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# Psalm 8

## 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?

**Summary:** this well-known 9 verse psalm by David (verses 1a and 9 form an inclusio) expresses awe at the creator God, at his magnificence and yet his care for mankind. It highlights how the Lord brings glory to his own name by using the weak to overcome the strong, recognising that all that we are and have is a gift from him. Man's authority over creation is given as evidence of God's love for mankind.



### 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?



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- 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:** the great Creator's love for us

Purpose: to engage the participants emotionally with the contrast presented in the psalm

Listen to verses 3 & 4, from the middle of Psalm 8:

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?

**Activity:** discuss experiences of being outside at night, looking up at the moon and the stars. Try to get responses relating to personal experiences, especially from childhood. Ask if the night sky has any particular significance in the local culture, eg in mythology, or how the stars have been used for navigation.

Then think about the God who created 'the heavens'. Think about the way this same God loves you – caring for you, listening to your prayers, protecting you, forgiving you.

See [Appendix C](#) for alternative activities for more urban participants, who do not have these personal memories of the night sky.

**For Bible-literate groups,** ask them why the night sky would have been so familiar to David (*he was alone on the hills as a shepherd, night after night, evidently reflecting on the creator God he worshipped, as he guarded the sheep. 1 Sam 16:11, 19; 17:28 We don't know when he wrote this psalm, but it is clearly grounded in those early experiences. This background might need to be told to non-Bible-literate groups*).

Intertextuality: read aloud these well-known verses about God's love:

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son

1 John 3:1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

**Question:** how do these relate to Ps 8:3-4?

**Creative Activity 2:** create a POEM in response

Ask the participants to make up a poem in awe of the God who created the heavens. If possible, engage the whole group with this (one main poet, with responses from the group, may work). If a real sense of wonder can be communicated, this will enhance the poetic value of both the song and the oral translation.



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Make sure the poem is not only video'd (outside if possible) but also recorded and transcribed on AVTT.

## 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?

## Theme and Flow of the Psalm

The psalm opens by addressing YHWH and marvelling at his majesty over *heaven and earth*. He then notes how YHWH uses *children and infants* to achieve his purposes.

After marvelling at YHWH's work of creation, particularly the night sky, he asks himself why YHWH cares for mankind, and illustrates the high position man has been given with a list of what he rules over – *flocks and herds...birds...fish...etc*, before returning to the opening line, marvelling at the majesty of YHWH's name.

## UNLOCKING AN OBSTACLE IN UNDERSTANDING THE PSALM: THE ROLE OF VERSE 2

### Strength and weakness

Does v2 seem a bit out of place? Read aloud the first three verses, and make sure the participants understand the main point being made in each verse.

- In v1 and v3 the psalmist is praising God, awed by the heavens that he created 'with his fingers'
- Inbetween, in v2, he is speaking of children, infants, foes, the enemy, the avenger (none of which reappear in the psalm)

Is the flow of the psalm interrupted by v2? What is the connection?

The text box explains how verse 2 helps us to understand the whole psalm. As with many other psalms, the 'odd' or 'difficult' verse holds the key to the entire psalm.

**Verse 2 is not out of place:** it is through this verse that we understand the rest of the psalm. It



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tells us that God establishes his strength through the weak and helpless. Once we understand this, we can see that man's position of honour in creation is not because we are strong, but because God chooses to use mankind as we are - like babies or children. Our authority and rule, described in vv5-8, are a gift from God.

Now listen to how this verse is used by Jesus, in **Matthew 21:15-16**. Read this passage aloud, a couple of times. Ask one of the participants to do a simultaneous interpretation.

Jesus interprets this psalm for us in the short story above. In fact, he applies verse 2 to himself.

- Who were the babies and infants in the story?
- Who were they praising?
- Who were the foes of God in this story?
- Who was right, the (unimportant) children, or the (powerful) chief priests and scribe?

This is the **key theme** of the psalm: how God uses the weak to defeat the strong (v2), and how he chooses us, weak as we are (v4), and then crowns us and empowers us (v5-9), so that all glory is seen rightfully as belonging to his own name (v1, 9).

**Bible-literate groups** enjoy discovering how the psalms link to passages of Scripture they are already familiar with, so they may enjoy looking at how this theme recurs throughout Scripture, see below. Make sure that only one person is reading the references, with the others listening and reflecting.

- 2 Cor 4: 7 'we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us'
- 2 Cor 12:9 "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
- 1 Cor 1:27 'God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong'

What people in the Bible can they think of who illustrate this?

### Discussion: does psalm 8 seem to be describing what we know?

Some participants may raise the valid question that man is not obviously in authority over the whole of creation at the moment. If so, take a minute or two to understand v2 in the context of the whole Bible:

- When was man placed in authority over all the beasts, birds, and all of nature? *Genesis 1:26*. What went wrong?
- Who is the one 'man' who is in the position described in psalm 8 at the moment? *Hebrews 2:8, 9*
- When will those God loves finally attain the position given to them in psalm 8?

This may be too difficult for some groups, but it is a good introduction to the blend of shared reality and inspired prophecy that is found in so many of the psalms.

## SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

Please note that in order to highlight the *inclusio* formed by v1 and v9, it helps to separate them off with a blank line (see [Appendix A](#)).

INCLUSIO: v1a The glory of YHWH's name above the heavens and over all the earth.



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### Stanza one v 1b-2

v 2 YHWH silences his enemies through the weak and powerless.

### Stanza two: v 3-4

v 3-4 the wonder of our creator YHWH's love for mankind

### Stanza three: v 5-8

v 5-8 the extraordinary position of authority given to man

INCLUSIO: v1b The glory of YHWH's name above the heavens and over all the earth.

## FINAL SUMMING UP

Get at least two people to **restate the big picture** of the psalm:

- The greatness of the Lord, his extraordinary choice to use the weak and powerless, (and so) how he has given man a position of authority over all of creation.

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.

## 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.





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**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

### Creative Activity 1: discovering God's actions in the psalm

*Purpose of activity:* to discover and internalise that the whole psalm is about God, and what **he** does

Ask: who is the psalmist talking to? Does this change during the psalm? Is this psalm a prayer *about* God, or *to* God, or both?

**Activity:** We are going to count up all the different activities the psalm shows God engaging in.

**Physical response:** participants should stand up for the psalm to be read, and *create gestures and actions* to describe the different things that God does.

Create a gesture or action also to repeat in verses 1 and 9, where God is addressed directly.

The list of activities should look something like this, when addressed to God. Read this out again for the actions to be repeated:

- v 1 O Lord our Lord, how majestic is **your** name in all the earth!
- v 1 **you have set your glory** above the heavens
- v 2 Out of the mouths of babies and infants, **you have established strength**
- v 3 the moon and the stars **you have set in place**
- v 4 **you are mindful** of mankind



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- v 4 **you care** for humanity
- v 5 **you have made man a little lower** than the heavenly beings
- v 5 **you have crowned** man with glory and honour
- v 6 **you have given man authority** over the works of your hands
- v 6-8 **you have put everything** under his feet (= under his authority).
- v 9 O Lord our Lord, how majestic is **your** name in all the earth!

**Explanation & discussion:** here we see that all the main actions in the psalm are done by God: the first verb in verse 3, *when I look at*, is the only place in the psalm where we do anything, and even that is done in response to what God has done.

In the psalm, God's role is to do, ours is to observe, wonder and praise – even the authority that mankind exercises has been *given* to him through the actions of God.

After the explanation and discussion, go through the psalm with the gestures/actions again, asking this time for participants to make appropriate exclamations or responses in the local language (if this wasn't done before).

### Creative Activity 2: finding CONTRASTS in the whole psalm

*Purpose of activity: to introduce the participants to the key pattern of contrasts throughout the psalm*

**Listen** to the psalm being read aloud again. We're now going to discover a different pattern that is found throughout the whole psalm.

**Response and physical activity:** one person reads out the guide translation, a verse at a time, and then asks the questions from below. All of the questions have two options: for each question, quickly designate one side of the room for each option, so that participants have to move to the side of the room which represents the answer they have chosen.

Although some answers are obvious, others require thought. The physical activity keeps everyone awake (and laughing) and, equally importantly, prevents automatic 'Sunday school' answers.

- v 1: which is greater/mightier, the Lord's name or the whole earth?
- v 1: which is higher, God's name or the heavens?
- v 2: which is stronger, babies and infants, or God's enemies?
- v 3: which is greater, the moon and stars, or God's fingers?
- v 4: which is greater, the moon and stars, or human beings?
- v 5: if that side of the room represents the heavenly beings/angels, and this side represents the seas/earth, where has God made humans to be?
- v 6: who is crowned with glory and honour – us or the heavenly beings/angels?
- v 6: whose hands created the world, God's or humans'?
- v 6: whose feet is everything placed under, God's or humans'?
- v 7: who do humans feel closer to, flocks and herds, or wild animals?
- v 8: who do humans feel closer to, birds in the sky or fish in the sea?

**Discuss** which contrasts struck the participants most vividly. Discuss which of the contrasts they intuitively understand as true (eg the moon and stars are greater than human beings; we feel



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closer to flocks and herds than to wild animals) and which feel counterintuitive (the praise of babies and infants is stronger than God's enemies; man is only a little lower than the angels, etc).

**Visual representation:** the central contrast that the psalmist is drawing out experientially. Using a white/blackboard, write 'heavens' across the middle (or draw a night sky). Ask the participants where God should be, in what size letters. Then where man (a stick figure) should be, and what size. The three-way distinction should create a strong visual impact, with a tiny stick figure below vast heavens and an even vaster God.



## Step 4: Explore and compose

Explore the Hebrew and local poetry and compose a song

### EXPLORING HEBREW AND LOCAL POETRY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 3. Rhythm

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





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#### 4. Irregular word order

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

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

#### 5. Highlighting poetic devices

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

### COMPOSING A SONG

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

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



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## SUGGESTIONS

**Children's song** - Ask the participants to craft something short and memorable with a strong teaching point. Children's songs have a high success rate in reaching the community. If there is time, ask them to teach the song to a group of children and bring them into record it before the end of the workshop.



### Step 5: Draft

Translating section-by-section, 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 1b-2**

That you have set your splendour over the heavens.  
<sup>2</sup> From [the] mouth of children and babies you have established strength/might, Because of [those] hostile to you, to put an end to [the] enemy and avenger.

You have set your glory above the heavens.  
<sup>2</sup> From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise/strength because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

#### **Discuss:**

**Word group of hostility, v2.** Make sure that there are different names for the three enemies of God in v2: enemies, foe and avenger. (See the the footnotes in [Appendix B.](#)) Cross-check that none of these convey the idea that God himself is in danger.

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



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## Stanza 2: Verses 3-4: the amazing position God has given to man

<sup>3</sup> When I look [at] your heavens, works of your fingers,  
moon and stars that you have placed,  
<sup>4</sup> What - man, that you remember him?  
And son of man, that you take care of him?

<sup>3</sup> When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
<sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him,  
the son of man that you care for him?

### Discuss:

in verse 4, the psalmist talks of *man* and the *son of man*, and then refers to man as 'he' throughout the rest of the psalm. Some more modern versions refer to *human beings* and *mere mortals* in this verse, and use *they* after that (see NLT in [Appendix A](#)). This is because of gender issues in modern English, not because of the Hebrew of the psalm.

- Who is the psalmist talking about?

The words used in the psalm are talking about **all of humanity**, all of mankind. Try to avoid a translation that suggests the psalmist is only referring to men. The reference to humanity includes everyone, both men and women. However, there is only one *man* who fulfils Psalm 8 perfectly, and that is Jesus.

**The unanswered rhetorical question of verse 4:** this is difficult. In verses 3-4 there is a kind of disjunct between v3 and v4: when I look at your heavens... what is man...? There is effectively an ellipsis of the idea that the psalmist *asks himself*, what is man..... We then have a rhetorical question in v4, which is **not answered** by v5, although many participants will think that it is.

v 3: when I consider your heavens.....

v 4: (*I ask myself*) what is man, that you care for him? Ie, why do you love mankind?

(No reason is given)

v 5: (*but indeed your care is proved by the fact that*) you have crowned him with glory and honour

Make sure that participants understand that the question in v4 is left unanswered, and that they do not put a connective at the beginning of v5 which makes it look as if it is the answer.

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

## Stanza 3: Verses 5-8

<sup>5</sup> You have made him little-less than heavenly-beings,  
And glory and honour you have crowned him.  
<sup>6</sup> You gave-him-rule over works of your hands,  
All you put under his feet:  
<sup>7</sup> Flock and cattle they-all, and bush animals too.

<sup>5</sup> You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honour.  
<sup>6</sup> You made him ruler over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under his feet:



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<sup>8</sup> Birds of heavens, and fish of the sea,  
Who-takes paths of seas.

<sup>7</sup>all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the  
field,

<sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
all that swim the paths of the seas.

#### Discuss:

#### Verse 5: made a little lower than....

In verse 5, which are we humans a little lower than: angels, heavenly beings, or God? You can see all of these in various different translations. The problem is with one particular word: see the text box below.

**The original Hebrew word is *elohim***, which has a wide range of meanings: it can mean gods, but also often refers to God himself. (In Psalm 82:1 it is used for God and for 'gods' in the same verse.) There are at least four different ways that our verse 5 can reasonably be translated: God, angels, heavenly beings, and 'almost divine'. The best choice is probably 'heavenly beings' or 'angels'.

Psalm 8 is talking about the position of authority that God has given to mankind, so it is probably better to use *lower than heavenly beings*.

On the other hand, if the participants are familiar with Hebrews 2:7, they might want to follow that and use *lower than angels*. (There are many difficulties with the NT's quoted uses of the Septuagint, but it is probably not necessary to bring that issue up at this point.)

**Activity:** discuss what translations of *heavenly beings* or *angels* could be used here in verse 5. Try out oral versions of verse 5 with the different possibilities that have been suggested.

#### Verses 6-8: everything under his feet

*Note: this discussion will not be appropriate for every group, where the group has already translated Genesis 1, however, it may be helpful.*

**Discussion:** look at Genesis 1. See the order in which God creates the heavens and the earth. Listen to someone reading:

- Gen 1:20-21. What does God create on the fifth day?
- Gen 1:24. What does God create *first* on the sixth day?
- Gen 1:26 & 27. Who does God create *last* on the sixth day? What does he say that he has created them for?

Look at Psalm 8:6-8 again.

- What is the same as in the verses of Genesis you've just read?
- What is different from Genesis?

In the Genesis account of the six days of creation, there is a movement inwards *towards* man, from far away.

**In Psalm 8:6-8, the order is reversed**, putting man at the centre, with living things listed in the order of their relationship to him. You could imagine this as circles spreading further and further away from man, starting with the safety of his home, all the way out into the dangerous and unknown depths of the ocean.



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**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

Writing it down

**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:

- **Check that the issues discussed in step 5** before doing the oral translation have been handled satisfactorily.
- **Names of God, v1/9:** The different names for God are difficult for oral translators to remember. Check that the double name, YHWH our Lord, repeated in v1 & v9, is accurate.
- **Statement or exclamation in v1:** make sure that the translation of v1 has a sense of dramatic exclamation, and is not simply a statement.
- **The inclusio v1 & v9:** make sure ) that verses 1 and 9 are still identical after any changes made here in the exegetical check (and in the poetic check in step 8).
- **Hebrew interlinear:** check the footnotes in [Appendix B](#). Note in particular the references to *marked word order* giving prominence, in verses 2, 5 and 6.



## Step 8: Poetry Check

Comparing and weighing 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.

## POETIC CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- Rhythm and pulse
- Eliminating wordiness: are all the connectives, pronouns and verbs necessary?
- Word order
- Metaphors and similes
- Exclamations and ideophones. Note that participants may be reluctant to add ideophones because they are not in the guide translations: explain why they are not there. If ideophones are used, make sure any redundant verbs are removed.



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- Verbs: discuss whether any ‘stripped down’ verb forms can be used.
- Breaking the rules: discuss which language rules might need to be observed, for example placement of vocatives, and where – and for what purpose – in poetry, rules can sometimes be broken.
- Feel free to raise and discuss other poetic features during checking, especially line length, repetition, chiasms\*, ellipsis\*, enjambment\* or anything you have observed in their own poetry.



## 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.

## 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).





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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:

If the group is a church-based group, they may like to use their translation of Psalm 8 to sing a song of praise to Jesus. Because of sin, we do not in fact see mankind in the glorious position that David writes about in psalm 8. But we see Jesus fulfilling Psalm 8, as he:

- was made for a while a little lower than the angels (v5) (*when he came to earth*) and
- and has now been crowned with glory and honour (v5) (*at the right hand of God*) and everything has been put under his feet (v6).

**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><i>For the choirmaster, on the 'gittith'. A psalm of David.</i></p> <p><sup>1</sup> YHWH, our Lord, How majestic your name in all the earth,</p> <p>That you have set your splendour over the heavens.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> From [the] mouth of children and babies you have established strength/might, Because of [those] hostile to you, to put an end to [the] enemy and avenger.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> When I look [at] your heavens, works of your fingers, moon and stars that you have placed,</p> <p><sup>4</sup> What - man, that you remember him? And son of man, that you take care of him?</p> <p><sup>5</sup> You have made him little-less than heavenly-beings, And glory and honour you have crowned him.</p> <p><sup>6</sup> You gave-him-rule over works of your hands, All you put under his feet:</p> <p><sup>7</sup> Flock and cattle they-all, and bush animals too.</p> <p><sup>8</sup> Birds of heavens, and fish of the sea, Who-takes paths of seas.</p> <p><sup>9</sup> YHWH, our Lord, How majestic your name in all the earth!</p>	<p><i>For the director of music. According to gittith. A psalm of David</i></p> <p><sup>1</sup> YHWH, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!</p> <p>You have set your glory above the heavens.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise/strength because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,</p> <p><sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?</p> <p><sup>5</sup> You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour.</p> <p><sup>6</sup> You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:</p> <p><sup>7</sup> all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field,</p> <p><sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.</p> <p><sup>9</sup> YHWH, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!</p>





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## Appendix B: Exegetical Layout



Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise to God, talking about God's creation, of God's care for man, and of man's unique position of authority in creation, which has been given to him by God.

**Fun fact:** in 1969 when the Apollo 11 spaceship travelled to the moon, world leaders were invited to send along messages, which were then left on the moon. The Pope sent the Latin translation of Psalm 8. So this psalm, which speaks of God creating the moon and stars, is now actually **on** the moon!

### SUGGESTED HEADING

Xx

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

לְמַנְצֵחַ עַל־הַגִּיִּתִּים מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד	<sup>1</sup> For.the.choirmaster; on.the.gittith <sup>2</sup> . Psalm <sup>3</sup> of.David.
יְהוָה אֱדַנְנוּ	1 YHWH, Lord.our <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> v1 and v9 form an inclusio\* around the whole psalm - v1a is repeated at the end of the psalm.

<sup>2</sup> Superscription\*: a 'gittith' was probably a musical instrument or the name of a tune.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew does not have the indefinite article 'a/an', so this is not shown in the interlinear. English requires it and it is found in the guide translations. Check what your language requires.

<sup>4</sup> Possessive suffixes are shown in the interlinear after the noun, as is the case in Hebrew. For the English possessives, coming before the noun, see the guide translations.





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מַה־אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ	how-majestic <sup>5</sup> name <sup>6</sup> .your <sup>7</sup> in.all-the.earth!
אֲשֶׁר תָּנָה הוֹדֵךְ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם:	that you.have.set <sup>89</sup> splendour.your above-the.heavens.
מִפִּי עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקִים	2 <sup>10</sup> Out.of.mouth.of children and.infants <sup>11</sup>
יִסְדָּתָּ עָז לְמַעַן צוֹרְרֶיךָ	you.have.established <sup>12</sup> strength because.of foes.your,
לְהַשְׁבִּית אוֹיֵב וּמְתַנְקֶם:	to.still enemy and.avenger <sup>13</sup> .
כִּי־אֶרְאֶה שְׁמֶיךָ מַעֲשֵׂי אֶצְבְּעֹתַיִךְ	3 <sup>14</sup> For.when-I.look.[at] heavens.your, work <sup>15</sup> .of fingers <sup>16</sup> .your
יָרַח וְכּוֹכְבֵי־אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנֹתָהּ	moon and.stars, which you.have.set.in.place,

<sup>5</sup> In Hebrew the verb [is] is implied: how majestic is your name....

<sup>6</sup> *your name* refers to the Lord's reputation, character and actions.

<sup>7</sup> All 2<sup>nd</sup> person references in this psalm, whether possessive suffixes or the subject in the verb, are 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, referring to YHWH. Because there is no contrast with the plural in this psalm, there are no further footnotes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> person sg.

<sup>8</sup> *you have set* – the first of a series of actions by the Lord in this psalm (see step two). Note that the Hebrew is difficult and a number of commentators interpret this word completely differently (Craigie, Dahood), but translations tend to interpret this **imperative** form as a qatal. It is marked here as a qatal, to avoid confusion.

<sup>9</sup> The verb marking in this chart is as follows: qatal is **blue**; yiqtol is **red**, vayiqtol is **pink**; imperatives are **brown**, participles are **green**, and jussives/cohortatives are **orange**. Frontshifting is in **bold**.

<sup>10</sup> Marked word order\* draws attention to 'out of the mouth of babies and infants' (see step two).

<sup>11</sup> Word pair\*: *children and infants*. The latter are still young enough to nurse.

<sup>12</sup> Some translators see an ellipsis\* in this line, *you have established the praise of your strength*, where the words 'the praise of' have been missed out but should be assumed to be there, and so they use praise in their translation, see NIV, NET, GNB. (Do not follow GNB for these verses.) See step two for why this is not the preferred option in this guide.

<sup>13</sup> Word group\*: *your foes...the enemy...the one who avenges*. These are all hostile to God.

<sup>14</sup> Note that this verse and verse 4 are one unit, all one question - the comparison of the heavens in v3 with man in v4.

<sup>15</sup> There is an implied definite article 'the' here in the Hebrew because of the possessive suffix on 'your'; this is required in English, as seen in the guide translations, but may not be necessary in your language. See the similar construct chain in v6, 'works of your hands'.

<sup>16</sup> *God's fingers*: an example of anthropomorphism\*; try to translate this literally, even though we know God does not have fingers. For someone gazing at the night sky, this poetic device gives a sense of God's care as a craftsman – and also of his immensity, since the whole of the heavens are made by his *fingers*. This leads to the important three-way comparison of v4: if man is so much smaller than the heavens, how tiny must he be compared with God!





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מֵה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ	4 <sup>17</sup> what <sup>18</sup> man <sup>19</sup> that-you.remember.him <sup>20</sup> ,
וּבֶן־אָדָם כִּי תִפְקֹדֵנוּ	and.son.of-man <sup>21</sup> that you.care.for.him?
וּתְחַסְּרֵהוּ מֵעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים	5 and.you <sup>22</sup> .have.made.him little.less than.heavenly.beings <sup>23</sup> ,
וְכָבוֹד וְהַדָּר תַּעֲטֹרֵהוּ:	and.glorious and.honour <sup>24</sup> you.have.crowned.him <sup>25</sup> .
תַּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיִךְ	6 You.have.given.him.rule over.works.of hands <sup>26</sup> .your;

<sup>17</sup> This verse is the heart of the psalm. The parallelism\* is balanced and rhythmical; the two verbs, – *remember him, care for him* – sound different in English, but are very similar in Hebrew, with a number of sound features in common, including that the two verbs rhyme (which is unusual in Hebrew), as well as the repeated *ki*. Can you echo the sounds of these lines in your language too?

<sup>18</sup> There is an implied [is] in the Hebrew.

<sup>19</sup> This is a rhetorical question\* which is left unanswered by the psalmist (v5 is not an answer). It leads the reader into the heart of the psalm, as he supplies his own answer. Believers and unbelievers will find very different answers.

<sup>20</sup> *Man* and *son of man* are both masculine singular nouns, and so the rest of the psalm uses m sg pronouns – remember him, care for him, made him, crowned him, given him rule, put everything under his feet. Some modern translations use them/their instead of him/his, to show that the whole of mankind is being referred to, eg NLT and NIV 2011 (but cf NIV 1984). What works best in your language? Do you have a different way of referring to all of humanity?

<sup>21</sup> Word pair\*: *man* and *son of man*. (See note 15) These two words for mankind are both used to refer to the frailty of humanity, which is emphasised by placing the two together. See for example:

- Ps 103:15 ‘as for *man*, his days are like grass’
- Ps 90:3 ‘you return *man* to dust and say, “Return, O *sons of man*’.

<sup>22</sup> The Hebrew *vav* which starts this line means ‘and’, but it can mean many other things. Here it means ‘but, yet’ (contrastive). In your language, is it better to add a word meaning *but* or *yet*, or does the contrast work better by using juxtaposition\* - by placing verse 5 straight after verse 4 without any connective?

<sup>23</sup> Heavenly beings or angels? See the text box in step five.

<sup>24</sup> *glory and honour*: The word order\* is marked, and these same two words are used to describe God in Isaiah 35:2. This emphasises the very high position which God has given to man.

<sup>25</sup> *you have crowned him*: to crown someone is to place a crown on their heads, establishing their royal position. Here it is figurative\*, showing that God has given man the power and authority to rule. If crowns are not part of your culture, is there something that represents that kind of authority?

<sup>26</sup> *works of your hands*: see note 11 above for God’s fingers. Note that in v3 the works were the heavens, whereas in v6 the works are on earth.



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כָּל שֵׁתָּה: תַּחַת רַגְלָיו	<b>Everything</b> <sup>27</sup> you.have.put under-.feet <sup>28</sup> .his,
צֹנֶה וְאַלְפִים כָּלֵם	7 <sup>29</sup> sheep and.oxen all.of.them,
וְגַם בַּהֲמוֹת שָׂדֵי	and.also beasts.of field,
צִפּוֹר שָׁמַיִם וְדָגֵי הַיָּם	8 birds <sup>30</sup> .of heavens and.fishes.of the.sea,
עֹבְרֵי אַרְחוֹת יָמִים	passing paths.of seas.
יְהוָה אֱדַגֵּינוּ	9 <sup>31</sup> YHWH, our.Lord,
מִה־אֲדִיר שְׁמוֹ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ	<b>How-majestic</b> <sup>32</sup> your.name in.all-the.earth!

<sup>27</sup> *everything*: marked word order\* gives this word prominence. *Everything* is then spelt out in detail in vv 7-8.

<sup>28</sup> *under his feet*: this is an idiom meaning 'in his power' or 'under his authority', see 1 Kgs 5:3, where the Lord put David's enemies *under his feet*. *Feet* is a nice pairing with *hands*, so keep it if possible, but it may not work to do this in your language.

<sup>29</sup> Use your work from step two to translate verses 7 and 8.

<sup>30</sup> צִפּוֹר *tsipor* can mean either an individual bird, or a collective noun 'birds'. Here we are interpreting it as a collective.

<sup>31</sup> This second part of the inclusio\* should be translated exactly like the first half of verse one. But if your language has a way of tying these two lines together, across the intervening verses, it would be great to use that.

<sup>32</sup> See footnote to v1 on implied [is].

