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# Psalm 125

## 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?
- What is the mood of the psalmist? *Encouraging, confident.*





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- What are the main ideas the poet is trying to communicate? *God's people are secure; God will give good/bad according to people's hearts/ways; the people of God can know peace*

## ABSORBING THE BIG PICTURE OF THE PSALM

**Activity:** In pairs,

- 1) Encourage your partner why they can know peace if they are part of God's people (based on the psalm, particularly vv.1-2, 5b).
- 2) Discuss the importance to you of gathering in a particular place with other people of God. What is your "Jerusalem" where you can be strengthened as you enter into God's presence with God's people?

## 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?*

## **Participants in the psalm**

**Activity:** Discuss as a whole group who are the participants in the psalm? Who speaks to whom? Who acts inside the psalm? Who do you think the poet is speaking to?

*The LORD surrounding and protecting, bringing good to the good and giving peace to Israel.*

*The righteous and upright ones in Israel trusting the LORD.*

*The wicked rulers in Zion.*

*Those crooked in their ways, the wicked.*

*The scene is Israel and Mount Zion, the destiny of the pilgrims. Who do you think the poet is speaking to?*

The poet is addressing the community, the people of Israel, most likely the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem or in Jerusalem during the feasts. The plea for goodness to be shown to the good and upright, and the plea for peace for Israel, were all addressed to the LORD by the poet.



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**Activity:** Read Joshua 14:1, 15:1, 19:51, and then read v.3. Do you notice how the different tribes were each given an inheritance in the land? Talk to each other about how the second part of v.3 relates to the first part of v.3. Do you see how it fits in with vv.1 and 2?

### Theme and Flow of the Psalm

**Activity:** Discuss as a whole group what this psalm is about.

The theme of the psalm is that, like mountains, the LORD surrounds his upright, people who trust in him. YHWH is their security (AM), he is the Guardian of the right (DK). This protection is conditional: it is for the righteous, the upright, and the trusting.

The flow of thought is the following:

- Stanza 1 (verses 1-2) celebrates the security of those who trust the LORD, the righteous and upright ones, with a security compared to surrounding mountains and the immovable Mount Zion.
- Stanza 2 (verse 3) is a guarantee that a righteous king will rule and have the authority over the land allotted by the LORD. This has a strange reason; that if not, the righteous people risk extending their hand to do evil under an evil ruler. What evil exactly is meant, is uncertain (see the possible explanations in the notes in Appendix B).
- Stanza 3 (verses 4 and 5) are two pleas to the LORD (to do good to the good and to give peace to Israel), with a verse in between that contains a warning to the wicked that they will be removed from Zion by the LORD. The wish for peace and well-being for Israel, which is similar to the plea for goodness, ends the psalm.

Underlying the theme of this psalm is the prophet Jeremiah's and other OT prophets' critique that Israel will not be automatically protected as is (Segal). Carnal religion in Israel will not endure and the wicked will be removed (v.5), but as long as it can, evil will always try to attach itself and corrupt (DK). By way of contrast, righteousness always leads to shalom, peace (DK, cf. Isaiah 32) and is always enduring.

**Activity:** in small groups of three, look for the six "blessings" in this psalm. List them in order.

There is a clear flow of blessings, the six "goods":

- 1) *the righteous will be firm and **not be shaken**, and*
- 2) *they will **endure** and abide forever, like the mountains and like Zion*
- 3) *the LORD **surrounds** her now and forever*
- 4) ***no scepter of wickedness** will endure in the land*
- 5) *the LORD will **do good** to her*
- 6) *the LORD will give her **well-being**, shalom.*

- What words or concepts do you hear repeated in the psalm? First find all the exact repetitions and then all the repetitions of similar, synonymous concepts.  
Exact repetition of words: "the LORD" 3 times, the "righteous" twice, and the "wicked" twice, and there are also repetitions of "forever" and "surrounding" in verses 1-2.



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There are also repetitions of the same concepts, but with different words, like the parallel of the “righteous” and the “upright in heart” in v.4, and linking “doers of iniquity” and “those turning aside to their crooked ways” in v.5.

- What type of psalm is it, what is its genre?  
It is a psalm of confidence, with some petitions for good and peace for the righteous.

### Emotions in Psalm 125

It is important to try to map the different emotions in this psalm: joy, celebration, apprehension? Fear?

**Activity:** Discuss in small groups the different emotions in this short psalm.

### Historical setting of the psalm

This is the last of the 15 Psalms of Ascent (Pss 120-134), which were songs sung at the time of festivals (such as Passover) in Jerusalem. Here, the pilgrims are about to return home at the end of the festival and as they pass the Temple, they see some priests working at night. They call out to them and encourage them to praise the LORD. In turn, the priests pray a blessing on the pilgrims. Pilgrims either before dawn or at night interacting with the priests, even maybe when departing for home (before dawn?).

### How does this psalm point to Christ and the New Testament?

Now, as a

### SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

- In the light of the flow of thought of the psalm as laid out above, discuss how the psalm can best be divided in segments or stanzas.  
Verses 1-2 contain promises of eternal security, v.3 the scepter of the wicked is being denied, and verses 4-5 contain petitions for good and peace for Israel, with the crooked in Israel removed with the wicked.

Stanza 1: in verses 1-2, those who trust the LORD are secure as Mt Zion and as the mountains around Jerusalem.

Stanza 2: in verse 3, the sceptre of the wicked in Zion is being denied, because the righteous will be negatively affected and commit some evil.

Stanza 3: verses 4-5 are framed by pleas to the LORD to do good to the righteous and to give peace to Israel, around the fact that the crooked will be removed.



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- Which poetic pictures and imagery stand out in this psalm?

**Activity:** The meaning of the righteous being firm and like Mt. Zion immovable, requires consideration. Discuss together the meaning of ‘moved’ (in v.1), and words in the language which can be used for ‘wicked’, ‘righteous’, ‘good’, ‘upright in heart’, ‘crooked ways’, and ‘evildoers’. (The footnotes in Appendix B may be helpful.)

The immovable mountains of Zion and surroundings (verses 1-2) must have been a strong poetic picture for the pilgrims singing this song. The picture of “not shaken, not tottering” goes with immovable mountains. The image of encircling protection of the mountains around Jerusalem build this out even further.

A chiasm across Stanzas 2 and 3 puts the plea for the LORD to do good to Israel in the central place of importance:

Wicked sceptre (v.3a)  
                   righteous (v.3b)  
                           do good to the good (v.4a)  
                           upright in heart (v.4b)  
                   wicked/crooked (v.5b)

- What is the historical setting of Psalm 125?

### Historical Setting of the Psalm

Psalm 125 is a Song of Ascents, perhaps sung by the pilgrims as they went to and from Jerusalem for the annual feasts. The songs were also sung during the feasts as they went up to bring their sacrifices. It celebrates Jerusalem and Zion as the focus point of their pilgrim faith.

But when was the psalm composed? The contrast between the righteous and the wicked within Israel is a strong recurring prophetic theme during the monarchy and from the Exile onwards. Psalm 1 gives that contrast a high profile. Psalm 125 mentions the prospect of banishment for the wicked in v.5, which could be a stark reminder of the Exile, but maybe not, we cannot be sure.

Verse 3 may give another clue: it could refer to foreign domination under a major power like Babylon or Persia, but again, not necessarily. It could just as well refer to a wicked king in Judah and Israel, of which there was ample evidence.

Both of these possibilities are not enough evidence by themselves for a possible post-exilic date. We cannot be sure of anything specific in the psalm referring to when it was composed, but most commentators lean towards a pre-exilic date because the temple on Mt Zion still seems to stand (v.2) and is referred to as immovable, something that is unlikely to be celebrated in poetry after the destruction of the temple and the Exile.

### UNLOCKING SOME OF THE OBSTACLES TO THE PSALM

- The meaning of v.3 does not seem to fit the flow of the psalm. Why would the righteous start doing evil under a wicked ruler? Several interpretations are on offer, the most likely the recall of



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the evil kings during the monarchies in Judah and Israel, like Manasseh and Ahab, who led the people astray. But the problem remains how the righteous will automatically be let astray in those conditions. It is also possible that righteous people are forced to accept and do evil in order to prevent some greater evil, which happens in real political situations all the time. This sort of compromise can be common when wicked people rule. Maybe the fact that evil will always find something to corrupt, like love that will cool (DK). In spite of that, Israel always had a faithful remnant, the 7,000 not bowing before Ba'al.

- It is not easy to see how the new covenant and the Messiah can be discerned in this psalm. Closest is of course the enduring security of Zion as fulfilled in Christ, but also the removal of the wicked from Israel in v.5., because the righteous and the wicked will always be together and mixed, but only until the final judgement. So these words may be prophetic of the messianic rule in the new heaven and new earth.

**INSIGHT: VERSES 1-2 AFFIRM THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE IN COVENANT WITH THE LORD: THE PEOPLE MUST TRUST GOD (V.1) AND GOD WILL PROTECT HIS PEOPLE (V.2). THE USE OF THE COVENANT NAME FOR GOD (LORD) THREE TIMES IN THIS SHORT PSALM EMPHASISES THIS PSALM IS ONE FOR THOSE IN COVENANT WITH GOD.**

#### Discuss:

- What do you think is the main point/message of the psalm?  
*The psalm focuses on the security of God's people, which is compared with the mountains around Jerusalem and Mount Zion, the destination and hope of the faithful (i.e., righteous and upright) pilgrims.*
- What does this psalm teach you about the LORD?  
*The LORD protects the land and its people, but will banish the wicked.*
- How could your church (or you) use this psalm?  
*The believers in Christ will receive the flow of blessings, including the final removal of evil and the wicked.*
- What heading or title would the group suggest for this psalm?

#### FINAL SUMMING UP

To summarise the Psalm, discuss the following questions:

- What is the main point or message of the psalm?
- What does this Psalm teach you about the LORD?
- How can you or your church use this psalm?
- What heading or title would the group suggest for this psalm?





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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.

There are several poetic devices to investigate here in Psalm 134:

#### **1. Repetition**

Look at the Flower Garden below for an overview of the repetitions. Do not hesitate to use repetition in your translation.



## Flower Garden

The repetitions and patterns below are placed upon guide translation. Read the commentary at the end of this Appendix which explains insights into these patterns.

### **Psalm 125**

*A song of ascents.*

1 Those who trust in **the LORD** are like **Mount Zion**  
 which cannot be moved,  
**forever** enduring.  
 As the **mountains surround Jerusalem**,  
 so **the LORD** surrounds his people,  
 from now till **forever**.



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2 Indeed, the scepter of the **wicked** will not rest

on land allotted to the **righteous**,

3 so that the **righteous** might not stretch out

their hands to do wrong.

4 Do good, LORD, to **those who are good**,

to **those who are upright in their hearts**.

5 But those who turn aside to their **crooked** ways,

**the LORD** will lead them with **evildoers**.

Peace be upon Israel.

## 2. Shifts

In verse 3 the scene changes and the speakers are now the priests, those “standing in the house of the LORD”. How can this discontinuity be marked in your song?

## 3. Figures of speech

Psalm 134 does not use much picture language. Closest, maybe, is the “lifting of the hands”, which symbolises surrender in prayer but also for the priest's action of blessing the people.

## 4. Word order and clause order

**Activity:** The translators are to choose a style or genre relevant to the psalm and set the whole psalm or sections to a rhythm or music. Make a song of your translation.

**Activity:** Make a recording of the composition in AVTT.

## 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?*



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- 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).

## 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 Those trusting in the LORD are like Mount Zion,

it cannot be moved,  
forever it endures.

1 Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,

which cannot be moved,  
forever enduring.





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Jerusalem—mountains are all around her,  
so the LORD is all around his people,  
from now and until forever.

As the mountains surround Jerusalem,  
so, the LORD surrounds his people,  
from now till forever.

**Discussion:**

- This stanza contains two comparisons: the immovability of Mt. Zion and the surrounding of the city by mountains.
- Draw attention to the repetitions in the text: *the Lord (2x)*, *mount/mountains (2x)*, *forever (2x)*.
- Notice how “*those who trust in the LORD –*” functions as a point of departure for the whole stanza. This is the preferred interpretation. Another interpretation is “*Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion*”, but the first is more poetic and parallel to the second comparison in v.1, and the second interpretation could force a rendering that the righteous cannot be moved, which is what the text implies but not explicitly says (see point below).
- Discuss what it is that *cannot be moved*: the verbs are singular, so they refer to Mt. Zion, it is Zion that cannot be moved and will endure forever. The comparison of the righteous is with Mt. Zion,
- Consider the phrase “the LORD surrounds his people”. How will that be understood in your language? It is a metaphor.

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

**Stanza 2: Verses 2-3**

2 Indeed, the sceptre of the wicked will not rest  
on the allotment of the righteous ones,  
3 so that the righteous ones will not stretch out their hands in wrong.

2 Indeed, the scepter of the wicked will not rest on land allotted to the righteous.  
3 so that the righteous might not stretch out their hands to do wrong.

**Discuss:**

- “*Indeed*” or “*surely*” introduces this stanza (even though it is often not translated in English versions). This stanza is a confirmation of v.1 that the righteous will not be moved and will be surrounded by the LORD, and who will now also prevent evil to reign in the land. The meaning of this stanza is enigmatic, it seems clear but it is not really clear what it really refers to (see the discussions above). The closest we can come is that the LORD will prevent another evil king on the throne (like Manasseh), or that it may refer to a future messianic reality.
- *The sceptre of the wicked* is a metaphor that refers to the rule of a wicked king. Can you maintain the metaphor in your language? Remember, poetry always likes to use pictures that say a lot.
- “*Land allotted to the righteous*” refers to the inheritance of God’s people Israel in the Promised Land. Think back here the things you discussed above about the allotted land.



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- “So that” in v.3: check the link between the verses 2 and 3, with v.3 the result of v.2. In other words, the wicked will not rule so that the righteous will not be corrupted.
- “stretch out their hands” in v.3 is a metaphor for initiating action. Try to keep an idiom here if possible.

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

### Stanza 3: Verses 4-5

4 Do good, LORD, to the good ones,  
and to those upright in their heart.

5 But those turning aside to their crooked ways,  
the LORD will make them go with doers  
of iniquity.

Peace be upon Israel!

4 Do good, LORD, to those who are good,  
to those who are upright in their  
hearts.

5 But those who turn aside to their crooked  
ways,  
the LORD will lead them with evildoers.

Peace be upon Israel!

#### Discuss:

- Verse 4 is the first and only petition in the psalm, cast as an imperative.
- Determine the best place for the vocative “o LORD” in the verse line.
- The double use of “good” in v.4 requires special attention. The meaning of “doing good” is very general, in the sense of bringing well-being. The meaning of “being good” is displaying the LORD’s covenant character of loyalty, graciousness, mercy, and rich love (see Exodus 33:19 and 34:6-7, where YAHWEH announces his goodness as he passes in front of Moses on Mt. Horeb).

**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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## 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).



### 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.



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**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:

- Go through all the notes again for each stanza in Step 5 and make sure everything has been covered.
- Ensure you have the repetitions which appear in the text (note the colours).
- For vv.1-2, make sure people understand the connection between the mountains and what the LORD does.
- Ensure v.3 supports vv.1-2.
- Check v.4 is an imperative (command), but presented as a prayer.
- V.5a contains a double statement of evil and its effects, “*they have crooked ways*” and “*they are being turned away*”. This is a very strong indictment. The syntax in Hebrew also has a fronted construction, which forms a frame or point of departure for the main verb, “*you will turn them away*”.
- V.5b, the last line of the poem, is a prayer in the form of a wish: “*May Israel have peace*” or “*Peace for Israel*”.
- Peace translates the Hebrew SHALOM, which actually means “*having fulness, well-being*”. Consider in your language which word will translate that best. At the same time, the key term you choose needs to be consistent with all the other used of “*shalom*” in your translation.
- Ensure there is a contrast between the possibility of error by the righteous (*not . . . do wrong*) in v.3 and the deliberate error of the wicked (*turn aside to crooked ways*) in v.5.



### 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:

- The imperative in v.3, which is the only imperative in the poem, and also is in the centre of a chiasm. Try to highlight this in some way.
- Check if you maintained the metaphors as far as possible.
- Check for poetic rhythm. Check if the verse lines are not too long with too many syllables and accents. Use enjambment where the sentences are required to overrun the syllable limits.
- There is one vocative, in v.4 “The LORD”. Consider the best position in the verse, in line with local word-order and phrase-order discourse preferences.
- Always keep the lines as compact and short as possible.



### 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:**

- Record a dramatic reading of the final version of the psalm. Perhaps have one voice for vv.1-3 and another for vv.4-5. Often a memorised recitation with gestures is more impactful.
- Include the whole poem in the performance – you can include song, rap, and/or spoken word. Also include gestures to make the song more meaningful.

**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

Hebrew-mirror	Guide Translation
<p><b>Psalm 125</b> <i>Song of ascents.</i></p> <p>1 Those trusting in the LORD are like Mount Zion,                            it cannot be moved,                            forever it endures.</p> <p>Jerusalem—mountains are all around her,                            so the LORD is all around his people,                            from now and until forever.</p> <p>2 Indeed, the sceptre of the wicked will not rest                            on the allotment of the righteous ones,          3 so that the righteous ones will not stretch out                            their hands in wrong.</p> <p>4 Do good, LORD, to the good ones,                            and to those upright in their heart.</p> <p>5 But those turning aside to their crooked ways,                            the LORD will make them go with doers                            of iniquity.</p> <p>Peace be upon Israel!</p>	<p><b>Psalm 125</b> <i>A song of ascents.</i></p> <p>1 Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,                            which cannot be moved,                            forever enduring.</p> <p>As the mountains surround Jerusalem,                            so, the LORD surrounds his people,                            from now till forever.</p> <p>2 Indeed, the scepter of the wicked will not rest                            on land allotted to the righteous.          3 so that the righteous might not stretch out                            their hands to do wrong.</p> <p>4 Do good, LORD, to those who are good,                            to those who are upright in their                            hearts.</p> <p>5 But those who turn aside to their crooked                            ways,                            the LORD will lead them with evildoers.</p> <p>Peace be upon Israel!</p>



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## Appendix B: Exegetical Layout

Ps 125 is a community hymn of encouragement.

### SUGGESTED HEADING

The LORD protects his people and their land.

#### 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> |
|--|---|--|

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת	1 A.song.of the.ascents
הַבְּטָחִים בֵּיתוֹהָ כְּהַר-צִיּוֹן	Those.trusting <sup>1</sup> in.YHWH (are) like.Mount-Zion,
לֹא-יִמוּט	it.cannot.be.moved,
לְעוֹלָם יֵשֵׁב:	<b>to.forever</b> it.abides.
יְרוּשָׁלַם הָרִים סָבִיב לָהּ	2 Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> - (as) mountains (are) all.around her,
וַיְהוּהָ סָבִיב לְעַמּוֹ	(so) YHWH (is) all.around his.people

<sup>1</sup> *trust*: the word can be translated with “have faith” but is more than often meant by the English term. It means to rely on; to feel secure; to be unconcerned and confident in. It does not mean belief in particular teachings or intellectual assent to a creed.

<sup>2</sup> Jerusalem sits on a hill but is surrounded by higher mountains, particularly to the east. As the pilgrim approaches Jerusalem, he notices the surrounding mountains and likens them to the way God protectively surrounds God’s people.



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מַעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם:	from.now and.until-forever <sup>3</sup> .
כִּי לֹא יָנוּחַ שֵׁבֶט הַרְשָׁע	3 Indeed <sup>4</sup> , not it.will.rest the.sceptre.of <sup>5</sup> the.wicked <sup>6</sup>
עַל־גּוֹרֵל הַצְּדִיקִים	on the.allotment <sup>7</sup> .of the.righteous.ones,
לְמַעַן לֹא־יִשְׁלְחוּ הַצְּדִיקִים	so.that not-they.will.stretch.out the.righteous.ones
בְּעוֹלָתָהּ יְדֵיהֶם	in.wrong <sup>8</sup> their.hands.
הַיְטִיבָה יְהוָה לְטוֹבִים	4 Do.good, YHWH, to.the.good.ones
וְלִישָׁרִים בְּלִבּוֹתָם:	and.to.upright.ones in.their.heart,
וְהַמְטִים עֲקָלְקָלוֹתָם	5 but.the.ones.turning.aside their.crooked-ways,

<sup>3</sup> Parallel phrase with 1c.

<sup>4</sup> *Indeed*: or *surely*. In this case כִּי is not causal (“because”). Here the word highlights the contrast between the sure inheritance of the righteous, and the lack of authority of the wicked.

<sup>5</sup> The *sceptre* symbolizes royal authority. Together with *the wicked*, the phrase refers to an oppressive ruler, in this case perhaps a foreign conqueror.

<sup>6</sup> In v.3, the wicked are mentioned first, then the righteous. In vv.4-5, the order is reversed. This puts the righteous in the centre of vv.3-5, in a prominent position.

<sup>7</sup> Here the allotment refers to the territory distributed by Joshua by lot to Israel after the conquest, see Num 26:55, Jos 14:2, Judg 1:3 (AM).

<sup>8</sup> *so that the godly might not stretch out their hands in wrongdoing*: A wicked king who takes the land allotted by God to his people might provoke the righteous to sin by acting dishonestly. Or, perhaps this verses speaks to the necessity of compromise in real political contexts, righteous people having to accept (or do) some evil in order to avoid greater evil.



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<p>יוליכֶם יְהוָה אֶת־פְּעֻלֵי הָאָוֶן</p>	<p>He.will.make.them.go YHWH with- the.doers.of the.iniquity.</p>
<p>שְׁלוֹם עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>	<p>Peace<sup>9</sup> (be) upon-Israel<sup>10</sup></p>

<sup>9</sup> *shalom*: this word (meaning *well-being*) appears six times in the Songs of Ascent, indicating the

pilgrims' wish for *šālôm* upon Jerusalem. Shalom means peace, but not in the sense of lack of war but fulness and well-being.

<sup>10</sup> The peace declaration is linked to the whole psalm – because the righteous are relying on God, who protects them all around, they will experience peace. Thus it is not a request, but a result.