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# Psalm 12

## 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?



### 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:

- 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?
- Are there any noticeable repetitions in this psalm?





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## CREATIVE RESPONSES

**Creative Activity 1:** we all live in societies in which there is little or no righteousness but a lot of emptiness, deceit, lying, and vileness. Discuss as a group how you experience this and how you feel about it.

**Creative Activity 2:** as with many psalms, the vileness and hideousness of the spoken word is a common theme. People say terrible things about each other and about God, and lying and deceiving is common place, with devastation the result. Arrogance and emptiness are celebrated and the weak and vulnerable downtrodden. Psalm 12 deals with these issues as they also occurred in the life of Israel three thousand years ago. There is nothing new or strange here. Discuss how it is that a poet in this case really stands up and speaks against this, and calls to God about it. What has been done with this vileness by the elders of your community, or by the religious leaders or politicians?

## 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?*

**Discuss:**

- What do you think is the main message of the psalm?  
The psalm laments the deceit and emptiness surrounding and ruling the lives of the LORD’s people, and makes a plea to the LORD to intervene. The comfort from this psalm is that God promises to rise up and put things right.
- What did the psalmist actually say? What is this psalm about?

### **Theme and flow of the psalm**

The psalm is a mix of words addressed to God (vv.1, 7) and those to the community, as well as a direct quotation of words from God (v.5). One can imagine the priest/prophet (psalmist) in the Temple, praying and encouraging the people.

The psalmist begins by calling out to God (v.1) and then gives an extensive reason (vv.2-4) why God should act and includes what God should do (v.3). God responds, with words. The psalmist tells the community that God’s words can be trusted (v.6) and that God will protect



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them/us (v.7). We would expect the psalm to end at v.7, but the psalmist continues to mention the problem again (v.8), as if to motivate God to act. (The tense in v.7 is future, not accomplished action yet.)

- **Key terms and ideas:** The people of God are first described as the godly and the faithful (by the prophet), and later as the weak and needy (by God).
- What type of song or prayer is this psalm? Do you have something similar in your language?

### Genre and significance of the psalm

The psalm has been identified as a communal lament (Scriptura).

- What triggered the psalmist to compose it? 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?

David as king is the author of this psalm, but he also functions as a representative of his people before God. He is responsible for what is happening and intercedes for them (v.1) while lamenting the situation. He also acts as a prophet delivering a comforting oracle from the LORD (v5) that He who is the LORD will intervene and put things right for the weak and needy loyal ones and faithful ones in Israel.

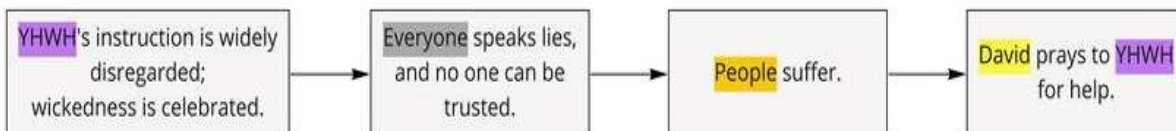
### Historical setting of the psalm

The background to the psalm is a time when the foundations of society have been destroyed. The prophet can speak to God on behalf of the people (as in vv.1, 7), but also bring God's word to the people (v.5).

The psalm has been identified as a communal lament led by a prophet, who delivers an oracle from YHWH in v. 6. This view works well with the notion of Davidic authorship, since David functioned, in some sense, as a prophet (cf. 2 Sam. 23:1-7; Pss. 14, 110). Furthermore, David as king represented the people, and he was responsible for the well-being of the poor and afflicted in his kingdom (cf. Ps. 72) (Scriptura).

### BACKGROUND IDEAS

- YHWH's law requires people to deal with one another in loyalty and faithfulness. The opposite of loyalty and faithfulness is "falsehood," which results in pain and suffering.
- Prophets (like David) receive messages from YHWH and report those messages to others.



**INSIGHT:** Psalm 12 links with other psalms: Pss 11 and 14 are similar in theme to Psalm 12.



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

...

### SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

The psalm can be divided into six stanzas:

**Stanza 1** (Verse 1) Plea: for salvation in the midst of isolation - there are no more godly people

**Stanza 2** (Verses 2-4) Lament: everyone lies, flatters, boasts.

**Stanza 3** (Verse 5) Declaration: the LORD says: "I will arise and save the weak and needy"

**Stanza 4** (Verse 6) Confidence: the LORD's words are pure

**Stanza 5** (Verse 7) Wish: May you keep them, o LORD, from this generation

**Stanza 6** (Verse 8) Lament: the wicked walk confidently

### 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

'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





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**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)



## 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.



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### 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.

## 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.*





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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).

## 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: Verse 1

1 Save, o Yahweh,  
for the godly one has come to an end,  
for trustworthy ones have vanished  
from the sons of mankind.

1 Help, YHWH! For the loyal one has  
disappeared;  
for faithful ones have vanished from  
among humanity.

### Discuss:

- In the first scene the psalmist cries out to God to act and save, and gives the reason that there are no more godly people (implying all are wicked). Cf. Ps 14:1 (which begins with saying all are wicked).



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- V.1: Save: note there is no object. Some versions has “help” here, but the root is save/salvation, the state one is one when things have been put right.  
*no more*: notice the words which are underlined, all speaking of the completeness of the problem.
- *faithful*: those who keep their covenant commitments.

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

### Stanza 2: Verses 2-4

2 Lies they speak, each with his neighbor,  
lips of smoothness, with heart and  
heart they speak.  
3 May Yahweh cut off all lips of smoothness,  
A tongue saying great things.  
4 Who said:  
“With our tongue we will prevail,  
our lips are with us,  
who is master over us?”

2 They speak falsehood, each with his  
neighbour;  
with flattering lips, with duplicity they  
speak.  
3 May YHWH exterminate all flattering lips,  
[every] tongue speaking great things,  
4 [all] who have said, “We can speak boldly;  
Our lips are under our control;  
who is our master?”

#### Discuss:

- In the second scene, the psalmist supports his appeal in v.1 with a description of the ungodly.
- v.2 *lies*: literally, *emptiness*. The next sentence explains the content of their words.
- *flattering*: lit: smooth (easily accepted)
- *double heart*: their inner (thoughts) and outer life (words, actions) do not match.
- v.3: *cut down*: the wicked try to cut down people with their evil words. Thus the request is for YHWH to reduce the effectiveness of their false words (like a blunt blade, see v.4b).
- v.4: *prevail* means to dominate, succeed.
- *Who is master over us?* They deny there is a God bigger than them. See Ps 10:4. It is important to keep the rhetorical question for poetic effect.
- vv.3-4 show a chiasm: *cut down / lips / tongue / great boasts / tongue / lips / blade*. In the middle of the chiasm is *great boasts*. This is the problem of the wicked, and links with their lack of acknowledgement of God (v.4c).

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

### Stanza 3: Verse 5

5 “Because of the oppression the afflicted,

5 “Because afflicted ones are devastated,



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because of the groaning of the needy,  
now I will rise up”, says Yahweh,  
“I will place him in salvation, he longs  
for it.”

because poor ones groan,  
now I will rise up,” says YHWH.  
“I will place in safety the one for whom  
someone sets traps.”

**Discuss:**

- In this scene, the LORD responds to the psalmist’s request (vv.1-2). Note the reason He says he will act. This declaration of YHWH, and this commitment to action is an instance of the Hebrew concept of justice, to be making a ruling, to pronounce a decision to act in favor of the weak and the needy. A ruling to put things right by bringing the deliverance requested.
- v.5 The LORD answers the (3-fold) lies in v.4 with an extended response. God says he will act because the lies of the wicked impact the weak and needy. YHWH’s motivation is not because of their failure to acknowledge Him (v.4c) but because of what they are doing to the weak.
- *groan*: The poor suffer and are in anguish, but God hears their cry.
- *I will arise*: God has not explicitly been asked to arise (as in Pss 3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 10:12), but He does so.
- *take my stand*: In Ps 3:2, enemies take their stand against the psalmist, who asks YHWH to arise and deliver. The same words are used in this psalm.
- *safety for which he longs*: God promises to deliver, in response to the appeal in v.1 (save).
- *witnesses*: This strengthens says in v.5b, suggesting a vow. The next verse (v.6) gives a 3-fold assurance that what God says is trustworthy.

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

**Stanza 4: Verse 6**

6 The words of Yahweh words are pure words,  
silver refined in a furnace on the  
ground,  
purified seven times.

6 YHWH’s words are pure words,  
silver refined in a furnace on the  
ground,  
purified seven times over.

**Discuss:**

- This stanza assures the listener that what the LORD says in the previous verse (and witnesses to) is reliable. Unlike the words of the ungodly (vv.2-4), the *words of the LORD* are fully tested and reliable.
- v.6: *refined* means tested and purified.
- *seven times* means completely. This is in stark contrast to the words of the ungodly (vv.2-4).

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



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### Stanza 5: Verse 7

7 You, Yahweh, will protect them

You will protect us from this generation forever.

7 You, YHWH, will guard them;

You will protect him from the generation which is forever.

#### Discuss:

- v.1 is a prayer in the form of a wish or desire, very common in the psalms.
- *Keep them*: the psalmist prays for the godly, for them to be protected from the evil that will continue.
- v.7: *them* and *him*: plural and singular seem to be used interchangeably (see also v.1 plural and v.5 singular), but emphasizing that God's promise, and the request, are for all, with the individual in focus. Keep the singular and plural distinctions unless it is completely unacceptable in your language.
- *This generation* is normally a difficult term to translate, but it refers to the group of people that are alive at any given time. Check what you have done elsewhere and be sure concordance of same meaning is maintained.
- *last forever*: There are two interpretations of this lasting forever: 1) this evil generation lasting forever, with the psalm suggesting that in this life there will always be lies that are raised up by ungodly people. Or 2) that the guarding from this (evil) generation will last forever. The versions differ, but the second option seems preferable. That this evil generation will last forever is theologically – in the view of the whole Bible - not true, they will meet their end.

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

### Stanza 6: Verse 8

8 On every side, wicked walk to and fro

When what is worthless is exalted by the sons of mankind.

8 Wicked ones roam around

when vileness is esteemed among humans.

#### Discuss:

- The last scene returns to the first in describing the problem. The psalmist is not relaxed, but has made his appeal to God, and he leaves it there.
- v.8 *On every side*: the moral disorder is everywhere.
- The faithless walk about and strut about confidently, as they are accepted and even respected in society.
- *triviality*. The wicked turn things upside-down so that unimportant things are treated as important, and the despicable is treated as honourable.
- *lifted up* means given importance to. YHWH should be lifted up, but instead false values are lifted up.



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- v.1 and v.8 serve as an inclusio (both having the word humanity, and both referring to the state of the world, v.1 referring to the loss of godly people, and v.8 referring to the dominance of ungodly people).

**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.

## 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



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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).



## 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:

- Review the points mentioned under each stanza in Step 5, and check that all have been considered in the draft.
- Do not forget the discoveries made in Step 2!
- Check the verb tenses.
- Check the stanza segmentation, and that the transitions between the stanzas flow well. Read the stanzas together.



## 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.

**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.



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## POETIC CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- Did the translation of Psalm 12 incorporate some of the poetic features of laments in your language?
- Do you need to add words, or reduce some, to get a good rhythm? Have you changed the rhythm or used some other mechanism to draw attention to the important ideas?
- Similar to the above, do the necessary syllable counts to check if the verse-lines have rhythm and not too many accents (which makes it difficult to sing). Has that been conveyed adequately? The verse-lines need to be as short as possible. Poetic language is compact, not wordy.
- The repetitions and build-up in Psalm evoke strong emotion and effect. Explore many different options to have the same effect in your language.
- Is the word-order natural, or giving the focus indicated by the Hebrew?



### 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)

*For the choir director, according to the sheminith. A Psalm of David.*

- 1 Save, o Yahweh,  
for the godly one has come to an end,  
for trustworthy ones have vanished  
from the sons of mankind.
- 2 Lies they speak, each with his neighbor,  
lips of smoothness, with heart and  
heart they speak.
- 3 May Yahweh cut off all lips of smoothness,  
A tongue saying great things.
- 4 Who said:  
"With our tongue we will prevail,  
our lips are with us,  
who is master over us?"
- 5 "Because of the oppression the afflicted,  
because of the groaning of the needy,  
now I will rise up", says Yahweh,  
"I will place him in salvation, he longs  
for it."
- 6 The words of Yahweh words are pure words,  
silver refined in a furnace on the  
ground,  
purified seven times.
- 7 You, Yahweh, will protect them  
You will protect us from this generation  
forever.
- 8 On every side, wicked walk to and fro  
When what is worthless is exalted by  
the sons of mankind.

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

*For the director. On the eight-tone scale. A psalm by David.*

1. Help, YHWH! For the loyal one has  
disappeared;  
for faithful ones have vanished from among  
humanity.
2. They speak falsehood, each with his  
neighbour;  
with flattering lips, with duplicity they speak.
3. May YHWH exterminate all flattering lips,  
[every] tongue speaking great things,
4. [all] who have said, "We can speak boldly;  
Our lips are under our control;  
who is our master?"
5. "Because afflicted ones are devastated,  
because poor ones groan,  
now I will rise up," says YHWH.  
"I will place in safety the one for whom  
someone sets traps."
6. YHWH's words are pure words,  
silver refined in a furnace on the ground,  
purified seven times over.
7. You, YHWH, will guard them;  
You will protect him from the generation which  
is forever.
8. Wicked ones roam around  
when vileness is esteemed among humans.



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## Appendix B: Exegetical Layout

Psalm 12 is an appeal to God to help his people who are being oppressed in an ungodly world where people live by lies.

### SUGGESTED HEADING

Lord, save your people living in a world of lies.

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

- Qatal perfective = blue
- Yiqtol imperfective = red
- Infinitive construct = purple
- Wayyiqtol waw+imperfective = pink
- Jussive/cohortative = light brown
- Imperative = brown
- Participle = green
- Weqatal = navy

לְמַנְצַח עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית	For.the.director according to the.sheminith <sup>1</sup>
מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד:	Psalm of.David
הוֹשִׁיעָה יְהוָה	1 Save <sup>2</sup> , o Yahweh
כִּי־גָמַר חָסִיד	for-has.come.to.an.end <sup>3</sup> (the.)godly.one,
כִּי־פָסוּ אַמּוֹנִים	for-have.vanished trustworthy.ones <sup>4</sup>
מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:	from.the.sons of.mankind.
שׁוֹא יִדְבְּרוּ	2 Lies <sup>5</sup> they.speak,
אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ	each with-his.neighbor,

1 Lit: eighth. This could refer to a musical instrument with 8 strings. See Ps 6 which has a similar heading.

2 Save: note there is no object.

3 no more: notice the words which are underlined, all speaking of the completeness of the problem. The Hebrew literally says: 'the godly one – sg. – has come to an end'.

4 faithful: those who keep their commitments. Plural. In v.1a, it was singular. So in v.1 we have the godly referred to in both singular and plural, and in v.8, similarly.

5 lies: lit: emptiness. The next sentence explains the content of their words.





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שִׁפְתַי חֲלָקוֹת	lips.of smoothness <sup>6</sup>
בְּלֵב וּלְבָב יְדַבְּרוּ:	<b>with.heart and.heart</b> <sup>7</sup> they.speak.
יִכַרְתֵּהוּ יְהוָה	3 May.he.cut.off <sup>8</sup> Yahweh
כָּל-שִׁפְתֵי חֲלָקוֹת	all-lips.of smoothness
לְשׁוֹן מְדַבֶּרֶת גְּדֹלוֹת:	a.tongue saying great.things.
אֲשֶׁר אָמַר	4 Who said-(א):
לְלַשְׁנֵנוּ נִגְבִּיר	<b>“With.our.tongue</b> we.will.prevail <sup>9</sup>
שִׁפְתֵינוּ אִתָּנוּ	our.lips (are) with.us <sup>10</sup> ,
מִי אֲדוֹן לָנוּ:	who (is) master <sup>11</sup> over.us <sup>12</sup> ?
מִשְׁדַּע עֲנִיִּים	5 “Because.of.(the).oppression.of (the).afflicted,
מֵאֲנַקְתֵּי אֲבִיוֹנִים	because.of.(the).groaning.of <sup>13</sup> (the).needy
עַתָּה אֶקוּם	now <sup>14</sup> I.will.rise up” <sup>15</sup> ,
יֹאמֵר יְהוָה	says Yahweh.
אֲשִׁית בְּיָשַׁע	“I.will.place (him) in.salvation <sup>16</sup>

6 flattering: lit: smooth (easily accepted)

7 double heart: their inner (thoughts) and outer life (words, actions) do not match.

8 cut down: The wicked try to cut down people with their evil words. Thus the request is for YHWH to reduce the effectiveness of their false words (like a blunt blade, see v.4b).

9 prevail: dominate, succeed.

10 The meaning of the idiom that is difficult to determine. What does it mean that our lips are “with us”? I would suggest something like “our lips say what we want them to” or “what we speak works for us”.

11 Who is master over us? They deny there is a God bigger than them. See Ps 10:4.

12 Vv.3-4 show a chiasm: cut down / lips / tongue / great boasts / tongue / lips / blade. In the middle of the chiasm is great boasts. This is the problem of the wicked, and links with their un-acknowledgement of God (v.4c).

13 groan: The poor may not necessarily be crying out to God, but God hears their cry.

14 Now: the implication is that the LORD has endured enough of the wicked’s evil talk.

15 I will arise: God has not explicitly been asked to arise (as in Pss 3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 10:12), but He does so.

16 Same root as used in the opening line for “help me, save me”.



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יְפִיחַ לוֹ:	he longs for it. <sup>17 18</sup>
אִמְרוֹת יְהוָה	6 The words of Yahweh
אִמְרוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת	(are) words pure,
בְּכֶסֶף צָרוּף	silver refined <sup>19</sup>
בְּעִלְיַל לְאָרֶץ	in a furnace <sup>20</sup> on the ground,
מִזְקָה שֶׁבַעֲתָיִם:	purified seven times <sup>21</sup> .
אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה תִּשְׁמְרֵם	7 You-Yahweh <sup>22</sup> will protect them <sup>23</sup>
תִּצְרְנֵנוּ   מִן־הַדּוֹר זֶה לְעוֹלָם:	you will deliver us from the generation this <sup>24</sup> forever <sup>25</sup> .
סָבִיב רְשָׁעִים יִתְהַלְכוּ	8 On every side <sup>26</sup> wicked walk to and fro <sup>27</sup> ,

17 There is a textual issue here. We have chosen 'for which he longs' rather than 'he witnesses to him'.

18 safety for which he longs: God promises to deliver, in response to the appeal in v.1 (save). There is an alternative interpretation: "delivered from some who sets them traps" (Scriptura), "...from those who malign them" (NIV).

19 refined: purified and tested.

20 Furnaces could be constructed by digging a pit and lining it with clay bricks, which was far more efficient than trying to build an above-ground furnace. But various translations use other words here which I think is slightly misleading (e.g. NIV, crucible).

21 seven times: completely. This is in stark contrast to the words of the ungodly (vv.2-4).

22 You is in a prominent first position in the Hebrew.

23 them and him: plural and singular seem to be used interchangeably (see also v.1 plural and v.5 singular),

but emphasizing that God's promise, and the request, are for all, with the individual in focus.

24 it is a rarer form of זה and is a demonstrative adjective modifying the generation - "this generation".

25 last forever: The psalm suggests that in this life there will always be lies that are raised up by ungodly people.

26 On every side: the moral disorder is everywhere.

27 The faithless roam about confidently as they are accepted in society. There could be the idea of pacing back and forth, looking for an opportunity to strike.



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כָּרָם זָלוֹת לְבָנֵי אָדָם

when.exalted<sup>28</sup> (what.is.)trivial<sup>29</sup> to.the.sons.of  
mankind<sup>30</sup>.

BETA

<sup>28</sup> lifted up: YHWH should be lifted up, but instead false values are lifted up.

<sup>29</sup> triviality. The word can also mean vileness. They turn things upside-down so that unimportant things are treated as important, and the despicable is treated as honorable.

<sup>30</sup> v.1 and v.8 serve as an inclusio (both having the word humanity (pl) and reference to a single person, and both referring to the state of the world, v.1 referring to the loss of godly people, and v.8 referring to the dominance of ungodly people).



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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.

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE SHEMINITH. A PSALM OF DAVID.

<sup>1</sup> Save, O LORD, for there are no more godly people,

The faithful have vanished from among *humanity*.

<sup>2</sup> Everyone speaks lies to his neighbor.

They speak with flattering lips and a double heart.

<sup>3</sup> May the LORD cut down all flattering lips,

the tongue that makes great boasts.

<sup>4</sup> They say, "With our tongue we will prevail,

our lips will be our instrument.

Who is master over us?"

<sup>5</sup> The LORD says,

"**Because** the weak are plundered / oppressed,

**because** the needy groan,

I will now arise.

I will take my stand and give him the salvation for which he longs."

<sup>6</sup> The words of the LORD are pure words,

like silver refined in a furnace on the ground,

purified seven times.

<sup>7</sup> You yourself, *keep* them, O LORD.

You *guard/protect* **him** from this generation that lasts forever.

<sup>8</sup> On every side the faithless one walk about (confidently) / strut,

as triviality is lifted up by *humanity*.

