B.)

### Those Being Addressed

There are no participants. It is a general teaching message directed at all who would listen. It lays out the two choices we have in life: to follow righteousness which leads to happiness and success in life, whereas wickedness leads to failure in life and ultimately judgement.

### Type of Psalm and Significance

Ps 1 is a psalm of instruction (didactic psalm) filled with words of wisdom. People must make a deliberate and moral choice (way) to follow Yahweh and his instruction (Torah) to be successful in life. A bad choice leads to a useless life and ends in destruction.

This fundamental teaching is perfect for starting the book of Psalms, and many of the themes in Ps 1 will be repeated throughout the book of Psalms (such as righteous vs wicked, choosing the right path of knowledge and wisdom in life, importance of the Torah, judgement of the wicked, YHWH watching over his people).

Torah is a key concept in this Psalm and throughout many of the Psalms. The main idea of Torah is “instruction” or “teaching”, but for a Jew the idea of “Moses’ law” given at Sinai (legal sense) is also understood. Keeping of the Torah was pre-eminently important to a faithful Jew as it is today. In light of the whole Bible, obeying God’s word is also important to all true followers of God.

**Creative Activity 3:** (15-30 min) Answer these questions in the big group:

Do you have this kind of genre in your language? That is, do you have a song or text which is a wise teaching or instruction to follow in life? If you do not have such a genre, what kind of genre would be appropriate for expressing these concepts? Is there a kind of wisdom advice for how to live life well that is expressed in song form?

### Main Images or Metaphors of the Psalm

Ps 1 is built upon two main metaphors: a) the tree planted by water b) chaff. These images highlight in a pictorial way the difference between the righteous and the wicked.

## UNLOCKING SOME OF THE BIG PICTURE OBSTACLES TO THE PSALM

**Facilitator:** You can lead a discussion of how to translate the following words/ideas by explaining the insights first and then giving an opportunity to discuss how to translate.

- 1) The opening description in 1:1 is traditionally translated “blessed are...”. How can we understand and translate this key introductory word to the poem?

**INSIGHT:** The main idea of the Hebrew word which starts the poem here is probably best translated as “How favored are...”, but other possibilities are “Happy are...”, “Oh, how joyful are...”, or “How blessed are...”. This will be discussed more in Appendix B.



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**Discussion:** What words have you heard for the beginning of this psalm? Do you have a good initial expression for “How favored are...” which expresses an idea of God’s favor toward someone? Can blessing or a state of happiness communicate in the translation or is this awkward? List other possibilities. What about: “Oh how joyful is/are...”?

2) How do you understand “Torah” in 1:2 for Ps 1?

**INSIGHT:** Torah means instruction or teaching. It is often used in reference to Moses’ Law, yet in other cases has a more general meaning, that is, referring to all of the OT or simply to what God commands.

**Discussion:** How do you understand “Torah”? Have you translated this word before in your translated texts? How is your translation of this term understood in your local culture (for example, refers to God’s laws, judicial or societal laws, or both). Appendix B explains a preference for a wider meaning all of God’s word.

3) How is “murmur” understood in 1:2?

**INSIGHT:** The Hebrew word for “meditate” is “mutter” or “murmur” in some contexts. It means here to reflect deeply upon or to think about something over and over again to grasp its meaning.

**Discussion:** Do people in your context “reflect” on God’s word or other holy writings? How do they do this? Do they mutter the words (this does happen in some religious contexts)? If so, is that a desired expression here for thinking deeply upon God’s word?

4) Is the judgement in 1:5 a local judgement or the final judgement? Both meanings are possible.

**INSIGHT:** The idea of a “final judgement” is the preferred interpretation of 1:5 in light of 1:6. See Appendix B for a more detailed explanation.

## SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

Here is a proposed structure for Ps 1 (three stanzas: vv 1-3, vv 4-5, v 6).

**Stanza 1 (Verses 1-3) Thesis:** Favour and success for the one who studies Yahweh’s word and follows his way.

**Stanza 2 (Verses 4-5) Antithesis:** Judgement and failure for the one who does evil.

**Stanza 3 (Verse 6) Synthesis or Conclusion:** Blessing for doers of right and destruction for doers of wrong.



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### The Theme and Flow of the Psalm

The wicked and righteous are contrasted throughout the Psalm which shows a clear choice between two paths to follow in life. There are three clear stanzas that follow logically. Murray Salisbury describes this as “Thesis” (vv 1-3) followed by “Antithesis” (vv 4-5), then “Synthesis” (v 6). From this, we see that v 6 acts as a conclusion to the psalm. Notice that v 5 prepares the way, acting as a kind of bridge to the conclusion in v 6.

### FINAL SUMMING UP

To summarise Psalm 1 discuss the following questions (give suggested answers afterward):

- What is the main point or message of the psalm?  
**Answer:** There are two paths to life which determine our destiny. Or you could highlight that this is a Torah psalm with true joy and success in life envisioned as hearing and obeying God’s word (Torah). Since “way” is emphasized at the beginning and end of the poem in v1 and then v6 twice (inclusio), the main point seems to be that we have two paths to follow or two choices in life with the Torah being the essential “way” to follow God correctly.
- What does this Psalm teach you about the LORD?  
**Answer:** His word is a faithful guide for life. The *LORD* watches over the righteous and judges the wicked with destruction. The *LORD* favors those who hear and obey his word.
- How can you or your church use this psalm?  
**Answer:** Use it as a wisdom psalm for instructing believers (young and old).
- What heading or title would the group suggest for this psalm?  
**Answer:** “The Two Ways”, “Following God’s Word Brings His Favour”, or “Two Choices, Two Destinies”. See Appendix B for other possibilities.



### 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

**Creative Activity 1:** Divide into several groups. This is the continuation of the Creative Activity 2 exercise in Step 2. In each group, discuss for 5 minutes what **pictures** or **images** you would use to describe an upright person (one who does what is right) and a wicked person (one who does what is wrong). Languages normally have many images that work for these descriptions. Think



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creatively. To help you, complete the following sentence with an image or picture or expression:

Among our people, we could say that a person who does what is right is like...  
and a person who does what is wrong is like...

Come back together and discuss the images that you came up with. Which do you like best? This might be an idea you could use later as you think creatively about this psalm.

Now look again at (or listen again to) Psalm 1: In v 3 the person who is upright is compared to a fruit tree which bears fruit every year. In v 4 the wicked person is compared to chaff (or straw) that is blown away.

- According to Psalm 1, in what way is the upright person like a fruitful tree? Be specific as to how an upright person bears fruit.
- According to Psalm 1, in what way is the wicked person like chaff?

#### Discussion:

- Do these images of a tree and chaff communicate well the difference between an upright and a wicked person in your language and culture?
- Does the image you came up with in your group discussion above communicate the idea more clearly?

**Creative Activity 2:** Now come up with a creative expression such as a poem, song, drama, or dance based on the two chosen cultural images (verses 3 and 4) which shows the contrast between an upright person and a wicked person (verses 1, 2, 5 and 6). This contrast of the wicked and righteous person along with the two images tie the main theme of the poem together.

Try to bring out the behaviour or qualities of each group that are mentioned in the psalm. Verse 2 brings out some specific qualities of the righteous. Verse 1 only mentions “mocking” as a specific activity of the wicked. So, you will need to think of more specific things that this group does that are not mentioned in the psalm. These can be included in your creative expression.

Listen to the psalm again. If you are struggling to come up with a list of behaviour or qualities of the two groups you can look at PSA 112:1-9, PSA 52:1-4, and PSA 73:6-11 in a language of wider communication to get some ideas.

Your creation does not need to use the images of a fruitful tree and useless chaff. But if ‘tree’ and ‘chaff’ are understandable pictures in your culture, you can use those images. In other words, you want to use two images that communicate well in your culture the meaning of what wicked people and righteous people are like. You can also have more than one version of what you are creating. Your creative expression here does not need to follow all the details of the biblical text, that will come later. You are getting the main idea as understood through your culture. You are trying to understand and communicate the major theme of the psalm.

Later in Step 5 you will do a closer oral Bible translation. And beyond that you can do a different kind of version for a written text which will probably try to keep the image in the psalm as close as possible to the Hebrew text. Record everything you create, here and later.





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**Creative Activity 3 (Optional):** Listen to at least 2 performances of Psalm 1 (examples of Ps 1 in other languages are in the Appendices of Zogbo/Wendland's book entitled "Hebrew Poetry in the Bible – A Guide for Understanding and for Translating" which is listed in the Bibliography at the end of Step 10). Perhaps you know of some other creative expressions of the Psalms in a neighbouring language where you can listen or read a creative poetic version of Psalm 1.

**Discussion:** What did you observe in these readings about poetry and performance? Was there anything that stood out for you?

Again **listen** a few times to the whole of Psalm 1 in separate recordings and readings. At this point, do not have any Bible version open before you or on any white or black board as you create, just listen for the main ideas and flow of the psalm. Again, do not try to memorise or include everything in the psalm at this stage.

Consider the following steps:

1. Orally review the main stanza divisions discussed at the end of Step 2, when you discovered the meaning of this psalm as a whole.
2. Orally summarise the main points as indicated in the stanza division.
3. Make your own poem of your summary of Psalm 1, reflecting the development of thought, not the exactness of a detailed translation. Consider using some of the oral poetic features that you heard in other poems. Decide what features you are going to use for this creative version.
4. Finally, attempt to create a free poetic version of the whole psalm based on the above steps. Do not look at the written text. Precision will come in Step 5. The goal now is to activate creativity, and to find a cultural connection and true local poetry. Make a recording of what you created.



## 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).



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## 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 (vv 1-6) and to make suggestions to other groups when you come together. It is recommended for one group to do stanza 1 and another group to do stanzas 2 and 3.

#### Stanza 1: Verses 1-3

1 Blessedness of the man

who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,

and in the way of sinners does not stand

and in the seat of scoffers does not sit,

2 but in the teaching of the LORD is his delight,

and on his teaching he softly murmurs day and night.

3 And he is like a tree planted by streams of water

that gives its fruit in its time,

and its leaf does not wither.

And all that he does will prosper.

1 Favoured is the man

who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,

and does not stand in the path of sinners,

and does not sit in the seat of scoffers,

2 but his delight is in the teaching of the LORD,

and on his teaching, he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water

that produces its fruit in its season,

and whose leaves do not wither.

All that he does will prosper.

#### Discussion:

V1 = 4 poetic lines. The thought of v 1 develops through three negative statements that include the ideas of walking, standing and sitting. In English NIV chose to use the forms “not”, “or”, and “or”. How can you best say this in your language? Some languages may not want to repeat “does not”







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three times. V 2 has an immediate contrast with the negative actions described in v 1. How can you bring out that idea? V 3 continues to talk about the positive example in v 2.

Note that “the one” (v 1) can be translated as “they” (see the *New Living Translation*). If you do this, then v 2 could be “their delight is...” and “they meditate on...”. In verse 3 “That person” would become “they are like trees ...”

V2 = 2 poetic lines. In your language you might be able to imitate the structure of v 2 (called a chiasm). In line 2b instead of saying “and who meditates on his teaching day and night”, you could say “and **on his teaching** he meditates day and night”. This moves “on his teaching” to the beginning of 2b.

V3 = 4 poetic lines. This section uses a comparison (“like”). Is there a way to express the beautiful leaves more forcefully like using an ideophone or special adjective or adverb or repetition or combination of these? The same for “prosper”: can it be stated more dynamically?

**Creative activity:** Listen to verses 1 to 3 several times on the recording. Think of how you want to structure the three negative expressions of verse 1. **Retell** in your own words the content of verses 1 to 3. You can break this apart into the three sections described above if this helps for this first oral exercise.

**Consider:** Would it be a better poetic expression to reverse the order of vv 1 and 2 (start with a positive description and move to the things he doesn’t do)? For example, “Happy is the one whose delight is in the Law of the LORD and who meditates on his Law day and night. This one does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers. That person is like a tree...” Remember this is an oral translation and the written translation that you do later may be quite different. Just think in terms of clear communication for vv 1 and 2 at this point.

Create 2 versions of verses 1-3, one that follows the text order as in the sample text and another that reverses verses 1 and 2 as suggested. Discuss which you like better and why.

**Creative activity:** With ideas from your retelling of verses 1-3 and the possibility of reversing the order of verses 1 and 2 as discussed above, make a poetic oral translation of verses 1-3, and record it.

**NOTE:** If necessary, listen again to the recording. Create this oral translation without referring to the written text. Make sure you understand all the details of the text before you record it.

## Stanza 2: Verses 4-5

4 Not so the wicked!

But they are like chaff that wind drives away.

5 Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgement,

4 Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

5 Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment,



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and sinners in the congregation of the  
righteous.

nor sinners in the assembly of the  
righteous.

**Reminder:** (v 4) Remember that chaff (or straw) has the idea of being useless (something blown away by the wind). Perhaps you have an interesting expression for this in your language (a word like whoosh or swoosh in English). This is called onomatopoeia (the word sounds like the sound it represents). Ideophones (little words added for emphasis) are also possible.

**Reminder:** (v 5) As discussed earlier the judgment in v 5 could be an action in the local court, but it is better to see it as the final judgment which is still to come. Also, it is best to keep the assembly of the righteous (ones) more general. See step 2 discussion or Appendix B for more details.

**Creative activity:** Make a poetic oral translation of vv 4-5, and record it.

### Stanza 3: Verse 6

6 For the LORD is knowing the way of the  
righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.

6 For the LORD knows the path of the righteous,  
but the path of the wicked leads to  
destruction.

**Reminder:** V 6 is a climax and conclusion for Psalm 1. Destruction probably refers to eternal destruction or death.

**Creative activity:** Would it be better poetically to reverse the two lines in v 6, that is, speak first of the way of the wicked and end the poem with Yahweh watching over the way of the righteous? This is a question of style or emphasis. "Watching over" can also be translated "takes care of" or "is intimately acquainted with" (see the footnote in Appendix B for PSA 1:6).

**Creative activity:** Make a poetic oral translation of v 6 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:

- Translation of '*ashrey* "favoured" (compare MT 5.3-13)
- Singular "man" vs plural possibility "those" (like NLT). Does "man" mean person (m/f), or could you use a neutral form (in English "one" or "person")?
- Meaning: Does the movement of vv 1b-d speak of moving farther and farther from God?
- Translation of *torah* (not in a purely legal sense) as "instruction" or "teaching" is possible? Or is a generalized use of *torah* desired, meaning "word", perhaps with a footnote (v 2). See Appendix B in the footnote of v 2 for a deeper discussion of this important term.
- Translation of "meditates", "studies", "reflects upon", etc. See notes in Appendix B.
- Exegetical decision between "planted" and "transplanted" and "stream" vs. "brook" vs. "artificial irrigation canal".
- Translation of "prosper" (used in the Wisdom books, especially Proverbs)
- Strong contrast v 4 "not so the wicked" contrasted with vv 1-3. Does your translation reflect this?
- Translation of the connecting word 'therefore' (5a) or consequence is implied here.
- How clearly to translate judgement here. Perhaps a footnote to indicate local vs final judgement. But exegetically decide if you agree that the final judgement is in view. Perhaps translating this generally to be interpreted as either a local or final judgement. See the footnote of v 5 in Appendix B for details.
- Connection "for" in v 6. The idea of reason needs to at least be implied here.
- Translating as "knows" or "watches over" or "takes care of", etc.
- Translating "destruction" here to reflect ultimate destruction.





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## 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:

- If possible, handling the alliteration and assonance of the first three words (ex., “favored is the fellow who does not...” which would capture alliteration but not alliteration). Yet it is too slang for most English translations. But perhaps alliteration and assonance could work in your language where you can keep the meaning.
- Imagery and Inclusio – v 1 and v 6 “way”.
- Handling the parallel structure in 1b-1d (negation, parallel forms like “counsel of the wicked”)
- Contrast (antithetical parallelism) of v1 and v2 “but”. Can you imitate this?
- Repetition and Chiasm in v 2 (it is not a complete chiasm) “law” is the middle term. Can you repeat “law” or is the style too heavy, or could you use an ideophone?
- Word pair choice and meaning as a merism in v 2 (keep word pair “day and night” or translate the meaning “constantly” or “continually”)
- Simile in v 3 and v 4 (comparison = tree and chaff) Keep terms? Add clarifying adjective such as “**worthless** chaff” (is it implied if ‘chaff’ is understood)? Find a substitute for chaff (ex. “straw”)?
- Can the similes of vv 3-4 be translated as metaphors (“**is** a tree...” etc.)?
- Imagery in vv 3-4 (fruit and leaf used as images), chaff blown away (wicked). Can an ideophone be used here for the green leaves or the action of being blown away?
- Anthropomorphism “LORD” watching over the righteous. Problems? Or does it need to be adjusted?
- Translating “but” or is the idea of contrast already implied? (v 6)
- Translating carefully the word pairs “wicked” and “sinners” or “the righteous” and “the wicked”.



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## 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:**

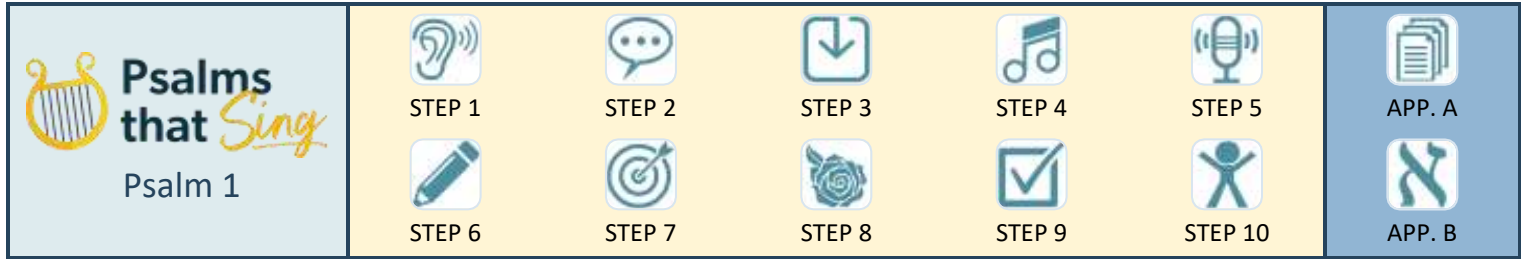
- You could focus a song around a refrain that highlights the difference between the righteous and the wicked. For example, v 6 could be a song refrain used 3 times: at the beginning, then after vv 1-3, then after verse 4-5.
- You could create a different kind of refrain that focuses on the idea of favor in v 1. An example in English would be: “Favoured in the one who is righteous before God / He meditates on God’s word and obeys it”. Again, like the example above, cover the rest of the stanzas to fill out the song. Remember that a central idea of the poem is meditating on Yahweh’s teaching and putting it into practice.
- Some groups find it helpful to use motions or act out the psalm as it is sung or read.

**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 at least 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.



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## Appendix A: Guide Translations

### Guide Translation #1 (Hebrew-mirror)

1 Blessedness of the man  
    who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,  
    and in the way of sinners does not stand  
    and in the seat of scoffers does not sit,  
2 but in the teaching of the LORD is his delight,  
    and on his teaching he softly murmurs day and night.  
3 And he is like a tree planted by streams of water  
    that gives its fruit in its time,  
    and its leaf does not wither.  
And all that he does will prosper.

4 Not so the wicked!  
    But they are like chaff that wind drives away.

5 Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgement,  
    and sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

6 For the LORD is knowing the way of the righteous,  
    but the way of the wicked will perish.

### Guide Translation #2 (Hebrew-tight)

1 Favoured is the man  
    who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,  
    and does not stand in the path of sinners,  
    and does not sit in the seat of scoffers,  
2 but his delight is in the teaching of the LORD,  
    and on his teaching, he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water  
    that produces its fruit in its season,  
    and whose leaves do not wither.  
All that he does will prosper.

4 Not so the wicked!  
    They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

5 Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
    nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For the LORD knows the path of the righteous,  
    but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.





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## Appendix B: Exegetical Layout

Psalms 1 and 2 are almost certainly the “introduction” to the book of Psalms. They could have been created to serve as an introduction to the book of Psalms. But it is more likely that they were known Psalms that were placed at the beginning of five collections of Psalm books, and then slightly edited because there are some parallels between Psalm 1 and Psalm 2.

Psalms 1 and 2 are psalms of instruction (didactic psalm) filled with words of wisdom (Kidner, 47). People must make a deliberate and moral choice (way) to follow Yahweh and his instruction (Torah) to be successful in life. A bad choice leads to a useless life and ends in destruction. This fundamental teaching is perfect for starting the book of Psalms, and many of the themes in Ps 1 (e.g., righteous vs wicked, choosing the right path of knowledge and wisdom in life, importance of the Torah, judgement of the wicked, YHWH watching over his people) will be repeated throughout the book of Psalms.

Torah is a key concept in this Psalm and throughout many of the Psalms like Ps 19 and 119. The main idea of Torah is “instruction” or “teaching”, but for a Jew the idea of “Moses’ law” given at Sinai (legal sense) is also understood. “The **principal wisdom** of the Psalm can be reduced to v 2 ... finding delight in the Torah and constantly meditating on it” (WORD, 62).

### SUGGESTED HEADINGS

“The Two Ways” (TH, Wieser, 102), “Following God’s Word Brings His Favour”, “Two Choices, Two Destinies”, or “The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked” (ESV)

#### **Coding for TAM Verbs and Hebrew features:**

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



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אֲשֶׁר־הָאֵישׁ	1 Blessedness.of <sup>1</sup> the.man <sup>2</sup>
אֲשֶׁר   לֹא הֵלֵךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים	who not <sup>3</sup> walks <sup>4</sup> in.(the).counsel <sup>5</sup> .of (the).wicked.(ones) <sup>6</sup> ,
וּבִדְרֹךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד	and.in.(the).way.of sinners not stands,
וּבִמְוֶשֶׁב לְאִים לֹא יָשָׁב:	and.in.(the).seat.of scoffers not sits.

<sup>1</sup> 'ashrey "(heavenly) blessedness of" means "Favoured", "Happy", "How blessed", or "Oh the joys of". It expresses a state of advantage, provision or security given by God. It refers to "the joyful spiritual condition of those who are right with God and the pleasure and satisfaction that is derived from that." (Ross, 184-185). Consider using the same word here as you use for "favoured", "happy" or "blessed" for the Greek word makarioi in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-10. 'ashrey is also used at the end of Ps 2. This most likely acts as an inclusio linking Pss 1 and 2.

<sup>2</sup> 'ish "man" is the singular masculine form in Hebrew and means "man" or "person" depending on context. If possible, try to translate it more neutrally ("the one" or "the person"). This "one" is contrasted with the "many" (plural forms) of the next three lines. It is good to keep this singular emphasis of the **one** good person (model of a righteous person) against the **many** who would lead astray, but some translations choose a plural (ex. "Oh the joys of those ..." – NLT, to emphasise that the "righteous one" represents all believers). This is true for all the righteous, but it seems better, if possible, to accentuate the contrast of the one vs the many. (NICOT for Ps 1.1 affirms this emphatic grammatical emphasis of the "one against the masses".)

<sup>3</sup> If good for your poetry, try to have a clear structure for the next three lines (lines 1b, 1c and 1d) which repeat לֹא "not" and have three different verbs and other parallels (see coloured patterns in Appendix C).

<sup>4</sup> There are three kinds of actions described over the next three poetic lines: "walk", "stand" and "sit". It is a progression of "three degrees of departure from God" (Kidner, 48) and to greater closeness and commitment to the world (implied). Some have described the verbal actions as those of a journey.

<sup>5</sup> There are three kinds of spheres or domains described over three poetic lines: "counsel", "way", and "seat". These represent the realms of thinking, behavior (action), and belonging (community) (Kidner, 47). "Counsel" can be translated as "advice". "way" can be translated as a "path". "seat" can be translated as "assembly".

<sup>6</sup> There are three kinds of evil people (see coloured patterns in Appendix C) described over three poetic lines: there are two general terms: "wicked" (one deserving punishment, usually for a crime) and "sinners" (those who sin). A third term used is "scoffers" ("mockers" or "scorners"). Scoffers have moved dangerously far from YHWH and mock him or religion openly. The Scriptura project notes that there is paronomasia (word-play) here between the forward pronouncing of 'ashrey "blessedness" in contrast to *rasha* "sinners" (similar sound but not the identical consonants). In other words, the **blessedness** of the righteous one is put in opposition to the **'wicked ones'**. Thus, the author is using triple consonants in the opposite order for the two words. Why? It sounds good which is the purpose of word play. Note that most Hebrew nouns have a triconsonantal root. This kind of word-play cannot typically be reproduced in the translation, but equivalent poetic structures can be substituted (compensation).



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חֲפֹצוֹ בִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה	2 But <sup>7</sup> in.(the).teaching <sup>8</sup> .of the.LORD (is) his.delight,
וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יְהִי יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה:	and.in.his.teaching he.softly.murmurs <sup>9</sup> day and.night. <sup>10</sup>
וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שְׂתוּל עַל-פְּלִי מַיִם	3 And.he.is like.(a).tree planted <sup>11</sup> by.streams.of water <sup>12</sup>
פְּרִיָּו   יָתֵן בְּעֵתוֹ אֲשֶׁר	which its.fruit it.gives in.its.time <sup>13</sup> ,
וְעָלְהוּ לֹא-יָבֹל	and.its.leaf does.not-wither <sup>14</sup> ,

<sup>7</sup> The contrast here is strong. Verse 2 describes the positive actions of the righteous one (one who does what is right).

<sup>8</sup> *torah* “instruction” is translated as “law” or “Law” in some contexts, but a great number of scholars feel it is best to translate it more generally here (EBC, TH, Futato, NICOT, WORD, Anderson). Ross (188-189) feels the most likely interpretation is a reference to instructions of the Law code itself (books of the Law). Besides “Law” or “law”, possible translations are “instruction”, “teaching” and the general idea “word”. If “Law” in your context is purely in a legal sense and is not understood broadly as “instruction”, then strongly consider a general expression like “teaching” or “instruction” and consider a footnote to show the connection to Moses and the law at Sinai. Also, consider “word”, but again use a footnote in a written text.

<sup>9</sup> “softly murmurs” – means “meditates” here. The literal idea may be to “read in an undertone” which is a way of carefully reading, possible meditating or memorising Scripture. This is still practiced in many cultures today. If you don’t have this idea in your culture, then you can translate as “ponder”, “study”, “reflect upon”, “read and think” or “pour over”. Avoid the term “murmur” if it does not have the meaning of “meditate” or “ponder”. This verb form is also in Ps 2.1 where it means murmuring/complaining against God. This is a vivid connection to Ps 2, though different senses of the word are used.

<sup>10</sup> “day and night” (merism) means “constantly”. Changing to the order “night and day” is a more natural expression in some languages.

<sup>11</sup> “like a tree planted” is a simile contrasted with “like chaff blown” in verse 4. You could try to use the metaphor “is a tree” or “is chaff”, if possible, unless it would give the wrong meaning. The simile with ‘like’ or ‘as’ seems to work well in most languages. “planted” or “that grows” is better than “transplanted” for this context. “transplanted” is a possible meaning of the verb that some translations or commentaries recommend (NICOT for 1:3 – but even NICOT says it could mean transplanted or planted as a **seed** in the ground).

<sup>12</sup> “streams of waters” can sometimes be more narrowly defined as “artificial irrigation canals” in some contexts. The Hebrew word used here is also clearly used in a broader sense in many passages (ex., Lam 3:48). The more general image of a “stream” or “brook” communicates well here. Jeremiah’s parallel usage which is probably borrowed from Ps 1 is of the tree by the waters/streams (Jer 17:8). The ‘stream’ in Jer is *yuvai* which is different from *peleg* here, but each seems to be a general image for illustrative purposes.

<sup>13</sup> “time”, “right time”, “appointed time”, or even better for this context “season”.

<sup>14</sup> “wither” or “fade”. In some languages you may need to say, “it does not die”.







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יְצַלִּיחַ: וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה	and.all that-he.does will.prosper <sup>15</sup> .
לֹא-כֵן הָרָשָׁעִים	4 Not-so <sup>16</sup> the.wicked.(ones),
אִם-כְּמֶזֶץ אֲשֶׁר-תִּדְפֶּנּוּ רוּחַ: כִּי	but <sup>17</sup> (they.are)-like.(the).chaff <sup>18</sup> that-drives.away <sup>19</sup> (the).wind.
לֹא-יִקְמוּ רָשָׁעִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט עַל-כֵּן	5 Therefore <sup>20</sup> will.not-stand (the).wicked.(ones) <sup>21</sup> in.the.judgement <sup>22</sup> ,
וְחַטָּאִים בַּעֲדַת צְדִיקִים:	and.(the).sinners in.the.congregation.of (the).righteous.(ones) <sup>23</sup> .

<sup>15</sup> “prosper” is a common word in the wisdom literature like Proverbs. It means to be successful in all of life, possibly financially, but especially spiritually. Make sure that the subject here refers to the righteous one mentioned at the beginning of verse 3. There is emphasis (intensification) in verse 3. This is seen by the use of “all” in the last line. “all that he does” is emphatic. Think about how to add emphasis in your version.

<sup>16</sup> *lo’ ven* “not so” or “not thus”. A strong contrast which shifts the focus of the psalm to address the wicked now.

<sup>17</sup> The strong contrast of “not-so” in 4a is combined semantically with the *kiy im* “but” (another strong contrast in 4b). This repeats the *kiy im* of 2a (the psalm shows vivid contrast between the righteous and the wicked. Verses 4a-b can be translated together as: “But wicked people are **not at all like this**, they are like chaff...” (for example, they are not meditating on God’s word... prospering). Discuss together as a translation team how to communicate that strong contrast in your language.

<sup>18</sup> “chaff” is a picture of what is blown away when winnowing grain. Chaff is an image of a person who is “passing and useless” (Anderson, 62). This can be translated “straw”. The idea is that it is worthless, useless, lightweight or of no value. Some translations add the word “worthless” here if the implied meaning is not clear.

<sup>19</sup> “drives away” means “blown about” or “blown away”.

<sup>20</sup> “Therefore” or “for this reason”. Not translated by some translations. But make sure that the idea of consequence is clearly implied if you decide not to translate this word.

<sup>21</sup> *rasha im* “the wicked” and *khatim* “the sinners” are in parallel and refer to the same group. Some translations need to make it clear that this is referring to the same group by using one word to refer to the two terms (TH).

<sup>22</sup> “will not stand ... in the judgement” means “will not endure judgement” or “will be condemned in judgement”. The judgement in view could be in a local court or at the final judgement. It is better to understand it in terms of the final judgement (Ross, 192) because of the idea of destruction in verse 6 (TH).

<sup>23</sup> “congregation of the *tsadikim* (righteous)” refers to the worshipping community of God’s people. For the original audience it would have been faithful Jews, perhaps including proselytes and God-fearers. In light of NT theology, it can be applied to all faithful believers in God.





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כִּי־יֹדַעַ יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ צְדִיקִים	6 for-is.knowing <sup>24</sup> the.LORD (the).way <sup>25</sup> .of. (the). righteous.(ones)
וְדֶרֶךְ רָשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד:	but.(the).way.of (the).wicked.(ones) <sup>26</sup> will.perish <sup>27</sup> .

<sup>24</sup> “for ... is knowing...” – this last verse gives the reason that the righteous and wicked have different destinies. “knowing” has to do with an intimate relationship and is not merely intellectual knowledge. It can be translated “watches over”, “takes care of”, or “is intimately acquainted with”.

<sup>25</sup> “way” or “path” is a metaphor for the direction one chooses to go in life. In this verse there are two clear choices: death or life. “way” connects to verse 1 and can be part of the sub-title, if used. That is, the theme is about “two ways” or two choices in life. It is usually good to include the same term for way in verse 1 as in verse 6 to show the connection (inclusio).

<sup>26</sup> “the way of the wicked” is emphasized by using a chiasmic structure where *derek* “way of” is repeated and the “righteous” is put in direct contrast with the “wicked”. Notice how the “way of sinners” is mentioned in v 1c. This makes the phrase an inclusio between v 1 and v 6 with “way” directly repeated and a synonym used to describe “sinners/wicked” and the “way of the righteous” being added for a strong contrast. If it does not affect your style, try to imitate the repetition and contrast.

<sup>27</sup> “perish” means “doom” and it means their path comes to ruin or ultimate destruction and death. It could still apply to a local judgement which is a possible interpretation for v 5. But as noted there, the more intuitive meaning for the psalm as a whole is to understand at the “final judgement”.

**NOTE:** For an informative excursus on the topic of wisdom vs foolishness as presented in the Wisdom Books (Job, Prov, Eccl, and some Psalms), see EBC at the end of Ps 1. A main conclusion is that the righteous wise one needs to hear the revelation of God’s instruction and obey it. God promises to bless his righteous ones in this life and beyond, even though they may suffer tremendously. Ps 1 introduces us into these important wisdom themes found throughout the Psalms.



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## 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:

- Key terms or themes using various colors or designations: **Stanzas**, **metaphor (simile)**, **negation**, **Yahweh (+pronouns)**, **way/path**, **righteous**, **wicked ones, sinners**, **judgment/destruction**, **contrastive or logical connections**, **wisdom themes**, **chiastic structures**. Xxx

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

1 Favoured is the man

who does **not** walk in the **counsel** of the **wicked**,

and does **not** stand in the **path** of **sinners**,

and does **not** sit in the seat of **scoffers**,

2 **but** his delight is in the **teaching** of the **LORD**,

and on **his teaching**, he **meditates** day and night.

} chiasm

3 He is **like a tree** planted by streams of water

Simile: like a tree

that produces its fruit in its season,

and whose leaves do not wither.

All that he does will **prosper**.

4 **Not so** the **wicked**!

They are **like chaff** that the wind blows away.

Simile: like chaff

5 **Therefore**, the **wicked** will **not** stand in the **judgment**,

**nor sinners** in the assembly of the **righteous**.

6 For the **LORD** knows the **path** of the **righteous**,

**but** the **path** of the **wicked** leads to **destruction**.

} chiasm

Stanza 1

Stanza 2

Stanza 3  
(Climax)





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## COMMENTARY ON THE FLOWER GARDEN:

1. There are **three stanzas** as mentioned earlier which provide a thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis: righteous, wicked, conclusion (see end of section 2). Stanza 3 is also the **climax**/peak of the poem.
2. **Wisdom themes**: Ps 1 is often called a wisdom poem or teaching psalm. Wisdom themes are seen in the terms counsel, Torah (teaching), meditating (on Torah), and prosper. Other common wisdom terms are highlighted separately (righteous vs wicked, blessing vs judgement/destruction).
3. **Negation** “not” or “nor” accentuates the contrasts in the poem.
4. **Wicked/sinners/scoffers** appear in all three stanzas. They bring out a major theme of the psalm (contrast with the righteous).
5. The **righteous** are also the subject in all three stanzas (implied in stanza 1).
6. **Yahweh** (the **LORD**) is mentioned toward the beginning and end of the poem (inclusio). Yahweh is the one who the righteous must meditate on through Torah, but his all-seeing capability, his judicial role, and care of his people are emphasized toward the end of the poem.
7. There are two **chiasms** which are shown by the repetition of the middle two terms. They are not full chiasms but are more technically called incomplete chiasms. The chiasm of v 2 emphasizes the central theme of the Psalm (meditating on Yahweh’s teaching constantly). The chiasm that ends the Psalm in v 6 provides a summary of the Psalms and underlines blessing vs destruction. Thus, both chiasms are important in the Psalm for different reasons. The built-in **repetition** of a chiasm accentuates what is important to the author.
8. The **similes** of being like a tree or like chaff are the central images (metaphors) of the Psalm. They give an unforgettable picture of the fruitfulness of the righteous contrasted with the uselessness of the wicked.
9. There are many **logical or contrastive connectors** throughout the poem. Although there are no strict rules, this frequency of usage is rare in poetic texts. It gives the psalm a unique instructive feel.
10. **Way/Path** acts as an inclusio also and provides the main theme of the Psalm (two ways – of righteousness or wickedness).
11. **Judgment or Destruction** are also emphasized toward the end of the poem. This gives a sense of finality or destiny to the poem that amplifies its important theme that everyone should consider as they live life.