



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

Psalm 15

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.

Pre-Activity: What kind of person do you think might be able to live in God's presence and stay there without ever being thrown out?

- What areas of his life do you think would be especially important?
- What kinds of things would he do, and not do?
- Do you think such a person can be confident that God will let him stay there?
- Do you know anyone like that?

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:



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

- 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?

CREATIVE RESPONSES

Creative Activity 1: Listen again to the Psalmist's opening question in the two lines of v.1

- What are the two places the Psalmist speak about in these lines? [**Yahweh's tent, Yahweh's holy mountain.**]
- Both places speak of the place where Yahweh dwells. They describe the place where Yahweh is present.
- In the first line, Yahweh's **tent** refers to the tent or tabernacle that he gave instructions for his people to construct for him to come and dwell among them.
- Yahweh's **holy mountain** speaks both of Yahweh's permanent dwelling place in heaven and of his dwelling place with his people on earth. Another name for Yahweh's holy mountain is Zion. The Old Testament speaks of Zion sometimes as a mountain, sometimes as a city, sometimes as both at the same time. It is also one of the names that Scripture uses for Jerusalem because that is where God said he would be present with his people.
- In John's vision of the new heaven and the new earth at the end of this world, he sees the new Jerusalem, the holy city of God coming down to rest on **a great and high mountain** and he hears a voice from heaven saying that this is the dwelling place of God with his people. (Revelation 21:1-3, 10)

Creative Activity 2: Drama

Mark out an area to represent Yahweh's dwelling place. Everyone should begin by standing inside the boundary.

- Choose one person to act Yahweh. (They should stand in the middle of the area.)
- Choose one person to ask Yahweh the two questions in v.1. (They should prepare how they will ask the two questions in your language.)
- Listen to the Psalm again and ask people to choose one or more of the things the Psalmist says the person does, or does not do, in vv.2-5. If the group is large (over 13), each person can choose something different. If the group is smaller, some people will need to act more than one thing. The things they choose to act, however, should all be **either** things that the person does **or** that he doesn't do (not a mixture of things). Each one should practice what they have chosen.
- Each person should do their chosen action or actions (either good or bad) and keep on repeating them. The questioner should then ask Yahweh their two questions. Yahweh should respond by going through the group shaking the ones doing something wrong and pushing them out of the area. (The questioner can help him decide who to shake and push out and who to leave.)



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

- (Note: The person who chooses to act the line about swearing to their own injury should also act changing their minds. In this line, the Psalmist is describing two things together as something the person doesn't do. Some people make a commitment which they then decide is too costly so they change their minds. This is what the Psalmist is saying that the person who may live with Yahweh doesn't do. They make commitments which are costly to them and they don't change.)

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?*

In every line of the Psalmist's answer to his own question, he speaks of something that the person who may dwell with Yahweh *does do* or which he *does not do*.

- Listen to vv.2-5 again line by line. After each line, say whether the Psalmist has described something which the person *does do*, or which he *does not do*.
- Say what it is in your language. If the Psalmist has said two things which the person does or doesn't do, say what they both are.

Board Activity: Divide a board, or piece of paper into two sides. At the top of the left side write a title in your language which means *he does do* and at the top of the right side, one which means *he does not do*.

- Listen to the Psalm again, line by line. In your language, write what the person *does* on the left side and what he *doesn't do* on the right side.
- Use the least number words you can for each action or combination of actions.
- Put the combined action in the line *he swears to his injury and does not change* on the right side.
- Give each action its own line on the board (except for the combined action, as above).

Start at the top and work down the board, line by line (either on the left or the right side).

The Flow of the Psalm: 4 blocks

The list of things which the person who may live with Yahweh does and doesn't may seem like a simple list of 10 roughly equal things of things that the person does and doesn't do (or



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

11 things, if you separate *walk blamelessly* and *do righteousness*, as we did in the previous activity).

- But it isn't. Look again at the the list you made in your previous exercise.

The list divides into 4 blocks.

The first block of 3 actions describe what the person *is like*.

- The first two actions in the block form a pair. Together they describe the outward life of the person *he walks blamelessly and does righteousness*. How does the third action *he speaks truth in his heart* complete the picture of what the person is like?

[It describes his inner life. Compare what the fool says in his heart in Psalm 14:1 and what the Psalmist says his life is like in that Psalm.]

The second block of actions are all things that the person *does not do*.

- How do each of the three things that the person *does not do* illustrate the three things that the Psalmist has just said that he *does do*?
- Draw lines between the 3 things that the person does not do in the second block and the 3 things that the person does do in the first block.

[Your lines should show an inverted pattern: *not slandering with the tongue* illustrates *speaking truth in the heart*, *not doing evil to a companion* illustrates *doing righteousness*, and *not raising a reproach against a neighbour* illustrates *walking blamelessly*.]

The third block consists of two lines which draw a contrast between how the person treats two different kinds of people. The two lines form a tight poetic unit at the centre of the Psalm.

- Before we look at how this block fits into the flow and the meaning of the Psalm as a whole, we need to look carefully at what the Psalmist says in the two lines and at the way he says it.

INSIGHT: Special focus: the meaning and the poetry of v.4a-b.

Listen carefully to the Hebrew-mirror translation of the first two lines in v.4 a couple of times. The lines speak about the way that the person treats two kinds of people. What words or phrases does the Psalmist use to describe the two kinds of people?

- First kind: *one who is rejected*
- Second kind: *those who fear Yahweh*

What words or phrases does the Psalmist use to describe how the person treats the two kinds people?

- First kind: *despised in his eyes*
- Second kind: *he honours*

To think about the meaning of the two lines, we need to look at the order of the phrases in each line and the structure of the unit as a whole.

line a. *despised in his eyes* *one who is rejected*

line b. *but those who fear Yahweh* *he honours*



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

The structure of the two-line unit, shown above, shows us at least three important things.

1. The Psalmist does not say **who** has rejected *the one who is rejected* but the order of phrases in the two lines helps us see who it is. By putting *the one who is rejected* at the end of line a. and *those who fear Yahweh* at the beginning of line b. the Psalmist draws a contrast between the two kinds of people. The contrast implies that the *one who is rejected* is rejected **by Yahweh**. It also implies that the reason they are rejected is that they do not fear him (in contrast to the second kind of people, who do).
2. There is a sharp contrast between the passive phrases in line a. and the active phrases in line b. The move from passive to active suggests that what the Psalmist really wants us to focus on is **the second line**.

The passive verb phrase *despised in his eyes* at the beginning of line a. does not mean *he despises* the one who is rejected so much as *he considers or looks on them as despised*. It stands in contrast with the active verb phrase at the end of line b. *he honours*. The contrast suggests that the most important thing that the Psalmist wants us to see about the person who may live with Yahweh in these two lines is that ***he honours those who fear Yahweh***.

The detailed study we have just done shows that **the key thing** which the Psalmist says about the person who may live with Yahweh in these two lines (v.4ab) is that he honours those who fear Yahweh.

- The reason that the Psalmist gives so much prominence to the person's honoring of those who fear Yahweh is that **it reflects and expresses his own core value**. He honours those who fear Yahweh because he himself fears Yahweh.
- This is why we describe Psalm 15 as a wisdom psalm. The book of Proverbs is full of statements about the fear of Yahweh. In Proverbs 9:10 (quoted in Psalm 111:10) says that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of Yahweh.

The fourth block of actions in the Psalm.

Returning to our list of the things which the person who may live with Yahweh does and doesn't do in Psalm 15, we can see that the fourth block consists of three things which the person doesn't do.

- When we looked at the second block, we saw that the three things which the Psalmist said the person doesn't do in that block illustrated the person's character (which the Psalmist had described in the first block with three things that he does do).
- In a similar way, the three things which the Psalmist says that the person doesn't do in the fourth block illustrate the person's core value: his fear of Yahweh (which the Psalmist has expressed in the third block by focussing on the way he honour those who (also) fear Yahweh.)
- In the fourth block, the Psalmist begins each line by giving a context for what he says the person doesn't do. Listen to the three lines of v.4b-5b and repeat the part which describes what he doesn't do with a louder voice (in bold below)

*He swears to his cost, **and does not change.***

*His money, **he does not lend at interest.***

*A bribe against the innocent, **he does not take.***





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

- How do the three things which the person doesn't do in the fourth block illustrate his fear of Yahweh?

The Psalmists concluding statement

The final sentence of the Psalm v.5cd is split into two lines.

The one who does these things / will never be shaken.

The sentence wraps up the Psalmist's answer to his opening question to Yahweh.

Who may reside in your tent / and who may dwell on your holy mountain?

Discuss:

Fairly easy questions

- Which blocks of things that we have talked about describe the things which the person *does do* (not the things *he doesn't do*)?

[The first block of actions: *He walks blamelessly, does righteousness and speaks truth in his heart and the third block: He considers someone who is rejected by Yahweh as despised, but he honours those who fear him.*]

- How are the things which the Psalmist he has said the person *does not do* included in his final statement?

[They are examples of what the person does do.]

A more difficult question

- How does the Psalmist's statement that the person he has described *will never be shaken* answer his opening questions to Yahweh? (Why is *not being shaken* important?)

[He will be totally secure in Yahweh's presence. He will never be sent away or rejected.]

The Flow of the Psalm

When you get the Psalm ready to publish and use, you do not need to divide it up very much.

- One way of dividing the text, for example, is just to separate the Psalmist opening questions in v.1 from his answer in the rest of the verses. You could also separate his concluding statement in the two lines at the end.
- If you want to divide it up more, you could put divide the 4 different blocks into separate stanzas or you could put blocks 1 and 2 together and blocks 3 and 4 together. (The last option is the way that we recommend in this guide.)

You can decide how you divide the text of the Psalm up in Step 9.

- In this step, however, you will find it helpful to draw a chart which shows the flow of the Psalm from the opening question through each of the different blocks of actions which the Psalmist describes until his final statement at the end.

Activity: Draw a chart on the board with labels in your language that looks like the chart below.





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

- Discuss what the arrows mean, why are some red and some blue, and why are the red ones wide and the blue ones narrow.
- See if you can finish the phrases ending in three dots without listening to the Psalm again. (Only finish the phrases orally. Leave the chart with the dots as they are.)

SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

Question to Yahweh:
Who may dwell in your presence?



Answer 1: Character
The one who ... and who ... and who ...



Answer 2: Core Value: to fear Yahweh
but those who fear Yahweh, ...



Conclusion:
The one who does these things will never be shaken

Answer 1 means:
He does not ... He does not ... He does not ...

Answer 2 means:
He ... and does not ... He does not ... He does not ...

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?



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.





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

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)

Other options

Activity 1: Game: Placing objects in or out of Yahweh's tent or mountain

- Choose objects (stones, pens, phones, sweets, shoes) to represent the following actions in from v.2a to v.5b:

1 object to represent the pair of actions in v.2a: *the one who walks blamelessly and who does righteousness.* **1 object** to represent v.2b: *...and who speaks truth in his heart.* **3 objects:** one each to represent the bad actions of v.3: *he slanders with his tongue, he does evil to his companion, he raises a reproach against his neighbour.* **2 objects:** one to represent v.4a *despised in his eyes one who is rejected* and one to represent v.4b *but those who fear Yahweh, he honours.* **3 objects:** one each to represent the bad actions of vv.4c-5b: *he swears to his cost and does change; his money, he lends at interest; a bribe against the innocent, he takes.*

- Give each of the objects a different number from 1 to 10 but don't give them numbers in the same sequence as in the Psalm (mix the numbers up by assigned them randomly).



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

- Each person in the group should take one or more of the objects and practice how they will say the action it represents whether it is good (v.2ab, v.4ab) or bad (v.3a-c, vv.4c-5b)
- With chalk draw a picture of mountain on the floor and a picture of a tent superimposed on it. You can also do this on a table if you like. Do not put the tent on the top of the mountain but draw it over the whole mountain. This is to show that both places speak of the place where Yahweh is present.

Play the game of placing objects.

1. To start the game everyone should ask the questions in v.1 in your language. Change the word order if you like but keep your questions short and pointed. Address them directly to Yahweh: *Yahweh, who may reside in your tent, and who may dwell on your holy mountain?*
2. Each person should place their object either inside or outside of the place marked as Yahweh's presence. They should *say the action* the object represents while they place it. Start with object number 1 and go in sequence to object number 10.
3. At the end, everyone should point to the objects which are placed in Yahweh's presence and say: *The one who does these will never be shaken.* (The Hebrew text does not say *these things* but you can add *things* if you need to.)
4. Now change the number of each object, this time to follow the same sequence in the Psalm.
5. Repeat 1-3 above.

Activity 2: Drama. Jesus and Psalm 15

This drama is one way of demonstrating how Jesus fulfills Psalm 15 in a series of 5 scenes.

- Each scene is like a snapshot, or photo. Make the scenes short so that the whole drama connects together.
- Choose people to say the titles for the scenes and others to act the different parts. You will need someone to act Yahweh and then someone for God the Father and someone for God the Son. Do the drama in your language. Adapt the words in each scene so that they go well in the drama.

Notes on the different scenes

- Scene 1 shows God sending Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. The scene shows that we have been sent out of God's presence because we have turned away from him and that we no longer live in his presence. (Choose a space for Yahweh to stand which represents his presence.)
- Scene 2 asks the double question in v.1 as a response to the problem that we do not live in God's presence.
- Scene 3 shows people responding to the Psalmist's first answer in v.2 (Psalms 14 and 15 are companion psalms in a number of ways. See what God says about us all in Psalm 14:2-3.)
- Scene 4 shows Jesus coming from the Father's presence. He is the one who walks blamelessly, does righteousness and speaks truth in his heart. (Jesus's coming to earth fulfills the closing wish in Psalm 14:7, that out of Zion, out of God's presence, would come salvation.)
- Scene 5 shows Jesus on the cross providing an entry back into God's presence for those who fear God and who come to Jesus for salvation. (The way back to heaven which Jesus wins for



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

us by his death and resurrection fulfills the imagery in Psalm 24:7-10 of the ancient gates being called to open up to allow Yahweh, the victorious king, to enter.)

- After performing the drama, and if it is appropriate in your group, take time to praise and thank God the Father and the Lord Jesus for providing a way back into God's presence.

Drama: The way back into God's presence

Scene 1. Title: *Yahweh sends Adam and Eve out of the Garden, away from his presence.*

Yahweh: *You have turned away from me so I'm sending you away from me and shutting the gate. Go!*

Adam and Eve: (They leave Yahweh's presence.)

Scene 2. Title: *The big question.*

Everyone asks Yahweh: *Who may reside with you in your tent and who may dwell with you on your holy mountain?*

Scene 3. Title: *The kind of person who can live with Yahweh.*

Speaker 1: *He who walks blamelessly and does righteousness* (Everyone does appropriate gestures.)

Speaker 2: *and who speaks truth in his heart* (Everyone does appropriate gestures.)

Everyone: (Looks mournful, turns away, and does appropriate gestures to show that they are not like this.)

Scene 4. Title: *Jesus comes from the Father's presence.*

God the Father says to God the Son: *Jesus, will you leave here and go to seek and to save the lost?*

Jesus: *Yes I will.* (Jesus goes out to stand with everyone outside Yahweh's presence.)

Everyone: (Pointing to Jesus) *This is the one who walks blamelessly and does righteousness and speaks truth in his heart.*

Scene 5. Title: *Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.*

Jesus: (Stands at the border of God's presence with his arms wide to represent the cross.)

Speaker 1: *Despised in his eyes is the one rejected.*

Half the remaining people: (Act some of the bad actions which Psalm 15 says that the person who may live with God doesn't do. They stay outside of God's presence.)

Speaker 2: *But those who fear Yahweh, he honours.*

The other half of the people: (Enter Yahweh's presence bowing down to him in worship.)



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B



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. Repetition

Look at the Flower Garden in Appendix C for an overview of the repetitions. Give special attention to the verb “bless”. Do not hesitate to use repetition in your translation.

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 5 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

Discuss the frontings in verses 4-5. Often psalms have a lot of fronting constructions at the end of the psalm.

Activity: discuss the frontings of verses 4-5.

The chiasm in v.4 is discussed below under Step 5.

The difficult frontings are in verse 5, three in a row (in the Hebrew-mirror, where frontings are bold-faced):

5 **Silver** his not-he gives with interest
and **bribe against-innocent** not he takes.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

One doing these

not he will fall to forever.

The first two frontings, related to money, are examples of focalisation, here functioning as emphasising the unexpected.

The last and final fronting is a case of topicalization to confirm what has been said in the whole of the previous psalm: *those very things we spoke about, one one doing those things will not fall or be shaken.*

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 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B



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).

In your oral translation, treat vv.1-3 as one unit and vv.4-5 as another unit.

- When you transcribe your translation, add a space between the opening questions in v.1 and the Psalmist description of the person's character with examples in vv.2-3.
- When you transcribe, you can join vv.2-3 to vv.4a-5b or keep them separate, but it is a good idea to add a space between the three *do not*s in vv.4-5b and the Psalmist's conclusion in v.5cd.

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...

Stanzas 1-2: Verses 1-3

1 YHWH, **who** lodges in tent your,
who dwells on mountain of holiness your?
2 One walking blamelessness
and doing righteousness
and speaking truth in heart his.
3 Not he slanders on-tongue his,
not he does to neighbor his harm
and **disgrace** not-he lifts on-friend his.

1 Yahweh, who may stay in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy mountain?
2 He who walks blamelessly and who does
righteousness,
and who speaks truth in his heart.
3 He does not slander with his tongue,
he does not do evil to his friend,
he does not bring a reproach against his
neighbour.

The opening questions (v.1)

- Keep the two questions in parallel. They are both spoken to Yahweh and ask the same underlying issue: who may live in your presence?
- In the Hebrew text, the Psalmist starts the first question by addressing Yahweh by name. He doesn't repeat Yahweh's name in the second line but is still speaking directly to him. The repeated question is (who may live) *...in your tent, ...on your holy mountain.*



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

- The two verbs in the Hebrew text mean almost the same thing. They both refer to living in a place as your home. In the Hebrew mirror guide, the first verb is rendered *reside*. It speaks of staying or living somewhere for a prolonged time but not being an inhabitant of the place. Elsewhere in Scripture the verb is used to describe an outsider who lives in a place in long-term but still remains an outsider. The second verb, which is rendered *dwell* in the Hebrew mirror guide, drops any sense that the stay may not be permanent. Elsewhere it is used to describe people who inhabit a place; they dwell there, it is their home (wherever they came from originally.)

The Psalmist's first answer (v.2)

- The Psalmist describes the kind of person who may live with Yahweh with three verbs with the same form. In the Hebrew text they are all participles. The verbs describe a person's character by his actions in a general way.
- The three actions are more than a simple list of three different things. The first two are a pair which together describe the nature of the person. See if you can translate the verse in two lines with a good rhythmic balance: *who walks blamelessly and does righteousness / and who speaks truth in his heart*. Otherwise, you can give each action its own line.
- The third action *and who speaks truth in his heart* describes what is in the person's heart. We recommend that you keep the Psalmist's reference to *speaking truth*. Do not change this to something like *who speaks honestly*. This only describes the way he speaks. The idea of having (and of speaking) *truth* is important. Elsewhere in the Psalms, *truth* is what Yahweh reveals about himself. It is the content of his revelation, what he speaks in his *law* and in his *word*. The Psalmist does not refer to that truth explicitly in this verse. He doesn't say *one who speaks the truth* or *who speaks your truth* but only *who speaks truth*. The idea that what is in the person's heart is consistent or harmonious with Yahweh's own revelation is nevertheless important to maintain.

3 examples (v.3)

- The three lines of v.3 each describe something that the person does not do. In the Hebrew text, the Psalmist gives the three lines rhythmic balance by making the first two lines simple statements (*he does not slander with his tongue / he does not do evil to his companion*) and then by putting the object of the last line at the beginning (*a reproach, he does not lift against his neighbour*)
- The pre-posed object at the beginning of the third line is the opposite of what he does himself in the previous verse (*he walks blamelessly*). The Hebrew-mirror guide renders the word as *reproach*. The sense here is of an *insult, accusation, or blame*.

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

Stanzas 3-4: Verses 4-5

4 Despised in eyes his rejected(sg.),
and **those fearing YHWH** he honors.

4 In his eyes, one who is rejected is despised,
but those who fear Yahweh, he honours.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

He swears.oath to harm(his own),
and not he causes.to.change.
5 **Silver** his not-he gives with interest
and **bribe against-innocent** not he takes.
One doing these
not he will fall to forever.

He swears to his own cost
and does not change,
5 His money, he does not lend at interest,
A bribe against the innocent, he does not take.
He who does these things,
will never be shaken.

The statement of the person's core value in v.4ab

- Review the poetic devices which highlighted in Step 1. Think especially how you will give prominence to the second line (*those who fear Yahweh, he honours*) and especially to the final verb *he honours* which expresses the person's own core value. The Psalmist gives both prominence by means of the chiasm in the two lines, the contrast between someone being despised in his eyes at the beginning of the first line and the honour he gives to those who fear Yahweh in the second, and by the move from passive verbs in the first line to active verbs in the second line.
- The person's attitude is to someone *who is rejected*. If you need, you can add ... *by Yahweh* or you can make the relative clause active ...*one whom Yahweh rejects*.
- We recommend that you do not convert the phrase *despised in his eyes* to something like *he despises...*. This changes the sense from expressing the person attitude to a direct action. See if you can maintain the the locative phrase *in his eyes* to express the way he views one who is rejected as (*to be*) *despised*. If not, experiment with verbs like *he considers, looks on or views...*

The three do not's of vv.4c-5b

- In the Hebrew text, each line starts with a topic frame. In the first line, the topic frame is *He swears to his injury* and the main statement is *and does not change*. In the second line, the topic frame is *his money*, and the main statement is *he does not give (lend) at interest*. In the third line, the topic frame is *a bribe against the innocent* and the main statement is *he does not take*. In your translation find a pattern that gives prominence to the three *do not*s.
- The Psalmist includes *not lending his money at interest* as an example of how the person shows his fear of Yahweh. This reflects the Mosaic law which did allow charging interest to a foreigner, but not to a fellow member of God's people (see especially Leviticus 25:36). The purpose of the law was that members of God's people should not take advantage of another member and subject them to crippling debt. If you think that the context of the three *do not* statements is sufficient to indicate that charging interest is a bad thing, you can translate the statement directly. If not, we recommend you experiment with making it explicit that the person does not lend to a fellow Israelite at interest. You might be able to do this without breaking the poetic rhythm by adding a phrase like *he does not lend 'to his neighbour'* (or) *'to his companion' at interest*. Another option that some translations follow is to understand the Hebrew word to refer to not lending *with usury* (that is, the person does not lend his money at excessive or exploitative interest).



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

The concluding statement (v.5cd)

- Keep a rhythmic balance between the two lines of the statement. In the Hebrew text the first line describing the person (*the one who does these things...*) uses the same participle form as in v.2 (*the one who walks blamelessly...*). The description of the person with these participle verbs gives prominence to the main statement in the second line that the person described *will never be shaken*.¹

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.)

¹ In many Bantu languages this effect can be achieved by using an associative construction to describe the person in v.5c, as well as in v.2. The description of the person in v.5c would be something like *one-of-to.do these things*. In v.2 the same association construction might be something like *one-of-to.walk blamelessly and one-of-to.do righteousness / and one-of-to.speak truth in-heart his*.





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

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.

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:

- See the notes in Step 5 as well as the footnotes on the Hebrew text in Appendix A.



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.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

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:

- See the notes in Step 5 as well as the footnotes on the Hebrew text in Appendix A.



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.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

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.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B



Appendix A: Guide Translations

Hebrew-mirror	Guide Translation
<p>Psalm of David</p> <p>1 YHWH, who lodges in tent your, who dwells on mountain of holiness your?</p> <p>2 One walking blamelessnesses and doing righteousness and speaking truth in heart his.</p> <p>3 Not he slanders on-tongue his, not he does to neighbor his harm and disgrace not-he lifts on-friend his.</p> <p>4 Despised in eyes his rejected(sg.), and those fearing YHWH he honors. He swears.oath to harm(his own), and not he causes.to.change.</p> <p>5 Silver his not-he gives with interest and bribe against-innocent not he takes. One doing-these not he will fall to forever.</p>	<p><i>A Psalm of David</i></p> <p>1 Yahweh, who may stay in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy mountain?</p> <p>2 He who walks blamelessly and who does righteousness and who speaks truth in his heart.</p> <p>3 He does not slander with his tongue, he does not do evil to his friend, he does not bring a reproach against his neighbour.</p> <p>4 In his eyes, one who is rejected is despised, but those who fear Yahweh, he honours. He swears to his own cost and does not change,</p> <p>5 His money, he does not lend at interest, A bribe against the innocent, he does not take. He who does these things, will never be shaken.</p>





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B



Appendix B: Exegetical Layout

Genre

Psalm 15 is a wisdom Psalm that asks the question, who may way live with Yahweh - who may reside and who may dwell in Yahweh's presence? The Psalmist's answer focuses on the moral uprightness of person's life and on their core value, their fear of Yahweh. Both, the Psalmist says, are seen in what the person does and does not do.

Many commentators suggest that the Psalm is a liturgy for worshippers to reflect on the requirements for coming into God's sanctuary; that is, for coming into his presence. While this is helpful, the opening question focuses more on who may *live* in his presence (who may *reside* and who may *dwell* there) than on who may *enter* it. The final line of the Psalm concludes the Psalmist's answer. The one who does the things he has described, he says, *will never be shaken*. They will never be shaken, the Psalmist implies, from their place in Yahweh's presence. They will be completely secure; they will never be cast out.²

Structure and Content

The Psalmist answers his opening question (in v.1) with a series of statements about what the person who may live with Yahweh **does** and **does not** do. He then concludes with the statement in v.5c-d that the one *who does these / will never be shaken*.

The list of things that the person does and does not do in vv.2-5b falls into two parts. The first part points to the nature of a person's life or character (vv.2-3); the second to their core value (vv.4-5b).

- Each part begins with a pair of lines in which the Psalmist points to the fundamental nature of the person's life and their values by things which the person **does**. The first pair of lines (v.2) says that the person who may dwell with Yahweh is one *who walks blamelessly, does righteousness and speaks truth in his heart*. The second pair of lines (v.4a-b) gives prominence to the statement that the person *honors those who fear Yahweh*. These two pairs of lines form the backbone of the Psalm.
- The Psalmist then illustrates each pair of lines with three things which the person **does not do**. In v.3, the Psalmist illustrates the blameless nature of the person's life by the fact that he does not slander, he does not do evil and does not raise a reproach against his neighbour. In vv.4c-5b, the Psalmist illustrates the person's core value, his own fear

² They will never be rejected (to use the Psalmist's own word in v.4a).



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

of Yahweh, by the fact that he swears to his cost and does not change, he does not lend his money at interest, and he does not take a bribe against the innocent.³

Context (and fulfilment)

Psalm 15 asks a question that touches the central story line of Scripture: the return to life in God's presence. The Psalm does not address the question how to enter his presence so much the kind of person who may live there with him. Expressed differently, the first part of the Psalmist's answer (in v.2) says they **are** blameless, and they **are** righteous and they **know** the truth in their heart; and the second part (in v.4ab), that they fear Yahweh. This is their core value.

Psalm 24 asks a similar question to Psalm 15⁴ but in Psalm 25, the focus is on who may enter Yahweh's presence rather than who may dwell there. The answer it gives starts in a similar place to Psalm 15; with the moral uprightness of the person, albeit in more summary form. Since the question in Psalm 24 is who may enter, it then goes on to describe how they obtain righteousness (they receive it), who they are (they are those who seek Yahweh) and crucially that it is Yahweh himself for whom the gates must open.

Psalm 15 addresses a perhaps simpler issue than Psalm 24: the requirements for being there. The answer it gives, however, expresses threads found in most of Scripture, from Seth *who called on the name of Yahweh*, through to the voice which came from the throne in Revelation 19:5 (echoing Psalm 113:1 and 115:13) saying, *Praise our God... all those who fear him*, and on to the opening of the book of life in Revelation 20:2 where the dead were judged...*according to their deeds*. Jesus himself, the member of the Trinity who came to earth to bring us into the Father's presence is the one above all who fulfills the requirements to be in his presence. He is the blameless one who fears God and only God.

SUGGESTED HEADING

a. Who may dwell on your holy mountain?

³ Both metrical pattern and tense-aspect pattern reflect the structure described. **Metre.** Both pairs of lines consist of a 3-3 pattern of accented words (v.2 and v.4ab), the same metrical pattern as in the opening pair of questions (v.1). The three lines which illustrate the first pair of lines consist of a 2-3-3 pattern (v.3), and the three lines which illustrate the second pair, a 4-3-4 pattern (vv.4c-5b). The Psalmist concludes his answer in v.5c-d with a 2-3 pattern. **Tense aspect.** the Psalmist employs timeless participle verbs in the first pair of lines to describe the fundamental nature of the person's life (v.2). He begins the chiasmic construction of the second pair with passive participles in the first line, also timeless (v.4a). These give prominence to second line which points to the person's core value: both by the object *those who fear Yahweh* and by the imperfective verb, *he honours them*. The imperfective tense-aspect of the verb reflects the pivotal importance of v.4b. It looks back to the imperfectives of the initial question and looks forward to the imperfective of the concluding statement. The lines illustrating both pairs of sentences are distinguished by perfective tense-aspect: three *does nots* illustrating the first pair of *does* lines and three *does nots* illustrating the second pair of *does* lines. (with the perfective form which begins v.4c *he swears...* giving a perfective sense to the imperfective form which ends it *...and does not change*).

⁴ See also the questions and answers in Isaiah 33:14-16.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

- b. Requirements for dwelling in Yahweh's presence.
b. The one who will never be shaken.

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

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד	¹ psalm of.david
יְהוָה מִיִּגְוֹר בְּאֶהְלֶךָ	Yahweh who may.reside ⁵ in.tent ⁶ .your
מִיִּשְׁפָּן בְּהַר קֹדֶשׁ:	who may.dwell on.mountain holy.your
הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים וּפְעֵל צְדָק	² who.walking ⁷ blamelessly and.doing righteousness ⁸

⁵ **reside... dwell...** the two verbs in v.1 speak of living in Yahweh's presence for a prolonged time. The first verb (glossed *reside*) includes the idea of *sojourning, staying, abiding* or *dwelling* as a resident in a foreign place. The second verb (glossed *dwell*) also carries the sense of staying somewhere for a prolonged time but is the more general term for *inhabiting, settling* or *living* in a place. In Psalm 43:3, the Psalmist uses the root of this Hebrew verb to describe Yahweh's *dwelling place*, the place where he *dwells* or *inhabits*, which he identifies as Yahweh's holy mountain.

⁶ **your tent... your holy mountain...** Both locations refer to the place where Yahweh is present. The *tent* refers to the *tent* or *tabernacle* which he instructed his people to construct for him to come to dwell with them. Yahweh's *holy mountain* speaks of the permanent dwelling place of God with man. In Scripture the holy mountain is also called *Zion*, the city and mountain of God, with Jerusalem and the temple mount being a copy or mini-version on earth of God's heavenly dwelling. Psalm 24 asks a similar question to Psalm 15 about the same place: *Who may ascend the mountain of Yahweh / and who may stand in his holy place?* In Psalm 24 the question (in two lines) is more specific; who may enter and who may survive or 'endure' there? In Psalm 15 (again in two lines), the question is more general; who may reside and who may dwell there?

⁷ **who walks... does... speaks...** The three participles in v.2 are the Psalmist's first response to his question in v.1. They describe the kind of person who may live in Yahweh's presence by the actions which characterise his life as a whole: he *walks* blamelessly, he *does* righteousness, he *speaks* truth in his heart. *To walk blamelessly* is a figure of speech meaning *to live blamelessly*. If you think the figure of speech is transparent, we recommend you keep it in your translation so as to maintain the Psalmist's focus on what the person *does* as well as what *he does not do* in the Psalm.

⁸ **who walks blamelessly and does righteousness...** In the Hebrew text, v.2 consists of two lines with a nicely balanced rhythm (each line consist of 3 accented words.) In your translation, it is more important to achieve rhythmic balance between the lines than to maintain the same number of lines in the Hebrew text. With careful pruning, you may be able to link the first two actions in a single line which balances a second line with the third action (*and who speaks truth in his heart*). If not, you may need to give each of the three things that the person does in this verse its own line.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

וְדַבֵּר אֱמֶת בְּלִבְבוֹ:	and.who.speaks truth ⁹ in.heart.his
לֹא-רָגַל עַל-לְשׁוֹנוֹ	³ not ¹⁰ he.slanders on tongue.his
לֹא-עָשָׂה לְרֵעֵהוּ רָעָה	not he.does to.neighbor.his evil
וְחָרְפָה לֹא-נִשְׂאָה עַל-קִרְבוֹ:	and.reproach ¹¹ not he.takes.up against neighbour.his
נִבְיָה בְּעֵינָיו נִמְאָס	⁴ he.is.despised ¹² in.eyes.his ¹³ who.is.rejected ¹⁴

⁹ **speaks truth in his heart...** This refers to what is in the person's heart not to his manner of speaking. The Psalmist is not saying that the person is one *who speaks honestly* (in or from his heart). The term *truth* describes the content of Yahweh's revelation of himself. Psalm 119:160a says *the head* (or, 'the sum') *of your word is truth*. The second line then says *and all your righteous judgments* (referring to Yahweh's law) *are forever*. Prior to this verse, Psalm 119, the great meditation of Yahweh's law, says the same or similar things repeatedly: 119:43 *Do not snatch the word of truth...*, v.143 *...your law is truth*, v.151 *your commands are truth*. Even more pointedly for Psalm 15, in Psalm 43:3 the Psalmist asks Yahweh to send his light and his to lead him "and they will bring me to your holy mountain and to your dwelling places".

¹⁰ **not... not... not...** In v.3, the Psalmist describes three specific things that the person *does not do* with a string of 3 perfective verbs. The specific things that the person *does not do* illustrate the Psalmist's general description of what *he does do* in v.2, but in reverse order. The result is a chiasmic structure in which v.2a is illustrated by v.3c (v.2a: *he walks blamelessly* - v.3c: *a reproach, he does not take up against his neighbour*), v.2b is illustrated by v.3b (v.2b: *he does righteousness* - v.3b: *he does not do evil to his neighbour*) and v.2c is illustrated by v.3a (v.2c: *he speaks truth in his heart* - v.3a: *he does not slander with his tongue*).

¹¹ **a reproach, he does not take up...** In the Hebrew text, the three lines of v.3 are nicely balanced (with the lines showing a 2-3-3 pattern of accents). The pre-posing of the object in the last line brings the three lines to a close before the Psalmist moves on to something else in v.4.

¹² **he is despised in his eyes...** In v.4ab, the Psalmist describes the way the person who may live with Yahweh treats two kinds of people. In the Hebrew text, the two lines are a chiasmic unit in which the passive participle verb phrase at the beginning of v.4a (*he is despised in his eyes*) contrasts with and gives prominence to the active imperfective verb at the end of v.4b, (*he honors*).

¹³ **in his eyes...** The locative phrase *in his eyes* indicates how the person views or considers the one who is rejected. A rendering like *he considers despised...* is better than a direct statement like *he despises...* because the locative phrase in the Hebrew text refers more clearly to the way the person views one who is rejected than to what he does to them.

¹⁴ **who is rejected...** In the Hebrew text, the one who does the rejecting is left implicit. The chiasm in v.4ab, however, points not only to Yahweh as the one who does the rejecting but also to why rejects the person. In these lines, the passive participle phrase at the end of v.4a (*who is rejected*) contrasts with and gives prominence to the active participle phrase at the beginning of v.4b (*those who fear Yahweh*). The reason why Yahweh rejects a person, the Psalmist implies, is that they are not one of those who fear him. This is consistent with the wider testimony of Scripture. The frightening truth is that he rejects those who reject him. Many English translations drop the idea of rejection in the phrase at the end of v.4a. The refer instead to the person as one who is *vile* (ESV), or *evil* (NIV), *a reprobate* (NASB), or even, pluralising the term, *flagrant sinners* (NLT). A couple of English translations keep the idea of rejection but make Yahweh explicit while adjusting the sense in other ways. REB has *those the LORD rejects*, GNT *those whom God rejects*. We recommend that you experiment with different ways to maintain the sense of the Hebrew text in your language but don't forget the need for rhythmic balance between v.4a and b.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

וְאֵת־יְרֵאֵי יְהוָה יְכַבֵּד	but.to-they.fearing Yahweh he.honors ¹⁵
נִשְׁבַּע לְהָרַע וְלֹא יִמָּר:	he.swears ¹⁶ to.injury and.not ¹⁷ he.changes.
בְּסִפּוֹ לֹא־נָתַן בְּנִשְׁדָּו	⁵ Money.his not he.gives in.interest ¹⁸
וְשָׁחַד עַל־נָקִי לֹא לָקַח	and.bribe against innocent not he.takes
עֹשֵׂה־אֵלֶּה	he.who.does these ¹⁹

¹⁵ **he honours...** The person's attitude to the one who is rejected (by Yahweh) in v.4a and the honour he gives to those who fear Yahweh in v.4b, reveal his deepest core value: his own fear of Yahweh. We have already noted that the chiasmic structure in v.4ab highlights the honour which the person gives to those who fear Yahweh. The pattern of verb tenses in the Psalm as a whole suggests that v.4b is the climax of the Psalmist's answer to the questions in v.1. This is because, after the imperfectives in the questions of v.1, there are only two further unqualified imperfectives in the whole Psalm: in v.4b and in the concluding affirmation in 5c-d: that the person who does these things *will never be shaken*. (The only other imperfective form in the Psalm is in v.5c but this draws its sense from the first perfective verb which precedes it: *he swears to (his own) injury and does not change*.) The limited occurrence of imperfective verbs suggests that v.4b and v.5c-d are the backbone of the Psalmist's response to his own questions. The person who may live with Yahweh is the one who fears Yahweh, and the person who fears Yahweh will never be shaken. Everything which the person does or does not do in the Psalm (including the honour he gives to those who fear Yahweh in v.4b) derives from this one core value.

¹⁶ **he swears (and does not change)... he does not lend... he does not take...** The verbs in vv.4c-5b are all perfective, at least in sense. The Psalmist employs the perfective to declare what the person does and more prominently, what he doesn't do because he also fears Yahweh. The one imperfective form is the second verb in v.4c *and does not change*. As noted above, however, this takes its perfective sense from clause which begins the line: *he swears to his own cost*.

¹⁷ **not... not... not...** Verses 4c-5b illustrate the person's fear of Yahweh by three things he does not do. The Psalmist begins each line by stating the context (or referent) for the thing that the person doesn't do because he fears Yahweh. In v.4c, the context may also be something he does because he fears Yahweh: *he swears to (his own) injury*. Given that action, however, the focus in v.4c is on what he doesn't do, *and he doesn't change*. In v.5a, the Psalmist begins by pre-posing the object of the line *his money* and then says what he doesn't do with it, *he does not lend (it) at interest*. In v.5b, the Psalmist again pre-poses the object of the line. This time the object is in opportunity which the person faces: *a bribe against the innocent*. The Psalmist affirms however that *he does not take it*.

¹⁸ **interest...** The Mosaic law allowed charging interest to a foreigner but not to a fellow member of God's people, see Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:36, Deuteronomy 20:19-20. In Leviticus 25:36 the law specifically says that people should not lend to fellow Israelites out of their fear of Yahweh. See also Nehemiah's plea in Neh. 5:9-11 where he bases his request to stop taking interest on the need to fear Yahweh. n

¹⁹ **these...** The demonstrative refers to all the things that the Psalmist has said that the person who may live with Yahweh does and doesn't do.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

לֹא יִמּוּט לְעוֹלָם:

not he.will.be.shaken²⁰ to.forever

²⁰ **will not be shaken...** The Hebrew text splits the final sentence into two lines not only to keep the lines short (the pattern of the rhythm is 2 accented words followed by 3) but to emphasise the Psalmist's conclusion that the person who does these things *will not be shaken*. In Psalm 24, the Psalmist's question is who may *go up* Yahweh's mountain and who may *stand* in his holy place? In Psalm 15, the question is slightly different. It is who may reside and who may stay there? The heart of the Psalmist's answer is the person who fears Yahweh and who demonstrates that fear by what he does and what he does not do. That person, the Psalmist say, *will never be shaken*. He is totally secure. Yahweh, the Psalmist implies, will never reject him (possibly with a glance back to the one who is rejected in v.4a).