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Psalm 126

Phase 1: ORAL



Step 1: Listen

Listening to a guide translation and versions of the psalm

Listen well to the poem (notice content, emotions and interesting use of language). There are two guide translations in Appendix A:

1. **Hebrew-mirror** - copied from the Exegetical Layout and adjusted for minimal readability,
2. **Guide translation** - 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?

Activity: In pairs,

- 1) Share if you can remember when things were bad and then the Lord changed it, and you were so happy. How did you feel? (What words would you use in your language to describe that feeling?)
- 2) Do you know anyone who farms food (like mielies)? How do you think they feel when they sow the seed? And when they harvest the crop?



Step 2: Familiarise

Explaining and discussing the meaning and beauty of the psalm

Get an overview of the poem (the big picture) - what's the main message? Who is involved? A poem must be understood as 'a whole' (unlike a story).

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE PSALM

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





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- What do you like about the psalm?
- What do you find difficult? (Perhaps v.4 (“streams in the Negev”))
- 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?
- Are there any noticeable repetitions in this psalm?

CREATIVE RESPONSES

- What is the mood of the psalmist in the first half? Does that mood change? Why?

Activity: in small groups, briefly, identify all the emotions you can hear as they occur in the in the psalm.

- What are the main ideas the poet is trying to communicate?
God changed things for us and we were glad. We ask him to change our condition again, and we will be glad again.
- What words or similar concepts or phrases do you hear repeated in the psalm?

Activity: in small groups, identify all the repetitions you can find in the psalm.

- There is a pattern of repetition of “restore fortunes” (1a,4a), and full repetition of Lord has done great things for emphasis.
- Lord + Lord (four times, in vv.1a,2d,3a,4a)
- “laughter + songs of joy” (2b,6c)
- “tears + weeping”
- “Sowing and reaping” is repeated twice for emphasis (AM).
- The magnification of the LORD is repeated twice too.
- There is a parallel between those who go carrying something and those who come carrying something at the end of the Psalm.

ENGAGING WITH THE WHOLE PSALM

Facilitator: address the following topics:

- *The participants in the psalm, the different “speakers” and “audiences”*
- *The historical background and the context of the psalm, the story behind the psalm, if relevant*
- *The theme of the psalm*
- *The flow of the psalm*
- *The potential big picture obstacles*
- *Emotion map*
- *The peak or peaks of the psalm*
- *The genre and purpose of the psalm*
- *Highly important poetic device(s) related to understanding the big picture*
- *How does the psalm point to Christ?*





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Discuss:

- What is the context of the psalm?
It might have been written after the first group of people who had been exiled had returned to Israel. The people are crying out for God to do that again, and bring back all the exiles (Clifford).
- Who are the participants in this psalm?
“The LORD”, the “we” are the exiles who have returned, Zion, the city of David, Jerusalem, the nations who oppressed them, and the metaphor of the sowers and reapers.
- What did the psalmist actually say? What is this psalm about?

Theme and Flow of the Psalm

Most agree that Psalm 126 is a pilgrim song celebrating the return of the remnant of Israel from exile in 530 B.C. The first stanza is a very upbeat jubilation with verbal praise and thanksgiving, including the joy of vindication before the nations, before whom the people of Israel was greatly humiliated when they were taken into exile.

The second part of the psalm petitions a further restoration, some time in the future, employing images from farming in the ancient Near East. The exact nature of the restoration is not sure, but the agricultural imagery points to some relief in time of severe drought in semi-arid Israel. The image is one of expectation: like the sower going out to sow, there is weeping, but it all ends with a rich harvest and great rejoicing.

The theme of Psalm 126 is Zion-centered throughout, starting in v.1. In second part, two images of renewal: dramatic sudden floods and slow and arduous labor (vv.4-6).

The flow is from joy re-lived (part 1), like Job’s restoration, and after toil and captivity, of joy re-claimed (part 2) (DK).

- What type of song or prayer is this psalm? Do you have something similar in your language?

Genre and significance of the psalm

This is a communal thanksgiving or praise psalm, celebrating the change in fortunes of the people of Israel, and calling on the LORD to do some similar renewal again.

- Does this psalm have a peak or high point?
Probably the magnification of the LORD in verses 2b-3, what the nations are now actually saying about the greatness of the LORD. They have been vindicated before the very nations the oppressed them and took them into Exile. So, the repetition of the magnification of the LORD and the vindication before the nations it brings, is the high point of the psalm. It shows Israel’s awareness of its shame but also its vindication before the nations. Their ethnic and national awareness always includes the nations. Israel is very aware of the nations. Many psalms have these themes and motifs.
- What triggered the psalmist to compose it?
The happiness of the return to the Land, and the need to have a song celebrating that fact each time they go up again to Jerusalem for the annual feasts. The psalmist also wanted to



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comfort the people with the knowledge of a certain harvest in the future, a future fuller restoration, after the hardship of sowing now. What they are sowing now and expecting now, is not certain. There are several possibilities.

- What did the poet 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?

He wants the people to rejoice and be thankful for what they have received, and he wanted to remind them about the LORD's faithfulness in the ups and downs of national life.

Hard toil and good seed is a certain prelude to a harvest (DK).

- What pictures or metaphors have been used in this psalm?

The restoration is compared to the metaphor of refreshing streams in a desert.

The metaphor of someone sowing seeds, with big harvests to carry home, was a powerful image in Israel. It was something they knew well, their hard work in daily life, which God used to bring life to them. Sowing seed is a picture of 'expecting' – trusting our little work will result in God doing something big. But not only this, sowing is laborious work, and there is nothing to rejoice in for the time being. This is a picture of Israel's time in exile, when life seemed difficult with little immediate reward. But, just as God is faithful with a harvest, God was faithful with them also.

Historical Setting of the Psalm

Psalm 126 is a song of ascent, sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, normally for one of the feasts. It was also sung during those feasts.

The time of its composition is most likely after the return from the Babylonian exile, but it could just as well be composed after some national catastrophe like a war in the First Temple Period. The catastrophe is most likely something to do with the nations around them referred to in v.2. But we don't know for sure. But like the first half, celebrating the return from Exile, and the second half is reflecting metaphorically on the same experience. Life isn't always good. Sometimes you have a period of sowing, which is hard and with no immediate reward. It can seem painful. But God is faithful. Both halves of the Psalm are saying the same thing.

SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

Stanza 1 (Verses 1-3) Jubilation of restoration. Joy because of the LORD restoring Israel's fortunes.

Stanza 2 (Verses 4-6) Plea of a future restoration, with a certain expectation. Prayer for the restoration of Israel's fortunes, possibly a drought.



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UNLOCKING SOME OF THE BIG PICTURE OBSTACLES TO THE PSALM

- *When* does this psalm exactly refer to? The return from Exile is the most likely, but it's possible to generalise as well. This is a Psalm for disillusioned people who think life is too hard. It's a reminder that life has seasons—some for sowing in tears, some for reaping in joy.
- The relationship between the two stanzas is complicated. Why is stanza 2 a plea for something (a *restoration*), using the same word for that has been celebrated in stanza 1? We are not certain, but it may refer to an expectation of further restoration, like national independence from imperial powers and eventually the final restoration the Messiah will bring. It's a reminder that God is faithful to those who would become disillusioned.
- Who exactly are the *nations*? Probably the Babylonians and the Persians as imperial powers, and the neighbouring nations like the Moabites, Edomites and Samaritans who took advantage of Israel's exile. There are times in Israel's history when the nations praised God. Think like the Queen of Sheba. Or something like 2 Chr 17:10-11.

FINAL SUMMING UP

To summarise the Psalm, discuss the following questions:

- In summary, what is the main point of the psalm?
Celebration and jubilation of the restoration of the exile, and the certainty of more in the future, in spite of current hardships. God knows when you feel disillusioned, but there are seasons to life, so don't give up.
- What does this Psalm teach you about the LORD?
The LORD is a restoring God, he is a God of justice, he puts things right again. He has restored his people, and it is certain that he will do it even more in the future.
- How could your church (or you) use this psalm?
*The Father restored everything through his Son when he came and died. We must celebrate that all the time, just like the pilgrims of old. But there is also the expectation of future restoration when all things are brought under the Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ. So the suffering we are undergoing now, will have a happy ending. The full and final restoration the Messiah would bring is a strong Christian application of this psalm.
But it might be beneficial to focus on how the Psalm evokes and addresses the emotional experience of living in this life now, while we wait for this better future. How does it comfort the suffering and give hope to the disillusioned?*
- What heading or title would the group suggest for this psalm?
Suggestion: "Celebrating the restoration after the exile" or "celebrating the restoring LORD".



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Step 3: Internalise

Absorbing the big picture of the psalm

‘Get the poem inside yourself’ (feel the emotions and be able to recall the main ideas).

Look at the whole psalm so that you can experience it and retell the message. 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. Aim to do at least the first two activities.

CREATIVE RESPONSES

First, do Internalisation Activities 1-5 as a whole group

Internalisation Activity: Listen to Psalm X being read again. Note all the words you hear which speak of God’s power, or which are very intense/extreme language.

Internalisation Activity: Say each line of the psalm in the right order, as a group. Use your own words; there’s no need to have it precisely right. Then let one or two persons say each line of the psalm, again in the right order

Internalisation Activity: Then, as a group, make gestures for each line and again say all the lines in order, but this time with gestures. Use mime/gestures to show the emotion and action.

Internalisation Activity: Lastly, as a whole group, use the popcorn method. Each line, in the right order, is said by a different person. Do this a second time to further reinforce.

Internalisation Activity (optional): The storyboard method: draw pictures of each event in the psalm as they unfold.

Then divide the group into two or three groups

Internalisation Activity: Skits—act out what’s happening in each of the lines. Make a little drama. Encourage them to use facial expressions, body language, motions, and movement to try to experience the emotions and the sequence of events. This psalm lends itself well to a skit.

Internalisation Activity: Memory song, chant or memory aid to help remember the psalm. Consider making a short poem of the song in the local language or Language of Wider Communication to help you remember the different actions in order. This song is only to help everyone remember each stanza in sequence (and the lines in sequence if it is a short psalm)



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Step 4: Explore and compose

Explore the Hebrew and local poetry and compose a song

EXPLORING HEBREW AND LOCAL POETRY

For the facilitator: in this step, address the following topics to explore in Hebrew poetry:

- 1) Repetition of words, images, and sounds
- 2) Handling the Hebrew parallelisms
- 3) Figures of speech, like metaphors, personification
- 4) Rhythm, verse length, beat
- 5) Word order, clause order
- 6) Poetic devices that emphasize and mark something as important

Once the artist-translators have sufficiently internalised and drafted the psalm in the workshop setting, compose a song, poem, rap, chant, or prayer to capture as much of the psalm as possible.

1. Poetic devices- repetitions of words, images, and sounds

Activity: Trace all the words that are repeated. Then all the concepts/images.

2. Poetic devices - main Images or metaphors of the Psalm

- Metaphors, metonyms, similes, personifications, hyperboles, merisms,

Activity: Can you identify any images, similes or metaphors?

3. Rhythm

Activity: Listen to the psalm again and in groups, and get a feel for the rhythm. Are the lines short or long?

4. Irregular word order

- Fronting of nouns before the verbs in Hebrew is particularly in focus here

Activity: Look at the Flower Garden or the Hebrew-mirror, and identify all the verses that have irregular word order, mostly (in English) nouns put before the verbs.

5. Highlighting poetic devices

Activity: Look at the Flower Garden in Appendix C or the Hebrew-mirror in Appendix A, and identify all the verses that have highlighting devices.





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COMPOSING A SONG

For the facilitator: several considerations, like the big question when to start doing the song

- 1) *When to start composing a song? The guide writer and facilitator have some freedom when. Either at the end of step 4, or after step 5. There are pro's and con's to each option. One advantage of doing it in Step 4 (before the detailed exegesis) is that the team starts to think about poetry. They only start to think about poetry once they start composing a song. The risk is that when they compose something early, before step 5, that they settle on a melody they like, but need to change it or even abandon it after getting the more detailed exegetical insights. The advantage*
- 2) *Some other considerations: what about memory aid, the poem or song made at the end of Step 3?*
- 3) *Another option is to only compose a nice tune and song on one stanza with not any serious exegetical issues. That tune can then be used for the rest of the psalm at the end of Step 5. Experience with shorter sections, like one or two stanzas at a time, to compose.*
- 4) *The team needs to learn some song-writing skills.*
- 5) *It is not necessary to use the same tune for every stanza. Sometimes 3-4 tunes can be used for long psalms.*

Note the poetic devices used in the Hebrew mirror or in the Flower Garden (Appendix C). What is the psalmist trying to achieve? Consider what poetic devices are used in the local language to achieve the same functions.

Activity: NOW, COMPOSE A SONG! 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. The song needs to cover all the main stanzas, but doesn't need to be correct in every detail (that comes later in Step 5)

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



Step 5: Draft

Translating stanza-by-stanza

Listen to the poem again. Orally create stanza-by-stanza a first draft of the psalm in the target language, trying to capture the poetic elements and essential details of the meaning. To take full advantage of the oral form, avoid reverting to written Biblical text at this point.

Activity: 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).



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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 - Jubilation of restoration

<p>1 The song of the ascents</p> <p>When YHWH restored the fortunes of Zion we were as dreamers.</p> <p>2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouts.</p> <p>Then they would say among the nations YHWH is magnified to do such things with these people.</p> <p>3 YHWH is magnified To do such things with us. We were glad.</p>	<p>1 When the LORD indeed restored the blessings of Zion, we were like those who dream.</p> <p>2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, “Magnified is the LORD to be able to do this for them.”</p> <p>3 Indeed, the LORD is magnified to be able to do such things for us; we are very glad.</p>
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Discussion:

- In v.1 is a complicated repetition of word roots “*he restored to us our restorations*”. The meaning of “*restorations*” can be translated in different ways, as blessings,
- “*Zion*” is in Jerusalem, but not completely the equivalent as Jerusalem. Do not translate “*Zion*” as Jerusalem, it is a too important name in the psalms and elsewhere in the Bible.
- The “*mouth filled with laughter*” is a figure of speech of abundance, and the same with the metaphor “*tongue*”. Be aware of the figurative language, it may not work well if translated literally. But don’t assume either it will not work. It may.
- “*They say among the nations*” in v.2a just means that its what people are talking about around the whole world. It is not that they are saying something to each other.
- “*Magnified is the LORD*” of v.2b and 3a is repeated twice and forms the high point of praise of of the psalm. The repetition needs to be maintained.
- The “*indeed*” in v.3a reinforces the concepts of the previous verse line. It needs to be translated, it cannot be just left out, unless it is completely meaningless.

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





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Stanza 2: Verses 4-6 - Petition in hope of restoration

4 Restore, YHWH, our fortunes
like the streams in the Negev.

5 Those sowing with tears,
with joyful shouts will reap.

6 The one who certainly goes and weeps
carrying the bag of the seed,
will certainly come
with joyful shouts
carrying his sheaves.

4 Restore our blessings, O LORD,
like streams in the Negev (a dry place)!

5 Those who sow in tears
shall reap with shouts of joy!

6 Truly the one who goes out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying (his/her) sheaves.

Discuss:

- The same issue as in v.1 here again: the duplication of the restore root.
- The position of the vocative “O Lord” needs to be discussed where best in the verse line.
- The “sowing in tears” is not literal, or not necessarily literal. It is just a metaphor for the unpleasant effort of sowing in contrast to the joyful hard work of harvesting. In the translation, keep the metaphors if they make sense, otherwise get equivalent metaphors.
- Try to use different words for “tears” and “weeping”. The Hebrew uses two words, for effect. By means of contrast, the “shouts of joy” are repeated exactly the same. That is significant too. It should be the same wording as the “shouts of joy” in v.1d.
- The extra words and phrases in vv.5-6 are for emphasis (DK).
- The “truly” of v.5 and v.6 carries a lot of weight. This is not a word in Hebrew, but a grammatical construct with no easy equivalent in English (see below). But there is a strong parallel and contrast between going out and coming in. Basically the metaphor idiom is repeated for additional poetic effect. It is beautiful agricultural imagery that is effectively employed to illustrate the restoration of vv.1 and 4.

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 or section.
- 2) Think about how to include relevant parts from previous steps and to use ideas from the previous creative activities.
- 3) Put everything together to make a poetic oral representation of the complete psalm, and then record it.



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Discuss:

- Repeating with the same words provides a lot of cohesion in a poem. Also the underlying concepts of joy in v.4 and then vv.5-6 at harvest time.
- The balance between the “surely” in v.3 and the “truly” in v.5 is important too.
- The psalm overall conveys a wonderful emotion of joy and gladness. Has that come out in your translation?

Activity: Discuss what title you would like to give the psalm in your language. You don’t need to make a final decision at this point.

Phase 2: TEXT



Step 6: Transcribe

Make a written draft

Activity: Transcribe the recording/s of the oral draft onto paper or a computer.

Before moving on to the checking steps, 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. Doing this now 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

Check the exegesis of the oral translation. Consider whether the correct meaning has been translated and if the wording used can be improved. The purpose of this step is to check the content of your draft for faithfulness and trustworthiness.

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:

- Have the repetitions of words (highlighted with colour in the guide-psalm) been maintained?
- The word-order of the vocative “*the LORD*” in v.4, should it be at the beginning, middle or end of the verse line?
- In v.1, does the idea of ‘dream’ convey the idea of being so happy they could not believe it was real?
- In v.4 does the idea of ‘*streams in the Negev*’ have meaning? Or what metaphor would work better for you? It could also be translated as “*streams in a dry place*”. The Negev in southern Israel does not have any additional meaning except that it anchors the psalm geographically in Israel.
- In v.5, is the contrast between ‘*tears*’ and ‘*shouts of joy*’ clear?
- Shouts of joy are repeated three times. These don’t have to be words, they could be ululations or some other joyful sound. What works in your culture?
- In v.6, is there an emphatic participle to indicate that they definitely will return with loads of harvest?
- Is there a strong contrast between ‘*shouts of joy*’ (repeated) and ‘*tears*’ (idea repeated)?



Step 8: Poetry Check

Compare and weigh the poetic features

Check if the Hebrew poetry is all accounted for in the translation through equivalent poetic features in the target language. Consider if the poetry of the translation can be improved, for example, look at the length of lines and the use of rhythm and ideophones.



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Activity: Consider the poetic features of your translation. Do they reflect the purpose of the Hebrew poetic features, drawing attention to the correct parts? Experiment a bit with different word-orders and see what sounds the most beautiful, the most poetic.

POETIC CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- The rhythm and balance of the verse lines: check the syllable counts, that the verselines are not too long and therefore too difficult to sing.
- The metaphors of the refreshing waters and the agricultural images of sowing and reaping need to be maintained.
- Try for rhyme, beginning or end of verse lines, where it could work.



Step 9: Finalise

Preparing the final version of an authenticated translation

Prepare 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 (audio, visual and written).

Activity: Re-check the spelling of your transcription, the punctuation, in-setting, and the layout of paragraphs to represent stanza segmentation.

Activity: Re-check the essential accuracy of the back translation (not worrying about spelling).

Activity: In AVTT, ensure that the final text of your psalm is uploaded with a back translation, check that the recordings from different steps are in the correct place, and do a final audio recording.

Activity: If possible, copy the final written text into Paratext.



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Phase 3: PERFORMANCE



Step 10: Perform

Performing the psalm in your community

Convert text into performance (dramatic reading/song/chant) to both perform and share this psalm, ensuring the main message comes through in content and style (the same emotional mood as the original poem in the Bible).

You now want to convert your written translation into a performance (song or chant) so that you can share it with your community. You need to make sure that the main message comes through in content and style (the same emotional mood as the original poem in the Bible). The genre - lament or praise or thanksgiving or other - should be similar to songs of the same genre in your culture.

Psalm-specific ideas:

- ...

Activity: Identify any relevant genres or styles or performance and put the psalm to music. You can put the whole psalm to music, word-for-word, or you can use creative licence to adapt the psalm for the performance.

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, in the form of a song, hymn or chorus, 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.





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Appendix A: Guide Translations

Guide Translation #1 (Hebrew-mirror)	Guide Translation #2 (Hebrew-tight)
<p>Psalm 126</p> <p>1 The song of the ascents</p> <p>When YHWH restored the fortunes of Zion we were as dreamers.</p> <p>2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouts. Then they would say among the nations YHWH is magnified to do such things with these people.</p> <p>3 YHWH is magnified To do such things with us. We were glad.</p> <p>4 Restore, YHWH, our fortunes like the streams in the Negev.</p> <p>5 Those sowing with tears, with joyful shouts will reap.</p> <p>6 The one who certainly goes and weeps carrying the bag of the seed, will certainly come with joyful shouts carrying his sheaves.</p>	<p>Psalm 126</p> <p>1 When the LORD indeed restored the blessings of Zion, we were like those who dream.</p> <p>2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, “Magnified is the LORD to be able to do this for them.”</p> <p>3 Indeed, the LORD is magnified to be able to do such things for us; we are very glad.</p> <p>4 Restore our blessings, O LORD, like streams in the Negev (a dry place)!</p> <p>5 Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!</p> <p>6 Truly the one who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying (his/her) sheaves.</p>





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Appendix B: Exegetical Layout

The genre of Psalm 63 is a psalm of thanksgiving in the form of a prayer addressed to God.

The theme is a celebration of the experience of the presence of YHWH, illustrated by the strong longing for it and by deep satisfaction in it.

SUGGESTED HEADING

The king (or David) celebrating the presence of the LORD.

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 |
|--|---|--|

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת	The.song.of.the.ascents
בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה אֶת־שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים:	¹ When.he.restored YHWH the.fortunes/restoration ¹ .of Zion ² , we.were as.dreamers ³ .
שְׂחֹק פִּינוּ אִזּוּ יִמְלֵא וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה	² Then it.would.be.filled (with) laughter our.mouth and.our.tongue (with joyful) shouts ⁴

¹ *blessings*: includes all the blessings and good things they had experienced in their homeland. Literally the Hebrew is: ‘give what was given before’ (i.e. the root is repeated).

² *Zion*: this is a key word as the psalms are often referred to as ‘the Zion psalms’. So, if possible, keep this word. In this context, it refers to the people of Jerusalem (or more generally, the people of God).

³ *who dream*: could also be ‘who are strong’ (as in LXX). The idea is that they were very happy, beyond what they could have believed would be possible.

⁴ *shouts of joy*: occurs 3x in the psalm, with *laughter* and *glad* expressing a similar emotion. This word is onomatopoeic so some cultures might prefer “ululate” to “shout.”





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אֲזַי אֶמְרֵוּ בְּגוֹיִם	then they.would.say among.the.nations ⁵ :
הַגְּדִיל יְהוָה לְעֲשׂוֹת עִם-אֱלֹהִים:	"Magnified ⁶ (is) YHWH to.do (such) with.these (people) ⁷ ."
הַגְּדִיל יְהוָה לְעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הֵינּוּ שְׂמֵחִים:	³ Magnified (is) YHWH to.do (such) with.us. ⁸ We.were glad.
שְׁבִיתָנוּ שׁוֹבָה יְהוָה אֶת־ כְּאֶפְיָקִים בְּנֶגֶב:	⁴ Restore, ⁹ YHWH our.fortunes/restoration ¹⁰ like.streams in.the.Negev ^{11 12}
הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדַמְעָה בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ:	⁵ The.ones.who.sow in.tears with(joyful).shouts they.will.reap ¹³ .

⁵ Nations. Why must the nations be included? "The confirming power of other nation's testimony to God's actions" (Segal).

⁶ Magnified is the LORD (he is more than great). Note it is the LORD who is magnified, not his deeds. (Many translations seem to make an error here.)

⁷ This positive declaration by other nations is in strong contrast to the taunting by other nations seen in some psalms, e.g. Ps 3:2 or Ps 42:3.

⁸ *for us*: notice the same words used as in the previous line.

⁹ *Restore*: the same verb as in v.1.

¹⁰ See footnote 4. TLN The rendering for restoring our fortunes is different here than in v1. It is thematically and poetically significant that they are the same in the translation.

¹¹ The restorative power of God is likened to the invigorating restoration of dry *wadi* (steep river) beds in the *Negev* desert in Israel, during the winter rains. The rains came every year; the people could depend on them to restore and enliven the parched landscape, year after year.

¹² V.4 is parallel to v.1. V.1 spoke of what happened in the past. V.4 speaks of their hope/prayer for the present/soon future.

¹³ THEME slow, patient answer to prayer of v.4a, after sudden response of v.4b.



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<p>הָלוֹד יֵלֵךְ וּבְכֹה־ נִשָּׂא מִשַּׁדְּהַזְרַע</p>	<p>⁶ ¹⁴He.will.certainly.go¹⁵ and.weep carrying.the.bag.of.the.seed;</p>
<p>בָּא־יָבוֹא בְרִנָּה נִשָּׂא אֶלְמֹתָיו:</p>	<p>He.will.certainly.come¹⁶ with.(joyful).shouts carrying.his.sheaves¹⁷.</p>

¹⁴ There is no literal way to translate the Hebrew construction here (infinitive absolute + cognate verb). When the infinitive precedes the finite verb, it is translated with a measure of certainty. In English you can use auxiliary adverbs like “certainly” or “surely.”

¹⁵ The group of verse 5 (all those who...) is represented as singular here (‘the one who’) but both are inclusive of all those who had suffered the exile.

¹⁶ *come home*: a powerful image as not only is it referencing the sower who has gone out to his fields and now is returning to his dwelling, but it also speaks of the exiles returning home to Jerusalem.

¹⁷ The metaphor of someone sowing seeds in tears (a small seed doesn’t seem to make much difference to their lives) and then rejoicing (as the lowly seed is transformed, with big harvests to carry home) was a powerful image in Israel. It was something they knew well, their hard work in daily life, which God used to bring life to them. Sowing seed is a picture of ‘expecting’ – trusting our little work will result in God doing something big.



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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:

- ...

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

A song of ascent

1 When the LORD restored the restorations of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then they said among the nations,

“Magnified is the LORD
to be able to do such things for them.”

3 Indeed, the LORD is magnified
to be able to do such things for us;
we are very glad.

4 Restore our restorations, O LORD,
like (refreshing) streams in a dry place!
Those who sow in tears
shall reap with shouts of joy!

5 Truly, the one who goes out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall certainly come home with shouts of joy,
carrying his/her sheaves.

COMMENTARY ON THE FLOWER GARDEN:

1. ...

